A Brief Oral Account of Torture Pulled Down Out of the Wind

[What the Hood Whispers to the Head]

friend I grow more alive with you each day
I drink up your sweat your spit your tears
I drink up your grey phlegm and the blistered coagulations of blood
minerals once a part of you
fizz between us like cold starlight
scouring the desert and when you drown
in the long keelhaul of electricity
I suck in your breath
that prickly chandelier of wind
shuddering from your throat
believe me when I say that there are things
you do not want to see
your body is eating itself
and still they grin they strike a pose for the camera
when they wring me out they’ll know
I held your dreams
like a bell holds the iron ghost of sound
and now I’m drenched at the end of my chain
truculent implacable circling inside
the shape your fear makes
lunging toward that cloudy omphalos
of scent that plumbs you like a poisoned well
tang of urine tang of sweat
blowback of pheromones rising
in corpuscles of oil ripe with the soured colostrum
of your beginning
this is our first and only dalliance
for we’re off and running headlong downhill
through some bottomless perdition
statues topple songbirds plummet from the sky
generals hide beneath their overcoats
clouds boil then blot out the sun
whole continents fall away beneath our feet
and when you turn to face me at last
you will face the gnawed synapses of memory
rising mercurial from the deep
brine-flooded folds of your own brain
gathering into a throbbing body of froth
gathering into a windbent wound sprouting teeth
you will weep
you will call it dog
you will kneel and rise and kneel again
you will devour yourself in your dreams
at night through the crack below the door
I’ve glimpsed you floating in the air above the body
drenched with a vermillion glow
the whole cell gliding beneath your light
I’ve dreamt of throngs of you
rising unabated through the calm of sleep
hearts of string and papier-mâché
stuffed with the offal of goats or chickens
humming chanting stammering on the vulgar parlance
of the backward and the dead
of devious sodomites that starve themselves for their sins
of djinns sidling through subway tunnels
drawing their bristling tails up beneath their robes
one flinch and the hemispheres are riven
sliding into the hardscrabble abyss of your caesura
one flinch and whole civilizations are buried in sand
believe me when I say that such figments
of the imagination will be squashed with impunity
I will kick you back across the precipice of illusion
I will marry you to the earth
or hold you down squirming until my master
places you in the middle of a cold tray
fool you have neither wings nor feet
and I have no heart
yet see how I gleam without it
[What the Torturer Whispers to Himself in the Mirror]

whence the fuck have we come to this place
to this godawful understory of the unrighteous
where the nightsky looks like some putrid ocean drying up
and the air itself stops up the breath
like wading through static through a thousand broken voices
a scourge of suffocating ghosts languishing in the heat
and despite it all we sleep the sleep of the just
dreaming of the cunts of Istanbul
a whole harem calling out to us wraithlike
across mountains and the vast expanse of empty desert
whispering to us through a veil of hookah smoke and silk scarves
until we rise in darkness at last without rebuke
hardened by what we forego invoking the fear of our people
invoking the columns of fire and ash
even as the low concussions in the east
reverberate bellowing those spineless simians
from their mudhuts and holes those muddleheaded mopes
that they bring here to cower and slobber
and sink into a pile of their own shit
listen we are beholden to no one we are without peer
without recompense we have pledged our troth to the one god
and the one country and to each other
and still there is this monumental boredom this loneliness
this squat cinderblock prison the tv nowhere
a garble of pixels the flies the fetid stink
of the weak and the mad
some nights a sunburnt lieutenant drops by to give orders
or to laugh raucously at his own dirty jokes
some nights we drink and wait for the phone to ring
some nights we burn sodden mattresses
books photos clothes of the dead
or sit gassumed shooting at animals
scurrying across the lunar landscape of the lost
but listen tonight we’ll redeem the names
of our fathers tonight we’ll rise up
shirtless lipsticked levitating in front of the mirror
brandishing our cocks in our rubbergloved fists
the dogs whimper pace inside their cages
through the walls we can hear our enemies crying out
cold sleepless I drift beneath the hood
and dream the silence is a glass ship
descending from the fathoms of outerspace
then occasionally a burst of laughter
from another room or a blunt yowl
and I remember my face reflected back at me
from the gleaming surface of a boot
like the enormous wizened face of a squid
at the bottom of a black ocean drying up
once I dreamt my body
was a life raft on fire or a bed going up in flames
and my heart flew above me like a wet kite
as I paddled with all my remaining strength
through my village through refugee camps
through foreign cities dissolving on the wind
I kept passing you
you had been to market you looked besieged
by boredom so small
inside your clothes you couldn’t lift your eyes
what I wanted to say was this
once in the beginning I dreamt of you
surging over a hill singing your voices
welded together in the air
you were defiant and mysterious
you were a crush of candlelight at the gates
[What the Fly Whispers to the Voices in the Wall]

once when you could not lift your arms
I partook of your bodies
now you’re no more than puddles trapped in stone
forgive me my old opprobriums
as even tonight I’m about my father’s business
the world churns on
through endless joy and oblivion
so speak to me now as you disappear
and I will carry your message
to the cold lips of the sleepers
yes I will tell them I saw you standing amazed
smiling in another life
I will look them in the eye
I will tell them you longed to be loved