

# VIGIL



CRAIG CUNNINGHAM



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For more information about the author:

[craigscunningham.com/books](http://craigscunningham.com/books)

[@craigscunningham](https://twitter.com/craigscunningham)

To contact the author about these books,  
email [canowanbooks@gmail.com](mailto:canowanbooks@gmail.com)

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*Other Books in Theology*

1. PATRIARCH
2. DEFECTOR
3. REZA
4. NAZARENE
5. VIGIL

I have seen the burning bush and heard the Word speak. What was spoken over me will surely be spoken over you. There is a new kingdom in us now waiting to be claimed and then proclaimed to those who must hear the truth of their origins.

But my brothers and sisters, know this: to pursue the calling of God in your life is to rise in defiance of powerful forces. The sacred individual is incompatible with those who wish for you to bow before manmade towers.

Be strong. Be willing to give your life for what you know to be true.

You have been marked for death among the living, living among the dead.

- Craig Cunningham

*Vigil*

The sun rises upon the desolate earth  
dotted with a man who says I will not relent  
and a second man who says you must, do you not know  
the fantasies upon which you have built your crimes  
are but mirages in this desert, there is no such thing  
as Lahai Roi, no such thing as a slave girl pregnant  
with the child promised to be a wild ass of a man,  
no such thing as a spring-rock called Meribah,  
no such thing as a woman with five husbands  
offered living water. Believe! my little children,  
the springs of old will soon burst forth from the earth  
to nourish the land where men slither from wall to wall  
jerking roots out of the ground like donkeys, imagine  
the evergreen kingdom, tables overflowing with bread  
while the King of Salem pours a chalice of wine for thee.  
Today, it is Gann who holds a pistol against the head  
of the old man who wanders place to place, rumored  
to carry the map of wells though he carries nothing  
now, naked and bound in the sand for his final breaths.

Nox, Nox, the white-haired wanderer with fire  
in his veins who rubs salt on his skin, tongue, hair, eyes.  
The pistol is twisted into his mouth  
as Gann bends down to sniff him.  
Tell me, Nox, where is this map of wells?  
Tell me, Nox, who else knows its location?  
From the distance, a shot rings out and Nox falls dead,  
the unseen marksman offering mercy to the captive.

O you who long to see the earth restored,  
put your ear to the ground and believe!  
The water which flows between horizons  
is waiting for Gabriel to ram his heel through  
the earth and unleash the ancient springs,  
Pishon, Gihon, Chidekel, Phirat, take heart!  
You shall drink and give birth to a new garden.  
But friend, are the wells of old not sealed, filled  
with sand and stone by the parade of diseased kings  
who marched upon the garden carrying torches,  
saying let it be known that if there is not fruit  
enough for all there shall be none for any?  
Line up you sons of nothing, bark you daughters  
of chance, beg for my drop to land upon your tongue.  
Friend, were the wells not filled with stones cast  
by the stagetalker who asks us daily to fall  
on our knees and beg the replication for forgiveness  
as he takes joy in seeing the crowns of our heads,  
count them up in bunches to be listed in the book,

speaking not to them of ancient power, ancient mystery,  
ancient breath, speaking not to the gathered crowds  
of eternal life that has no beginning, for the end  
is easy to sell,  
so repeat after me for a ticket to the golden kingdom.  
Friends, were the trail markers and memories of wells  
not licked clean by Abaddon who embraced the lost boys  
and led them to the pool to look at their own reflections,  
see my boy you are just flesh and bone, dust for dust,  
descendent not of Adam's blood but of his sin?  
My boys it all comes down to how you see the garden.

Tell me:

Who can suffer the full image of the Creator?

Who can bear knowledge of the beginning?

Who can endure the string anchoring our hearts  
to the force that spoke order into chaos?



She passes under streetlamps in search of the bride  
who has spent the past two thousand years waiting  
on her groom, the brokenhearted virgin  
pacing the basement of a condemned nightclub singing  
the war is won, the war goes on, this is our vigil.  
Sing the words in order to believe them, O my soul,  
the war is won, the war goes on, this is our vigil.  
Cry out, O Church!

Camilly recalls a day when she was still a child  
and mother took her to watch the stagetalker's act,  
come all you scoundrels and fall to your knees,  
bow your heads and show me your crowns, lift up  
your rotten faces, expose your apple-stuffed cheeks,  
confess the depravity of your nature and repeat this:  
what good is a sinner like me? Cry mother, kill yourself  
upon the altar if you want him to give you eternity,  
cast your eyes upon the replacement, fill your belly  
with air and drink a gallon of imitation wine  
for the golden kingdom is available to all who repeat.

The state can hate God and love docile compliance  
in its people, don't you see my children that some  
churches are useful to the rulers of men?  
Though tonight a warrior carrying a sword approaches  
Camilly saying what do you seek?  
She declares: I seek living water.  
Then let us drink together.  
Malcolm takes her hand and guides her to the portal  
where in the darkness voices rise, those who seek the wells  
of living water gathered to sing of the four rivers flowing,  
the Word pushing against the walls of the universe,  
the image pressed upon us in order to remember  
the inheritance.

Look for the one they call Elle,  
she who has been sized for a noose,  
she who sings it is well with my soul  
while the masses declare we cannot feel safe  
until all beliefs are homogenized,  
until all expressions of faith are in the familiar  
hands of the stagetalker, who is this fugitive  
wandering the city building an army of defectors  
and what can be made of her husband, the one  
they call Kruso, he who brings sustenance to the poor  
cowering in their hovels, he who lifts the child's chin  
to say you are an intentional creation of a good Creator,  
spoken to life with a word by the Word,  
made in the image of the One who broke  
the darkness in half to flood the earth with light.  
O son, what will you speak over us?  
What kingdom will arise from your mind,  
O daughter, your tongue, your hands?  
On weekly broadcasts the stagetalker warns his acolytes

that any who reveal the whereabouts of their collective foes shall receive a pardon for their sins of knowledge.

O you rotten sons of sin, you friends of the watercolorist, you descendants of the slaveholder, you mounds of sewage, follow the trails of salt

left in their footsteps and remember these are the disciples who wish to unleash springs to flood our kingdom, these are the defectors who wish to destroy the staircase we have built to lead you up to the golden kingdom.

As the church disperses, Kruso and Elle approach Camilly to ask what she seeks, and she declares:

I have come to drink the living water,

I have come to eat the bread of life.

Long have they known how the story ends: a reward  
of fifty knives in the back, soiling your pants in public  
when the floor drops out and a noose snaps your neck,  
how wonderful that they are dead my comrades,  
on we go with the daily business of pointing fingers  
and whispering I wish everyone would accept the truth  
that we are sons of nothing, daughters of chaos.  
Or perhaps the reward is a plastic sack over their heads,  
a black maria parked outside the door, we have questions,  
nothing to be overly concerned about, just a few questions,  
comrade, assure your family you will be home by morning,  
a club to crush their skulls, their bodies bound and dragged  
around the square for children to see what becomes  
of the man who believes he is made in the image of God,  
around and around they go leaving a great circle of blood  
to be lapped up by dogs.

O Church! Let us pray to receive a single bullet in the head.  
All who follow the Nazarene are going to the ancient river.  
Behold your reward Simon, Thomas, Andrew, Nathaniel,  
look there! Rejoice! The body swarmed in buzzards is yours.  
Tonight, Kruso and Elle find the door to their home ajar  
and wonder if the song coming from beneath the earth  
is the ancient river singing this is the night, my lovelies,  
this is the night you will find yourself splayed on the altar,  
guided by the voice which said let there be, and there was.  
Kruso walks into the darkness but finds no one waiting,  
my love we are safe tonight, the Nazarene's reward  
is still forthcoming.

In the church

Kruso approaches a woman from wild places  
waiting for him at the altar, praying mercy  
upon the thirsty child hidden under the bushes,  
the promise of innumerable descendants, misery  
my master, misery has marked my days of slavery  
while the deafened earth ignores my retching breath,  
the prayer for death, death, death come to me now  
but spare me the vision of the withering boy,  
bastard son of the patriarch who adores the skies,  
oh suffering son let not your mother see you die.

And yet,

the heel of Gabriel crushes a hole in the earth  
as the ancient river bursts forth  
to lengthen his days, to strengthen the hands  
which draw the bow upon his enemies evermore.

Tell us what you see now, mother!

Who are you?

Olena rises to face the one they call Kruso,

O shepherd of a ragged flock, I carry a road for thee,  
the promise made to a man the day he was captured  
in the desert searching for Jacob's Well, Nox, Nox  
the one who said in the event I am killed find Kruso  
and tell him the map of wells now belongs to you,  
the bowl of death you must eat, but my son  
each of us are handed a bowl of death, are we not?  
And though this bowl is heavier, though this bowl  
will rot your guts from the inside out, all who follow  
the Nazarene don't have the privilege of choosing,  
just a simple dichotomy of whether we will eat,  
or whether we will live.

A day is coming when the ancient rivers  
will be set free and what has been scorched  
shall be adorned with fruits and flowers,  
but children, first you must choose to see, to  
GO FORTH AND DISCOVER THE UNIVERSE,  
to reject the barren and sing forth the waters  
of Lahai Roi, Esek, Shebah, Sitnah, Rehoboth,  
Elim, the Oath, the Dragon, the well upon  
which Photine drew water in His presence,  
the earth crushed underfoot by heaven's angel,  
behold the coming kingdom!

My friend Olena, Nox said,  
the map is of no use if you have not eyes to see,  
nothing He gives to you is what you expect,  
but whenever I am handed the bowl of death  
remind yourself that I am destined for the river,  
I am a man who heard the Nazarene's promise.  
These are the words which haunted her mind  
as she found crosshairs on his head, her index finger

seeking the trigger, the weight the sound the smell  
of a .50 caliber bullet moving from mountain to desert  
and bursting through his forehead before Gann  
could say I'll end your suffering for a confession  
and the precise location of every church, Nox,  
what good is it to unearth what has been filled,  
sealed, forgotten by men far wiser than you or I,  
so why endure all of this pain?  
Kruso, the road I bring for you leads to death,  
to the map, and Nox said you would know  
what must happen next.

