

AUNT CHLOE

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Love Poem in the Black Field

Because I saw you, alone, your black body slicing
The thick fat of night. I shouldn't have been able to
Make you out, but I know your shadow, his dance.
Because you can see in the dark like I can, eyes used
To lack of light, keen as the livestock They claim
Are our kin. Because you name them all, even the cattle:
Jeremiah, Temperance, Rebel. Because you look
At the animals like you look at all the living and look at me
Like honey in your palm. You freed that dying cow—
Because you believe a life is more Than her milk.
You lead her into the woods, walked until she wasn't
Afraid of what was beyond this land, and I was terrified
To rest my eyes a minute, to leave you in that deep fog.

Because you returned and I praised God, and that joy roils
Like guilt in my gut. Because when they beat you wet
I heaved, and when I wept for you, you wiped my cheek.
Because you know fear; because you know how to live anyway.