1989

An Explanation

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Recommended Citation
Available at: https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.3751

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AN EXPLANATION

They say this really happened, in the Church of Eternal Light: a penitent dropped to the floor wearing nothing but sweat, she spasmed like some snake on an electrified wire, she uttered angel eldestspeech, and then she disappeared—they mean totally, and at once. First the entire tarpaper room gave a shudder, and then she disappeared—at once, and totally. Nobody understands it. Well, maybe I understand it. Once, in 8th grade, Denton Nashbell had an epileptic seizure. Mrs. Modderhock squatted above where he flapped like something half a person half a pennant, she was pressing a filthy spoon to his tongue. I've remembered him 25 years now. And—that woman? she was the universe’s tongue the universe swallowed. That’s as good an explanation as any. Once, in sleep, you started a dream soliloquy, the grammar of which is snow on fire, the words are neuron-scrawl, are words the elements sing to their molecules . . . —I threw myself across you. It wasn’t sex this time. I just wanted to keep you beside me, in this world.

THE SCIENCES SING A LULLABYE

Physics says: go to sleep. Of course you’re tired. Every atom in you has been dancing the shimmy in silver shoes nonstop from mitosis to now. Quit tapping your feet. They’ll dance inside themselves without you. Go to sleep.

Geology says: it will be all right. Slow inch by inch America is giving itself to the ocean. Go to sleep. Let darkness lap at your sides. Give darkness an inch.