

Telephone

poems by

Jen Besemer

Brooklyn Arts Press • New York

Telephone
© 2013 Jen Besemer

ISBN-13: 978-1-936767-23-6

Cover art by Jen Besemer. Design by Joe Pan.

All Rights Reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced by any means existing or to be developed in the future without written consent by the publisher.

Published in The United States of America by:
Brooklyn Arts Press
154 N 9th St #1
Brooklyn, NY 11249
www.BrooklynArtsPress.com
info@brooklynartspress.com

Distributed to the trade by Small Press Distribution / SPD
www.spdbooks.org

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Besemer, Jen.
[Poems. Selections]
Telephone : poems / by Jen Besemer.
pages cm

"Distributed to the trade by Small Press Distribution / SPD"--T.p. verso.
ISBN 978-1-936767-23-6 (Paperback : alk. paper)
I. Title.

PS3602.E775T45 2013
811'.6--dc23

2013004201

FIRST EDITION

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to j/j hastain, my dear friend and collaborator, with whom I shared the poetic call-and-response practice adapted in *Telephone* for single-poet use. Many additional thanks to Max, Laura, Carol, and Nicholas (and j/j again) for conversing with this book, and for conversing with me about this book.

CONTENTS

Dialogue One: Call 11

stone grows plump
why must we chase our cool
some cup
ice that speaks
make a heart
the bulge in my trousers

Dialogue Two: Call 27

i'm so sick of this blue haze
people often confuse cause with effect
wake, you sleepers
at one time
the sport of vampirism
we recognize you by your anthracite lozenges

Dialogue Three: Call 43

make a ship
an exile into sincerity
in a castle made of dust
the road is littered
we are waiting for a good idea
in the body there is another room

Dialogue One: Response 19

another nibelungenlied
a hand grips another hand
relocate to another dictionary
the black box has a name
children & elders
the moth gives up

Dialogue Two: Response 35

who walks alongside
make a tent
all the strangers
the sigh of the screen door
make a hole
run inside the thunder

Dialogue Three: Response 51

nails of phosphor
the larger of the two questions
fables & star-charts
& in the spirit of the north
the epiphytic dream
the door is not a simple proposition

Dialogue Four: Call 59

a brick wrapped in string
a lion's forced intimacy with its prey
this time when the music starts
the color of new leaves
realization of sourness & fortitude
there in the gutter of yesterday

Dialogue Five: Call 75

regime change
wire-limbed personages
valley-belly of smoke
meat
these two senses
a hollow moon alights on the tongue

Dialogue Six: Call 91

the red velvet tongue of sleep
here is a shovel
we know you
this is a darkness
make a forest
the act of walking into a place

Dialogue Four: Response 67

the light under the bridge
describe the passionless cruelty of ants
to find wilderness in the scraps
these bottles are full of moss
we take a dare
a blood of stars & serrated light

Dialogue Five: Response 83

my druidic forefathers
lodestone & birchbark
a knight swims in the channel
ochre powder slapped on walls
name that echoes in the head
some people

Dialogue Six: Response 99

the strange leap
does this tune
on the shore
a box has eight corners
in the context of the commercial
our signal is not what it was

About the Poet

dialogue one:
call

stone grows plump : its arms & laces under the earth
: stone erupts in compact pregnancies of tourmaline :
circumstances unforeseen : sharp ranges cut through
by threads of butter : the taken & the taker : each
quick to claim its own before : its own after ::

why must we chase our cool : the fear that drives the
horse around the post drives the heart into a corner
: false teeth grinning through the soul-stuff : look at
how we chatter away & waste ourselves for weeks :
rough tortoises nodding with our tongues in the wind
: better make it good : the whole world is watching ::

some cup : full of word pebble : tiny lemon fort :
dream of conger in a crevice : ceviche saddle : make
a float & put a line on it : fend along the shore & pole
up pesce ::

ice that speaks : vast understatement of winter : forces
slide between weak & strong : free & taxed : naked
sun-birtherd line between solid & vapor : note our
shadows : ink-blue & antennaed : a border flapping as
we walk : snow mouthing our shoes ::

make a heart with your hands : your knuckles & their
silent daybreak : mop up your only egg broken on the
tread : ascend & descend : baby buggy balance beam
: before the wilderness engulfs the kick ::

the bulge in my trousers is that blip in spacetime : my
forests of magic christians & trees full of puppeteers
: everybody loves a schism : treble peppers bass &
makes trenchant song : mama gets her bullies in a row
: pins the collars down for ironing : i have to rewind :
i have to find my wormhole ::

dialogue one:
response

another nibelungenlied over the phone & the broken
mirrors clouding with a touch : fierce sentiment rises,
foam in a bottle, if the neck is long : the voice of ore
& root : what sort of argument is there today : forge
& mine are places & actions & quanta of association :
ghosts of animals rise with each fallen word : a name
like a sneer tearing at the earth we rest upon ::

a hand grips another hand : an eye watches both :
nostrils dilate : shallow breath edges inside : it seems
the skull echoes : somewhere a door has slammed : a
vibration of empty data : the message of the moment
shifts : one sees a flash like the feather of light just
before sunrise : one sees an injury as a burnt forest :
one sees time & how it departs ::

relocate to another dictionary & with that bucket
dredge up thick silence from the margins : a paste of
pages spread upon the brow : wrap my head in soft
candy flavored by essence of inquiry : sick with talk,
reach into the tongue : turn it inside out : dust it with
bone-slivers : begin again ::

the black box has a name : choose it from this list : write
your choice in blue or black ink on the card provided
: fold the card in half after you are done : be sure your
choice is concealed from casual view : your privacy
is important : leave the folded card in the upper right
corner of your desk for collection : do not make eye
contact with the proctor : your privacy is important :
the black box has a name : your participation in this
survey is much appreciated : it is entirely your choice
: choose your benefit premium from this list : write
your choice in blue or black ink on the card provided
: fold the card in half after you are done : your privacy
is important : do not make eye contact with the black
box : the black box is important : it has a name : it is
entirely your choice ::

children & elders walk single file down the canyon
path : in each pair of hands a fat candle the color of
yewberry : a hum of purposeful movement : the click
of teeth & garnet rings : the toss of a doll into a hole
in the earth ::

the moth gives up its dream of taming light : it loves
its life of silent paper & cool leaf-hair : it loves its
thinking tongue : its miles of wind : the doors of color
it sits beneath : the moth is only ever itself : the light
is light's own business : they are not our story ::

JEN BESEMER is a hybrid artist and the author of four poetry chapbooks, the most recent being *Object with Man's Face* (Rain Taxi Ohm Editions). She is currently pursuing solo and collaborative projects in recombinant poetry, translation, performance, criticism, visual art, and combinations thereof. Recent work has appeared in *Artifice*, *Aufgabe*, *BlazeVOX*, *Drunkenboat*, *e-ratio*, *Otoliths*, and *Pank*, and is anthologized in *Troubling the Line: Trans and Genderqueer Poetry and Poetics* (Nightboat). Jen writes features and reviews for *Rain Taxi Review of Books* and teaches art and poetry workshops in and around Chicago. To learn more, visit www.jenbesemer.com.