



ANSWER THE LIGHT

DRAWINGS
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POEMS
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ANSWER THE LIGHT

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The one I started in the fall the cliff of mankind broken blood the apple
made entirely of coal the Devonian mistake repeated I came close to the nipple of the
volcano but by fingers bit the space between and suddenly
outside was inside again the smut was still falling from the sky
there were no clothes anywhere and everywhere had cut all its dirt away
not to be clean but be again again

all music is the memory of a knife



I stood on that street with her I made her go away
things turn from us when we
when we

there is nothing but rain nothing but sky
old earth old afterthought

but she turned her back she was old she thought she was old
it must have been me a man like an oak tree a man with rough skin so frail

where is a man ever to be if not behind a woman going away he wants her to stay
nothing can be spoken

it is not like this at all it is a black rain out of the
no god it is only us we write our names on the wall
the names have no letters

we are colors all we are is colors all color is is the
pain of light

She left her shadow, a soul is a catastrophe isn't it, think how
it would be if we were only we.



that God was this very knife His sword is round His blessing carves
sense into clay till it yelps with understanding

Plato turned his eyes away from this his gay friends snickered the woman
was the only real thing in the world the only real thing and she was not a thing
she was this other ear this bucket full of everything this blood

the body is realest where it is least real where most the other yearns it

blood is its own knife don't you understand
there is no bible there is only sunlight coming through the window
that's all there ever was and you were among the first to understand

all you ever had to do is answer the light.

The pictures speak of sacrifice

a sacrifice

making holy

by knife

The pictures speak of saying yes to holy yes to knife yes to blood

but something else

speak of cutting away the story from the story and leaving something

something new

breathing

what is the breath of a knife?

who knows how to milk crystal, milk steel?

These are vague questions but the pictures are precise

follow what is seen into the invisible

that's all we can do, follow.

Into the paper deep into the paper into the weave the grain the lost fibers of the beginning

into the papyrus marshes the careful tendance of deity and jackals howling like knives

this paper is stone

on this paper on this stone

Abram set his son

and raised the knife

this god-got knife god gave him Sacrifice him
Abram brought down the blade
and cut the son. The Sun also bled
felt the womb shudder

the sky broke.

The boy was a girl now.
And into the father his name was changing

into the father's name
the female letter ן crept in

and he was Abraham.



the burning tower
is the only flower of a city
the deer have eaten all the needles from the arbor vitae the column lifted to a god
still stands but nobody can read the inscription
no name no name o god who has no skin but ours
don't we know that she was seeking? a long search inside a boat and the boat burning

but I don't feel like anything I am snow
I have settled between your left breast and your right breast pretending to be part of you
why do you turn away from me just because I hurt
my word hurts you because words do they have no other business than waking

and could one wake into love
while so much of the city is burning? I asked the rabbi and he answered
eat your bread your bread is part of the body of the woman you so admire
and who is that I asked and he answered eat your bread your bread is a part
of the woman you run from in terror and who is that I asked and he answered
eat your bread your bread is on fire everyone you even meet is she she is no one

why is the human eye a color in the middle of so much snow

Of course I'm literal
or it is.

Sometimes things just do look like other things.
Or knock on some door in the mind
where the shapes and textures of things are stored.
And colors live.
The door opens and I look out —
in the drawing I see what looks like a burning tower.
But it also looks like a shoe on fire.
I'm suspicious of things that look like other things —
but it's too late now, always already too late
because once you see anything
the narrative has already begun.

We do not know how to unsee.
Or is that what art really is, how to unsee the things we see,
we think we see?

Already flames pour out of the tower,
children throw books out the window
to save them, even though it's raining
and the words get very wet
as they fall on the people standing around
the base of the tower, some grieving,
some cheering the fire on.
Inside the tower wise men hurry down winding stairs
thinking about death. Every one is safe:
a tower only burns itself.
Now from the smoke and flame and glow

the tower begins to talk.
All a tower is, is talk, talking big,
answering back to the sky.

Women dancing around the fire
have danced right out of their high heel shoes.
One of them is on fire and the flames rise slow
to lick where her ankle would have been

empty bone, bone of air

but she is gone, escaped from any fire,
escaped from all these answers,
instruments, vestments. She has left
everything behind but dance—
the dance looks like the empty
left side of the picture all light and air,

everything the dance leaves
behind when it too has leapt
wildly and gone.



