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Blake at Last

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Blake At Last

Consume my heart away sick with desire
And fastened to a dying animal.
It knows not what it is and gathers me
Into the artifice of eternity.
—William Butler Yeats

They say that I am mad. Is this madness then
that the mysteries of childhood which are mercies
return as revelations, corpses of goats wrapped in feathers
of peacocks delivered by warty hags
and always in winter; that, finally, the dancers of life
rearrange themselves into cold, black triangles.

I was the son of a haberdasher.
We lived in London in ordinary time which contains
models of the soul.

The spirit tells me everything.
Trees have minds. The body is a box
with a lion in it prepared to act out
the inevitability of designs.
A blue-silk door in the wind leads to barbarous
worlds were molten angels’ wings shudder and,
like the power of a familiar face,
call up blood and longing.

I have seen emerald tygers in the garden
waiting to tear my heart’s sacrarium
with grappling hooks, spikes of crimson;
waiting to carry my scream across
the ecliptic of Earth, across the Rubicon.

It is clear that I am dying. I am painting
stark naked in my garden, as you can see.
I will not, at least, stumble all day
between my bed and my chamber pot
on which path my shrunken member leaks
moldy, steaming toads. I am aware of pressures,
of the sinking of the marrow, of the blood, of the giant's
drag on the reins of the breath horse,
the weight of the coins on the eyelids.

I tremble all day under this violent-grape umbrella.
As you can see, a ghost hanging over the stone wall begs me
to paint a different scene over the watercolor pond
in which she drowned herself.

They say that I need permission from a king who wears water
to become the faint tripudium of cells,
to learn that the unreal takes energy from the real
and becomes real, to forfeit the ancient poppies
of desire.

I wonder, what is this place? My toes
are black and blue. My heart
beats rapidly as if to explain
the color red, as if to explain
so many gods who came to announce
the presence of human imagination.

Once, late at night,
the idea came to me that everything
might be broken into unimaginable parts and that
those parts, while seeming to move predictably, would leap
away and spin off like burning hair.

The dogs have come to eat the light.
There is a great custom hall where one presents
papers.