

7-15-2016

After the Black Chrysalis

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Recommended Citation

Youmans, Marly (2016) "*After the Black Chrysalis*," *The Mythic Circle*: Vol. 2016 : Iss. 38 , Article 9.
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mcircle/vol2016/iss38/9>

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Mythcon 52: The Mythic, the Fantastic, and the Alien

Albuquerque, New Mexico; July 29 - August 1, 2022

<http://www.mythsoc.org/mythcon/mythcon-52.htm>



Abstract

Cracked. Cracked open—praise To that, for that, praise That the black, feathery lint Was washed clean
from my face, That the black, feathery lint Came off in wisps and shreds And crinkled threads Like thrums
from a loom, Like lines of false poetry, Like cat fur in the mouth On waking.

After the Black Chrysalis

by

Marly Youmans

Cracked.
Cracked open—praise
To that, for that, praise
That the black, feathery lint
Was washed clean from my face,
That the black, feathery lint
Came off in wisps and shreds
And crinkled threads
Like thrums from a loom,
Like lines of false poetry,
Like cat fur in the mouth
On waking.

For hours I lay
Motionless
While they licked
The black, feathery lint
From my mouth and ears,
While they combed
With fingers and lice combs
The black, fine-feathery lint
From my hair.
Grateful.
Praise
To them, all
Backing away,
Leaving me
With the hush
(Praise to the hush)
And the mirrors.

In the black
I had turned to melt,
Rippling pour of metanoia,
My body, my mind a creek
Bearing sticks and leaves,

Tearing them over the rocks,
Far-faring, far, far
Until I knew no place,
No likenesses,
No name, no map.
Nothing pinned me.
Nothing moored.

Then came.
Then, came
The further change.
Like a terrible
Vice in the gut,
When a medicine
Comes and goes
Gathering up a sickness,
Smoothing the rumpled muscles,
A relentless hand that gathers,
A waistband sewn
On a gathered dress—like that, I
Was born again,
Gathered into the air,
Into the company
Of the others.
Washed,
I was
All
Wash,
All sparkle,
All dewdrops.

They hung me
From rafters to dry.
They left me there to dry
In long loneliness,
And when my joints

At last, at last
Joined me,
Made joinery,
Made joinery of me,
Made a house of me,
Made a place to live—
When my strands
Of muscle loved and held me
Fast, and my washed
Upside down hair
Began to expand,
To have its own thoughts
And volition, and so
Like a forest of antennae
Floated into the air,
For the first time
I saw what came
Along with me,
What came
From me,
To me.

The
Mass
Of them like net,
Gossamer and black
With colors—stains
Like the ones that sun and Gothic
Windows rain onto floors,
Glass stained, stained, pane
Marked with glass-blebs,
Marked with shade,
All stained
But dawn-beautiful—
Eyes and eyespots, I
Was nothing but seeing,
Nothing but losing
Myself in seeing
What was still
Nameless,

Naming them only
As like one
Thing after
Another,
Not yet knowing,
Hardly
If at all
Believing.
I glimpsed them,
The mass of them like
A burden, trailing from my back.
And then I saw them, saw more, saw better,
Saw colors and scales and shape,
A morpho iridescence,
An inward architecture
Resembling a grove of trees,
Winter limbs splotched with Christmas lights,
Red and blue, leaf-green and yellow
Wrapped in a cloud of shadow.
Like some colossal, mad gown,
All stain and supports and gossamer,
A triumphant gown with train
Designed for a monarch, for a queen,
The wild, imperial silks
Catwalked in some alternate Paris,
Some metaphysical Fashion Week.
I saw the mass of them.
The name flowered in my mind.
Then the grief (change is grief),
And then the praise (change is also this), it
Streamed, filled me until I tingled,
The dew gathering
And flinging from my
Upside down staring eyes,
And the life and light and blood of me
Coursed through the veins of that mass
Like branched lightning,
Flash of joinery, flying
Sap of fire.