

Vicki Graham

The Hummingbird's Tongue

Preface *by* Ian Marshall

Red Dragonfly Press

Contents

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I. WATERSHED

Watershed	13
Composed	14
Synthesis	15
Threshold	16
Six Garden Reveries	17
Unwavering	22
Moon Songs	24
A Grain of Sand	26
Round	30

II. SONGS

Rain Songs	33
Blues	35
Hush	36
Two on the Gravel Bar	37
Rose	39
Slake	41
Coast Gardening	42
Songs a Poet Might Sing to Herself	43
Stone Work	45
Six Songs for Hands	46
Green Apple – Black Plate	49
Sculptor	51
Six Reveries on Shells	52

III. NO END

- Bird Songs 57
Come Grieving 61
Moorings: Blacklock Point 62
Chance 64
Symbiont 65
Swainson's Thrush 67
Holding: Six Variations 68
Replete 71
Migrants: Port Orford Beach 72
Refining 74
One Bird 75
No End 77

Watershed

Joy silk. Loss a knot.
Metaphor, like paint or stone,
a medium: the pen's black threads
tangle, untangle. A heron's cry
breaks the night, wakes desire.

Learn to love what is broken,
but first touch what remains:
the wiry hairs of beard lichen,
the willow leaf's satin,
the hazelnut's beaked husks.
Part the petals of the nootka rose
as tenderly as the bee in mid-summer.
Lick the pollen grains
from the fingertip. Taste honey.

And remember:
even the cleistogamous flowers
of the evergreen violet
must break to release their seeds.

Rain Songs

I.

River work: Not to erode,
not to grow teeth and gnaw
like a rat, but to chisel
ragged banks smooth,
polish stones, run sculptor's hands
over the gravel bar.

II.

Rain wakes desire to be rain.
Stone wakes desire to be stone.
The river, too, wakes desire:
To be stone and hold fast
to the earth. To be rain
and flow fast to the sea.

III.

River rain: steady thrum.
Forest rain: a syncopation
of leaf and branch.
After rain: not silence
but a counterpoint
of creek and water ouzel
flooding with song.

IV.

Sing river. Sing stone.
Sing sun. Sing wind.
Sing the great blue heron

wading the shallows,
the ouzel building a nest
under the water fall.
Sing rain. Sing flood.
Sing willows uprooted,
boulders lifted.
Sing chance. Sing change.
Sing now. Sing home.

V.

Lie flat as a stone
on the gravel bar. Listen.
The rain is singing. Drop
by drop your colours
deepen and the river rises.
Feel it tug. Let go.
Sing with the rain
all the way to the sea.

VI.

Live, like the salmon,
by rain. Follow,
steel strong, pearl scaled
and sleek, one thread,
unwavering.