

THE BOOK OF LOS

William Blake

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CHAPTER I

1. Eno, aged Mother,
Who the chariot of Leutha guides,
Since the day of thunders in old time,
2. Sitting beneath the eternal Oak,
Trembled and shook the steadfast Earth,
And thus her speech broke forth:
3. `O Times remote!
When Love and Joy were adoration,
And none impure were deem'd,
Not eyeless Covet,
Nor thin-lipp'd Envy,
Nor bristled Wrath,
Nor Curled Wantonness;
4. `But Covet was poured full,
Envy fed with fat of lambs,
Wrath with lion's gore,
Wantonness lull'd to sleep
With the virgin's lute,
Or sated with her love;
5. `Till Covet broke his locks and bars,
And slept with open doors;

Envy sung at the rich man's feast;
Wrath was follow'd up and down
By a little ewe lamb;
And Wantonness on his own true love
Begot a giant race.

6. Raging furious, the flames of desire
Ran thro' heaven and earth, living flames,
Intelligent, organiz'd, arm'd
With destruction and plagues. In the midst
The Eternal Prophet, bound in a chain,
Compell'd to watch Urizen's shadow,

7. Rag'd with curses and sparkles of fury:
Round the flames roll, as Los hurls his chains,
Mounting up from his fury, condens'd,
Rolling round and round, mounting on high
Into Vacuum, into nonentity,
Where nothing was; dash'd wide apart,
His feet stamp the eternal fierce-raging
Rivers of wide flame; they roll round
And round on all sides, making their way
Into darkness and shadowy obscurity.

8. Wide apart stood the fires: Los remain'd
In the Void between fire and fire:
In trembling and horror they beheld him;
They stood wide apart, driv'n by his hands
And his feet, which the nether Abyss
Stamp'd in fury and hot indignation.

9. But no light from the fires! all was
Darkness round Los: heat was not; for bound up
Into fiery spheres from his fury,
The gigantic flames trembled and hid.

10. Coldness, darkness, obstruction, a Solid
Without fluctuation, hard as adamant,
Black as marble of Egypt, impenetrable,
Bound in the fierce raging Immortal;
And the separated fires, froze in
A vast Solid, without fluctuation,
Bound in his expanding clear senses.

CHAPTER II

1. The Immortal stood frozen amidst

The vast Rock of Eternity, times
And times, a night of vast durance,
Impatient, stifled, stiffen'd, hard'ned;

2. Till impatience no longer could bear
The hard bondage: rent, rent, the vast Solid,
With a crash from Immense to Immense,

3. Crack'd across into numberless fragments.
The Prophetic wrath, struggling for vent,
Hurls apart, stamping furious to dust,
And crumbling with bursting sobs, heaves
The black marble on high into fragments.

4. Hurl'd apart on all sides as a falling
Rock, the innumerable fragments away
Fell asunder; and horrible Vacuum
Beneath him, and on all sides round,

5. `Falling! falling! Los fell and fell,
Sunk precipitant, heavy, down! down!
Times on times, night on night, day on day
Truth has bounds, Error none falling, falling,
Years on years, and ages on ages;
Still he fell thro' the Void, still a Void
Found for falling, day and night without end;
For tho' day or night was not, their spaces
Were measur'd by his incessant whirls
In the horrid Vacuity bottomless.

6. The Immortal revolving, indignant,
First in wrath threw his limbs, like the babe
New-born into our world: wrath subsided,
And contemplative thoughts first arose;
Then aloft his head rear'd in the Abyss,
And his downward-borne fall chang'd oblique.

7. Many ages of groans! till there grew
Branchy forms, organizing the Human
Into finite inflexible organs;

8. Till in process from falling he bore
Sidelong on the purple air, wafting
The weak breeze in efforts o'erwearied:

9. Incessant the falling Mind labour'd,
Organizing itself, till the Vacuum
Became Element, pliant to rise,
Or to fall, or to swim, or to fly,
With ease searching the dire Vacuity.

CHAPTER III

1. The Lungs heave incessant, dull, and heavy;
For as yet were all other parts formless,
Shiv'ring, clinging around like a cloud,
Dim and glutinous as the white Polypus,
Driv'n by waves and englob'd on the tide.

2. And the unformed part crav'd repose;
Sleep began; the Lungs heave on the wave:
Weary, overweigh'd, sinking beneath
In a stifling black fluid, he woke.

3. He arose on the waters; but soon
Heavy falling, his organs like roots
Shooting out from the seed, shot beneath,
And a vast World of Waters around him
In furious torrents began.

4. Then he sunk, and around his spent Lungs
Began intricate pipes that drew in
The spawn of the waters, outbranching
An immense Fibrous Form, stretching out
Thro' the bottoms of Immensity: raging.

5. He rose on the floods; then he smote
The wild deep with his terrible wrath,
Separating the heavy and thin.

6. Down the heavy sunk, cleaving around
To the fragments of Solid: uprose
The thin, flowing round the fierce fires
That glow'd furious in the Expanse.

CHAPTER IV

1. Then Light first began: from the fires,
Beams, conducted by fluid so pure,
Flow'd around the Immense. Los beheld
Forthwith, writhing upon the dark Void,
The Backbone of Urizen appear,
Hurling upon the wind,
Like a serpent, like an iron chain,
Whirling about in the Deep.

2. Upfolding his Fibres together
To a Form of impregnable strength,
Los, astonish'd and terrified, built
Furnaces; he formed an Anvil,
A Hammer of adamant: then began
The binding of Urizen day and night.

3. Circling round the dark Demon with howlings,
Dismay, and sharp blightings, the Prophet
Of Eternity beat on his iron links.

4. And first from those Infinite fires,
The light that flow'd down on the winds
He seiz'd, beating incessant, condensing
The subtil particles in an Orb.

5. Roaring indignant, the bright sparks
Endur'd the vast Hammer; but unwearied
Los beat on the Anvil, till glorious
An immense Orb of fire he fram'd.

6. Oft he quench'd it beneath in the Deeps;
Then survey'd the all-bright mass. Again
Seizing fires from the terrific Orbs,
He heated the round Globe, then beat;
While, roaring, his Furnaces endur'd
The chain'd Orb in their infinite wombs.

7. Nine ages completed their circles,
When Los heated the glowing mass, casting
It down into the Deeps: the Deeps fled
Away in redounding smoke: the Sun
Stood self-balanc'd. And Los smil'd with joy
He the vast Spine of Urizen seiz'd,
And bound down to the glowing Illusion.

8. But no light! for the Deep fled away
On all sides, and left an unform'd
Dark Vacuity: here Urizen lay
In fierce torments on his glowing bed;

9. Till his Brain in a rock, and his Heart
In a fleshy slough, formed four rivers,
Obscuring the immense Orb of fire,
Flowing down into night; till a Form
Was completed, a Human Illusion,
In darkness and deep clouds involv'd.