

We see hoof prints in the sands
 and follow them to this listening room
 of field stones—this sunlit pasture—
 letting their words embed themselves
 like seeds. Wild squatters, we climb boundless
 up the dizzying stairs, reaching an open bloom
 of windows and light. In semi-circles
 we cradle their quick, thick lines
 warm as wine, thinking, *Let it come!*
 and *How can they know?*
 We climb into the crumpled things
 they could not reach, dragging the weight
 of dread from the half-finished words, splayed,
 inside out, on the tips of their tongues,
 and ours, ours.

Under a ramshackle trellis of lights,
 they tap sun and frost and sanity,
 about what could be ours
 when we wake alone, uncomprehending
 clouds, or the wind off the water
 burning away in us, awakening a response.
 Rhythms rise, heads dip, arms sail, as if rowing
 to some shore that is ours alone.
 The unspeakable sea surrounds us, taking on
 its new spring look. Existing as a page of lines,
 as waves that come and go.
 We flock under their green fronds,
 lean into what we hear, for joy, the rippled tassels
 of seaweeds, a mother calling, a baby's cry.
 In the silence, hidden stars press
 like shells to our ears.
 What did you hear, traveling home,
 like your thoughts?

This is not a dream, though our trodden hearts
 are stamped with hoof prints.
 In a nearby pasture, horses feed,
 then gaze up—at once—what are they looking for?
 What mystery or triumph here is heard?
 Everywhere, music. The spring center,
 our bowed spines, the changelless brilliance
 from inside.

They spare us
 the cleaning up after the party,
 all the skeleton-words—their suicidal bloom
 into night—swept up, drop by bodiless drop,
 from a distant bleak beach,
 the way the Towers was spared
 from a fire long ago.
 Out of nowhere, flames curled around the frame,
 overcoming the object of love. Who can say
 we will not be spared,
 just as the Towers withdrew
 to the heights into itself, to bloom again,
 this fortress of so much intimate stone.
 Or how, sun-thickened, it was meant to stand
 —the way prayer swims inward—alone.

Why We Climb

On a reading of poems at the Towers



Beatrice Lazarus

They come slowly up, swim
 reddened seas to get here. The night before
 they could not sleep, eyes fixed on feckless
 words, lines criss-crossed, passed over, tossed
 into black wastebaskets, declarations
 unsaid. Some things are not meant to be read.
 They'll force a galaxy into an ocean,
 sunrise into the glow of a clock, a great wave
 of sighs into the kiss goodnight.

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Why We Climb

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