



*From*

**Sometimes Things Seem Very Dark**

Mark Lamoureaux

for Francesca Woodman

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cover image [**Easter Lilies**] © Francesca Woodman

1.

[Easter Lilies]

The 2 flutes  
sprout out

the green axis the  
labrys-axe

bilateral symmetry:  
spine bisects a

legs & arm  
spine all alone

this headless  
I spine alone

I me the navel pit  
I the spine bud

hilt of mind

was never we  
under middle grey

the 2 fingers

I always 2

7.

**[Self Portrait (Talking to Vince)]**

Leaning out although  
of fire speech

the warm if is was breath  
expelled ruffles  
a curtain

not words only  
frozen spit, swaddles

covers  
all my mouths  
O my mouths  
of the open  
of the dark wall  
of the open I O  
unshod I

13.

[Untitled New York, 1979]

Hanging, strange,  
punctuation through  
which surge curlicues  
of dark plants: eyelashes,

lashes that dislodge  
& pain the eye, the eyes  
like 2 stone  
eggs in the skull:  
birthing black/red sylphs,  
those that run away  
with words: squirrels  
mouthing hard cherries in  
a grey tree in the middle  
of the city: the city,

the brick & stone city.

14.

[**Hands** Providence, Rhode Island, 1976]

Or else

she holds the hands  
that speed  
the glass to water,

the little bird will strike  
    & crack  
translucence or else

fly through; air  
grants egress, the pane

turned to air  
balloons lungs  
the body will rise  
to the surface  
of the water, or else

the body will hit the glass.

Dear Francesca,

I don't know how they all make it this far in. You would not even believe it. It is not like advancing alone into darkness, as the night hides bats & moths & mating animals, but rather like shambling into a terrible light. Like the light at birth only closer, whiter—a light that finds every blemish & authors every drastic shadow.

This light is meant to blind. Yes, darkness is a balm for the eyes, covers these abrasions—not like that light that pries open the aperture, dilates the eye & lets the soul hover through.



15.

[Untitled Rome, 1977-1978]

Body a white lead  
    bubble  
    what skin does  
hide

    it  
    with  
    no  
    face

a kind of  
    morel           a sheet  
the brain  
    on a broken  
    grid   renaissance  
perspective points  
    limbs, a switch-  
blade   distended,

swivels an upended  
    wick & flame from  
torso   where  
    the heart hides

there is this field of vision,  
this expanse that befits  
    analysis, perception  
flat rubric of coughing  
lines this is    me  
    me  
    me

25.

[**Untitled** New York, 1979-80]

Jewels excreted  
for the dirt in the  
body of a clam,  
    calcified irritant

then wrested & wrapped around

neck   wrist   waist

The seed excreted  
for the body of the vegetable  
in the dirt & then  
sliced, the pattern  
of its hollows  
in the corner  
    wasted

27.

[Untitled Stanwood, Washington, 1979]

[Untitled New York, 1979-80]

Something respectable

no scorer & sewer  
of corporeal fetters

prolonging revelation  
of the sky's innards

boiled hands

blood-tinted skeins binding  
the closed mouths of scars

no stacker & counter  
of pentacles—avarice

of grey boxes & panes of scarified  
glass  
no sucker for what  
burns or molders in  
vaults

no scrawler of epithets  
shepherds of nebulae  
those mouths clotted  
with dust & raw  
dough

Something respectable

a milliner  
a dyer of cloth

cherub of solace

an eye for everyone

sous -chef

inscriber of golems

mercerizer

lepidopterist penniless

lapidarist

a sphinx  
a syrxinx  
a ghost



Dear Francesca,

Where was I on that day? Could I have come there, as your brother, your unwanted child like in that Chaplin film? For death, as such, did not exist for me then. What would the world have spared us? I would have spared the arc of everything after. It would have spared the intrusive ringing of fear that creeps into the nighttime ear. When I am dragged into the prison of sleep. It would have spared the so many frontiers to cross. So many frontiers & no light but for the tiny flames that burn underneath my fingertips.

33.

[Untitled Rome, 1977-78]

1. The dark wine
2. The sea, famously similarly dark
3. Objects in the Smithsonian natural history museum (like large eggs, magnifying glasses, etc.)
4. Mosses & lichens
5. Greek gods
6. The view from the tripod at Delphi
7. Leos Janáček "On an Overgrown Path"
8. Leos Janáček "Youth"
9. The artificial field in the background of the first act of Jenufa at the Metropolitan Opera, trompe l'oeil.
10. The Passion of Joan of Arc
11. Certain passages in the Old Testament
12. Certain passages in the Odyssey
13. The flayed skate in Jean-Siméon Chardin's "The Ray," adumbrating Jenny Haniver.
14. Ostensibly falsified accounts of an exchange program between Earth & Zeta Reticuli, wherein is described a world where people are peaceful & happy & don't eat animals.
15. The eating of animals
16. Swirling, pastel-like colors
17. Photography
18. Forgetting old faces
19. Not forgetting old faces
20. The Mothman
21. Cryptozoology, in general
22. The end of the week
23. The beginning of the week
24. A box of crayons
25. Sleep

26. Sleep

27. Sleep

28. Sleep

29. Waking

30. Knowing the pyramids are there

31. Not quite believing the pyramids are there

34.