See how the birds circle in a vortex, rising  
to the gathering clouds like an army prepared  
to storm the earth, the great timpani rumbling  
over the river swelled to its banks, while far away  
he examines walls covered in photographs of defectors,  
armed protectors of the church, though see how some  
faces have been slashed in half, martyred  
at the hands of Gann who collects bullet shell casings  
now lined upon the shelf, casings which he sniffs  
to accelerate the beating of his heart, faster faster  
as he looks away from the photo of Olena his lost love  
who once shared a bed with him, right over there,  
don't look Gann or you might remove the gun again,  
you might press it under your chin, you might ignore  
mother who said the name of God is Self-Preservation.  
He sniffs the casings one by one but the scent of cardamom  
overpowers the remnants of gunpowder and he recalls  
the morning she said an angel named Francis came to me

in a dream, and in this dream she presented me a road saying all you have built must be left behind, all you know is what you have been told by those who know nothing, kings of a passing age who have severed the eternal string, child, take the road that leads to your death and life.

But what of your badge? What of your uniform?

At dawn he awoke to find her gone, and ten years later he watched footage of her crossing the border with Nox, Nox, the dead disciple who received mercy from Olena, Olena who refused him the same mercy though he spread his arms and offered his chest to prove her belief false.

Still I wonder: is the Nazarene amused  
by kings of our passing age,  
stagetalkers, mud-faced pyrite hunters,  
laborers who pluck seeds from barren fields,  
or will He cast their mouths into the flame  
and say the time to speak your word  
has come but where are your lips,  
O master of the collective,  
and what has become  
of your flapping tongue,  
O deceiver of men?



Be warned

O you who long to see the earth restored,  
wolves roam the desert sniffing the air  
for blood which courses the image-bearer's veins.  
Come all you who believe there is more than breath,  
come all you who seek ancient wisdom,  
come all you who wish to move through the ages  
as one moves through a vineyard plucking grapes  
from the vine with your teeth,  
come all you who have been handed the road,  
the bowl of death, the destiny of the river,  
come all you who have asked the question:  
what does it mean to be made in the image of God,  
of the One whose words are transfigured into being  
while infinite voids petition to be spoken into order?  
What shall become of the ones who remember?  
Choose the void to order or the void you shall become.  
Hear the howling wolves aroused by the scent  
of the image-bearer who says I walk the road in search

of wells to be unleashed, I walk the road hunting a void  
to be ordered, I walk the road waiting on the Word  
spoken over me that I might have a word to speak  
over thee.

Child,

you will not know that you have accepted the road  
until you hear the howling.

As Olena speaks of maps, of deserts, of a prowling wolf tasked with feasting upon the hungry, bound by an oath to drink the thirsty, Kruso recalls the night he is walking home and hears the explosion, the screams of terror turned into screams of joy saying someone found the church and blew it up.

An old man stumbles forth from the alley with shrapnel in his neck saying help me, help me, don't call anyone, simply place your hands upon me and remember what flows through your veins, let me draw near your spark as I rekindle the flame inside of me.

Kruso guides the old man up the stairs to his home and stretches him on the bed, and while wiping blood recognizes the face worth thirty pieces of silver, Nox, disciple of Christ.

Elle steps into the room saying you have killed us, Kruso (but the moment the road is offered you are already dead).

After a week the restored disciple sits down at the table and breaks bread in half, saying once a body was broken, once blood was shed, and to this covenant I am bound, not to kings of a passing age or stagetalkers selling pyrite. He removes a volume of pages held together by string and tosses it onto the table, the question and the answer united.

In a former age, the magus rises from his bed  
and wonders where the star named Cynosure will lead,  
though, would it matter to one compelled by commitment  
to the prophecy, to the curiosity of a coming kingdom,  
to the one who accepted his road and already took a step?  
Point out the devil standing between a man and water,  
the horned serpent who says you are not thirsty, Adam,  
you are confused  
into thinking you have lips, a tongue, a throat, the ancient  
desire to cup your hands and draw water to your face.  
Thus the magus traverses kingdoms in search of water  
while his own cistern is overflowing, his courtyard lush,  
the bellies of his own family round with meat and milk.  
Tonight, Kruso and Elle move through one another  
for the last time as every night is the last time,  
lovers bound by the Word, the breath, the dust, the rib,  
cornerstones of the great temple soon to be called family.

He rises naked before the window to see the promise  
of Cynosure spoken to Abraham, to Hagar, to himself,  
and like the magus he cannot retreat from the road  
delivered by Olena who is not sleeping on the couch  
but drinking a bottle of wine and sharpening her blade  
while watching the stagetalker preach the parable of minas  
literally, I am the servant and you are the traveling master,  
entrust the minas to me and you will receive an abundance  
of health, wealth, happiness, sow the field and reap pyrite.  
From the bed  
Elle says people like us have limited choices, darling,  
and the wolf was made to eat you.

She pulls hot smoke into her lungs as city lights  
say who are you, why have you come to us,  
what use do we have for a lying, rotten whore  
who changes names with the seasons and seduces  
the weak-minded into her bed? Some nights  
Camilly cannot distinguish between the city's voice  
and that of the ancient spark still burning, beautiful.  
Elle dips her in the river to become something new:  
you must first recognize you are millions of years  
old, born by the breath of the One who spoke life  
into the void and forever orders the chaos of your days.  
The recognition of thirst is not a problem to be solved  
with glasses of water or with drops on the tongue  
from the stagetalker's golden vial, show me the crown,  
beg for the drop that dissolves your mind and castrates  
your words into platitudes about being rotten, dead,  
a mush-for-brains sinner made in the image of Adam's  
choice, not the image of the Creator who made him.  
O delighted citizens of the tyrannical collective,

if living water flowed to your feet would you be brave  
enough to drink it?

O delighted citizens of the tyrannical collective,  
to remember is to become more powerful than the ones  
who collect taxes with a pistol pointed at you, the ones  
who determine which words can be spoken, the ones  
who delight in the rule of kings of a passing age,  
and thus they cannot permit you to reflect your origin.  
As Elle dips her into the river,  
an angel swims forth to deliver the road,  
now irrefusable.

Darling,  
I'm trying to make sense of these fugitives  
running wild from the law and stirring unrest.  
Oh Dove,  
there's always bad apples in every society,  
all we can do is keep our noses to the grindstone.  
Of course, Darling,  
but the paper here says they're to be executed  
if caught, and just look at those faces, the mother  
in me wishes to wrap them up in a hug and say  
turn yourselves in, sweethearts, the jig is up.  
They're good-looking, these two, just wayward  
citizens who likely need an updated prescription.  
Dovey Dove,  
wayward is putting it lightly, these are criminals  
of the highest order spreading hocus pocus, I'm told  
they're trying to find an ancient underground well  
and will flood the city if they succeed. Terrorism  
is nothing to feel warmhearted about, my love.

Oh Darling,  
I guess I'm just alarmed when people believe lies,  
and I'm scared that this movement is growing.  
Why can't they attend a state-approved church?  
Dovey,  
don't you know that the authorities are hunting  
day and night for these two terrorists and their ilk?  
We could be heroes, you and I, if we spot them!  
Imagine it, Darling! They'd put us on television!  
But I'm still trying to understand their obsession  
with water, with blood, with bread.

The bus comes to a stop at the final station  
as Kruso remains locked in a traveler's dream,  
Nox at the table saying your days began with a Word  
and the Word was God and the Word was with God.  
Won't you pass the bread Elle, but look now at the blood  
pouring from his ear down his neck until dabbed clean  
by Elle who being so close smells potassium chlorate,  
touches the wisps of white hair and sees the wet bandages.  
He unscrews the lid of the saltshaker and dumps it  
on his head, his tongue, in his eyes, to purify the blood  
pouring out of his ears, witness the subatomic elements  
presented on the table, the word bound in leather.  
You'll have to forgive me,  
I have stolen your claim of ignorance O Kruso, O Elle.  
As Nox points at the river now flowing under the table,  
Olena shakes Kruso awake to say we have arrived  
at the end of the world.



O gardener, set down your tools and listen:  
the well called Word is moving mouth to ear, ear  
to mind, mind to mouth under mask of midnight  
as Elle feels the road humming beneath the wheels  
of her motorcycle, the vibration in her chest a reminder  
of the primal forces coursing her veins, subatomic elements  
codified that all may gather around the cup and drink,  
the well called Word stacked inside her bag for image-bearers  
who knock to say I am a hungry man in a barren land  
and the bread of my father's people has dissolved my guts,  
the cup of my mother's people has rotted my tongue.  
O disciple,  
won't you invite me to the new feast? Indeed, feast brother,  
feast sister, but understand that a bite of this bread, a drink  
from this cup invites the day of revelation, your face exposed,  
the dagger plunged into the hearts of your children. O judge,

here before the court stands a man who engages in ancient magic, a man for whom the society we have forged in blood is insufficient, a man for whom acceptable explanations are bypassed, rejected, a man who speaks riddles about bread, water, being born again. Rehabilitation is in order, perhaps an extended stay in the asylum, a proper recitation, a double-dosage of memory suppressors swallowed in the presence of your court-appointed caretaker.

Nox says

you will recognize the hungry by the roar of their bellies. Elle delivers Bibles to the murderer, the thief, the whore named Camilly who hears the city ask what shall we make of the girl who opens her legs and her mouth for money and now wishes to give birth, to speak prophecy, to feast.

O gardener, open your window and speak:  
she enters the door carrying a word and hears warriors  
saying how much more Malcolm, how much longer  
must we endure devils carrying daggers and backpack bombs  
into churches warning if you accept you are nothing, you can live,  
but if you believe you are eternal, you must be splayed on the altar  
of manufactured justice.

