

things you cannot answer



Painting by Sarah Oyetunde (www.abstractorganics.co.uk). "Things You Cannot Answer" was written by Margaret Donsbach Tomlinson for *Rattle's* Ekphrastic Challenge, September 2015, and selected by Timothy Green as the Editor's Choice winner.

why in the night when the psyche goes widening over the long
and intricate landscape where sleep knits together the real and the unreal
do we not lunge awake to find the sun sizzling at the sea bottom?

where have all the dolphins gone? where the frolicking fish?
where can a small human being lie down that is not haunted by the absence of moments
in a life so crowded with them that every moment becomes a memory of moments?

when will the air drown us as surely as the white bubbles on the wave crests
hoard their sorrows in a foam of unrelenting and susurratious lack of melody?
when can we find a home in which no one before us has died or slept or awakened?

what is the story of red? what does the red tongue taste in a feast of water?
what is the story of blue? what does the blue nerve carry in its capillaried forest?
what is the story of gulls in the color-drenched crying of the ghost-ridden night?

how can the slide of one sand grain against another and the next against the next
erode our belief in beaches? how many do we displace in a daydream? how much
does an earth composed of such fine-faceted rocks loose and fused and melted cost?

who knocked on your window in the hours before dawn when the moon hung pregnant
below the clouded stars? who did you dream of? who will protect you if by morning light
a goat-footed myth beckons from the doorway? who oils the hinge of the daybreak?

—Margaret Donsbach Tomlinson

