



# My Dark Angel

Rogan Wolf

*The illustration of Jacob wrestling with the angel is from a drawing by Gustave Doré (1832-1883), later engraved by C. Laplante.*

## Genesis 32 24-31

And Jacob was left alone ; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.

And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh ; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.

And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

And he said unto him, What is thy name ? And he said, Jacob.

And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel : for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.

And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said,

Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name ? And he blessed him there.

And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel ; for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.

And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh.

*(Authorised version)*

*Although in this passage from Genesis, Jacob is described as having wrestled with "a man," he himself refers to his adversary as God. The same incident is referred to in the Book of Hosea (chapter 12, verse 4). There, Jacob's adversary is described as an angel.*

## Doing Life

I am a warehouse of faces  
weary performances

all of them betraying me  
to the dark.

Each new mask  
I pick from the store

shatters my mirror.  
Who made that face ?

I ask. Whose voice was that  
pouring forth just now

from lips surely  
not mine ?

I am a hole in a mountain.  
I am a hidden hoard of gold

deep in a mountain.  
I am a lost dream

doing life  
under a mountain.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*October 2009*

## Sightings

I can say this with real pride :  
no one but I  
throws my shadow.

I call it my under-self, my field  
of operation. I cannot  
call it home.

I glimpse it sometimes, usually at night,  
leaping the wet rocks  
as the tall seas break and pursue ;

or poised for a moment at the top of a dead tree  
calm after that stoop for eternity  
out of the wind, the clutch of the mist ;

or sidling with gleeful expertise  
between the ranks of the juggernauts -  
that whole brutal caravan.

There is no holding it  
no shaping nor naming of it ;  
it is my best hope

the one element  
that cannot be harmed  
cannot be reduced.

All risk is survivable  
and all manner of disaster  
so long as my shadow plays.

It holds my true life  
and will outlive me.  
It will live forever.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*July 1993*

## Coming To

In anger, I climbed  
a sheer rock-face without knowing  
its particular worn character, or height,  
or my own strength, or whether  
the top would give passage to hand and foot,  
and suddenly was simply stuck and watched  
myself suspended there sixty foot up  
my legs beginning to tremble with this exercise  
of holding on  
and the sharp-edged rock-floor below  
waiting to take to itself  
the scattered parts of my spine  
and the scattered pieces of my skull  
and at last I realised – this  
is me and here  
and now and nothing remains  
for me except what I  
now make happen and  
terror flooding my system  
I mounted that final pitch  
of the sheer rock face  
as if it were a flight of stairs.

*Rogan Wolf  
August 2006*

# Song of Perseus

I came to see you  
I came alone  
I came to free you  
from your dark sacrifice  
lashed to a stone.

I came to see you  
I came alone  
I came to grieve with you  
and atone.

I came to sing to you  
like wind to stone  
I came to sing with you  
and atone.

I came  
and be-came  
so much older now  
and still the same.

I came to sing to you  
like wind to reed  
and bring to you  
my seed.

I came to see you  
I came alone  
I came to free you  
from your dark sacrifice  
lashed to a stone.

*Rogan Wolf  
August 2006*

# The Dark Angel of my Dream

The dark angel of my dream  
was dreadfully beautiful

lithe and invincible  
and faceless

sans eyes sans mouth  
his head like a smooth bulb

dark and gleaming.  
I knew I could not hope

to escape and, yes,  
here he comes pouring

up the stone steps  
by the sea-shore, the waves

wild behind him,  
straight up at me

outwitting me without effort  
in our life-long race

and glorious in his searing energy.  
I submit, powerless and rapt

as the lipless angel kisses me  
taking my face.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*November 2011*

## Skirmishes with the Gods

She told me that storms  
had scattered all her boundaries  
and events just tore through her  
without noticing.

She yearned to act,  
to impress herself  
on the Furies, to take hold  
of something

but her nature, her schooling,  
the massed upholders of her time -  
they stood against her  
and she yielded.

A life in the shadow  
of others' needs  
leaves nothing to spare  
for skirmishes with the gods.

So she didn't know  
as she waited to die  
if anyone  
knew who she was.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*October 2002*



# Where the Rider Sits

*(with thanks to the late Ursula LeGuin for the dragon)*

I was driving south-west along the motorway  
when the downs to my left  
suddenly heaved up  
and became a dragon  
poised to hurl itself into the day.  
Smoke drifted from one of its nostrils.  
Steely scales glittered  
on a tightening flank.

I came successfully to rest  
on the tarmac verge and -  
avoiding that vast hilarious eye -  
rushed into the fields, screaming :  
“Wait ! *Wait* !  
That place upon your shoulder  
where sometimes you let a rider sit -  
You, my dragon !? I, your rider !?”

*Rogan Wolf  
December 2005*

## On the shoulders of the Worm

“I’m proud of you,” the angel said.

“You fought for a hearing

then sang in style from the shoulders

of a creature of fire.

You’re coming on.”

I caught my breath.

I’d been counting bruises – abashed yet again

by cliffs which permit no beaching

by platforms which turn

into pits. But yes, he was right :

at 65 I had bridged a chasm

and breathed from between the wings of making

words of redemptive fire.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*November 2012*

## The Dark Sky

All your life you hid behind walls  
or manoeuvred yourself out of the reckoning.  
You gazed at the world in horror  
under the dark sky.

You hid so well  
the light almost missed you  
and left you for dead as it blazed its trail  
through the dying trees.

But suddenly it turned and you met.  
“Hail, stranger !” you cried  
to the voracious savage white light.  
“I have found you. Consume me.”

*Rogan Wolf*  
*November 2009*

## Centaur

We laid him on his side  
shining in the dim light

his vast head tipped  
towards the crown of the slope

the curved fury of his thighs  
flattening the rough gorse of the combe.

And we left him there as a memory  
of the glory of it all

the thunder and joy  
of the mornings on the downs

when the rhythm was all one  
and my eyes saw only what his eyes saw

and our ears heard nothing  
but the onward ecstasy of his hooves.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*Sept 2011*

## I Remember how I Sat

I even remember how I sat.  
I'd not been conscious of my bones before  
except when they broke.  
Everything in my world  
was either in shreds  
or seeking to shred me.  
And a cold wind whistled through  
my veins and around all  
my corners. Even my ground  
had slipped from me.  
I hung and flickered  
like a flame without fuel.

And he said. you sit so fraught  
in your carapace of skin,  
straining for answers  
straining with a dark angel for resolution.  
Spare yourself, my friend. Breathe easy.  
Take pleasure in your skin.  
The insoluble  
will continue on its way.  
Be still in perfect readiness  
for opportune events.  
There's nothing better.  
There's nothing else.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*May 2017*

## My Way to You

I have forced a path through to your door  
without direction or address.

Had there been a road to this place  
I would never have found you.

It has taken a life-time  
to make my way to you.  
No lesser discharge  
would have reached this far.

I never once  
knew where I was going.  
Now that I've got here  
my disorientation is complete.

Here at your door  
I find myself at last.  
Here at your door  
there is nothing left of me.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*December 2005*