



I ASK FOR SILENCE, ALSO

BY ALAN BRITT

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LAUREENA

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i walked the ground
with the sun's hand touching my face
searching you vanished Laureena
but you the mother of my eyes
entered my bones and drifted away
while i was still watching
the flower's shadowed face

i thought i recognized you
in the expression of the finch's eyes
but a leaf knew my hands
and fell with its face in a pond
i watched the rippled water
and thanked the leaf
for i knew that the bird who holds my wrist
has been with you
and flown
from your dark face in the sunlight

i wandered alone
feeling the frantic wings of my fear
and knowing that you Laureena
have taken the blood from my veins
for it now flows
through the trees

I ASK FOR SILENCE, ALSO

i ask for silence, also
as did Neruda, the father of the love that a
small brown bird carries in his eyes

to be able to grow with the sun's music
and to care for the newborn of the shells
to ride with the warm blood of the fields
and to greet the aged word
which falls from a flower near its birth of death
to enter a room
which does not quarrel with the truth
that love often forgets

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i long for more
but they will come
as i sleep in the bed that grows
from the children of time

i thank all friends
with an offering of love, which rises
from the leaves of my breast

i will not be alone
for i will have with me
my mother silence, who will lead me by the hand
down the long path
where my feet will be kissed with the joy
that walks with a tender voice of the stone

i will pray for the roots
to grow from my heart and drink from the river
where i may be
beside the soft face of the lark
the lark may teach me his soul
and i will weep for the kindness of the light
that brings me unto him

i will stand alone
and know the cloud's sorrow
as it is carried in the hands of the wind
i will find everywhere of everything
as i breathe the breath given from the bush
in this land my eyes will grow from the blossoms of the trees
and i will leave my eyes in the breast of night
that the moon may kneel over them
and show me the moving arms of spring

i may then rise to greet the mountain

i have asked for silence also,
with a tongue that lies still
but wishes to grow with the earth

YOUR EYES TURNED TO SKELETONS

the fingertips of silence
run along fenceposts
watching a feather
that lies undisturbed in sleep

quiet eyelashes surround me
brushing my face
as i sit
lost from the footpath
that you had never touched

i once heard your voice
behind the curtains that rose and slowly fell
now the rivers are running too quickly
through the sandspur where i walk

5

leaping fires burn
in the swelled veins of my temples
as the laugh of the maple
echoes screaming through my hollow eyes
and i stretch with the apple's stem in my teeth
directing all animals
into the clouds

YOU

the sea's hand
guides your voice
into night's hollow ribs
where i am surrounded
by your soul's reaching eyes

i kneel
beside the leaf sipping a warm voice from your hand
and see you running
along the edge of a dark shell
but a cruel mouth is closing in my eyes
and i taste the air
that pressed against my face
when you flowed in light dripping through branches
i was touching the earth's lips
while the sun's arms
watched you crawl with rippling water

grass now huddles together
hearing the desperate arms of fear
struggling in my body

the moon's eyes search through trees
as you pass slowly
in the cry of silent ferns

FOX

i held a fox's eyes
slanted from starvation
lying by the edge of a river

there was no shotgun
hiding among the cattails
only the lost foottracks of a rabbit
and the distant sound of milling insects from the marsh
echoing far beyond
the silent ears of a fox

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THE HAND THAT LIVES

symphonies crawl from the smoke
that moves over night's shoulders

the robin has left
shadows sink with the breath of trees
the leaves have become quiet where
the sand holds bleeding eyes of stars

the lark has landed in the forest alone
as the wind
rubs his feathers that have become silent
beside the fingers of sunlight

do the grey foottsteps of the forest
die without a sound
and the huge bells speak to the raven
that has flown from the clouds
to listen to the voices of water
that share with each other
the hand of a whisper

NOW

a voice limps in chains
away from the fields of wind
into bones filled with darkness

i cannot hold the rocks
that the voice has touched
a light falls from my hands
into the edge of a river

a voice born from a flower's eyes
drifted into the hands of silence
it is aged from caution
that bleeds over the sound of a wrist
it is blind and never felt
the closing hand that passes
it has been seen by the moon
and waits to die

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THE MESSENGER

a messenger walks with the stone's voice
raising his eyes and parting the rain
from dangling shadows of the sun

he tells of the leaves' dreams
that wander in the silence
of a river's arms

he knows of the old men
who became lost on the sides of mountains
now they run without eyes
over the tops of trees

his hair dips in water
dragging along the grass
as he enters shade
of the stream running between trees
touching with his hands
where he cannot see his face

