

## Excerpt from *Thirsty*

Dionne Brand

I

This city is beauty  
unbreakable and amorous as eyelids,  
in the streets, pressed with fierce departures,  
submerged landings,  
I am innocent as thresholds  
and smashed night birds, lovesick,  
as empty elevators

let me declare doorways,  
corners, pursuit, let me say  
standing here in eyelashes, in  
invisible breasts, in the shrinking lake  
in the tiny shops of untrue recollections,  
the brittle, gnawed life we live,  
I am held, and held

the touch of everything blushes me,  
pigeons and wrecked boys,  
half-dead hours, blind musicians,  
inconclusive women in bruised dresses  
even the habitual grey-suited men with terrible  
briefcases, how come, how come  
I anticipate nothing as intimate as history

would I have had a different life  
failing this embrace with broken things,  
iridescent veins, ecstatic bullets, small cracks  
in the brain, would I know these particular facts,  
how a phrase scars a cheek, how water  
dries love out, this, a thought as casual  
as any second eviscerates a breath

and this, we meet in careless intervals,  
in coffee bars, gas stations, in prosthetic  
conversations, lotteries, untranslatable  
mouths, in versions of what we may be,  
a tremor of the hand in the realization  
of endings, a glancing blow of tears  
on skin, the keen dismissal in speed

## Thanks

Listen

with the night falling we are saying thank you  
we are stopping on the bridges to bow from the railings  
we are running out of the glass rooms  
with our mouths full of food to look at the sky  
and say thank you  
we are standing by the water thanking it  
standing by the windows looking out  
in our directions

back from a series of hospitals back from a mugging  
after funerals we are saying thank you  
after the news of the dead  
whether or not we knew them we are saying thank you

over telephones we are saying thank you  
in doorways and in the backs of cars and in elevators  
remembering wars and the police at the door  
and the beatings on stairs we are saying thank you  
in the banks we are saying thank you  
in the faces of the officials and the rich  
and of all who will never change  
we go on saying thank you thank you

with the animals dying around us  
our lost feelings we are saying thank you  
with the forests falling faster than the minutes  
of our lives we are saying thank you  
with the words going out like cells of a brain  
with the cities growing over us  
we are saying thank you faster and faster  
with nobody listening we are saying thank you  
we are saying thank you and waving  
dark though it is

## Credit

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## Book of Genesis

Kei Miller

Suppose there was a book full of only the word,  
*let* — from whose clipped sound all things begin: fir  
and firmament, feather, the first whale — and suppose

we could scroll through its pages every day  
to find and pronounce a *Let* meant only for us —  
we would stumble through the streets with open books,

eyes crossed from too much reading; we would speak  
in auto-rhyme, the world would echo itself — and still  
we'd continue in rounds, saying *let* and *let* and *let*

until even silent dreams had been allowed.