



# SHADOW-BIRD



Annie Finch

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## SHE THAT

The source of night is madness. I am she  
that knows the way of madness. I am found  
on edges of high capascades. I be  
one of the edge of nutrients. Free me  
and all the vanished kind find tapestry.

## DUSK

When dusk and I are not the claims of dusk,  
the hands of dusk, the chains, the open cuts,  
the depth of dusk, I will not call them cuts.  
Something flies by in speckles, in the dusk.  
I'll call it land in waters that are light  
and follow it, to drown instead in flesh,  
as if I had an enemy in flesh,  
since I will have no enemy in light.  
Soon with the darkness all the arrows, charge  
their hands, will hold me, and then open flowers  
touch with their night-edged blossoms other flowers,  
and dusk, now after me, with arrows charge  
its loads of islands down from that high cave-  
like walls-from-dripping night, and I am laved.

## SHALLOW SKY

In the deep houses, cellars speak alone  
till whisper-eucalyptus finds his home --  
but stripped, and sodden, like a man gone by  
and idly ruined -- what once grew so high.  
Now the deep houses are not the only gone.  
His voice shows that more endings have been done.  
And endings having done the endings, when  
will endings come, and where can endings go?  
Inheritors, we wait for it to show.

Not in the desperation of deep sky  
or finitude of observation. I  
have peace without that plenty. Shallow sky  
unclench my fist, and sun lie on my eye  
across my nose, and tell me how to die.

And it might come tomorrow. Many men  
had their tomorrow yesterday. For them  
I love a bomb; it ends me just like them.

Not in the desperation of deep sky  
or finitude of observation. I  
have peace without that plenty. Shallow sky  
unclench my fist, and sun lie on my eye  
across my nose, and tell me how to die.

## THE AGES' YEARS: A DIALOGUE

Windows are streaked. Sky must be autumn green.  
The days' levels have lowered to a stream  
where tigers seldom drink. "I know a team  
of autumn revellers, whose hands are seen  
in traces everywhere the nighttime's been."  
Take me out of my room, where each new scene  
has sulked across the ceiling in shadows.  
Take me out to the autumn world, to roam  
outside the legs of roaming, outside home.



## HARVEST SEAM

It was November. I was not alone.  
Send me your green, an endless pouring name  
called from the skies that still had hands, that came  
handed from clouds through tunnels. Any seam  
was open, but the ear was mine, the crest  
that climbed along the season till, the gleam  
that slits November answering, I heard,  
with scattered lips, in every pore, "Harvest."

It shattered, harvest. Don't come in,  
reaping on land comes on, nothing comes in,  
stay out and harden fall and death and kin.  
Still, like a midnight, I was not appalled.  
I took the hands, and harvested, and fall,  
a harvest, kept its nothing from my fall.

## AN IMAGINARY COMPANION

My blood was wise, my arms were weak, I was  
a vessel from the inside. I could speak  
alone, as if to water, that spoke back  
beside me with no language, never stopped  
to hear me, but continued, dark on black,  
and if I'd been that way, I would not have stopped.  
Two merciless companions, we were clocked  
on our own time, as "water" and "free clock."  
If it bit me, it bit me with the cold  
and I ignored it--I bit back. So cold.  
We have no hard companions. We are old  
and warm as wild flowers, touch no ice,  
have just a toe for one gold-rippled shallow,  
and never make our conversations count  
against the time that clocks me since I lost.

## A WREATH OF TIME

*for Anne Bradstreet*

Bursting with fruit, my lips have opened time  
to duck into your valley, not behind  
the walls of silence. I am not the line  
you need to walk on or you need to see,  
and I am in your heart. Courage for me  
extends out to your hands. Your fingers see.

## NIGHT RAIN

With will the flicker of a candle flame  
goes out though blown and in the iron house  
the rain continues. This is such a house,  
whose dripping galaxies untie dark time--  
the drops that land are silent. In between,  
the noise of growing flowers, like a scene  
of gravity spent on the land between.

## SUCH HUSKS

Oh tongue of meter, moving with your comb  
past awful words to make the peace your home,  
you are still my companion, though your love

still alters me, and ruins what I move  
along to do, and kills me with you, love;  
you love in words, you don't know what you move:

such husks of hollowed influence. Such clear  
thick patterns from the nights that held me full.  
You keep your own still paces, with a last

touch of the spirit on you, like a down  
that ripens, falling everywhere we pass.

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