

LEE SHARKEY

Broken Sky

If they appear at the threshold

If they take the form of man, woman, and infant

The sky carries the weight of mountains

Children are straggling behind

How shall I welcome the stranger

If they stand at the threshold

If they arrive through dream, lore, or prognostication

If they don't know if they are coming or going

I see they carry the stone of sorrow

The Red Sea has parted but not for them

I set a table before them

I light two candles. The flames leap to reveal blasted mountains

Moses has thrown down the stone tablets

Aaron has confiscated the gold from the women's ears and fashioned a hollow calf

If they appear, stripped of possessions

The children are coughing

The infant is subdued to silence

If I could pray

I would pray for the sons the blood of the lamb has not protected

I would pray for the tribe abandoned by Moses-up-the-mountain communing with
Yahweh

They appear, mute, insistent

They ignore my offer of bread

One of the flames is consuming the house and the other, casting shadows on stones

If what they want of me is my attention