Tell me:

have we not set aside a place for those who thirst? Is a drop  
from the stagetalker not enough to satiate your selfish desires?  
Spread upon Malcolm's table are not the subatomic elements,  
but submachine guns of war,  
imagine if the wolves discover the sheep are waiting with guns  
aimed at the door, and now a hundred thousand rounds  
will clarify the ancient hierarchy of power once and for all.  
Malcolm oils the barrel of his rifle while saying did not  
the Nazarene instruct the twelve to sell cloaks for swords,  
take heed of His commands, O Elle, and consider  
what becomes of the map, of the church, of the kingdom

if we are lined on the platform and the hangman pulls the lever.  
The light on the hill cannot be uncovered if there is no light.  
What then, Elle? What then? So few of us remain as it is.  
Brave Malcolm, recall that under the trees of Gethsemane  
Peter withdrew his blade and sliced off the ear of Malchus,  
yet the Nazarene did not call forth angel armies but offered  
mercy, mercy for those who have no eyes, mercy for amnesiacs  
who have forgotten that death is an impossibility for inheritors.  
Fair Elle, on the day you begin to dig rubble from the wells,  
may you find the ground has already been softened  
by the blood of our common enemies.

O gardener, stand on the hill and remember:  
the crowd pounds their bodies against the fences  
as you gently loop the noose around the necks  
of her servants, the bride who moves in and out  
of time's corridors, alerted by heaven's angels  
to flee, though who will shed tears for the twelve  
captives now lined on the platform, their heads  
bagged in black cloth while the crowd says die  
you bastard evil wretched fool killer molester  
of my truth, my truth, the one you fail to acknowledge  
while saying there is such a thing as objective truth  
and relative truth is unworthy of respect, so coerce  
them, O you who wear badges on your clothing,  
O you who wield power at the barrel of a gun,  
make them nod their heads that there are 10,000 gods,  
10,000 realities, 10,000 truths, 10,000 moral exceptions.  
The gardener in a former age polishes his badge  
and says what hides in darkness will soon be revealed.  
Instead of pulling the lever himself he chooses a child

from the crowd and directs them to do it just like this,  
and on the great collective count of three  
twelve bodies drop, twelve necks snap, twelve are dead.  
Watching from the crowd Kruso and Elle hold hands  
thinking of Nox, the shrapnel, the river under the table,  
the Word, the bread, the road they cannot deny.  
Hidden amongst the revelers is Nox who ducks away,  
and they follow him to a café where he devours bacon  
and eggs with a shrug, why should I be shocked by evil  
when the Nazarene told us over two thousand years ago  
that this is the reward for all who follow Him?  
He just eats and eats and eats and speaks of wells,  
and a map that shall soon be in his possession,  
and with a full mouth says one day that will be me,  
one day it will be you and you, and he eats and eats.

O gardener, recall the day you discovered  
the root of your value could not be based  
upon rewards and trinkets of the passing age,  
but only on a breath, a rib, a word spoken  
to separate you from the chaos.

Recall the day you looked at your reflection  
and no longer saw the fruit tree but the Creator.  
Recall the day you looked down at your badge  
and cast it into the garbage bin for the source  
of your power had been exposed as momentary,  
nothing nothing.

Recall the day you realized that  
roaring down the roads of our centuries  
comes Melchizedek carrying fire.



What living beast could survive such desolation  
as this, where the ground is marked with footprints  
of Abaddon sneaking from place to place, caretaking  
for the souls submerged beneath the sand crying out  
I AM READY TO REMEMBER,  
where can I trade these stones for eyes?  
Yet Abaddon cuts small holes in the earth to feed them  
bones, mice, snakes, creeping and crawling things saying  
did you not sever the string? Are you not my submissives  
to do with as I please? Come up and make me a kingdom.  
Buzzards circle the sky not in search of animals,  
but for the man foolish enough to believe the desert  
holds the promise of pleasure, that here Abaddon  
searches the night sky in fear that Gabriel's heel  
might come crashing down and burst forth the springs,  
that here revelation is received by those on the brink  
of madness, here I am choking on visions of boulders  
transformed into bread, leaping from mountains  
as Gabriel, Michael, Francis soften my fall,

envisioning the kingdoms of the earth bowing down  
at the feet of the one who says may King Adam's choice  
reign forevermore.

The son of the Word cannot resist the subatomic call to  
GO FORTH AND DISCOVER THE UNIVERSE.

Kruso and Olena keep the lights off in the safe house  
as they sit down to eat, and there he cannot distinguish  
the flicker in the kitchen window:

is it Cynosure reflecting in four rivers,  
the gleam in Abaddon's eye,  
the shimmer of wolf fangs?

At the darkened table Olena says here is the truth:  
I descend from the boy under the bush, thus  
the blood pumping in and out of my heart is that  
of Hagar, she who was cast into the desert to die,  
she who was punished by the one who prayed  
for stars while holding a star in his hands.

And yet,

did not the Creator offer her the same  
promise as the one which was given to Abraham?  
The same stars promised to him were promised to her,  
not in infinity, but the measured number of all born  
between that day and the final one, children children,  
every living creature thirsts for the same living water  
while drawing swords over puddles now infected  
with blood spilled, demanded, counted by the drop.  
Once upon a time, Photine sat on the edge of a well  
and was told she would never thirst again, living water  
drawn up from the well that cannot be found on maps.  
Millions of sons and daughters are born by Hagar's well

that they might remember the first sound they heard,  
and remember  
not the water itself but the water itself. O my Kruso,  
let us awaken holy water, springs called forth in mystery,  
springs that have not yet dried for they cannot.  
Son of Abraham, son of Hagar, you must understand:  
the Nazarene's well has no end to its depths.  
Son of Paul,  
Son of Brahman,  
Son of Gautama,  
Son of Abaddon, lift your cup and drink.

She wishes to darken the line between dreams  
and waking reality, yet the closer she moves  
towards the river the less she is able to distinguish  
the howling wolf saying I am coming for you, Olena,  
and the groom saying I am coming for you, Olena,  
two pillars holding up a singular, promised ending:  
her head forced underwater, a blade across the throat,  
a noose to snap her neck, her body dragged in circles.  
Understand, Olena, the groom cannot marry the bride  
until she has been devoured by the wolf,  
but the wolf cannot devour the bride until she is wed  
to the groom, He who sends a trumpeting envoy  
to declare His intentions to retrieve her, your hero  
will fulfill the promise within the millennium, surely.  
Images descend before her eyes, Gann's fingertips brushing  
her cheek saying don't worry about the smell my lovely  
that's just gunpowder, I've been admiring my collection  
once again, one night you should come along and see  
how they squirm when I slide the barrel into their mouth

and cock the trigger, let me hear your children apostatize,  
repeat this children: I am a screw in a complex machine,  
a very tiny screw in a machine I cannot understand.

1, 2, 3, click.

Betray the Church and prostrate yourself  
at the feet of the collective, the stagetalker who says nothing  
of symbiosis, nothing about what interrupts the metaphor,  
nothing of the Nazarene singing ballads through the ages,  
nothing of the wolf or Photine's water, nothing of the subatomic  
elements, nothing of how the closer one follows Him to the river  
the more difficult it becomes to distinguish howls from trumpets.  
A breath awakens her back to the table where Kruso waits  
for her eyes to express clarity, and thus she declares:  
Nox isn't dead.

The milling masses of hungry men hurl slurs  
as the baker moves amongst the encampment  
with a basket of bread, come all who hunger,  
come all who have no place to lay your head.  
Yet, no one reaches for the baker's basket  
when their bellies are already filled with sand,  
chemicals, memories of father saying god is nothing  
man is even less, you were made to endure  
the years by collecting all the riches you can,  
fill your storehouses with stocks and bonds,  
pump your soul full of products and gadgets  
to make your life go by faster easier better,  
always remember you will never have enough  
because you can never be enough, O my son.  
In time the son believes but he also evolves  
to say if man is nothing then I am nothing, if I am  
nothing then what's the use of trying to win  
a game that has no meaning whatsoever?  
If I am nothing and life is nothing why work

for the riches that cannot bring my life worth?  
Why should I put on the suit and tie every day?  
And thus the armies of young men wander  
to the edges of the desert waiting on Abaddon  
to say I understand your suffering, your pain,  
I understand that your nature is fixed, so why not  
put a black mask on your face and embrace chaos,  
why not  
scream in rage at the idea of a God who could be  
so cruel as to make you, scream in rage at anyone  
who could be so foolish to believe in such a God,  
rage at abstract oppressors, rage at headlines, rage  
at anyone who speaks of gardens, water, bread.  
Today, Gann walks through the encampment of men  
holding a photo of Kruso and a bundle of chemicals  
saying surely you have seen this man,  
surely you will help me kill the man

The subatomic elements take root in his mind  
and propel his feet towards water, stars, desert,  
a reminder that long ago the patriarch looked up  
but not high enough, you see the first sheen of stars,  
but old man do you not understand they go on  
in perpetuity? Do you not realize those same stars  
have been promised to a girl who wails for the boy  
dying underneath the bush? The universe is expanding  
because the Creator has not stopped speaking,  
though one day he will say ENOUGH!

Kruso removes his clothes and enters the stream  
as he offers a prayer for she who ordered  
the mountain to move, and the mountain moved.  
In another world Elle walks the midnight streets,  
passing the bound word to those who wish to trade  
their stones for eyes and see beyond the fruit tree.  
Dear Officer Gann, tracking her down is a simple task,  
just follow the lines of salt to the end of days, past  
the rotten hells where the ideology of nothingness

has ripened so we have nothing but collective chaos swelling through the young boy's soul, no explanation need be given just that perhaps he was born wrong, perhaps he killed fifty strangers in the marketplace because he had a gun, perhaps his dosage was insufficient, let us cultivate in him a rage for enemies he cannot name until one day the woman with bright lights in her eyes passes the doorway and he steps out to seize her body. But what can be seized from Elle who declares STOP, and his legs are no longer able to move and his tongue goes numb.

A hooded angel brushes past them on the street, she who smells of minerals from three miles deep. Children, understand the day of judgment is at hand, that angels and demons are among us even now.

Still the smell of minerals follows Elle  
into the church as she recalls the hooded figure passing  
throughout the night, the bright white hair falling out  
from the hood, the eyes of fire glancing up but how,  
Elle, were you blind to what you are made to see?  
Immanuel, Immanuel!

