



Change is in the air. The flame stirs to life
that which is inside you, that which craves re-creation;
the Spirit breathes, shimmering, onto earth
and finds in love the point on which all life turns.

— Rainer Marie Rilke, from *Sonnets to Orpheus II*, 12

Abba Lot went to see Abba Joseph and said to him, “Abba, as far as I can I say my little office, I fast a little, I pray and meditate, I live in peace and as far as I can, I purify my thoughts. What else can I do?”

Then the old man stood up and stretched his hands toward heaven. His fingers became like ten lamps of fire and he said to him, “If you will, you can become all flame.”

In the silence of the stars,
In the quiet of the hills,
In the heaving of the sea,
Speak, Lord.

In the stillness of this room,
In the calming of my mind,
In the longing of my heart,
Speak, Lord.

In the voice of a friend,
In the chatter of a child,
In the words of a stranger,
Speak, Lord.

In the opening of a book,
In the looking of a film,
In the listening to music,
Speak, Lord.

For your servant listens.
David Adam

Poem with a line from the Desert Fathers

Those monastics deceive.
Not intentionally, of course --
that would run counter
to their best matter:
Love, absolute and without measure.

The deception
is to name them ascetics.
Disappearance into desert
plays as renunciation --
as if solitude were the issue.
As if the body deprived were the issue.
As if there were
an issue.

Crossing into the desert
is an act of extravagance.
Witness the immoderation
of wind turned blind storm.
The promise of water wavering
over horizon so expansive
no dowsers would know
where to start.

The seeker senses his footsteps
lighten when he crosses.
He ticks off the items
of his right living --
so different from those
whose journeys end
with bones bleached,
picked clean
by some spiny denizen
of desert. Or
happenstance.

Abba, he says,
when he finds the father
he's sought.
What now?

The desert father rises,
stretches his long fingers
to empty sky.

They burst at the tips,
as cactus splits on end
to allow bloom.
But nothing pushes forth.
Instead, the father opens viaducts
for what is Divine,
rampant,
to come through.

He said: Why not become fire?

After that, the seeker averts
his eyes. He is not ready.
The Spirit roars through the desert
without him, in flagrante.

This is no beguilement.

We are all gypsies in the desert,
carrying our perfect grains.
We catch the wild
yeasts that float on air
and pray for their foamy
intemperance.

Pray for fire.

The sear, the hermetic glaze
on bread is surface only.
Break it open.
See the crumb and loft and tooth
of the meal as prepared?

Break us open,
ours is a God
of plenty.

— Sabrina Vourvoulias