

THE LEPER'S BELL*by Yusef Komunyakaa*

It pleads through dogwood
with all I know,
follows me around
the sad blue periphery
of other lives. I laugh
at my shadow, peaceful
in ditch water
with a lily, my dreams nourished
by the sorrow-worm's
hunger, my love
healed like a stone.
Each step I take
I plant my old pain,
not even a dog's mercy
for company. What I sing
these red mornings
belongs to the black cricket.
This shack where stars
fall through the roof,
with a bell for a tongue,
just my libido intact
like the mute wood
of some moth-infested bough.
No balls & so goddamn civil
as I ride its downward
wheel, I have nothing
the earth wants to steal.