In the church she sits down at the piano to sing  
whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say

IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL

as his face appears in her mind, he who ordered  
the mountains to move, and the mountains moved,  
he who sleeps in the desert house while wolves circle,  
their noses wet for the map of wells.

My love, on this night I commit to carry the metaphor  
until I find myself underwater, we who stand together  
are not a union of individuals but a living representation  
of the Nazarene and the bride, the Word which charges  
into the void and draws a line between order and chaos.  
Elle's fingers forget the notes as she looks up to see

the words painted on the altar in dripping red:  
THEY'RE COMING FOR YOU,  
the same words found by the uniformed officers  
who storm the church with guns drawn on no one,  
for the fugitive called Elle is a vapor, perhaps she moves  
through the corridors of time like the old man,  
though my fellows who left the candles burning,  
and whose voice is still resonating in the emptiness?  
Elle takes shelter in the home of the gardener  
and reveals that when she closes her eyes and sees  
that which she was made to see, the hooded figure  
is carrying paint, a brush, and with each step  
her heel leaves a trail of red.

Darling,

I'd like for you to turn the volume down  
so we can speak about something I saw  
at the bus stop just now, fugitive posters  
printed on fresh paper, all these rumors  
of Elle being captured are lies, consider—

Oh Dove,

don't be hysterical!

My Darling,

you're right, it's just the idea that someone  
among us is reckless enough to believe  
in ancient magic and live by those rules.

Imagine how maniacal you'd have to be!

Dovey,

this is a tale as old as time, and these kids  
will receive their punishment, that's certain.

I say, if you see something, say something.

Certainly, Darling. Darling?

Yes, Dovey?

my hands are shaking and I can't stop them.

Oh Dove,

that's no problem we have a pill

for that very thing, I'll fetch a glass of milk,

and how about after we get you situated,

we can tune in to the stagetalker

for his words of encouragement.

Darling,

what would I do without you?

Shh, shh, Dovey Dove,

listen to what he says:

smile and think of the golden kingdom,

believe and receive to take the superhighway

to health, wealth, happiness.

The lark's ballad interrupts dreams of wells,  
open your eyes Kruso for you must determine  
whether the remnant you carry in waking  
is a howl or a trumpet announcing dawn.  
He rises and moves through the still-dark  
house to fill his cup at the sink, there  
lies Olena, curled beside the fireplace embers  
clutching the word as a lover, whisper to me  
of a coming kingdom, living bread, living water,  
teach me the symbolism of shepherds and kings,  
of wayfarers and cowards, inheritors wandering  
the earth in search of salvation for all these years  
only for the Nazarene to reward them with  
assurance of stoning, skinning, decapitation.  
A beam of light hits the window  
followed by a storm of bullets as Kruso dives  
onto the floor screaming run Olena run  
but she has already been warned by the angel  
who dips into her dreams from time to time

that the wolves have arrived.  
Come Kruso, may we who bear the image  
of the One who authored the rules of nature  
now ignore the rules of nature by His power,  
take my hand and remember the string anchored  
in your heart is not anchored to the carriage  
of a king with cancer but the heart of the eternal  
Creator, feel His breath in us now, the rib, the soil.  
And as gunfire rips through the door they are not  
in the house, but three days hence in the river  
as Kruso searches for his hands, his feet, his eyes.

Listen!

Hear the cries echoing from the holes  
where Abaddon keeps captured amnesiacs:  
what shall we do to pass our chosen days,  
we who severed the string and anchored  
our hearts to sand and dissolving bread,  
jugs of sugared wine, bowls of juicy lamb,  
the girl who says I am yours and you are mine  
for this hour of self-sacrifice, no one will notice  
the metaphor is muted, its tongue sliced off.  
Sometimes these teeth beg to chomp the fruit!  
Abaddon returns from the faraway dunes  
carrying a string of dead coyotes for his supper  
when he hears their groaning bellies, their pleas,  
ungrateful to he who wishes to feast and forget  
the awakening of Pishon, Gihon, Chidekel, Phirat.  
O king of pleasure, recall how we followed you  
under the promise that our days would be filled  
with drum circles under the moon, burning towers,

orgiastic psychosis, writhing on the barren ground,  
babies marked for the beast and cast into flames  
as we press our meat-greased lips on the mouth  
of the wolf, and yet, there is no endless feast,  
no children sacrificed  
in the bonfire fueled by words of the inheritors,  
just desperation for the subatomic elements.  
Abaddon kneels and weeps, oh my mistaken sons,  
it is you who cook the feast, you who press the wine,  
you who birth children to be sacrificed in fire,  
you who bang the drum  
for me.

Gann enters the house after being alerted  
the ones called Kruso and Olena have fled  
though there is no place to flee, my good men,  
a hundred miles of brushless earth surrounding  
the house offers no respite from predators.  
You are flipping tables and opening closets  
only because you have not read enough to understand  
the implications of the Word, these are not drug mules  
or smugglers who will be found cowering the attic, no,  
we are dealing with dream-talkers, carriers of a spark  
who realize they are no longer bound by the laws  
of nature which bind us to the passing age, the road  
we cannot see was handed to them and they chose it.  
Gann repeats the word memorized each night  
as he sniffs empty bullet shells:  
A fire devoureth before them; and behind them  
a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden  
before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness.  
And nothing shall escape them, the territorial imperative

by which he has built his life, see how one tree will block  
another tree from sunlight, the wolf will piss on a carcass  
so her enemies can't eat, the general bombs the bridge.  
The question is not whether there is truth,  
the question is simply who will win the age,  
and the boy called Gann watched the hangman's  
performance and said me, I will win the age.

The boy Gann becomes a young man who devours the written word and evolves to hate all followers of the stagetalker, babes who suck tits for milk because they cannot digest the hunk of raw loin plopped on the plate, the obvious interpretation ignored by those whose most ambitious visions for the coming kingdom involve rubies, mansions, crowns, streets of gold, silk robes, pearl necklaces. Surely the one-eyed headnodders and handclappers will enter the kingdom and be blinded by the stones they covet, stones and scepters like trinkets twisted by the stagetalker so he can see the tops of heads and distribute bags of silver to apostates. Mother, their minds are mesmerized by objects mocked by the Nazarene, yet no one wishes to discuss bread, water, seeds, inevitable torture and death. Mother, why would anyone agree to follow Him, have they not seen the evidence that the groom will enter the wedding bed with a concealed dagger?

Child, you are asking too many questions, you forget these are glassy-eyed dimwits who believe in God. You will not win the world until you partake in reality, there are those who live and those who die, the truth you seek is rooted in self-preservation, nothing else. Gann analyzes the belongings left behind by Kruso, copying addresses, thinking of the territorial imperative of a new kingdom, the self-preservation of repentance. Mother, was the apostle Paul not offered living water to quench his thirst after stoning the condemned followers of the Nazarene? Am I so different than he?

In the corridors of time Kruso encounters the hands  
which planted eyes in the garden of his mind.  
Child, receive the vision of water flooding the city  
and inheritors boarding the great ark called I AM,  
receive the dream-calling of the angel who moves  
door to door in search of blood saying there is time,  
still, O you who wish to see the earth restored,  
accept the road that carries you from death to death.  
Then he is at home dancing with Elle in the living room,  
laughing off the madness of life when there is a knock  
on the front door, and standing on the porch is an officer  
who says would you mind if I ask you a few questions?  
Nothing to worry about my loyal comrades,  
no need to fret about the black maria parked on the street,  
we shouldn't be needing that if you're cooperative,  
and at once Elle recognizes him as the one who called  
forth the child from the mob to pull the lever like this,  
twelve necks snapped in the public square, lives ended  
to the sound of applause, let it be known that those

who operate in darkness shall be rewarded with death.  
The commander sits on the couch with hands clasped  
and asks  
why such lovely comrades would house the fugitive  
named Nox, the disciple of Christ, defector, troublemaker.  
Kruso confesses the bomb, the figure wandering to him,  
the blood, the smoke, circumstances he could not orchestrate,  
circumstances he would never choose.

Olena says he isn't dead, that the .50 bullet  
which exploded through his skull and brain  
was insufficient to end the life of Nox, he  
who cannot die and therefore cannot be dead.  
But children, are we not bound by flesh and bone?  
Was he not lined up in the crosshairs, did blood  
not squirt in a ten-foot spray behind him  
one second after she pulled the trigger, did not  
Gann roar across the desert for the missing map?

Selah

my friend, this is the word I speak over you now,  
Selah to fuel your soul down the road you chose  
and the road chosen for you, Selah that you might  
ask the King of Salem to reveal the mystery  
as He guides you to the river.

Some nights she awakes to the sound of a rifle  
until she hears Nox's voice saying a day will come  
when you must trade your innocence for the mission,  
the indication that you are drawing near the place

where light and darkness meet, here you hear  
the pain of a string severed, a chomp, the stone  
smashing into brother Abel's head over and over,  
here.

Nox says: Olena, Olena,  
understand that we can move in and out of death  
and time is not moving in a single direction,  
recall Lazarus, Tabitha, the Shunammite, Eutychus,  
and to believe that you can end the life  
He made for me  
is fallacy.

On the mountain path Kruso sees the glimmering  
brass casing of the .50 shell halfway buried in sand  
and offers it as a memento mori, a prize of obedience.  
Remember the child Olena who marveled at the stars  
with mother saying isn't it wonderful how they shimmer,  
yes my lovely, but I cannot see them, I can only remember,  
purity of belief intact before the demons called years  
hardened my eyes into stones, stones now blind to skies  
and fixated on the fruit, on chaos, on kings of a passing age?  
But with the road comes a new pair of eyes, not for wonder  
alone, child, not just for stars, but to see the road, bending  
through time as mud-faced pyrite hunters heckle inheritors  
for their lack of gold, haven't you heard the end is upon us?  
The road handed to Olena takes her to a rifle, a mountain,  
a naked man bound on the desert floor saying I am free.  
Olena feels the ground quaking to unleash four rivers,  
wells at Lahai Roi, Esek, Shebah, Sitnah, Rehoboth, Elim,  
the Oath, the Dragon, the well upon which Photine  
drew water in the presence of the Nazarene, He who guided

her beyond the tree and said this living water is for thee.  
Kruso offers her the shell but she rejects it, and  
thus he drops it into his pocket saying where is Nox?  
She points to the desert floor,  
where there is no body decayed, no map,  
just a man transformed into a well overflowing.  
We are the wells, Olena says,  
the map points to you and I.

