VANISHING

Mezzotints by Holly Downing | Poems by Jane Hirshfield

GAZELLE & GOAT PRESS
“The more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the universe about us, the less taste we shall have for destruction.”

— Rachel Carson
Heart Starting and Stopping in the Late Dark

I cannot tell if this night singing comes from inside or outside the house, though today a cricket walked across my papers on the floor. He made a little clicking sound as he passed, from his strange knees, or his feet on the paper. He seemed to know where he wanted to get to. When the dying Bonnard had his nephew add the new yellow-gold to Almond in Blossom, it was his signature he canceled for that other. This late typing, starting and stopping, is not so different from a cricket’s walking to the night’s ear, I think—

if the night had an ear. Perhaps that is what startled him singing, wherever he is, startled by my insomnia into his one word, which is filled, I think, with dignity, which is filled, I think, with trust.

I would like to go, as at last Bonnard did, all the way into the world of the living, To sit there a while in the petals, altering nothing.
Bees

In every instant, two gates:
One opens to fragrant paradise, one to hell
Mostly we go through neither:
Mostly we nod to our neighbor,
Lean down to pick up the paper,
Go back into the house.
But the faint cries—ecstasy? horror?
Or did you think it the sound
Of distant bees,
Making only the thick honey of this good life?
Downed Branch

I wanted to be intimate to my own life.
What came were
the many eating their way through the tree.

Night of no wind, the grass littered with unripe apples.
The limb fell hard.

It was not
the weight of the apples but the many eating,
even on the ground still eating,
anonymous and steady.

Someone else could name them, genus, species.
Someone else could feel for them affection.

I wanted the intimate knowledge
they had of the tree.
Wanted their simple, almost weightless, and ruinous hunger
made without distinction of the lived-in tree.
Love in August

White moths against the screen in August darkness.
Some clamor in envy.
Some spread large as two hands of a thief
who wants to put back in your cupboard the long-taken silver.
Rock

What appears to be stubbornness, refusal, or interruption, is to it a simple privacy. It broods in one thought like a quail her clutch of eggs.

Mosses and lichens listen outside the locked door. Stars turn the length of one winter, then the next.

Rocks fill their own shadows without hesitation, and do not question silence, however long. Nor are they discomforted by cold, by rain, by heat. The work of a rock is to ponder whatever is: an act that looks singly like prayer, but is not prayer.

As for this boulder, its meditations are slow but complete. Someday, its thinking worn out, it will be carried away by an aunt. A Mystrium camillae, perhaps, caught in some equally diligent, equally single pursuit of a thought of her own.
Death said, Now I too am orphan.

Rock said, Burning Ones, pry your own blindness open.

Orca, thistle, kestrel withheld their instruction.

Earth stumbled within and outside us.

its meadows, its mountains, its instruments tuning their silence, its deep mantle broken.


Watching, listening, was like that: the low, wordless humming of being unwoven.

The imperial piano, its 89 strings unsummoned, unwoken.

A clarinet stripped of its breathing, the cello abandoned.

Tears stopped, eyes said. An unhearable music fell instead from them.

Rains stopped, roof said. Fires, forests, cities, cellars peeled open.

Some breakage can barely be named, hardly be spoken.

Break anything – a window, a piecrust, a glacier – it will break open.

Ghazal for the End of Time

(after Messiaen)
Death said, Now I too am orphan.

Rock said, Burning Ones, pry your own blindness open.

Orca, thistle, kestrel withheld their instruction.

Earth stumbled within and outside us.

its meadows, its mountains, its instruments tuning their silence, its deep mantle broken.

Hands wanted more time, hands thought we had time. Spending time’s rivers,


The imperial piano, its 89

The violin grieving, a hand too long empty held open.

A clarinet stripped of its breathing, the cello abandoned.

Tears stopped, eyes said. An unhearable music fell instead from them.

Rains stopped, roof said. Fires, forests, cities, cellars peeled open.

Some breakage can barely be named, hardly be spoken.

A voice cannot speak, cannot sing, without lips, teeth,

Break anything – a window, a piecrust, a glacier – it will break open.

Ghazal for the End of Time

th

, 90

st

strings unsummoned, unwoken.

lamina propria

coming open.

pesticide application and drift, and global warming. They are listed here in order of appearance in

Each of the insects featured in

mandibles, can be three inches long. These beetles live primarily underground, feeding their larvae on

One of the largest and most spectacular insects in the U.K., the male Stag Beetle, with its huge antler-like

Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle

drainage due to agriculture and forestry, and nutrient runoff from nearby agricultural activities.

is due to the removal of grazing animals that maintain the open nature of the species’ breeding sites,

The stunning Southern Damselfly is considered threatened in Europe and the U.K. It habituated in

Small Black Damselfly

placed on the endangered species list in 1976, when its native habitat started to disappear due to develop

Smith’s Blue Butterfly

striking, distinctive coloring, it has become rare and was declared federally endangered in 1989.

One of nature’s most efficient and fascinating recyclers, the male American Burying Beetle finds a small

American Burying Beetle

in 1998. Still considered endangered, the moths live in dry forests and lowland moist forests.

Endemic to the Hawaiian Islands, the Sphinx Moth was thought to be extinct until it was rediscovered

Hawaiian Green Sphinx Moth

Increased carbon dioxide from traffic has altered the soils these plants depend upon.

serpentine soils, which are high in magnesium and heavy metals, and low in nutrients such as nitrogen.

The striking Bay Checkerspot is a butterfly endemic to the San Francisco Bay Area, and is federally

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Colophon

Vanishing is a collaboration between Holly Downing of Sebastopol and Rhiannon Alpers in San Francisco, California. Holly made and hand-colored the mezzotint engravings, while Rhiannon designed, letterpress printed, and bound the edition. Holly was assisted in the editioning by Toni Stirling.

The papers are Rives BFK from France, Arjowiggins Kea Kolour Vellum Sombre Grey, and a handmade cotton rag paper that was created by Rhiannon Alpers for the edition. The enclosure is a drop spine magnet box with a museum glass panel in Dubletta bookcloth.


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