



The Call

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Cover art by Claude Smith

for Kimberly

FACELESS PRESENT

unborn
unbidden

the sunlight
fills the unlit

street, and
suddenly, I

turn and smile
leaving the night wind

full of whispers

AT CLUB FAB

An auditorium without an audience. Two women dancing. One dances in a white gown, and she moves with confident abandon—a performance addressed to emptiness.

The other woman is on a swing, center stage. She wears black frilly briefs and a transparent tunic over a beige undershirt. Her black hip boots have spike heels. She fuses the can can dancer to the go go girl.

The woman in white is a bride. She is death. She is a piece of cake with vanilla frosting being eaten by a man with dirty fingers. She has lost her

shoes, and she looks for them, high and low.

The can can dancer fused to the go go girl twists the ropes of her swing, winding and unwinding her body in languid arcs. She is asleep, and she lies in the sand of her dreams and feels the warm sun and the cool sea breeze.

Both women have a secret. In these two secrets are all the other secrets.

FALLING

off a horse
off a roof

out of a tree
out of a car

preparing to fall
removing my shoes

listening to your voice
knowing the pain

knowing what I owe
what I will do

left to right
left to write

my grief

CARRYING MY BONES

rays of light coming out of me
as I walk down the street

I'm walking an inch above the pavement
skimming the surface

responding to my body
while I mutate into a welcome mystery

ahead of me, temptations pile up

ROOM

I'm in a room with a door
you can go through
but I can't

You're in a room with a door
I can go through
but you can't

I'm in a room with a door
you can go through
but I can't

You're in a room with a door
I can go through
but you can't

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FREEDOM AHEAD

I pray to the imps at the crossroads
where I clean a window to a broken promise
and my dusty feet are washed in the sea of beginning

the imps are writing dirges
on the bag of bones we call spring
I keep speaking, and they keep writing

above me a plum tree rattle its branches—
staccato beats against this empty cage

the imps demand I give them a line of credit
I give them marks on a drum and a flag
but such answers never satisfy

the trick is to proceed without certainty

FOR EVERYONE

no floor
no walls
no ceiling

what did you expect?

a wanting heart
a burning mouth
tangled nerves?

there is a bell
and a mirror
and a lamp

as the bell rings
it begins to crack
the mirror reflects
a broken shadow
the lamp reveals
everyone has gone back

PROMETHEUS SINGS

uncertain
chained, yet

rocked
laughing in the rafters

starburst in his prime
splendid

rage mixed with joy
unsubdued

singing to be free
of his secrets

DIRGE

for Joe Saviers

everybody knew
your friends knew

your family
your psychiatrist

but you kept drinking
and drinking and drinking

and now your friends say prayers
by the oven where you are cremated

and we did a puja in the gompa on a full moon night
Tashi heard your voice, it was raining through sunlight

two rainbows appeared, so she put flowers on the shrine
and Jack got a message, "What's up with the dead flowers?"

MY WORDS

one at a time
each has gone
across

one at a time
each has gone
over

gone
in silence

until the tattooed lady dances

CRETAN LYRE

addleheaded in Safeway
a tropical shower in the vegetables
transmits light to my inner idiot

coming before coming before
coming way before coming

beyond joy and woe
where I can do what I do
without having to lie

HARD

but I want to understand why
why here, on this planet?

in this body
in embodied mind

I feel like a smashed atom
thinking of the Universe

the seven sisters do a veil dance
with the moon, and

the little stars look big
so

far away

SKIMMING

Deport, unfinished

Don't know who the president is
and don't give a damn

Just want to get laid

Raw, ridiculous

Jumping up
and leaping sideways

I cross my fingers

IN

a forest—an old
cannon in a tree
that could fall if
there was a breeze

later

a boy kisses a girl
and the cannon falls
or not, if no one's there

later

abnormal that
there is a forest at all
after those kisses

later

a sequence
of abstract pictures

placed
between
interruptions

CONTACT

a jumble makes a coherent whole
a confusion clears in order

I follow a trail along a fence line
picking up discarded pizza boxes
which I stash in a pile near the base
of a post and cover with a tarp

someone I can't see is with me, has
gone ahead into a field, we
are talking about litter
and I think of a litter of pigs
instead of pizza boxes

I remember killing the runts in a pen
on a farm in Iowa when I was a boy
crushing their skulls with a hammer
and, later, standing in my bloody overalls
and asking forgiveness of the Universe

HARD TO TELL

desire from distress

flipped over, turned around
winter sprawls in space

voice repeats
because ear retreats

flipped over, turned around
spring twinkling in the antipodes

flipped over, turned around
spring twinkling in the antipodes

voice repeats
because ear retreats

blissful in uneasiness

MIMICS IN THE MIST

Mimics brush by
in white face and tattered tux
I turn, they turn, my turn, their turn
doubles hide in every word

I walk on the leaves
fallen on the ground—
 gravity's delight!

Truth follows beauty around the lake