

Last Night I Dreamed I Was a Well
by Alberto Genk

Last night I dreamed I was a well,
and within me there was no water, no coins, no sleeping birds.

She slept there, naked,
as fire sleeps once it has devoured the whole house.

She slept with her head resting on my damp shadow,
her hair spread out like rhizomes,
seeking, in my lime-bound depths, the fossil placenta of a faceless god.

She slept without roots,
like the sob that wells up from a body already dry.

Her skin, still warm,
was a remnant of sun that had refused to wholly fade.

I had no voice—only depth, only echo.
I felt her breath sliding down my walls
like a blind butterfly searching for a way out.

I was a well,
but also a buried mirror,
an inverted dome, an open skull where time dripped like rotten honey.

And she, in her slumber of extinguished fire,
was at once the flame and the ash, the tongue and the wound,
the poem before it is written
on the damp surface of my subterranean skin.

Everything began to tremble.
The light was a womb and I was giving birth to my entrails:

the clotted blood,
black as the fermented flesh of a ripe olive;
the spike of bone,
dry and white as the rancid spit of the earth
that chews corpses in its loamy gums;
and the worms, swollen with fever,
wriggling among the guts like loose threads of stitching
from the incandescent nerves of the heart.

But she remained in me,
like the melody of a song no one ever composed,
like the Venus at her Mirror that no one ever painted,
yet still returning the light of a lamp that no longer burns.

I was a well,
and she slept within me
as the final word sleeps in the open mouth of a poet
who died before he could write it.