

Theo Steele

[What have we done]

What have we done in this, our darkest night?
To what forgotten forest are we fell
And how, so root and branch do both curse spell,
Where fog, encoal'd, imbues with cloud our sight,
Surrounding ev'ry face we meet with Blight,
Whose knived line carv's out a trace, a Well
Cascading in with all its mights to Hell?
The vapours held betwixt these lines move tight
Into gaping personages then, quick
As they dance into shape, do vacate back
To blackn'd smog which as the ocean shifts
Over itself, a growing potion, thick
To perfect brew'd. My bones grow Ache and Lack;
But drown'd out is their path—it floats adrift.

They crumble in atop themselves, debris
From some controll'd explosion: dry and charr'd,
Destin'd to be the waste fate does discard.
Yet, time allowed, what seems fine chance will be
And, likewise to two falling trees, my bone,
Unseen or seen, did spark a tiny fire.
A lonely ember 'twas, and did require
Some movement to its fickle flame inspire.
So moved I to my deepest depths of will,
With heavy heart embarking on its sea.
The cascade I had 'fore in-gazed faced me,
Wide-as-the-horizon, an endless hill.
The top did seem but further every inch
But 'hind did seem sure death. 'Twas in this pinch

I rose my head. Above it to my heart
A crack in distance shone—'twas my ember.
The flame brought me to my feet remember
And, half in mind, Ascent of Cascade start.
Behind the flow I knew there to be ice,
For such cold worlds do not let flowing be,
so passed I through, life's ocean dropp'd on me,
and with my brittle bones and star roll'd dice
I plucked from falling world two daggers cold.
My eyes obscured by wash, I blindly dug
My place, lifting my molten body's mold
By hand, hardening to the rocks each tug,
The upstream coming down 'coming more tame
The closer to the hope-made sky I came.

Then, as a blacksmith finds his mold self-grown,
My practic'd pattern forged a way its own
And I, the more I let my way be shown,
Did seem to rise that water made of stone.
Away dropp'd all my fat as up I rose,
Away dropp'd loosen hairs, my sweat it froze
And fell, and dropp'd beneath, pass'd 'neath my toes
To endless death, rinsing me feet to nose.
But just as I did to this purpose mold,
The ice with which I rose grew weary, crack'd
So softly and remorselessly, compact
No more as to the warm we came, and roll'd
Away to join my sweat and flesh below,
My knife no place to cling, my life to stow.

I swim through slush of half-solid and rise,
The swamp up which I move, ever more warm,
And though at start I find I face a swarm
Of loosen water rocks, I soon surmise
The more I climb the softer each stroke comes.
So on I flow, my breath held deep but soft,
I let my body fall again, be wash'd
Into direction mapp'd by playing drums.
One knife's whisk'd out my hand, flies back and falls;
The other comes to slush within the marsh,
Melting into a liquid form, they blend.
A faded wash seemingly moves o'er all;
A slight light pigments the cold pond harsh,
Revealing smokey lines of my knife's end.

I'm roped on to the source, luminate, warm,
Floating up seemingly by force 'gainst law
Of Newton. Each light-ray does one ice thaw,
Reflecting light through perfect diamond form,
Shining direct into each other's face,
Beaming an endless web around my field,
Housing my growing self inside a shield,
And bathing me without inside this place.
I close my eyes and feel their cocoons grow
More pink, more soft, and in this tired state
I fade into a peaceful sleep: a gate,
A door, a light, a face, the clouds 'come snow
Appear and I do choose to open all,
The gate, the door, the face, the light, I fall

Upon a bed of compact mist, all soft,
My heart alight, the ember grown aloft,
My skin feels 'kin to a burning fire's waft,
Sizzling at every edge and spitting 'oft.
My open'd eyes do look around the wood,
The ghoulish form's tear in the air re-sewn
So through it dancing branches from roots grown
Do frame the stars, suspended, understood
By me, who gapes up from my shelter home.
At once, in shock, the cloud on which I float,
Does drift away, discovering below't
A pool of stillness, dotted with specs chrome:
The stars. They glitter 'gainst my mirror eye,
And back they swim into that mirror pool,
Wherefrom they bounce onto the canopy,
Sprinkling their light through ground, through sky, through all.