At the well called Nox  
Kruso cups his hands  
and looks through the water  
brought up from the ancient garden  
where four elemental rivers nourish  
the new kingdom.

He lifts his eyes and sees a being  
of light sitting on the well  
crying come kings, come devils,  
come saints, come wolves  
for the day is not yet over  
and there is water enough  
for all.



Elle do you recall the smell he carried  
on his skin the night the bomb exploded  
in the church, the sheets that could not be cleaned,  
the sting of potassium chlorate proof  
that amnesiacs destroy what they cannot remember?  
Kruso drinks from the well and sees Elle at home  
lying in the bathtub, her body submerged as she prays  
for the child in her womb who will be named Sychar,  
may this child be a blessing, may this child be a blessing  
for the curse, an ancient well where Photine drinks,  
where Jacob dreams of grandfather's promise, behold!  
Maker, may this child be a tree to give shade to Ishmael,  
may this child accept the road and trust the Nazarene  
who will certainly lead to death and resurrection.  
In the water, she remembers the night they made love  
beside the river, pleasure amplified in condemnation  
not from the Nazarene but to the possibility of normalcy,  
when you step into the river to be baptized *alea iacta est*,  
children you cannot claim ignorance any longer.

Man and Woman stand naked and move into moving  
water as they take hands and say will you follow?

I will.

And with the acceptance of death they are dead,  
submerged beneath the waters and brought forth  
into life, that life may be born out of them.

Ask for the road and you shall receive:  
drink, walk, rest, break bread and die  
to the passing age, consider how easy it is  
to follow the one called Christ, enter  
the prisms of time and visit with Saul  
blinded on the road to Damascus, pardon  
Saul, your fingernails are caked in blood  
and ash, your bag is filled with chains.  
Isn't the road clean and easy to walk?  
Move again through the prisms of time  
to sit across from Paul on the shore of Malta  
heaving water from his lungs, the viper  
latched to his hand saying eat the fruit  
my good man, let your teeth chomp  
before the centurion cuts your head off,  
take one last look at the promised stars  
and confess they are for you and you alone.  
Children, is the road not wide enough?  
Have you not been convinced to follow?

Come with me yet again into the room  
of Ananias terrified to reveal himself  
to the blind killer three days in darkness  
without food or water, go my servant  
and gently place your hands upon his face,  
disregard the bag of chains, his hands  
stained red with blood, black with ash,  
for you have been chosen to enter the den  
of the wolf, and are not wolves breathing  
still?

Darling,  
take a look out the window,  
the black-masked protestors are at it  
again and the news said to stay inside.  
Oh Dovey,  
they're just kids looking to pass the time,  
no need for us to worry way up here,  
a building hasn't been burned down  
in weeks.  
Of course, Darling,  
it's just that they're looking at me,  
right at me! it seems,  
pointing their clubs and hollering curses.  
Dove my Dove,  
we've been nothing but be supportive  
and our own children are in their ranks  
if I remember correctly, Billy and Sally.  
Oh Darling,  
I miss them so, should we call them?

Dovey,  
they have their own lives now,  
all we can do is keep their bedrooms intact.  
Darling,  
sometimes I lay awake at night  
wondering if we raised them properly,  
just today I saw a family of four  
and my silly mind went to them,  
Billy and Sally.  
Lovey Dovey,  
we did our very best.

A fire devoureth before them; and behind them  
a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden  
before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness.  
And nothing shall escape them.

Mother, did you hear the Nazarene's song?

O my son, I wish you would be a normal boy  
and swallow a handful of pills, go harass girls  
and stay away from books written by maniacs.

Mother how I long for your heart to change,  
if only you could listen and see everything as I do,  
the road only moves forward, ignorance is forfeited  
by all who accept the destiny of the river.

Gann rests in the easy chair licking the rim of a glass  
when the telephone rings to say the fugitive traveling  
with Olena is indeed a disciple of Christ, the defector  
named Kruso, Kruso who moves about in darkness  
though Gann knows darkness is not preventing capture.  
It's the corridors of time, the miraculous, the hand  
dragged in spit-mud so the blind can now see,  
stones traded for eyes, Immanuel, here I travel

on the road to Damascus though where is my word?  
Where is the light to blind me, where is the voice  
of Jesus Christ?

Does Ananias wait for me in the city, or am I to fulfill  
the duties of my commitment to the state, shh shh,  
let me listen . . .

Olena, do you remember the night we danced  
until our feet blistered then we made love on the floor?  
Behold, the empty casings on the shelf sing to him  
as he packs a bag for the city.

O gardener, tell us  
one more time how the garden is beneath us  
still, waiting for water held back by dams  
of our making, tell us of hands covering holes,  
tongues flapping on Abaddon's command,  
the pop of the whip at the feet of his obedients  
made to sing I AM FREE, LOOK HOW FREE  
as their chains bang against the stones in  
rhythm, O my Adams and Eves, sinful devils,  
the earth dances with the sun but does she not  
also dance with the moon when sun is gone?  
Step into the shadows of life, dance, accept  
your chains as symbols of ultimate liberation.  
Here is the truth:

in the quiet I am intrigued by Malcolm's  
rifles locked and loaded, the arsenal prepared  
in case the watchman falls asleep in the tower,  
Malcolm who has watched a hundred executions,  
he who will put a bullet in the head of the next man  
walking towards the wounded bride fiddling

with the buckle of his pants, he who promises  
the molesters of our children will be fed to pigs.  
My children, the days of prayerful waiting are over  
and the days of prayerful war have begun.  
Yet, out the window he sees the glowing face  
and knows why she has come, she who bears light  
and smells like minerals three miles deep.  
Remember, God once hardened Pharaoh's heart  
intentionally, and the water that was salvation  
for some was the condemnation for others.

A fiery sword is born in the mouth of Francis  
as she sings: the war is won, the war goes on,  
this is our vigil, the city a deaf, blind audience,  
but were they born without eyes and ears  
or did they gouge them out while hunting pyrite?  
Look there, Francis, buried in the maze of streets  
is the courtyard where Malcolm witnesses a boy  
shot in the head for delivering Bibles by bicycle.  
Feel the heat in the blood saying how long, O God,  
until I can chamber a round for these devils  
strutting about in uniforms, hodey dodie comrades,  
here's another day to make certain no one believes  
they are of any value whatsoever, better to dismantle  
the minds along intersectional perforations, O human  
you are not a human but a race, a culture, a class,  
a gender, smaller smaller, then a this and that,  
a texture, a bacterium, a cosmic accident.  
But the dead boy is not performance art, he came forth

from his mother's womb and now his breath is stolen  
at the hands of fatherless totalitarian homogenizers.  
Malcolm waits until all of the blood has drained  
from the boy's skull and watches prisoners in stripes  
drag the body to the furnace, though don't you see  
he is already in the river, led to the shores by the King  
of Salem who says I brought you where I said I would,  
now Leap!

Francis feels the earth swell beneath the city, a power  
greater than shifting tectonic plates, hear me Jericho,  
Jerusalem, Rome, Hiroshima, your walls and temples  
shall not fall, they shall be flooded.

Still, IT IS WELL, for what else can it be  
if the war is won, the garden already in bloom,  
kings of the passing age deposed, their crowns  
melted into pools of pyrite and cast into the sea?  
Elle moves through the corridors of time  
as her fingers find the familiar keys, her song  
muted to the faceless reporters on the other side  
of every wall, though in her headphones the song  
takes her to the kingdom called Peace, ordered  
by the first and final word of the Word saying  
GO FORTH AND DISCOVER THE UNIVERSE.  
And yet,  
she cannot hear the door handle turn, the hinges  
twisting, the footsteps approaching, his heart  
quickenning, the drip of saliva from his carnassials,  
the shimmer of a wire dangling from his hand.  
The smell of gunpowder interrupts the kingdom  
and at once the wire is around her throat,

tighter now,  
the voice saying hello, my name is Officer Gann  
and you must be Elle, my oh my you're beautiful  
but there's no reason to fight, simply submit and live.  
Blood rushes to her eyes and clouds the ceiling  
fan going round and round as it becomes a star  
roaring through the universe on the spoken word  
to press against the boundaries of time, space,  
the same vision seen by the boy under the bush,  
the woman crying out for water while remembering  
the promise of a kingdom to come.  
Limp, she is dragged towards the front door.

O seekers of eternal treasure, mighty mansions,  
a crown of gold, a scepter of crushed diamonds,  
kneel before the stagetalker and beg him  
for a drop of water on your black tongue,  
your wicked black tongue that says nothing  
of goodness but incants wicked devils upon us,  
enough, I say, enough thou kin of Cain!

The stagetalker appears amidst laser lights  
and smoke to shout O sinful descendants  
of Adam and Eve, consider how

He has offered you the yoke that is easy,  
the burden that is light, and all you must do  
is repeat the following prayer after me:

I am a son of sin in search of eternal treasure  
that begins today, coins overflowing my pockets,  
the doctor amazed at the cancer in remission,  
the smile unable to be broken off my face,  
for you are not made to serve but be served  
by the eternal power that wishes to provide

you an extra bedroom and a brand-new jacket,  
the ancient power to make your hand a magnet  
for job promotions, your table a magnet for rare  
fruits and meats, your days a magnet of blessing.

Tell me

what kind of God would lead you to death,  
and what must a man forfeit for a bag of silver?

The chest is opened before the stage, the piano  
fills the room with mirth and the line forms  
as all choose to invest in a life of prosperity,  
a reward

unfit for the eleven.