NEAR A ROCK

the sound of an organ
raises its eyes over the branches
carrying words taken from the wind's arms

civilizations of ripped tongues creep
from a leaf floating near the edge of a brook

i am waiting
for the soft feather
that comes from a voice
to kneel and sleep with the grass
but it comes not knowing
of fear
that breathes
on the face of a small bird

SOMETIME THERE WILL

your eyes slowly rise
from the bottom of the sea
there are no falling rocks where i sit
there is only
water around us reaching into the sky
showing us the noise
which moves through the grass
the lark walks with his eyes forward
as i sit in conversation with Paul
the hands of the sea
come to gather us together
and will the wind help us
for the flower is green
and has not looked beyond shadows
that hold their dreams
along the stones of the water

SONG OF THE WIND

moving through vines
down a virgin path
my tongue roams through happiness
of sunlight filling my mouth

pebbles kneeling in front of me
ask of the ferns walking together
by the thrasher's nest

a young ram ventures gently
twitching where the dragonfly lands
above his bent knee

the warm blanket of a sleeping cocoon
dreams of mother's fingertips
swaying in hair of the gathered villagers

beneath quiet moss
an otter drinks
from the mountain's vein

this is where i lie
in the shade that greets the gull

PEARL OR SOMETHING

the fronds listen with their wings
i hold the voices
which have been dug up behind old dust
the water sleeps with silent arms dripping from its brain
the arms walk and fold into the grass
answering the lips which have been wandering
in the paths of wheat fields endlessly
a silent glow holds the stillness
that comes from behind trees
into sunlight becoming water
the stones know the roots
and the air approaches
with its slender arms moving across the face
of a deserted forest which is always watching

SONYA, MOTHER OF LEAVES

i have asked
for the rivers in your voice
to take me
and wrap me in lightning
which moves over a stone's face

i call for your eyes
hiding with the sun's voice
in the gathered hands
of clouds

i remove my eyes from the pond
and listen
to the fragile notes
kneeling beside the silent harp
of a flower

MY DECISION IS BURIED IN STONE

the sun
reaches into mountains
and hands me time's limp body

i hear you walking
through blood dripping from time's forehead
and i kneel with the rattle of carriages
twisting through my eyes

i sit watching
as a lark carries away
the tiny bones of your wrist

silence screams from the sky's veins
as soft light pushes through darkness
and walks through your fading laugh

WAITING

there were
the laughing hands
born in a squirrel's eyes
and i would kneel with you
to touch them

11

listening to birds
gathering in the hills

but leaves
drifted into time's face
and now i carry
the sun's foottracks

MY GRANDPARENTS HAVE TOUCHED THE CORN

dark souls crawl through the folded hands
of young corn
while a dream spreads across the field
of bending wheat

the wind rubs
against voices in the distance
and lifts them past a brown bird
that has gathered near branches

huge shadows lie with the sun
never touching the haze
which drips from voices ripped by a knife

FOR THE REBIRTH OF TIME AND LIFE

the birds that raise their eyes
for the light you hold

where is the warm breath
that comes from the clouds
will you see
i will hold the leaf that falls
and will i know i know the fear
that crawls in dreams and asks me
to walk beyond a sound
that i will never touch

i long for the stone
i will ask it not to sink in the mud
i want to speak to the flowers
for they know how i have slain time
that belongs with you

i must not walk in shadows
that know the voice of silence
i must know the moon
as i cannot know it
i must walk in fields of another land
and ask why does the earth
hold your face
and i will not know
with hands that cannot speak
i will only wonder
of time that i loved
but put to death

FOR THE EYES WITH CHAINS

i've given up the leaves
there is no pity walking
with their voices
they gave me their hands
when i was weeping

there was pity
asleep in their eyelids

the moon
has dripped over my face
i cannot wash it off in the sea
i saw you in reflection
as the moon knelt close
by the water

13

there was wheat
blowing over your face in the meadow
your hands were together
holding a soft light
that vanished
with the wind's dying

i should go away
and follow the words
of the long path
but the moon would follow
it has seen you
with eyes that do not speak

i will go away
and turn over the stone
that i may be welcomed
by its children

but they must sleep
and i will be alone
as the lark flies to her nest

i will go away
to the shadow's of night's teeth
and i will remain
here

THE ONE

when was the time
we knew the one
that found us
holding silent flowers
that ask for touch

14

i may ask the leaves
to tell me
of the light dragging fear
into the dark past your hand
they may ask me to weep
and i will weep for the one
who places silence in my eyes

ON THE TAXING OF CANE POLE FISHING IN THE WATERS OF TAMPA

the old pathways
where weeds have gathered
become burial grounds
for the discarded faces of the dead

the silent men
who walk alone through the marshes
speak with their eyes
as the odor of grass carries
the songs of birds past still hands
that are waiting at the water's edge

