

marine blue feathers

from Autobiography of Death
Kim Hyesoon

2008

*Twenty-eight yogis will come out from your brain and greet you.
They'll be carrying various tools, and their heads will be the
heads of various animals.*
—The Tibetan Book of the Dead

1
This world is my death, so I lie down with my left and right wrists on
top of one another
I float with the back of my head facing the sky
My spine becomes as skinny as a pen
I cover my thin, prostrated pen-like body with a blanket
You watch your shadow plunge down in the shape of a hen toward the
surface of the paper
Why is your soul human when your spine is a pen and your shadow is
a hen?
Is it true that poets see a piece of filthy paper at the time of their death?

34

2
A blue hen big enough to reach the sky cackles
but when I came home there was a crinkled blue-colored paper under
my pillow

A tiger roared and attacked as if it could swallow the entire continent
but a moth with striped wings that had lost its mommy was crying
outside my room

I flew beyond the sound barrier and struck the sky like a tornado
but a beetle was circling in front of my door

3
but the lid of your coffin is a mercury mirror
but the grave is so shallow that you can't stand or even sit up in it
but you can see your breath in there
but your lovely breasts are pressed down by the ceiling

4
The ghost inside your skull is spilling water like a kettle
Your temporal lobes become active and your eyelashes flutter like the
eyelashes of the blue hen

A voice scorches your hair like electricity
A voice beats your thoughts like a club

That strange voice is not human
That thing perches on your ears and cackles
That thing flies around inside your skin
That thing is neither solid, liquid, or gas
That thing is barbaric, you can't open or close it

(Are you saying that you're still a fetus growing your liver with the
sounds inside your mommy?)

35

5

The flying blue hen lays an egg inside its body
The blue hen clucks, I can't endure I can't endure

The crown of the blue hen is tall and its beak is long so its head gets
buried in its chest

The blue hen clucks, I can't endure I can't endure

It looks as if the blue hen is enduring the time it takes for fish from
the sea to evolve

The feet disappear in the last phase of the evolution
You don't have to walk at all
You don't have to sleep or eat

The blue hen clucks inside a huge hole in the back of your head
The blue sky opens under your left eyelid
But the blue hen's tiny feet are buried inside each page
Whenever you turn the page its huge wings flutterflutter!

So is this place the footless corpse of the blue sky?
So is this place the blue, eternal stillness of your inhalation?

The hen is as blue and vast as the blue sky!
I can't endure. I can't endure!

translated by Don Mee Choi