

## **Organic Ink**

Petals unfold from your tongue, you speak crimson  
velvet freshness into being. An opening bud of careful  
precision, a floral life floating on your breath, bees, and boundary.

You expand a mystery of molecules, at your word atomic spice  
springs into breeze; you dizzy hummingbirds, intoxicate butterflies.  
Shining beams play, shimmer, light your Shulamite, invite a tango.

You draw. Come, find my notes poured out in the garden, etched among  
lemons and limes. See, the lost apricot awakens! Sweet shoots adorn  
black crumbling branches. On every cell I inscribe: what was dead is alive.

You wait for me to discover your love among the leaves and thorns,  
(will I perceive it?) your hidden blossom of wonder, a shy heart-shaped  
valentine of third heaven, a sachet for this moment, a marked downbeat

of song, a bodily inhale of my eyes and skin and hair and breath. Filled  
with rising melody, your unspoken lyrics whispered on wind, I join  
your written roses in swaying dance, in blood-red bloom of belonging.

“Organic Ink” was first published in *The Christian Century*.

## **Pantoum of the Tinderbox**

Even now you could send a drop  
For the beating box of my brittle heart  
Years now so dry, no rain, no refrain  
Your lush green melody hushed away

From the beating box of my brittle heart  
You hide in shifting scorched sand  
Lush green melody a hushed memory  
I wander this, your parched desert

You hide in searing scorched sand  
My charred lips crack, peel in pain  
I wander this, your parched desert  
My throat rattles stripped prayer

My charred lips crack, appeal in vain  
Fingers twist like dying vines  
My throat rattles, stripped of prayer  
Once verdant land crumbles to stubble

Fingers twist like dying vines  
You say only, "I want it dry"  
My verdant land crumbles to stubble  
Again: "I am building a fire in you."

You say only, "I want it dry"  
So dry all my bones ache and cry  
Again: "I am building a fire in you."  
Drought presses on within, without

So dry all my bones ache to cry:  
Strike up the lightning march, then!  
Drought presses on within, without  
St. John tells me you are living fire

Strike the lightning match, then!  
Your gasping, arid box awaits  
St. John tells me you are loving fire  
Turn tinder to bright ardent flame

Your gasping, arid box awaits  
Years now so dry, no rain, no refrain  
Turn tender, ignite ardent flame  
Even now you could drop the match.

“Pantom of the Tinderbox” was first published in *The Penwood Review*.

## Nocturne

Silk of a thousand shades flows from your throat, night  
notes billow, float, dance in the sleeping garden, tangle  
of rosebush the shadowed lectern of your liturgy. Star  
beams cannot find your gray body but fiery sparks issue

from open beak: scrub jay shriek melts into lilt of robin,  
goldfinch warble sharpens to hawk cry, hoot owl, medley  
of sky and tree. You wing wide, embrace all nations of the  
tongue, a writer of icons, singing doorways of egg and gold

and open eyes, a call to the soaring beyond. You chant the  
quilt of creation, hymn to fingers that wove the fabric of  
melody, conducted patterns of feather, flight and fugue.  
Now the phoebe's sweet chirp, swallow's chatter, scraping

crow-caw, you swallow the wide world whole just to croon  
your divine office, embroider blessing on the hours, lauds  
in blackness. Mockingbird, you settle on my chimney top  
like a church steeple, trilling frogsong, the cricket's hum,

burbling laugh of the neighbor child. You chat, you rasp,  
chirrup, scold. You sing sunlight in the darkness, telling  
cocoon and keening coyotes how we were knitted to love,  
endure, and even in the cleft of night, joy in spilling praise.

“Nocturne” was first published in *The Windhover*.