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Trial and Error

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deny their names in fog and ice. She’s the base
tagged and abandoned repeatedly.
Watch out. Watch out. There’s a sudden
conflagration. A flame catches hold
at the corner of this picture beginning
to crisp and curl under, smoke and ashes moving
rapidly in a diagonal across the world
toward my fingers.
But see, she’s leaping, leaping,
white now, invisible, up and out, escaping
to clutch a bare branch as real and definite
as this network of black cracks we see spread
in its steady place across the blank,
blank ceiling over our heads.

TRIAL AND ERROR

The right prayer might be a falling
prayer spiralling down in the throats
and raised wings and white warmth
of tumbling pigeons, the joy
of a beseeching abandon, or a crossing
prayer in the fingers of oak branches
over themselves, their display
of a hopeful wind, or a drifting
prayer in the cerise petals
loosed and dropping from a stalk
of wild betony, a proclamation
in dissolution.

It may take two every night, maybe three
every dawn—prayers offered of one fact
against another—milkweed against winter,
reflected face against water, rapid
barking against fear.
I can compose any kind, prayers wrapped
in seaweed, rolled in grape leaves,
prayers sent spinning tied to butterfly
kites crackling in the sky over the sea,
prayers in wax bound to stones sunk
past coral cliffs or ice canyons
to the ocean floor, prayers delivered
with moans or howls, rattling gourds
or timbales, prayers in the cadence of rain,
prayers in the absence of breath.

I'll send them out in signs, lanterns
on rooftops, candles on cairns, backward
prayers like the dark side of the moon, prayers
hung upside down by the knees, prayers
beginning with praise, beginning with Our Father,
with Darling Mother, with Darkling Son, fading
off fast to In the beginning . . .

I'll become by myself, I swear,
whatever prayer it takes, teeth, eyelids,
ears, beatitude of knuckles, invocation
of spine, a solid skeleton of the perfectly
linked linguistics of prayer, hands
pressed together before me,
my whole body speaking,
waiting.