

**From the Life of St. Peter**

*(Brancacci Chapel, Florence)*

**1. His Shadow**

*(Acts 5:15)*

They brought us out on the pavement then,  
our pallets  
and cots, the  
poorest barely decent in their bedclothes.  
And facing

as best we could the sun,  
so whether  
he would or no his passing shadow might  
pass over us and we  
be healed. As if

some ghastly catalogue of everything you  
fear the flesh  
might one day have in store for you should  
suddenly block  
your way back home.

But look  
how the painter has lovingly rendered the clubs  
of my knees. Gall-  
knots, hooves  
of callus you would surely look away from in the

— | | —  
ordinary  
course of things, calves  
like an afterthought trailing behind. I wonder  
will I get to keep some sign of this when I'm made  
whole.

I've come to think  
the body scorns hypothesis, hasn't it  
paid for its losses  
in kind? While we are writ in water. My  
advantage here

was learning so early how little the world will  
spare us. Now  
this rumored cure:  
You see  
the peeling fresco? It was once as chaste as you.