

## What Remains

white feathers in the nest like a dusting of snow  
emptiness of birth after prayers paint drying  
on the canvas it is raining blue egg  
in a glass Jim Crow hidden in their hearts  
a city divided scars in every home the Gospel  
truth at the bottom of an empty puddle silence  
when the last breath is taken days scratched  
on the prison wall shreds of silk and sunlight  
lining the abandoned chrysalis after the storm  
the broken house floating like a boat a voice  
filled with bells bed of leaves ashes  
on the mantle history is the container  
buried beneath the killing fields a white string  
still tied to a baby's wrist and bones clinging  
together across the miles in the hotel of stars  
iron and straw a field of winter fields of milk  
the permanence of snow and the arithmetic  
after childhood that sack of small stones  
we carry a heart filled with scars the sea  
holding too many bones despite genocide  
so many creatures in the air fluttering  
over the graves and the onion domes  
inside memories of what is found there

## Stillborn

Blue jays zigzag through leafless  
black branches at the edge of  
the winter field where a cow  
has lain for three straight days, since  
birthing a stillborn calf.  
When she moans, the cry comes from  
the great gulf of grief that is  
motherhood. One tree trembling,  
alone; red berries on tips  
of the tallest branches,  
this is what the cow sees  
through air, the color of tears.

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1

Owls call from the hollows.  
This is the sound of the moon.

Light shattering like glass  
across the night. Sky

filled with ghosts. They have  
traveled far. This room holds

their voices like a box  
of cracked bones. I remember

how to write my name  
in a swirl of Arabic.

It is a secret. Sound,  
like the sound of my name

in the halls where I walked  
through moonlight, stepping

over soldiers facing Mecca.  
The faces of the tortured are

familiar. Beneath hoods, a voice  
I recognize. A muscled thigh, feet

in shackles, buttocks and kneecaps.  
Skin smelling of sweat and urine.

2.

A man is named for a prophet.  
He calls for him in the darkness.

Naked and cold in a cage,  
his middle name is God.

## Seeking

It happens in stillness. Because it is night  
you hear snakes drop from the oak  
and other things you cannot name  
passing beneath or above you. Trees  
so thick the stars are mute.?  
Close your eyes. The immensity  
of such unquantifiable light  
fills the emptiness that once was  
memory. After the hunger  
and solitude, dreams and the dead  
speaking as if they are with you,  
it happens when the oak begins to burn  
from within. And you welcome the flames.