Long has she known how the story ends: a reward of your body dismembered in a black trash sack, cast into a dumpster or fed to wandering dogs, mercy mercy, officer, a simple bullet in the head will do. Though tonight she is stripped, hanging by her feet in the meat locker of an abandoned supermarket humming IT IS WELL, the subatomic elements traveling through her veins as messengers from an ancient city to say no need to concern yourself with the blood dripping from your thighs up your belly, up up your chest and neck, up your face and to the drain, washed into the subterranean pipes and pushed into the four rivers asking how long must we suffer my siblings until the banks can no longer hold us? Gann drags a chair beside her and opens the word, though he needs not the word to ask why she follows the One who warned her this is the only possible ending, a beautiful girl like yourself could have been anything,

a middle manager even, perhaps a hotel clerk or barista,  
ah but let us take solace that these troubles are light  
and momentary, that perseverance builds character,  
and character, hope, Elle, even now these little slices  
of my knife are transfiguring your image into Him,  
the local craftsman who confused Himself with God,  
God who confused Himself with man,  
man who confused himself with the utopian collective.  
Blinded by the blood in her eyes she says tonight I pray  
that you find what you have always been looking for.  
He twists the pistol into her mouth and asks,  
where are the wells?

Mother, some repent of their belief, but not all,  
and I must know why anyone would believe in God,  
I must draw myself to the confused heart of man  
to understand what he seeks, the reason to live,  
and that is why I am determined to join the Academy.  
Mother fills a glass with vodka and washes dishes  
ignoring the son at the table who brought the word  
God into her home for the final time, the reader-boy  
who sits where father should be though father is gone  
and always has been gone, father doesn't exist my son  
he is just an idea that you cannot seem to ignore  
when I am the one who kept you alive all these years,  
the insult going all the way back to bedtime  
when fair-faced Gann asked if father is coming home,  
will father be at my birthday party, is father a secret agent,  
will father surprise us at the graduation ceremony?  
My reward is a son with his mind in the nothingness  
of religion, faith, biology, psychology, his days wasted  
in books when there are ditches to be dug like a real man.

Mother gulps the vodka and hurls a skillet at his face  
hoping to kill him but she misses, that is the last time  
the word God shall be spoken beneath this roof, God!  
I can save you time and answer all of your questions:  
man is less than you can possibly imagine  
and wants to be more, that's it Ganny love,  
the truth isn't complicated.

Three days in the ground is long enough  
for the Nazarene to travel through the corridor  
and find Adam sleeping so He can steal his teeth,  
to find Eve conspiring and slice her tongue off clean  
in order to lift Himself out of death and transfigure  
into the Word, here we create the image of man  
because man is in the image of us, made to  
GO FORTH AND DISCOVER THE UNIVERSE,  
to dance within the dictate of order as intended.  
Yet, on the edge of the desert men do not discover  
or dance  
but shield their eyes from sun and sand waiting  
on the relief of night, the whore's trumpet promise  
to re-insert your teeth, to reconnect your tongue.  
Kruso and Olena move through the encampment  
of men towards the bus station hiding their faces  
from patrollers warned to watch for disciples,  
one an ex-cop armed with a sniper rifle, the other  
a shapeshifter, perhaps, a fugitive from the city.

Amidst the hollowed masses longing for the undefined  
Olena declares we cannot give them eyes, just water  
when they remember their thirst, remember  
we are named Lahai Roi, Esek, Shebah, Sitnah,  
Rehoboth, Elim, Meribah, we, the wells of old.  
A patroller locks eyes with Kruso and approaches  
through the crowd, coming towards them  
with his hand on the revolver at his side.  
Though, take heart! For the Nazarene comes and goes!  
He comes to whisper the war is won, the war goes on,  
this is our vigil, board the next bus my friends.

As night falls Cynosure rises in the north  
to cast light upon Abaddon's desert captives,  
yet do you hear the footsteps coming from afar?  
He returns from the mountains with skinned rats  
to roast over the fire, and seeing the starlight lays  
over the holes to keep his obedients in the darkness  
of their choosing, patient waiting will be rewarded  
with rat spines to suck for your pleasure, O you  
who have been given freedom to howl, to rape,  
to live without working, to do whatever you want  
as you transmute into an army of horse-faced locusts.  
Malcolm hears the rat flesh sizzling and drives  
to find Elle who no one has seen for days, days  
amidst whispers that a wolf is loose in the city  
chasing blood on the end of his nose, blood  
his tongue cannot reach.  
Malcolm enters her door with a silenced pistol  
at his side and hears the sink running, his lust fed  
not by naked women but dreams of the Sicarii reborn,

a short burst of severity is more just than decades  
of cracking the window to check for a black maria,  
holier than showing papers to buy eggs and milk.  
My Sicarii, the kingdom is not on the other side  
of life or in our imaginations, but AT HAND,  
and waiting for kings of the modern age to depose  
themselves is cruel to the poor, the lonely, the lost.  
He finds Camilly standing at the sink weeping  
on water, cleaning teeth she found in the carpet.  
She turns to say these belong to Elle,  
and do you have an extra pistol?

O gardener,  
do you remember the morning you found her  
working in the flower shop, your silent sorrow  
bearing down upon your shoulders at the ring  
of the entrance bell, and there she is, the face  
he pretends not to recognize to keep anonymity  
intact, she who opened her door and exposed  
the fear he loved to cultivate for forty years  
before going home to exchange the blood-crust  
for the soil of his garden, the patient harvest,  
cucumbers, tomatoes, watermelons, pumpkins,  
the glass of sweet tea, the companion's loving  
hand while watching Wednesday night tv shows.  
My love, work is work and I am a professional,  
best not to worry yourself with the smell of guts  
on my uniform or ask why I wake up trembling.  
But his wife collapses in the spring garden  
clutching her heart, saying keep the garden alive.  
Today he enters the florist and sees Elle in an apron,

she who answered his questions after the church bomb,  
she who gave quarter to the disciple named Nox.  
He hunts flowers to place on a coffin hiding from her  
eyes though she approaches and places a hand on him  
to say I know what you have done, and still the water  
flows at your feet in this Hour.

Joy means knowing how the story ends,  
she says.

Though your Hour appears to be now,  
he says,  
and you chose suicide the day you accepted  
the road that leads to the river, this we know  
from the mouth of the Nazarene, He who hung  
on a cross and said you will too, He who was crowned  
with thorns, He whose back was slashed open  
and from His dying lips came the invitation to imitate.  
In the desperation of centuries fools said I shall  
imitate, and the centuries have brought us together,  
promise you won't disappear into the corridors  
my beautiful girl who could have been a mommy  
carting little Dolly and little Buddy to the zoo,  
oh what could have been! Macaroni and cheese!  
Peanut butter and jelly! Bedtime tales! Family camp!  
Instead we are faced with the territorial imperative,  
beholden to the nature forced upon us by the One

who invited you to die and me to live.  
O Elle, you knew, you knew.  
She refuses to avert her eyes from his as he ties her  
to the metal chair and caresses her hair,  
the breath of a wolf on her neck as his currency  
is fear, consider what man can do to man,  
great shovels slicing open the earth to dig up power,  
but tell me is this nature or the side effects of amnesia?  
I wish to know the location of the wells, he declares  
and removes an ice pick from his belt.  
Selah.

## Blackness

carries the bus down the desert highway  
past hordes of disaffected vagabonds, Abaddon  
my Abaddon, we've heard tales of orgies, freedom,  
we're no longer insurance salesmen nor citizens  
of the diseased king nor adherents of the stagetalker  
but neophytes of the religion called Chaos, valueless  
and thus persons without expectations, is there room?  
Abaddon digs new holes and says yes, plenty of room,  
just make sure to bring your children for the fire.  
Kruso, why has the dream-talker abandoned you  
and where is the memory of Nox brushing his hair  
in the reflection of a parked car's mirror saying  
you can't be useful until you understand death  
and life are not enemies, just half-brothers on a circle  
who each long for the kingdom in their own way.  
Yet, half his heart stops beating and he feels  
his eye socket crushed, his feet bound, love  
resounding around the framework of the universe

to whisper in his soul I am alive but come home soon  
for me, for us, for the holy creation growing brighter  
in me day by day and now recoiling at wolf breath.  
At the rest stop he calls the number never called  
and hears the joyful voice say Elle can't speak now,  
she's unconscious but perfectly safe in my custody,  
though since I seem to have something you want  
and you have the map of wells, perhaps we trade?  
Indeed, Officer, a trade is in order: your stones  
for eyes, your pistol for a hammer, justice for justice.  
Sleep Olena, for dawn and death are rising.

The Nazarene leads her to the banks of the river  
but says don't jump, just sit and let the sunshine  
fall upon your face, watch the history of my beloved  
go round and round from the flooded centuries,  
the war is won, the war goes on, this is your vigil.  
Coming round the bend is Saul of Tarsus  
whose hand has healed from the viper bite,  
now Anastasia saying I have bread for prisoners,  
come round Antipas, come Hasapis, come Maia,  
make way for Nathaniel under the fig tree,  
come Photine, come Island John, behold Nox  
who confirms Adam's teeth have been stolen.  
But she is brought back to the meat refrigerator  
on a whisper that her Hour has not yet come,  
a light, a light  
pushing into the darkness and then the presence  
that terrifies her more than Gann but her body  
cannot fall to its knees, only shrivel in the chair  
saying I am a word but I am not the Word.

The face of light fades to the face of the woman  
who passed her on the street, she who smiles  
and says I have come to set you free my child,  
sent from the Creator to sew courage and strength  
on your heart, for the bride is still waiting  
on the groom who prepares the new home,  
patiently waiting on wolves, crocottas, locusts,  
gardeners, to grow thirsty.  
Elle, stand up and walk!

Mother's shoes needed mending  
the day they traveled to grandfather's home  
to pilfer his belongings, mother are you sad  
and she wiped her eyes and shook her head,  
rushing for the top drawer of the dresser.  
Ganny-boy keep a lookout for folds of cash  
or perhaps a gold watch, tear down the walls  
if you must and thus the boy explored the home  
of the man he was not allowed to meet, father's  
father, father, when will you return for me?  
In the desk drawer he discovered a leather pouch  
stamped with the words BREAD AND WINE  
though the pouch was full of salt, Ganny-boy!  
What have you discovered for your mama?  
Ganny-boy hides the pouch in his pocket and runs  
through the house saying nothing mama nothing,  
but now he sees a trail of salt on the sidewalk  
leading to the abandoned grocery store, or  
is it leading away my loyal captain?

