

Fall 1988

The Imp of the Unquestionable

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Recommended Citation

Howell, Christopher (1988) "The Imp of the Unquestionable," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 31 , Article 20.

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The Imp of the Unquestionable

If you ask me
my favorite color
or what a bird said
crossing some endless palm
of silver sky and just barely
holding its soul in
as it struggled not to realize
it was flying; I have to hand you
my bird-like failure of response—
so be advised.
If you ask me nothing
that comes to mind
but, rather, something that doesn't,
something your mother was saving
for a deathbed revelation
that would smash the family
and send her cackling
maniacly into the afterlife
like a perverse bondsman jumping his own
bail, something no one knew
you fool enough to ask
until you did it and all the wine
and blood and cum of living
mauled the perfect lace and pressed
zipped perfect trousers;
be advised—I'm so forgetful
even St. Jerome has trouble
forgiving my moral banana peels
and slights. but the unrepentant paisley
of this voice is trouble
passing itself on
to you. It doesn't care to say
that shakes of its deceptions
or the shapes of absences its life
is buying up, even if they're yours.
You have your own pain
and, after all, its beauty is always more filling
than the sufferings of strangers—nevermind

they are inside you using your name
and your typewriter
for the suicide notes. So don't ask.
Just hold your tongue
in your hands as if Immaculate Announcement
had finally devised a heart you could swallow
like knowledge
and all the questions you will no longer need
you will no longer need.

Christopher Howell