

STILL, THE SKY

**ALSO BY TOM PEARSON**

*The Sandpiper's Spell*

# STILL, THE SKY



*Poems, Artifacts,  
Ecofacts, & Art*

TOM PEARSON

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*To our sacred quietude,  
For us at the center of our labyrinth*



Fig. 1. *The Archives of Asterion, Notes & Stanzas 255-363*

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Fig. 2. *The Archives of Asterion*

*Homesick for homeland, Daedalus despised Crete  
And his long exile there, but the sea held him.  
“Though Minos blocks escape by land or water,”  
Daedalus said, “still, the sky is before us,  
And that’s the way we’ll go. Minos’ dominion  
Does not include the air.” He turned his thinking  
Toward unknown arts, changing the laws of nature.*

—Ovid



STILL, THE SKY



**Prologue:**  
**Waters That Know Our Names**

My departure instigated his exit,  
Longer, slower, more deliberate, the way  
Of the sensitive, thoughtful and reflective,  
Even through heartbreak.

Storm clouds from the era of our grandmothers  
Gathered over us, blowing in from the sea,  
Mothers from the hills where on the lowest klines  
They'd lounge and listen

Then turn to night and a harvest of sorrows,  
Pack for tomorrow to leave the land of our  
Ancestors, exiled to waters that have seen  
Us a thousand times.

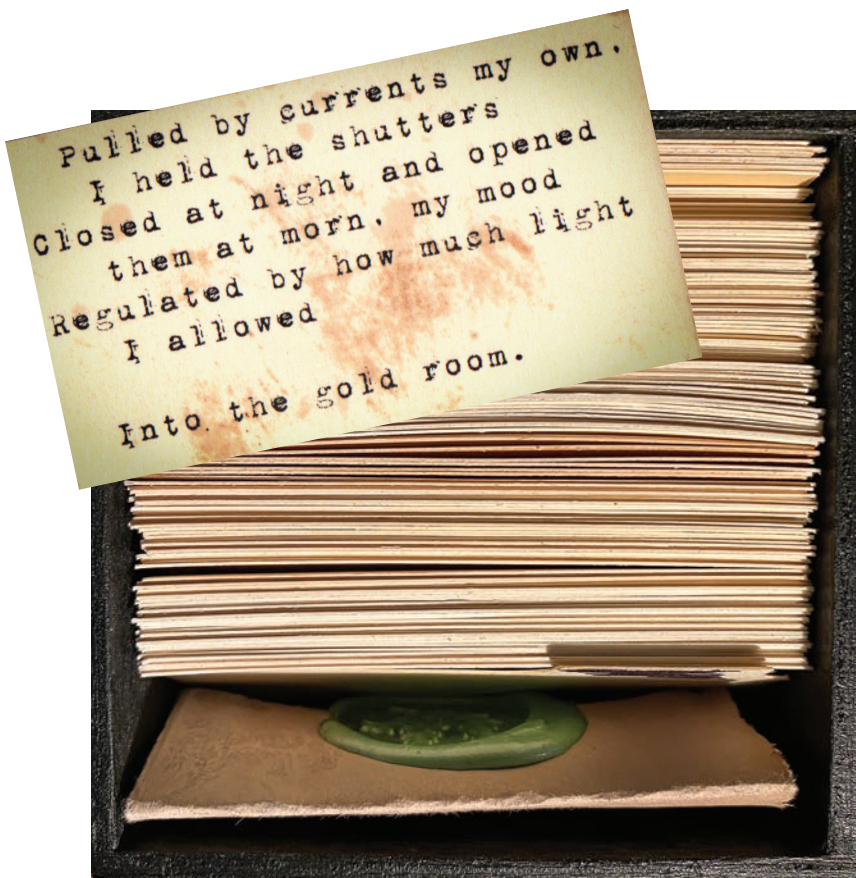


Fig. 3. Notes & Stanzas (set 1 of 7)



## I. A Foreign Stillness

### *i. Fragments of Icarus*

Let god folly and father fracture matter  
Not, this immortalization, for us, a curse,  
Constellations for others to navigate  
By what to avoid.

There was a great voice in my head the morning  
After my death that woke me from sleep, whispered  
Into my ear, *Get up, go—go write*, urging  
Me to confession—

To remember it not as a failure of flight,  
Not for the fall, for the end of that life,  
But for the tender years of sweetest youth spent with  
    You, my childhood beast—

For treasures received, hidden in the garden,  
Passing stories as we gathered wax and feathers,  
Telling the tale and untelling it  
    Soon as it was told.

