

THE PROSE POEM: AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

Volume 6 | 1997

The Stone Flowers Morton Marcus

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Morton Marcus

THE STONE FLOWERS

(for Donna)

There was a time when stones flowered. I need to believe that. In forests and fields, layers of black rock cracked open after rain, and slick pink petals swarmed into the wet sunlight. And those who saw this weren't astonished because such blossomings happened all the time.

As recently as the nineteenth century, miners reported seeing chunks of coal blossom with blue flowers as tenuous as flames. Some said walls of coal spurted blue flowers all around them, and with picks at their sides they stood speechless at the wonder of it.

On the beach at night, I've seen the sand shimmer with a green phosphorescence. The next day I imagined the sand was acres of seeds, and I thought, "That's what this Earth is: seeds."

And when I look up at the stars sometimes, I think that's what this planet is, a seed hurtling with others through space.

When my wife weeps for our son or the death of a relative, I think of all the seeds scattered over the earth like unlit points of light lying gray and dull next to golden specks of mica and the glassed-in worlds of opal with their trapped swirls of celestial flame.

I know that the earth is full of cinders and hard seeds that have never blossomed, and that it makes no difference if pink flowers once surged from layers of black rock, or if one day the planet will crack open and shoot a pink and blue geyser into the night that will unfurl like a celestial flower.

I know that whether times are good or bad, we ride this planet like mites crawling on a pebble.

That is why I am not ashamed to say that flowers once blossomed from stone: I need to believe in every possibility. We all do.