He lifts his eyes to see the woman approaching,  
she who has lived in his dreams for a month,  
the face described by Olena the night she woke  
and said I have been handed a road I must accept.  
She passes but never meets his eyes, smell the deep  
subatomic blocks of the earth, cornerstones laid  
with the first words, she who has been to the core  
of existence for that is where she makes her bed.  
Ganny-boy says look at me,  
and Francis says NOT YET  
while entering the corridor.

See how the poor are ordered to cut stones  
from the heart of the earth, to give their lives  
to towers and walls meant to fortify cities  
against the dawn of the kingdom to come,  
though my king  
the army coming to cut your head off  
is not coming through the front gates.  
The army of the living God moves in water,  
dreams, bread, light, salt, words, a fire, a cloud,  
a strong east wind.  
O Alexander, O Julius, O Moctezuma, O Cyrus,  
tell the stonecutters that nothing lasts forever,  
ask the Viennese watercolorist of walls, towers,  
and he will speak to you of thirst, the Hour  
which swallowed his dreams of a new world,  
stones and eyes, revelation and a suicide bullet,  
Eva foaming at the mouth from cyanide pills  
as she recalls grand parades and champagne.  
Malcolm dreams of Photine carrying buckets

from the well to the village and offering water  
to the children who clamor at her feet, drink  
and die children, drink and walk the river road.  
Consider, Malcolm, that there is a coming kingdom  
and we are already in it, folded into corridors  
you cannot see yet, your eyes see in light waves  
and bloodshed, piled corpses, but not in Hours.  
Malcolm loads bullets into the clip with prayers  
for those who shall receive  
what they deserve.

Where did Pharaoh's soldiers point their spears  
while swirling in the Red Sea?

Who was murdered in the forty days  
the springs of the great deep burst forth  
and grandfather floated about on his ship?

Mother I'm becoming obsessed with light  
and water,

we've been overlooking the secrets of eternity  
because they are so prevalent, a terrible truth  
we must reconcile, mother are you listening?

Mother did you jump off the bridge yet?

I'm going to take a walk Ganny-boy, just a walk  
towards the song from the one called Abaddon,

here is how it goes: O come O come all

who have severed the string, come amnesiacs

come and join the underground orchestra

and bang on the drums while I pick my teeth

with rat bones and rub grease upon my wings,

no need to draw water, sons of Adam's chomp,

no need to speak, sons of the wordless void,  
for you shall become what you believe is true  
about the universe, and reality has been ordered  
to obey, come seize the power available to all  
and determine if yours shall be temporary  
or eternal.

Ah, Ganny-boy, this is why you are content to kill  
Stephen with stones, to set fire to the church  
though women and children are hiding inside.

Ah, Olena, this is why you entered the corridor  
to see pigs run off a cliff and drown in the sea  
as the King of Salem places salt on your eyes,  
singing all the springs of the great deep  
shall burst forth again.

The light-faced woman piles stones at her feet,  
yet there is a finger moving through the dust,  
a voice requesting that she point out her accusers.  
But where are the solicitors who paid her  
to open her legs shut her mouth do her duty  
like a real professional, part of the agreement  
is that you are a secret-keeper, smile and moan  
and remember not to remember my name, Camilly,  
point them out if you wish to carry the burden,  
I wish to find the bearded psychology professor  
buckling his pants saying tell me about your father,  
or perhaps the gay boy brought by his mother  
who took her aside and said fix him, break off  
the dark psychological reality that has taken hold  
since his daddy went to the airport and flew away,  
the stagetalker who walked the streets at night  
saying fall on your knees before me, open wide  
that I may place a droplet on your tongue,  
let your desire be for gold, rubies, diamonds, silk,

the golden kingdom, ignore the life of the Word  
who suffocated and bled out in front of His mother,  
bound by the same Hour that comes to you now.  
Child, now is the chance to point out your accusers.  
The Nazarene hands her the road  
where stones and faces no longer exist,  
scraped out of the corridors,  
vaporized in the haze rising off the river.

While passing through the arid night  
Kruso hears yes and cannot remember  
no, what are the words for me to escape  
the road that will see my children executed,  
mocked, scorned, dragged through the square  
because mother and father never relented  
from the vision placed upon them.

Yes is the word of the inheritors, Nox declared  
on the night he drew Kruso and Elle aside  
to pass them the burden of the church: I am  
beckoned to horizons where the King  
of Salem mines for salt, come come son  
your Hour has not yet arrived and still  
I speak wait, the towers permitted to stand.  
The old man sits beside Kruso to reveal  
that in a dream he saw wells flooding,  
that in the bed he almost drowned in a well,  
that he saw a vision of the bride spewing  
Lahai Roi from her mouth on the desert floor

so the ancient garden can bloom to restore  
Adam, toothless son and guileless daughter, Eve.  
Eve, has the promise of knowledge faded?  
The water smells of minerals long forgotten,  
subatomic elements laid upon the table  
so inheritors may feast and die, feast and die.  
Under the stars Nox points to Cynosure  
when asked where he is going, there Kruso,  
there is all I know and yes is all I can speak,  
the only word I am permitted to remember  
in the presence of the Nazarene.

I wish to see  
the earth restored without hanging on a cross  
myself, but in the fertile hours of my heart  
I understand the choice is not mine to make,  
for if I choose to follow the Nazarene's road  
I am bound for the river, hello Nathaniel,  
hello Saul now Paul, hello Stephen stoned,  
hello burning Antipas,  
won't you send along an example of a road  
that has no suffering? A road of rubies?  
Such a road does not exist, my good fellow,  
you are asking for the nature of life to change  
but the Word has already spoken, the road  
already delivered unto you and your family,  
the road you accepted when the Word birthed  
a word in you.  
The gardener smelled her funeral flowers  
when he was handed the road and decided  
to trade stones for eyes, now you hear the wells

rising from the ancient springs of the covenant  
and understand they have been ORDERED  
by the Hour,  
recognition that the great deep is pressing  
against the surface, that space is still expanding  
as He speaks, bound to the Hour He placed  
upon Himself until He declares ENOUGH,  
O gardener!

Out the window she sees the gardener  
gathering remnants of the harvest,  
the seed planted one million years ago  
in the place where the four rivers meet  
now blossomed and ripened for the table.  
Malcolm presses a wet cloth on her head  
as she searches for the memory of the light-  
faced woman, but she only remembers her heart  
is sewn with courage and strength, the bride  
lovely and waiting for the groom's house  
to be prepared, perhaps in a thousand years,  
perhaps tomorrow, but won't someone find  
the King of Salem and ask for more salt?  
Won't someone request that He turn our blood  
into jars of wine, our suffering into bread?  
She finds her teeth in a bowl beside the bed  
while Malcolm says O how I wish you saw  
the fire is already kindled, the sword drawn,  
the cloak sold and the blade purchased,

for the wolf has been given a heart of hardness,  
my love, there are gardeners and wolves.  
Saul is on the road and Pharaoh is on a throne,  
and once the distinction has been made clear  
one must be slain and one must be embraced.  
But Malcolm,  
who can put a number to the stars  
when He is still speaking them into the sky?  
The child flutters in her belly as clouds gather.

Darling,

I'm worried about the cracks in the walls,  
my wild imagination tells me all the earth  
is moving, Barb next door agrees with me  
and her walls are cracking, too, O Darling!

Dovey,

these are natural occurrences, nothing  
out of the ordinary, just an old building  
settling into its foundation.

Darling,

I haven't been sleeping, I hear the crack  
crack moving up and down the walls  
and I think of us falling into one,  
aren't I a mess?

Oh my love Dove,

we'll call an expert tomorrow  
and he will get us squared away in no time,  
in the meantime there's no harm taking a pill  
to settle your nerves and put your mind in line.

Darling,  
that, a glass of milk, and a hot bath would do  
wonders for me, only the water smells of dirt,  
imagine the cost of the walls and pipes.  
Dovey Dovey,  
we've been saving all these years for this,  
emergencies are sure to come our way.  
Darling,  
my silly-billy brain can't shake the notion  
that the walls and the smell of the water  
are connected, like this is the end of it all.

See how the boy hides under the bush  
as mother turns her eyes from his death,  
the forlorn maidservant who says I am  
a star in the sky, am I not? Is not my son  
carrying the blood of the promise made,  
and is there no hope that he too will remember?  
If he is to die here, let him die in the shade.  
Yet, the storm clouds gather, the wells rise  
from the great depths of the foundations  
while the King of Salem says not yet  
Photine, not yet Ishmael, not yet Saul,  
the Hour shall come but not until I am done  
speaking stars across the universe, look up  
grandfather, the promise is greater than you  
are able to see with your man-eyes  
and His patience for amnesiacs is long.  
Behold the masses cramming the door  
of the stagetalker's temple saying bless us  
in these mysterious days, provide answers

to the cracks in the walls, the smell of water,  
the sound of whinnying locusts in the night  
who seem to be growing louder and louder.  
Behold the amnesiacs lost in Abaddon's holes  
banging the drum as he dances one last time,  
children are you ready to be transmuted,  
and are you not aware that my life is complete?  
Behold the mud-faced pyrite hunters longing  
for the poor to place a crown upon their heads.  
Bow before temporary kings only if you desire  
to be temporary.

How great is the mercy of He who orders  
the new kingdom into bloom, He who calls rivers  
to rise out of the ancient places we cannot see.  
Come and drink O soldiers of Gideon, not as a dog  
but as a man outnumbered by the army in the valley,  
isn't the exact same story being told over and over?  
Three hundred are called while Midian awaits  
the battle they were never permitted to win.  
The dead Midianite boy with a father and mother  
was formed in the image to prove the image is good,  
felled on the field of battle to prove the image is good,  
I'm twisted, I'm turning into knots at the logic of God  
who so easily dispenses with us so that a metaphor  
might be carried through the ages into my obstinate ears,  
and for this I see now the boy is still alive, he must be.  
Yet the wolf salivates at visions of the naked bride  
spread on the table before him, exposed, sliced  
down the belly with her organs pulsating in rhythm.  
See how Gann walks circles in the empty meat cooler

recognizing that he feels joy, not dismay, not rage,  
at Elle's escape, for every disciple he bleeds to death  
eliminates the purpose God gave to him as a boy,  
we are all just playing our given part, are we not?  
Joy means knowing how the story ends, so despair not,  
Gann, eat your bowl of bloody lamb at Abaddon's table,  
and know it will never be enough.

