

the gospel of mark

Ethan Grant

I suppose I should find in this a moral,
a miracle—the rumor of good news.
But all I can see is a man, an uncanny
blur of men, like trees walking.
Then he wipes stinging spit into
my eyes, rubbing roughly
until stars burst on my brain, teary
light breaks through, and I learn
what to make of light—figures
walking: rootless, gangly stalks.

As the story goes, he once withered
a fruitless fig tree, screamed at storms
and demon-men in boneyards, howling
to white Arabian suns. Now I see
him, dark-eyed and gaunt before me,
a dooming glare sunken in sockets.

My sight failed to wake me. Unmoved
by this inconceivable deed, I stood
babbling like a fool. Then he led me
strong-armed from the crowd, whispering
words from a black-throated mouth:
Tell no one. Return to your village

no more. So I told no one, and dared not
return, not even when he wandered away
with a throng of fifty in his thrall,
cloaks billowing, kicking dust to the sky.
We heard he came from the wilderness,
from nowhere, to beat through Galilee.
So in Jerusalem, they say, he hung
from a tree, there to writhe beneath
this merciless Arabian sun.

Still I see, but my world seems smaller
than before, when simple darkness ruled.
Men, untreed, cross my threshold nightly
as I lie awake in starlight, plucking
lice from my bedding, wondering
what fear has kept me quiet so long.