

Fearfully unmade

In the beginning
god unsaid the dark.
He drew in a long breath
and unemptied his lungs.
And the spirit of god
unfloated, while the water
swallowed her, untroubled.

In the beginning
god unmorned the night
and unmooned the day.
god disconnected water
from water, breaking
the blue in two. god pulled
back the sea from the land,
as the waves dug clinging
fingers in the sand, stumbling
grains running distraught
to the ocean. This breaking

water unnamed, unclaimed
but teeming with need.
So many mouths full
of nothing, no word
for mother or the moon
as she glowed with ungodly
light at the earth split
open, torn wide by seed.
Here the beginning of her
undoing. Long before

god dismembered Adam
for Eve, first woman
fearfully unmade,
there was this: this love
unbelievably brutal.

*For god so loved
the world's unending.*

Lamentation for leaving the church

all the unborn allelujahs still and silent the body
broken but bread no longer reaching my mouth gold
cross hanging empty its gilded assurance suspended
in the dark and neck less barely there another
Erica bows her head and waits for a sign former self still
full of a certain faith this chest pressed full of holy
ghosts shaken down for good measure shivering
hearth that once blazed with tongues the language
of incandescent favor and angels unbridled
jaw galloping and glorious head thrown back wild
keeling wind at my back before and behind me hands
lifting so light every burden no longer
mine my body a temple a tempter an atonement no
nothing my god this blood couldn't buy back from the grave
offer me again sanguine life unending born again
promise canopied from each limb the deathbed's posts
queer tree sing of a sacrificial season second chances
resurrecting all I've buried I want to believe in burning
stars holy invisible in the too-bright blue of mourning
teach me to trust the sky vaulting silence pierced
with unseen light I push fists in my eyes and they appear
vacant open this wound where I once buried prayer
xéno seed sunk deep in this earth god's sun not forgotten
I yearn for another home a germ of hope my vining tongue
zealous for fruit its skin these lips studded with thorns.

Lena Waithe speaks to her cape of many colors at the Met Gala

Genesis 45:5

Don't be another train skimming the carpet. Be glorious heavenly upset, and don't apologize for a single stripe. Let the cappa magna be cross with your spectral divinity. Let both roll off my back. Forgive yourself for hiding your royalty, calling it "flag." The church keeps selling me to brothers who toss us into the shame well. But we dreamed this place. It was fated, after famine and opening to your tiers, each tear was God, who wept. Dry Her eyes with your prodigal folds. Love sent me here, my shoulders carrying your bow like the sky. What lay ahead of you is new, glory feathered. But you do not need wings to preserve this, my body, stitched in the image of God. This here: your life work. You and I, King's dream. Prismatic and mantled at last.

The difference between a field and a meadow

the sign tells us, is diversity. No suburban rows
of plant development here. Not the same shapes stretching
in perpendicular regularity from my eye as we drove

hundreds of miles, past fields of almond and apricot
exactly spaced, endless lines of precise grapevines
and the pumpjacks nodding heavy heads in time

through California's hypnotic central valley,
until we arrived at our home for a night. Our unknown
host welcomed from every wall and pillow,

with nearly identical Christian sentiments,
cultivated and displayed in regular rows. God is love.
You are loved. The embroidery says: *Consider the lilies*

of the field, and I do, deciding he must have meant
meadow unless he was walking amidst a greenhouse
with blooms grown only to be cut and Jesus was making

a point about high-margin yields and pragmatic hands
more than the miracle of meadow. Below Yosemite's
cliffs, at the foot of its highest waterfall, we stand

by a stretch of green that when passed at 25 miles
an hour just looks like grass. To my suburban eyes a chore.
But to others these blades are food, shelter, or baskets— deer

grass being what the Ahwahneechee tribes prized
for their weaving. Their preference tended not by plows
but by fire. The same flames we're told sequoias need

to open their cones, the seeds only unlocked by tongues
that hollow their hulking trunks with burns so large
I could stand inside without bowing my head. I bent

my forehead to bark and said *thank you* though I don't
speak the electric tongue of trees whose roots we know now
are not dumb but abuzz with warning or comfort or the gospel

of rain. No sign of clouds in the sky today. Or maybe
there's a message I miss as I read that not many places
have the right mix of soil, frequency of fire, and water

to cultivate what to us seems wild. *The grass*

*of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into
the oven* and he must have meant me, the unnamable blades

that have thrived in the life I burned to the ground,
fire held fast in my own shaking hand, hesitant while
chiding gospels scolded *o you of little faith*. How many

ways can a life rise from its ashes, I wonder. And the words
of Mark affirm: *a meadow accepts itself as various*. I look
to the sky for a sign, some cloud in the shape of a need

I cannot name. I test the wind with my tongue,
as a torch song burns my lips, smoke filling
my chest with a longing to bow to the ground.