Evil is good for us, good is good for us, here we are  
Elle, back in the place ordered upon us long ago,  
and here is the question I am meant to ask of you:  
Do you believe in Paul's conversion?

Indeed, Gann.

You believe he traversed the earth for a great purpose,  
and that the western world would not know the name  
of Jesus without his life of courage and suffering?  
Consider then the lot of Stephen cast into the pit,  
his bones crushed by hurled stones, stripped and alone,  
consider that he who stands above with cloaks at his feet  
shall one day write letters you will read and memorize,  
and millions will know the stones aimed at Stephen  
shall one day be aimed at he with the cloaks at his feet.  
And thus, this death is your simple part to play, relish  
all the Nazarene has in store for you, the crushed bones,  
the blinded eyes, blood pooled on the floor, a widower,  
and I too shall relish the cloaks at my own feet, the road  
I have not been handed yet, but Elle I know enough

to know the road exists and always has, I am destined  
for an Hour outside of my choosing, come soon O Lord.  
I worry for you, Gann, but I also long to experience  
the moment you meet the Nazarene in the corridors  
of time, I am jealous for the recognition in your heart,  
the bending of your knee, a leaping thief on the cross  
who recognizes that Jesus is the Word, the Light,  
no mantras have been spoken O stagetalker, no gifts  
made so you can install a slide for your swimming pool,  
just mercy abounding, the second flood a gift of life  
and a curse of death.

Somewhere in the corridors of time Kruso  
steps off the bus dusted with desert sand,  
the empty rifle shell in his front shirt pocket  
singing him to the woman and child hidden  
behind one of fifty million windows, Olena  
Olena, how did this reality become true of us?  
The all-consuming fire burns trees to the root  
whether they are good or bad, these are words  
without much difference in the face-light of He  
who spoke stars across the galaxy and said LOOK,  
GO FORTH AND DISCOVER THE UNIVERSE  
thou Abraham, thou woman of a scorched boy,  
everything must be consumed and thus we are  
no longer our own but at the mercy of the One  
who leads us to the river for a baptism of death,  
we who have the great fortune of remembering  
our inheritance, we who shall be consumed first.  
O day of judgment come, O wells burst on deserts!  
Kruso finds a telephone and calls the gardener

who says Kruso Kruso, she's alive, barely alive.  
There is the smell of minerals from the ancient deep,  
gunpowder and flowers, the brass casing  
pulled towards he who wished to pull the trigger,  
his joy stolen by Olena, Olena, won't you come home  
and put on the record that makes you dance crazy?  
Children, I hope it is clear  
we are all going to the same place,  
and the Hour of the second flood is upon us.

Let us join the hymns which rise from the valley  
of the river, there is the voice of Paul met  
in harmony by the voice of Saul, but can it be?  
Kruso and Olena move past darkened windows  
to the back door of the gardener's home.  
Kruso opens the door as the rains arrive to meet  
the wells rising from the deep, four rivers awakened  
in search of one another, in search of dormant seeds  
(Here I am!) to grow trees to shroud the forlorn boy  
evermore, sheathe your arrows and find your seat  
at the table along with Mephibosheth, bread and blood  
are soon to be served to all who recognize the Word,  
there is a thief to your right and one to your left,  
but which one is which and which one am I?  
The roof leaks rainwater onto the floor, now mixed  
with the blood of the gardener who sits erect  
on the couch, a bullet through the back of his head.  
Kruso runs up the wet stairs in search of Elle  
and sees a bar of light beneath a bedroom door,

and pushing it open sees her tied on the bed, gagged,  
her eyes on fire with fear at the sight of his arrival.

My love . . .

and seeing her eyes shift, he steps back as a shotgun  
blast rips through the door where he was standing.

I come with good tidings of great joy,  
that all who follow the Nazarene are destined  
for a dark house, a shotgun blast, biting a gag  
with broken teeth, dead friends, fleeing the room  
as Gann steps out and blasts another round  
into Kruso's leg, we are all wet now,  
no roof can hold back the downpour of God.  
Standing over Kruso, Gann chambers a round  
and presses the barrel into his mouth, repeat me:  
A fire devoureth before them; and behind them  
a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden  
before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness.  
And nothing shall escape them, say it fool,  
say it you who believe in fairy tales, say it  
you who have rejected reality, say it and live.  
Kruso says I will give you what you want most,  
and reaches for the empty shell in his pocket,  
here is the map of wells, a road to ancient springs  
but my brother, you have always been too late,

a million years ago you would have been too late,  
for reality is shaped in the corridors of time,  
yesterday He is risen and today He is born.  
Gann fingers the trigger, goodbye Kruso,  
the water is rising now, what will happen first,  
will you drown or have your face blown off?  
The front door bursts open and the Sicarii  
of Malcolm's making storm the house with fire.  
Gann bounds away from the spray of gunfire  
and leaps from the second story window  
as Camilly rushes into the room to rescue Elle.

Children, the Hour of the second flood  
will arrive with terror, but she will subside,  
for fear is not welcome in the new garden,  
no, no, she will have her throat sliced open  
by the angel who carries a flaming sword,  
the scorched boy snips the tips of his arrows,  
even now rain washes mud from the faces  
of pyrite hunters, even now the blood of war  
is cleansed at the name of the Nazarene.  
Speak the name of Jesus into the abyss  
that chaos might be ordered, that darkness  
might be ripped out of the light forever,  
the reckoning is brutal children but He comes  
to peel your heart off the altars of dying kings.  
I hear Him now, take cover at the command:  
Come O four rivers rising! Come Lahai Roi!  
Come Esek, Shebah, Sitnah, Rehoboth, Elim,  
the Hour placed upon you with the first Word  
has arrived, come all you floating round the ages,

come you who were given the road of death,  
let Photine alert the children of the village  
that the salt-men have finished tilling the soil,  
every seed is planted waiting for the flood  
to give birth to a kingdom eternal,  
a kingdom with twelve trees lining the road  
bearing twelve types of fruits, O nations,  
are you ready to be reconciled to the Word?  
Mephibosheth runs under the trees  
on his way to the King's table.

Mother, have you leapt from the bridge yet?  
Not yet darling, I haven't finished cleaning  
the feet of diseased kings, the fleeing stagetalker  
who tells me man is nothing but a dirty sinner,  
what now Ganny-love, what good am I?  
If you get hungry tonight when I'm gone  
there is a bowl of rotten fruit on the table.  
Gann hears mother leap as he sloshes  
through the flooded streets, his hip broken,  
touched by the man who found him on the lawn,  
am I Saul or am I Pharaoh, O Maker of mine?  
Am I the thief on the right or on the left?  
Is it possible to be all of them at once?  
She approaches from afar, the light-faced  
woman now carrying a sword of consuming fire,  
listen to how she sings IT IS WELL, child,  
smell the minerals on her from ancient rivers  
now flooding the earth, squint to see her  
through the downpour of rain, for she sees you,

she has been sent to execute a final judgment.

Let all who have eyes see, all who have ears  
hear the trumpet sound from the mountains,  
the armies of the living God need no gates  
to conquer cities of glass and stone.

His hip collapses him into the flooded street  
as she moves toward him with steady pace.

Fire both purifies and kills, kills and purifies,  
the ordering of those words is a mystery,

Brother Gann.

She wakes to see his face, the husband  
lover father brother fellow disciple  
of Christ, his leg bandaged, bloodied  
now caressing her face, I'm home my love,  
everything is going to be okay, He's moving  
across the deserts tonight and we must hold  
through the storm for the garden to come.  
Tell me, Kruso, what use is a map of wells  
when the earth is flooded, ancient water  
rises now and wolves can't swim for long.  
There are her teeth in a bowl by the bed,  
but where is the rage swelling in her eyes?  
Hand in hand we have carried the covenant,  
the metaphor of what is upon us tonight.  
Remember the night we entered the river  
saying we will follow, Kruso, I remember  
we traded our innocence for innocence,  
*alea iacta est*, may we  
die and live and suffer and float all at once.

They move through the corridors of time  
to a blanket underneath the stars, restored  
bodies moving together in consummation  
of the commitment to follow He who commits  
to the stars above, tell me their names, O God,  
tell me if you speak the same word for evil men  
as you do for me, tell me if I am an evil man.  
Let us be faithful in the mystery, O disciples,  
for time is short and the Hour is nigh,  
and all that will be already is.

Darling,  
the water is rising up to our windows,  
have we an inflatable boat?

Dovey,  
it will subside,

I once saw a television program  
about floods and this is no different,  
though the tv isn't working now,  
oddly enough.

Darling,  
we're ten stories up,  
think of all the people below us.

Oh Dovey,  
you've got such a loving heart,  
you're always thinking of others!  
Let's crack open a bottle of wine  
and put dinner in the oven.

Darling my Darling,  
I'm beginning to think

we should be afraid,  
like the world is ending.  
My fluttering cooing Dove,  
there's always going to be a new day. ✨

I am so grateful you chose to read this book. If you would like for these ideas to spread, there are a few steps you can take.

The first is to write a review for the book. At the end of the day, we all give credence to books that are more thoroughly and highly-reviewed. That would be a great gift to me. Second, you could tell friends and share on social media. And third, you can connect with me online at [craigscunningham.com](http://craigscunningham.com) or by finding me on social media at [@craigscunningham](https://twitter.com/craigscunningham). You can also email [canowanbooks@gmail.com](mailto:canowanbooks@gmail.com) to let me know your thoughts and questions about this book. I would love to hear from you through one or all of these channels.

All that will be already is, and all you see is yours.

- Craig Cunningham

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