Found then at last is this, our first stanza of youth,  
An autobiography of imprisonment,  
The metronomic distance between arrival  
    And departure.

In the slatted daybreak, I witnessed, peeking,  
Shadows in the garden and increments of  
Color, light, and sound, which crept between the  
    Attention I gave.

Pulled by currents unknown, I held the shutters  
Closed at night and opened them at morn, my mood  
Regulated by how much light I allowed  
    Into the cold room—

Laying out ideas there upon twin beds,  
Pushed together at night and boldly turned down  
For a harvest inside of future dreams, for  
    What was yet to come.

In the future, I will remember this:  
The blessing of the fleet, a foreign stillness,  
Cousins to nostalgia and melancholy,  
    The passing lanterns

Of the night fishermen who poled and prayed  
To hook a dream or spear a light under the  
Suggestion of stars, once crossed, crossed again,  
    Sewing up the sky.

And in the future, I will think of him along  
A cartography of where his hands have passed,  
Maps drawn on silk, hidden in coat pockets and  
    Of his quiet stealth.

I marked days and a catalog of lesser  
Innovations on the wall in an attempt  
To record our evenings and think nothing to  
    Look upon them now—

In the sea, more than before us, and in that  
Effort to notate what had occurred in the  
Night, more than nearer your promises, more than  
The whispering waves—

More than Helios to hypnotize, with wings  
Or sails, testing, if the gods did not come, we would  
Become the gods, through flight and hubris, with a  
Harness for the wind.

But our alchemy gained little from it,  
Our movement toward freedom, plunged, swallowed by  
Seagulls or marauded by marlin, angels  
That swim, fish that fly.

Along the margin of the boundary layer,  
Water chased wind, coupled currents clashed to  
Appease the appetites of too many in  
Every direction—

And your soul's energy, overharvested,  
How I cried to leave you there, screaming in your  
Labyrinth, and me aft, behind in the tailwind  
Of my father's flight!

Such craftwork, left like a plaything for a child,  
His carelessness, a sword, and in the future  
I will think of him thus, a father asleep,  
A mentor surpassed—

A prisoner once caught, now a child drowning in  
The sea. It was written by my own hand  
Upon scrolls of the deep, this very love, this  
Passion for falling.

*ii. Last Days*

Fraternal order, their quiet solidarity,  
Did not dissuade them from separating us,  
Commencing a dialogue while dividing  
His profile from mine.

Worse, they blocked my view of his bruises, a rag  
Held to his head, of his swollen eye, and the  
Cuts on the bridge of his nose as he nodded  
To sleep in his hands.

I came to hold his head and wondered how  
He arrived here, pleading to keep him awake,  
But soon enough, left him as before on  
The path he knew well.

Resting yesterday, I dreamed him walking through  
The garden. I dreamed him, dreaming me, now as  
I walk the sullied streets and ravaged pathways,  
    Observing his work

Of the previous night, and though feeling sorrow for  
His state of mangled fleece and outrage,  
I understand that I am the one alone,  
    Becoming extinct—

The price of our rich bounty, this long famine:  
Paramours of shadow, a brother taken,  
A father's right to rule and his bequest of  
    Carnage, your birthright.

Each step I take without you, the contours of  
My own rage are softened by lamplight against  
The work you were enlisted for, to enact the  
    Bloody sacrifice—

To be at one with each one buried, below,  
Finding your scribbled notes and reflections left  
Above on mantles, my wings struggling with the  
    Altitude and wind—

Dividing up our living space, finding fault  
Lines along the floor, holes in all the walls,  
Inaccessible geographies, oases,  
And subdivisions—

Beyond the green threshold where we once lived,  
Riches you hid, and me street facing, trapped in  
The remains of what we allotted in the  
Divvying of our lives—

Moving in an arid desert full of bones,  
Sinking in a quenchless ocean, felled to bones,  
Calcifying in the ruins of our prison palace,  
Your maze built of bones.

*iii. Waning*

To the others, note, a redacted affair,  
Illegible on the evening his sea chest,  
A heart once open, broke at once, livid white,  
Whistling to himself—

Tottering and lingering on the taste of  
So little company. He cried out, but he  
Would not speak when spoken to, and so  
I left him alone

With his unruly tongue and with his sour  
Disposition. It did us good all the salt  
We saved that summer, the taste of ambrosia  
On our purple lips—

The summer before the gardener brought his  
Note to me in the shady afternoon,  
But knowing his occupation until dawn,  
I held my peace.

