

Margo Berdeshevsky

When are you not

When are you not a poet and just a woman
the lover asks, honey on his false tongue,
jackhammer to a swollen earth of your breasts
Never, you want to scream Never
not a linguist of the soul daring word
to prayer. & rage. & please, peace. Never
not a maker of the small to serve.
(But not your—kind of mother.)
Never not a chisel to the morning leaf
or the sorrow of the storm. Never not
a gatherer of cries in these hands that
have lost thumbs, but have prayers.
When are you a normal person gathering the fallen
fruit for juice not for the mystery of the tree,
Never—not watching the larvae. The hungry
white fly. Its kiss. Never the thigh not jiggling
at tedium, so eager to leap stones at a stream,
imagine the gazelle.
Never when the sperm is pulsed at the womb, no music.
No colored cry. No muted sax playing God's baritone.
Ask him when was Christ not a carpenter? when He hung
on wood to die? building chairs for thieves to sit on,
to His future right, and to His future left? Ask him,
when are you not a man, and just a woman, love, there
in line at the new Eagle Brand Hardware store, waiting
for its morning doors to open so you two may buy nails,
a ladder, gladioli— newly born.

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