

Nat Hardy

DESERT FLESH AND IRON I

In the dark magnolia of time,
I sleep with my face to the west

where the past lies
charred and barren as
nocturnal folds of earth,

where memories leach into the
hide of my forehead gossamer thin
like pale debris on umber,

where silence reigns heavy
and the false safety of flesh
foresaken for ruin and the rot of history,

where I sleep alone
in the dust of my years.



“Desert Flesh & Iron I”

Painting by Julian Grater



“Desert Flesh & Iron II”

Painting by Julian Grater

DESERT FLESH AND IRON II

Russet cord of flesh
wrapped like brocade

on a slow stain of burl
traced dimly white —

the thing
your body was

bent and broken
by the chill
and clodded earth.

DESERT FLESH AND IRON III

At the mouth of the desert furnace
salmon flesh and vertebrae endure the
alchemy of the present —

a rent cage fractured
by the weight of impermanence

and the sepia cough
of lungs blown empty.



“Desert Flesh & Iron III”

Painting by Julian Grater



“Ghost Gum II”

Painting by Julian Grater

GHOST GUM II

In the rising damp
of lithium

a xylem trace
of sapwood

lists phosphorescent,

piercing ruin
and reduction

knotted beyond the pale
cask of dead seasons —

prepuce taproot to
carbon 14.

ORE BODY I (RIGHT PANEL)

Glyphic fingers
spread charcoal

grope for darkness
by grim repetition.

The dry murmur of palms
prostrate from a coppery stain

earthward bent
and broken—

its digits bruised
by history, callous

and what the hands remember.



“Ore Body I (Right Panel)”

Painting by Julian Grater



"Ore Body IV"

Painting by Julian Grater

ORE BODY IV

On rough cast linen
shroud-bearing flesh
did kindle crimson

when sallow fingers of earth
pinched together

dissembling life
and lore where the past
lies fallowed

and silence
stays empty.

In a burning cloud of ingot
death bandaged my eyes.

SADDEST DUST I (DARK CELL - RED SWEAT)

Salt blood fell
from the cloud of a brow

its stillborn splash
idle and abandoned
in the shale of years,

its auburn dew
drowned by history
into dry uncertainty —

a fatal cast,
strewn into augury of dust,
darkness

and the sweat that led

to nothing.



“Saddest Dust I”

Painting by Julian Grater