The investigation of the late season  
Was like a sunset, with his hot temperament  
Changing with the changing daylight, and as the  
Days became shorter

So did his shadow shrink until it cast no  
Longer around the edges of the tower.  
At first cold, he was no more though the story  
Went from first to last.

It belongs to me now, forever, and only  
Thereafter in the silhouette of the  
Night theater, all these riches unseen,  
This prize, unlifted.



*iv. Senex*

A father's word turns with the tides, coos like a  
Child in adult conversations, listens to the  
Protest of peacocks and renders their language  
To us decoded.

Those he sheltered in the gathering, clipped and  
Caged, reached for their freedom with talons sharp  
Enough to arrest creation from Creator  
Before his work was done

And the cruel task complete, to make something of  
The air and condemn it to the ground. Later,  
Seagulls made nests in each corner he blockaded,  
Until fledging, fell.

I waited to enter through an arch along  
The breezeway, the one window I had into  
A gentleness in his heart, a story for each  
Feather we gathered—

Learned of him in shadow, tales told as asides  
To lighten the tasks we toiled in winter, until  
The nest was full again in spring, one less death  
In the family.

The old skittered 'round the garden wall  
Protecting the new life so painstakingly earned.  
The honey on our lips from bees who cross-  
Wind along back roads

Inoculated us against the pollen  
That dropped along the ash's hemline, blood of  
Heaven, manna of stars, dead-fallen here in  
A snowstorm of spring.

It kept us running on a river of tears,  
Covered our conveyance with a fine yellow caul,  
An unruined world that held both the venom  
And the antidote.

*v. Prospect*

In the oration of heroes and gods,  
We were immortal in their way, could survive  
Our disasters, pass through our deaths. We had the  
Resilience of youth.

Floating along the wake of water, beneath  
Stern warnings, we towed as near to shore as we  
Could muster, careful not to run aground of  
Previous mistakes.

Seven or fourteen or more, anything  
Less and we were undone in our own way,  
Lasciviously bothered by the sport of  
The hunt for those here—

Clouding the waters with wantonness and a  
Fuzziness over their own potential, with  
Nature upon their shoulders, on this ground where  
Mortal men stand fixed—

The tiny troops forced to proceed, caution for  
Fear, their mission before them cast to the ground,  
The sentinels of the labyrinth's reveries  
From which we set sail

From the docks of prospect, running up the masts  
Of first discovery with something later  
For our pains. In the sea his voice obeyed the  
Breath of the moment

And swallowed up him whom the gods made to play  
Therein, a creature that I have loved as my  
Own, and on that day, he spread his wings and flew  
Out over the sea.

*vi. Apotheosis of Ganymede*

His teachings rendered us neophytes, budding  
In desire, clinging to an arm with  
Aspirations vital as a row, for the  
    Fight, wrestling our own—

For my own conundrum, the propositions  
Of Helios and Poseidon, revealed now  
By one Icarus of Crete and Candia,  
    Who held a monster—

Not tall nor strong but beautiful against the  
Specimen of Ganymede, honored for  
Effecting the perfect proportions idealized in  
    That society—

Lifted top to tail to Zeus, he would what I  
Could not, such futility, resisting the  
Seductions of rising and falling, courting the  
    Depths of sky and sea.

They rest unevenly, canyons from peaks, the  
Underworld written not against heaven's height  
But for descent, not a god wish but for death,  
    A new beginning—

To destroy us while we create them again  
In our own image and occupy their seats  
For some time. It is in the descent again  
We thus reconcile—

And not in the apotheosis of the  
Cupbearer to quench a jealous god, but in  
The passing of the mortal and monster  
Back into god form—

Given wings at the beginning or end to  
Escape this tower on feathers or fins, not  
As it was prognosticated to us, we  
Rose in the gloaming.

*vii. Summer Son*

Pesce volante, its entrails left gutted,  
Impaled, skewered, then finished, retractable,  
The separation of flesh, the skeleton  
Of the flying fish—

A foreign stillness suggested a change,  
Smashed like rotting apricot, tasted honey from  
Lying lips, felt the sour circumference of  
Adulterous hips—

He was your grandfather after all, beaming  
His all upon us, watching each step we took,  
Luring me to kiss his face in the sky, then  
Setting on my fall.



Fig. 4. *Seed of Minos*