The Door Standing Open

four songs of spiritual torment
for low voice and piano

Joelle Wallach
The Door Standing Open
four songs of spiritual torment for low voice and piano

Music by Joelle Wallach based on poems by Robert Mezey

In accord with the poet’s usage, pronouns referring to God are not capitalized in these songs.

I
On the Equator
page 1

How rarely your mercy visits me,
My king, my father;
... most of my days, I am your wandering son
Who has cast his lot like a prophet
In the desert of his days.

And your deliverance that comes to me then,
My father, my king,
Is like a well that the wanderer came on at last,
When he had almost prayed for death from thirst
And the heat that shrivels the body.

... at times it is so sweet,
... like a miraculous dream that you give
To the blind man in his agony, at night.
He dreams that his eyes are open and that he sees
The face of his wife and the dark gold of her hair.

But at times you make sport of me,
My father, my king, and I draw back
... grow small with loneliness, like the blind man
awakened
I gaze at my coming days, and I descend
Into the black abyss....

II
Like a Girl
page 6

Like a girl who knows that her body drives me to begging,
God taunts me, Flee if you can! But I can’t flee,
For when I turn away from him, angry and heartsick,
With a vowel on my lips like a burning coal:
I will not see him again —

I can’t do it.
And I turn back
... knock on his door,
Tortured with longing

As though he had sent me a love-letter.

III
Vetus Flamma
page 8

That love which once was nearest to my heart
... pressed against my arm and forehead too,
Is gone and you went with it. We are two.
You have your legends, I, an empty heart;
And in the quieted pounding of that heart;
I hear what future I awaken to.
Night falls each dawn and stays a week or two,
And all there is to eat is my own heart.

I nurse a broken love, your broken word,
And cannot even recollect your name,
But keep the smallest remnant of your word
To ornament my door with what I lost.
Unaging ghost, you never said your name —
You only came to wrestle, and I lost.

IV
With My God the Smith
page 11

Like chapters of prophesy my days burn, in ... revelations,
... my body between them’s a block of metal....
... over me stands my God the Smith, who hits hard:
The wounds that Time has opened in me, open their mouths
... release in a shower of sparks the intrinsic fire.

This is my just lot — until dusk on the road.
... when I return to throw my beaten block on a bed,
My mouth is an open wound
And naked I speak with God:
You worked hard.
Now it is night, come, let us both rest.

from Uri Zvi Greenberg
The Door Standing Open

I

On the Equator

Robert Mezey

Joelle Wallach

How rarely your mercy visits me,

my father, my king:

most of my days I'm your wand'ring
and the heat that shrivels the body.
At times it is so sweet like a miraculous dream you give to the blind man’s agony at night, dreaming his eyes are open seeing the face of his wife, the dark gold of her hair.
But at times you make sport of me, my father, my king,

and I draw back, grow small with loneliness, like the blind man

waken’d from his dream, my father, my king, my father my king.

I gaze at my coming days, and I descend into the black abyss.

My father, my king, my father, my
My fa–ther, my king,
my fa–ther, my king,
my fa–ther, my king,
My fa–ther, my king,

poco stringendo

in to the dark abyss.
In accord with the poet's usage, pronouns referring to God are not capitalized in this song.

II

Like a Girl

Robert Mezey

Like a girl who knows her body drives me to begging,

Joelle Wallach

God taunts me.

Flee if you can but I can't flee,

for when I turn away from him, angry and heart-sick,
vowel on my lips like burning coal: I will not see him again.

\[\text{poch. meno mosso} \quad \text{a tempo}\]

I can't do it. And I turn back,

knock on his door, tortured with longing as though he'd sent

\[\text{più dolce}\]

me a love letter.
In accord with the poet’s usage, pronouns referring to God are not capitalized in this song.

III
Vetus Flamma

Robert Mezey

That love which once was nearest my heart, press’d against my arm and forehead too, is gone and you went with it. We are two.

You have your legends, I...
my empty heart; And in the quiet pounding of my heart,
I hear what future I wake to.
Night falls each dawn and stays a week or two,
and all there is to eat is my own heart.

I nurse a broken love, your broken word,
and cannot e...
and I lost.

I never said your name you only came to wrestle, cantabile

ment my door with what I lost. Unaging

ghost, you never said your name you only came to wrestle.
IV

With My God The Smith

Robert Mezey

Agitato \( \frac{d}{=} \) 100

Joelle Wallach

Like chapters of prophecy my days burn,
in revelations,

My body between them’s a block of metal,
Time has opened in me, open their mouths

Over me stands my God, the Smith, who hits hard:

The wounds that

Time has opened in me, open their mouths
più pesante
e poch piu lento
poch piu lento

of sparks
the intrinsic fire.

poch piu lento
piu pesante

wince in a shower

fire.
poco

wound,

block on a bed,

my mouth is an open

When I return to throw my beaten

block on a bed,

my mouth is an open

wound,
let us rest
let us both rest

Now it is night; come, let us rest;

Naked I speak with God: You worked

poco

hard, hard!

Now it is night; come, let us rest;

piu dolce

let us rest let us both rest

pp