But the air speaks to the air

something like this is coming into the ear:
look closely at the air until you see the molecules of nitrogen
that let you breathe—notice carefully how each one
has a face and the face is mine, i.e., yours. Notice this
because there are no colors left in the world to tell you
only my soft mouth coming towards your ear
like an owl towards a white rabbit in the snow, fear fear,
and my soft mouth is asking you Where is your face
and why am I who I am
and why am I always asking you for something
without saying what or when
I came down from heaven to find you
are you pregnant yet

Leave the weave—
two round men falling out of the air
into where?

Where air's not, ink sinks
deep in fiber – a word
stifled into print –
choking on color.

The horror of circles is
circles always rhyme.
The nose of the plane
nuzzled under my arm,
its fuselage your body was

and I kept you warm
in the terrible cold sky –
isn't that a little like
responsibility, or Freud, or St Francis
Hospital frowning at the river.

Who will catch the men who flee
one is Isaac one is Ishmael
far far the desert will trim them
till only bone is speaking –
run away before they start to speak.

All I've been running from all my life
is Abraham. I want an eye for no-eye
a tower that gets there,
a voice that knows how to disobey.

I want the unprompted heart,
the blue sacrifice



How can I live without pressing forward into that hole
sTong-pa-nyid luminous vacuity
how can you carve out of flesh with such a simple bruise
so quiet a knife and have the hollow that is left
instead leap forward, more flesh than the flesh it perforates,
where the interruption is the meat of music

hear?



hands use pieces of hands to have a color

and the color is the light inside the skin at night when the sky gives nada
and you have to do all the color yourself

how tiresome it is always to be coloring the world
a child with a crimson crayon
first find the lines then color between them inside them

don't color the sky
leave the sky to take care of itself

see, see where the sky has ripped itself open
the sutures of God come undone and there pours into the world
the opposite of color

scribble harder faster little child the lines keep getting further and further apart
is there enough wax in the world for the world?

enough bees to drown the mind one minute in honey
morgasm they call it down the street

when the world leaps back up into the hand
and you become the only color there is



In the house of the blade the air is an animal

this kind of small creature eats fire
and what it voids (it voids by kissing, a slow
cream runs out of its mouth)
is what the Greeks called panacea, the all-heal, the medicine
that cures existence.
That's why some animals think of themselves as death or even
the death of men
but they are just little blades, little apples and pears and green lizards,

in the picture poets are chanting the Iliad
pretending to know how the Greeks made sounds come out of their mouths
pretending to music and the words of their pretense
are at the moment describing the funeral pyre of Patroklos

and we should be like him known only for being loved the object of love
a body on fire and people grieving

isn't that what a word is? a body on fire and people and grieving
and a statue of the dead man broken, cast down by ignorant soldiers
guffawing but later in the night each wakes up in terror

since they hear the word too.

January dawn the loveliest
shift of flesh light through bare trees

Everything coming towards you now
the plowman from the stars
wakes you with his coulter's scrape

We are blades to each other
we cut the mistakes away.

*

(Of course girls and cut and blood are obvious. Pathologies are obvious. Everything tells. But when the stars bleed, and the horizon itself becomes a knife, and when men do it too, the dreamer is clearly on the verge of waking.)

*

He wears a phallus for a heart.
He walks by dreaming.
He says by leaving.

You knew him then, the same one
again. Because there is only one.
That is why she ran from Abraham.

Never far enough. Never desert enough.
The spring that opened in the rock
was remembering him,
the water was his water —
howling with anger she bent to drink.

Please, please, my soul my only harp
keep exile Hagar from the hag of God.



Where could she have seen it the inside of the moon
broken over the kneecap of a servant woman
when an imperious Byzantine demanded
and all my blood poured out and it was black

because I am the child of a broken bone the child of a blank sky
whose skirts fell around me and I thought I was born but I was only me

listen to him the palaver of nervous men
from whom the colors have been surgically removed
what can they be on a winter night but a winter night
what can they do but stand in the rain and be the rain

aren't you tired of me telling you what everything means
aren't you tired of my hard kneebones my prayers my low mountains
stretched along your dream and I won't let you wake



it is not Beowulf it is another war another posse of grizzlies
lined up for the interminable thing
the kill

yet they look like children passing by after a rain in France
passing a rainpuddle and some of them looking down and some not
but the pool reflecting all of them no matter

no matter, we die of resemblances, no matter, I mean
only a circle and only a pointy thing I go upstairs to bed dreaming of this
carrying a body inside my body a circle inside my circle
carrying a little river flows between alders and osiers
all we can give all we can give

all we can give each other is a river
walk home with me the moon gives enough light even though
I know what you did last night you broke the moon
they carry pieces of the moon down the dark road we see to come home

I am the arrow you are the shield the river is the river
and none of this is here

when the osiers turn red it is time for time to start again