NOT ENOUGH FOR CACTUS

a hawk lands in words
that are held by the cactus

the sun moves along the edges of our soul

15

water grows from our dreams
sinking through our bodies
and falling from the tips of our fingers

why has the lark's voice
become a ghost living in leaves
dust will rise up
and become a figure fading into the river
and cold
that walks with the shoulders of darkness
will not come to lie across our knees

our eyes were born with the soil
we have lost the colors of a dragonfly's wing
that drip from the sides of clouds
and we are away
from the seed giving birth to stones
the grain lifts its wings across the prairie
and spreads the fire of its blood
to flow in the white hands of the moon

i long for the moon to drip in my eyes
so that my skull may become the children of sand

THIS NIGHT

16

the night heron flew above me
calling for the wind that listened
his shadow passed through the leaves
and could i know why his nest did not speak

i thought i could see who we were
as i approached the flowers of a bush
my arms sinking into my breast
into a lighted place of silence

i'll bury the stone in the river's eyes
and the scales of a snake
will reach into my heart
so that i may grow
from the side of a mountain
love will gather in the voice of the reeds
and the shells will pour hot tongues
into the breast of my soul
the cricket's voice runs as streaks of light
through the darkened sky
and the sea is the cloud
that drips over the earth
and its walls will be filled
with the skeletons of dead voices

still i kneel as a shadow and know
that a closed hand may weep
together

THE EYELID IS FALLING

who sees the flower's soft mouth
calling from the wind's arms
as rain drops flicker in its hair

who sees the straining young necks of jays
spotted by the leaves' reflections
inside their woven branches

17

the wind's lonely whine drifts
through the sun's hair
on a deserted window screen
where the tip of the vulture's beak
is hidden safely in my folded palm

SHE WATCHES IN OUR SHADOWS

the sleeping ribs of a wildcat
lie with the dead leaves of my heart

shadows growing from hands
that will not close to a voice rising
from the gardens of a stone

we move quietly in the distance
touching caution that kneels deep in our eyes
afraid to kiss the wine
that drips down the pale bones of a face

i must ask you
to love the eyes that grow from a river
i will kneel with the sadness of joy
and i will love
your love that warms the grass

NIGHT OF THE SAND

where the moon's eyes
are blinking on the waves
your whisper is heavy in my breast
as your faint cheek has been buried
in a bed of dried leaves

18

how could i weep for you at the water's edge
where a hand reaches out
and sinks in the sand
where the heron picks out my eyes
your feet are kissed
by the ocean's soft fingers

out of your glowing skin
light walks through your eyelashes
i was gathered into your eyes
and the green leaf with its dew
lies suffering in my throat
where no light may press against it
and feels only its quivering breath

O, it's here where the gull drinks necturn
that has swelled and dripping from your eyes
my heart screams
with lips from the candle's flame
as they are pressed
against the moon's finger on your cheek

while the moon breathes through clouds
i can only walk through shadows
that lean out of rocks
thinking of the lark's white breast
and wandering in search of the quiet pine

I MUST ASK THE WHEAT

why must i lie face down
in the wheat

its hands touching my head

i hold the wheat
bleeding from my palms
pressing it against my face
and weep

19

WE AND THEY

a still hunger rises from the dark edges of a heart
stepping slowly into light
a steel arm melting in its eyes
and dripping inside its body of dust
a laugh's insane teeth
rips the sides of skulls
warm blood rushes for the stone that has vanished

a shadow wades into the river
where the moon's breast kisses its hands
that are pressed against its eyes

in the distance under a tree
a low soft voice searches in the wind
kneeling beside the face
of a weeping stone

IN THE ARMS OF TIME

you walk brown under the spanish sun
your feet brushing the tops of wild flowers

i am watching in the bark of trees
as you swim from a pond
and fish are licking you
with their bodies

the wind rises from the shade
as you draw close dripping your voice on the roots
and the sun walks
with flocks of colored birds
that have all gathered in your eyes

i have visited the hyacinth
that hides in darkness
but there is no speaking
as pale hands climb over my body
while frogs chant to the moon

i know that i must leave
never touching your agile skin
as you walk in mist
beneath the silent shadow of leaves

YOU'VE HIDDEN YOUR FERNS IN THE SHADOWS OF BONES

you walk in the eyes of the puma
and call to the moon's hands wading in a river

i have searched beneath the moss of old tree stumps
and among the smell of wild weeds
but the bending wings of light
do not fill my veins
and i cannot touch the cheekbones of the sun
i have become chained to the arms of your voice
which rises from the foottracks of leaves

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