[Untitled MacDowell Colony, Peterborough, NH 1980]

Black & red  
my body  
painted

Python

I am the sworn

to the oracle

Red & black

I am  
the wasp in  
the navel

the snake

around the finger

Omphalos python

the men who come  
prostrate, to the murk

wherein the child

convulses, her tongue

tastes your individual  
fates

I may

not gaze

upon the legs that reach

to God, your coins thrown  
to the crucible

make the melted pelts  
of your food beasts—

the oracle eats  
snakeskin the oracle eats

melted gold in the lap  
of lightning

the electric eyes  
that open in  
my breast

black & red, the eye, the teeth  
of the python that is

my spine, my tumbleweed  
of nerves that scuttles



through the dark cave

I am the rib of the knife  
that cut the cord

to your mother—Omphalos  
bride the starved

child in the cave of smoke  
she is death  
she is the tongue

of random, of several

the lightbulbs in the lyre  
the snake in the mouth

the mouth in the air  
the mouth in the wall

black & read  
the snake's eyes

are painted  
on my back, you see

I see

It is never my mouth who speaks  
but hers

39.

**[then at one point I did not need to translate the notes; they went directly to my hands]**

It makes a certain angle

to the wall  
to the floor

to the wall of salt

the gaze cannot reach  
or pull

the double through  
the looking-  
glass

the hot throat

that drains the water  
from the mirror,  
the parched carapace

Childhood-

home eclipsed by cinders

cannot walk backwards  
cannot walk back

into the waiting  
breast of the shadow

40.

**[I stopped playing the piano]**

On some days I want to halt  
the libraries quivering with books,  
arrest the angle of the sun-blood  
on the armoire—the crayon-smack  
lisp of the seals on the letters  
breaking, what with no one writing  
letters anymore—the distance breached  
between entities, so quick, now, fastened  
to the limbs of a quick little bird,  
say nothing to the rooms now emptied of us,  
the shucked husk now supine, the  
latches all clicked. Alone, at last in the  
globe of the eye, all the eye wants convulsing  
around it like a blanket. It is a magnifying-  
glass to burn my name from the tired  
lung of the page. This is not breath,  
you know, how quick the breath lifts  
from the desiccated breast—this is  
the one little trick: to leave the room  
when you are still in it, all the charms  
of the world pressing like plants  
toward the available light. The available light  
pours into a bottle of glass with no  
insides, heavy, like a body  
in the taut hammock of the possible, its  
line stretched from other to other.

41.

**[& I had forgotten how to read music]**

pmabt abt frtn hndshh  
mpps sv tskwhn  
pldthpnfrst lrndt  
nlng rdd tmslt thnts:  
thwnt drctlt hndsfr  
whlstppd plng ndwhn  
strtdgn fndcldnt  
plcldntplb  
nstinstd hdfrgttnhw  
trdmsc

42.

**[I could no longer play**

**I could no longer play by instinct]**

Once the endings have ceased  
it is a room filled with honey  
a person wants to crane  
their neck but cannot  
gaze fixed on one  
singular apogee, all the letters  
in the world struck  
in one spot that grows  
a blackness that drops  
through the table & clatters  
like a marble skating  
the tilting floor, comes  
to rest, spinning  
in a corner where  
the ceiling meets the floor  
meets the wall, where  
a spirit enters, where a spirit  
leaves

Dear Francesca,

I am going away for a time. Which is not to say I will not be back, as taking a trip implies a point of departure & a point of return. To trip also implies falling. Trip the wire. To stumble & this is a physical comedy, after all. Our hero steps on a rake, gets quite a surprise. Funny. Who put that banana peel there? Was it you? Oh, this just goes on & on. People love the cinema because it ends. People are less comfortable with life for the same reason. & I'll admit it, I am not comfortable with life, but I love the cinema. The cinema itself will never end, don't worry about that. People love to be with each other in the dark. People love to be with each other in the dark, thinking about something else. Moving pictures. Viewed from the air, the frames do not look so different from each other, but thousands of same or similar in succession yield a certain gaze. The heroine looks just so, & the hero, likewise. They are not us. Therein is contained their beauty. This is not me, either & therein is contained something else. What lives in this box? No sooner the question asked, then it is gone. On a trip. To the ocean. In the car of a Ferris wheel, perhaps. Where there are lights & simple music, repeated ad infinitum. A film. Or a photograph, where strangers collect in the margins off to the side from where the subject is centered. In how many of these does my own image exist.? That is where I would like to go on my trip. I would like to go there.

43.

**[Untitled New York, 1979-80]**

Silver ions turn to pure dark  
crystals in the gelatin (the boiled  
tendons of food animals) where  
light has hit, thus on the negative,  
light becomes solid & black,  
the light's likeness forms a barrier  
to light, which when projected  
through the negative becomes  
(an absence of darkness  
of crystal  
of mass)

luminous again, there on the paper of the print.

Words collect in a similar fashion,  
on the page, dark against the white  
paper (pulverized trees). What  
is the light that will catch on these words, thus  
causing light again? Where? Only the crystals

have mass, but the light is something  
else, isn't it? There it is  
on the print, you are touching it.

\* a dusi/e-chap  
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