

From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God. He said: "In my distress I called to the Lord . . . From the depths of the grave I called for help." — Jonah 2:1-2

You all wait until you've abandoned God
to come to my onyx kingdom
You're shocked by darkness,
the warmth underneath the cold,
the pressure you fear will crush you
but in fact buoys you like an octopus
Your arms become strange

You look at them

It's called hitting rock bottom
I'm rock bottom all the time
And I never hit
Not once have I ever hit
I float, waft, splash
You're gasping
so I give you a whale,
a whole room to yourself down here
to indulge your need for great walls
to keep the deep out even in the deep
You'll leave my ebony ballrooms
when you think you know immensity

But you'll be back

You'll forget again
that God isn't
all about light and air
You'll be shocked
again
that heaven is dark

Hello

Your eyes adjust more quickly this time
and see me reclining
with my feet up or dancing all night
under the disco ball
of bioluminous fins

Welcome back. Come and dance
for one song
before you climb into your whale
walls again

I had run out of my medication
Apothecaries in Nazareth didn't carry the taboo pills
My supplier wouldn't have more for another month
until he went to Jerusalem

A quiet woman at temple
pulled me aside after service,
told me to visit a Sister Susan
who would be expecting me
at 10:45 p.m. in the old temple's basement
The woman's eyes sparkled. Then
she left to serve cookies in the lobby

I arrived at the old temple,
walked down a dank staircase, passed
men with crutches who hadn't changed shirts
in a lifetime. I asked a woman bandaging a man's foot
I wouldn't look at
if she knew where I could find Sister Susan

She pointed with her chin. *Last door on the left*

I paused in the open doorway. Sister Susan turned around,
put the bottle on the desk
and said, *I'm just going to leave this here*

She continued her conversation
with a woman holding a clipboard and taking notes

I took the bottle

A thin man whose eyes were dead
or on eternity watched me
or nothing as I climbed the stairs
and left

It dawned on me that the woman serving cookies
was Sister Susan's disciple

Or Sister Susan was hers

And the woman with the clipboard
was writing their gospel

The Canaanite Woman Heals Jesus

Benjamin Bagocius

A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to Jesus, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession." — Matthew 15:22

The story is that I, Jesus, healed her child.
But I didn't. The Canaanite woman healed me.

She showed me how far away from God I was.
I thought I lived in God's palace. But I hadn't
yet even reached His front door.

I would only touch the afflicted, then leave.
I wouldn't live with them.
I didn't make them breakfast.
I didn't place pencils back into their hands,
teaching them to write after they stabbed me with them.
I didn't clean up shattered glass
of the painting I had devoted months to making,
which took only one second for the afflicted to knock
to the floor and slash with a knife.
I didn't cook them dinner an hour later.
I didn't sit with the afflicted overnight in the hospital
after they yelled "Fuck you!" to me while tearing the seven books
I had written. I didn't meet with endless series of doctors through
endless emergency-room nights, then drive to different pharmacies
for the afflicted's medication while they slept.
I never secured the afflicted's seat belt, drove them home,
and tucked them into bed.
I never signed them up for swimming lessons.

I asked the Canaanite woman to join my ministry
and teach with me, because she knew
The Mystery, the space beyond
the brick limits of love.

She said no.
She had to raise her daughter,
rewrite her books, and write new ones.

I decided to rise above the deluge,
the maelstrom of Right, the rip tide of Wrong

and work on living in Oneness,
one big arc of God

I loaded my dualistic thinking—
man and woman, lambs and lions, shame and fame—

into one spot where I could look at it long and hard—
40 days and 40 nights

The animals on board were my self
My vocation: to tame that yapping and howling

so it wasn't pushing and pulling
me around all day

The moment I quieted the self's snarls and bites
the rain stopped

A rainbow appeared

I felt a little bump

I barely noticed I had reached the mountain top

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Scorpio



Scorpio



Libra

Light as a butterfly, deep as bitter root

I flick red ants from my wrist before take-off.

Airborne, I suggest the saffron moon step aside,
leave room for my cackle, my mania.

I ascend the orange glow of maple.

Autumn halogen filters over the bay.

Ferries steal through sapphire water,
that forgiving place that has no center.

My mother's opal on my finger,
her ashes in the vault.

I did not give her permission to leave.

She did not ask.

Even leaves are disturbed by flight.

I want to fly over the sea, evaporate with clouds.

I love the rush, spiral, drift.

When I enter the bruise, I wonder what it will taste like.