

1970

The Tale: Invention of the Invisible; Invention of the Knife; Invention of a Color; Invention of Nothing; Errata

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THE TALE

INVENTION OF THE INVISIBLE

And always someone's missing
and the light left for him in the window
is now the oldest one on earth
and still each day his shirt, bowl and spoon
are washed by his mother and sister
and the front door is unlocked just before nightfall
because that's the time
when the ones who have been gone so long
like to return

but nothing happens
although we heard his messengers
behind the wall
and yet when we go looking for them
there's only his empty chair
around which, the old ant,
now barely able to move
has almost made a circle.

INVENTION OF THE KNIFE

Its blade imagined by the hanged man
in that split of a second as he glimpses
with raised eyes the rope for the last time
yields itself to his executioners
who then go home at daybreak
over the snow that makes no sound
to cut the bread fresh from the oven.

INVENTION OF A COLOR

Already it's thousands of years old.
Who can say its name?
Neither black nor white.
No one sees it twice.

How strangely everything is soaked in it:
that finger straining to lift itself and that face.
Even the trees and the animals are still,
that is to say, if there were any here.

This color announces a visitor.
Somewhere no doubt a door has been opened.
It is a color of waiting, color of patience.
No one comes. It is a color of an idea
which will not complete itself in our lifetime.

The more I speak about it, the more
I realize that it doesn't exist,
like the steady dripping of a faucet
which, all of a sudden, has ceased.

INVENTION OF NOTHING

I didn't notice
while I wrote here
that now nothing remains of the world
except my table and chair.

And so I said:
(for the hell of it, to abuse patience)
Is this the tavern
without a glass, wine or waiter
where I'm the long awaited drunk?

The color of nothing is blue.
I strike it with my left hand and the hand disappears.
Why am I so quiet then
and so happy?

I climb on the table
(the chair is gone already)
I sing through the throat
of an empty beer-bottle.

errata

Where it says snow
read teeth-marks of a virgin
Where it says knife read
you passed through my bones
like a police-whistle
Where it says table read horse
Where it says horse read my migrant's bundle
Apples are to remain apples
Each time a hat appears
think of Isaac Newton
reading the Old Testament
Remove all periods
they are scars made by words
I couldn't bring myself to say
Put a finger over each sunrise
it will blind you otherwise
That damn ant is still stirring
Will there be time left to list
all errors to replace
all hands guns owls plates
all cigars ponds woods and reach
that beer-bottle my greatest mistake
the word I allowed to be written
when I should have shouted
her name