

**Jeff Arnett**

Love Scales

I never told you this  
but I am asking you  
never to repeat  
what I have never told you.

This is what I am  
asking you  
never to repeat  
what I will never  
tell you  
love  
I am asking you  
never to love

what I will  
never tell you  
I repeat  
love  
never ask  
what I am  
never  
telling you  
love  
never  
repeat  
love  
repeat

## Manhood of Sky

My hands are older  
than my eyes  
yet I am the same man  
I was yesterday.  
Begging clues of the sky.  
Gravely robbing passersby.  
Like all men.  
performing tricks  
for perfect strangers.

Ah, you say, show me.  
Show me.  
Stand back, I say.  
Give my wild eyes  
all the affection you can.  
They are ravenous,  
starving with hope.

Sit still, you say.  
Look at your hands  
how they caress the sky  
searching for a psalm  
to sing.

## At Play in the Fields of the Lord

*Poetry is finding the Great Dance.*

In the church of the open fields  
the church of bare feet and no altars,  
sways the chorus of old mothers  
their hair braided with laughter

You know who were there  
those holy chords  
you could not quite sound  
but you could dance  
the old steps memorized  
in the earth  
ordained by the sun

And you want to squeeze  
God's toes but  
they are moving too fast.  
Yes, they are big toes  
nimble toes  
dancing toes  
in the church of the open fields  
God's dancing toes.

## House Calls

1.

Winter is my houseguest.  
The old pipes groan your name.  
The furniture glares at me as I dust.  
In the pale sunlight on our bed  
your hips left an indented smile.  
In the spite of evening  
I turn on all the lights  
and call you names  
none of them yours.  
I do what I can to keep warm.

2.

At night our bed drawls a slow breath.  
The mirror cackles in the moonlight.  
Even the walls are restless  
especially when they think I am sleeping.  
I hear them riffle the bedside bible.  
Wrinkle my only suit.  
Fondle time.  
How do you do it  
from so far away?

## Leaving

A delicate rain of leaves  
falls slowly from the trees.  
I cannot feel it though  
because I have to go.

She cuts my heart from my chest,  
“Is this our little child,  
is this our little child,” she cries,  
but god never sighs on earth.

She tells me, “Tie us with your  
arms and bind me to your chest.”

Should I leave?

“Tie with your kisses  
the side of my brain  
that commands my heart.”

Must I leave?

“Tie each day  
to the following day  
and in between these days  
roll some loving caresses  
for me to smoke  
inside your skin.”

I leave.

Behind me  
my future  
and what else?