

SHUTTERSTORIES

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# Charak

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What do you know of breathlessness?  
The heart pumped into a sore pulp – he  
named it his soft spot and  
treasured it for a long time, like a  
fool drunk on dead stars and  
botulin.

Enter the putrid punch of life!

Tonight the moon will burn cold over an  
eternity under the cover of  
darkness, a night as dark as  
blindness.

There is a divine, unspoken word in the  
dank, summer air tonight.

Remember when we tread like crazed  
men?

The glittering bank, the moth aflame?  
The sky like vast, dark pools,  
Bubbling, boiling over.  
The bodily machinery aches, squeaks,  
and grinds to a halt

Red leopard, you are most phantomlike  
of all.

Frenzied thirst, but flesh is flesh.  
In the pallid, broken, unhealthful  
waking hours,

I find you breathing, heaving, Leopard  
of Dawn.

I am scared of that darkness – the  
waking hours the worst of all.

My belly is all knots for you,  
My face red like an open wound.

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Charak Puja is a festival celebrated in the southern belt of Bangladesh, where devotees undergo acts of flagellation in order to appease Lord Shiva and his wife Shakti. The rituals involve falling on a ground studded with sharp objects and being suspended from rotating columns using hooks impaled onto the skin.

