

To the Choirmaster

Creative Nonfiction • Olivia Corso

Shivers spiral down the spine, down stairs of bone and marrow. The ghosts of fingers tickle, prick, the little white shadow that chases your finger as it drags across canvas skin, along length of arm and stomach and neck, taut, and, someday, leg and inner thigh and arc of foot. The cadence of breath, the swelling of chests, rolling like whitecaps against one another, remember to breathe. The sharp bite of brass and blood, metallic tinge on the tip of tongue, dripping honeycomb as lips part. Fingers wilt. Eyes meet. Do you hear it?

Silence, indeed.

Yet there are things said in these spaces where eyes meet – blue grey oceans, wave encrusted, foam spattered, embracing rich green forests, bark weaved, leaf dabbled, is this where souls speak? and eloquent heavens sing, heavens sing whale song, great leviathans traced in stars pour forth white noise, white hot, it burns, blazes, blisters the earth, blink back the ash where dark pupils smolder, dilate—see what I cannot say—

For I must tell you that as a child I saw atoms—shimmering pinpricks of dull light dancing beyond my vision, tremoring patterns appear as sight slips, light sifts between cornea, lens, iris, retina, sclera, sealed tissue paper eyelids tremble and roadmap veins pulse

quietly, perceiving the world as it moves, foundations always move, foundations made of sand, infinitesimal quaking grains of molecules, is it God? that so shakes the world at its core—

And that I believed heaven was the stars – energy cannot be created or destroyed in an isolated system, insulated, what is a soul? Death peels back skin, sinew, tendon, tissue, vein, vessel, the vessel for life dissolves in iridescence, bulb flash, bang, the universe conceived in a blink, the eye of God, the hand of God, the whole world in his hands, on his fingertips galaxies twirl, constellations dazzle on his skin like freckles, a supernovae smile—

And that I prayed for miracles—climbing, leg caught in crook of tree, rough oak bruises exposed skin of ankle, knee, thigh, snowy cotton shift tears in toothed grain, falling, but floating for a moment off the ground so distant, might I walk on water, too? across shattered waves of crystal glass, stained cobalt, cerulean, cyan, lapis, powder, sky, steel blue, window struck ablaze by amber sun, behind chapel, above dead grass lot, suspended barefoot and bleeding—

And I must tell you the time that I first knew God—the choirmaster stands tall and grand, and I hear it outspoken, outreaching, the choirmaster conducts wind, words, warm tickle in the throat, trachea, pharynx, larynx, lung, and the choirmaster conducts beat, heart echoes in hollow chest, slower than mine, against my cheek, the world falls into rhythm, and the choirmaster stands tall and grand in a garden, green forests reflected in mirror, rearview, what did you think?—first knew love.

Silence indeed.