

1974

Cave Painting

William Stafford

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Recommended Citation

Stafford, William. "Cave Painting." *The Iowa Review* 5.2 (1974): 101-101. Web.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.1738>

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A UTAH CAMPFIRE

Of course it is luck, whatever flame
jumps at the time: the rest
of the mountain steps back. It is luck
that the moon is no larger, the
shadows their shape that they are,
and you come toward me, your shape.

But look—the world is changing,
flames finding taller tongues
and the moon asserting bright
sparks in the trees that leap
far into clouds, like fire.
And like fire the world sweeps on—

Past this place we have found,
past you, the stranger in my arms.

CAVE PAINTING

It was like the moon, the open before us,
when we came out of the last hills
we had to cross, to be tracked by the stars.
And whatever we said, we knew could be heard.
Then, we learned about caves, where you have
now discovered us, even these places. But
for awhile we painted our hidden lives
deep here, and we always tried—like
this I am doing now—to find ways
even deeper, with rooms that would
blaze only for us and those of our kind.
And even now—because a picture is a disguise—
you may never know our ultimate home with
Earth over it, and the silence, where without
power or worth—with nothing—we first
learned to huddle together and foil the stars.