

**Wilderness House Literary Review 16/3**

*Toti O'Brien*  
**SCRIPTURE**

In principio was branding  
and branding  
reached into the night.  
Branding was the night.  
And the rod  
was without beginning  
without end.  
It reached into the past  
poked a bullet hole  
into the future.

The thin air of dawn  
leaked a trickle  
of dense menstrual blood.  
You could hear a cry  
smothered beyond curtains  
of mist, screened  
by wooden barn doors.  
You could hear  
the intermittent lament  
of calves, of swine.

For an instant  
you guessed a human note  
a vibration of fear  
plea for mercy  
aborted.

For an instant  
you guessed.  
In the maze.  
Blindfolded.  
Alone.

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### TOMORROW

To the girl who slept on the metal cot, her legs bent *en chien de fusil*, half fetus, half weapon they said her fiancé had committed suicide apparently, in the night, leaving a brief note.

Which, they said, explained nothing, just a confused rant, part trivial part mystical, mentioning both apocalypse and a broken faucet Saint Catherine and a new garden hose.

Perhaps she could figure, they said. They did not ask for an alibi, as they knew of course, her whereabouts quite precisely.

The girl curled on the bed sat up sideways pushing her left palm against the cot, her right against the bandage wrapping her waist, drenched in serum and blood. She sighed, almost inaudibly.

They handled her a note scribbled on the back of a thin, flimsy leaflet printed red, a page from an old calendar. Said thirteen, of which month which year? Where had possibly...

She held the note with fingers so limp, they thought she would let go. She kept staring front, at the wall where the window was. The closed window. Past the wall, she kept staring.