

**the Gospel**  
according to Thomas



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**a cycle, in verse, by**  
**kris kahn**



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## **inscription, from the gnostic Gospel of Thomas**

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Jesus said to his disciples, "Compare me to someone and tell me who I am."

Simon Peter said to him, "You are a righteous angel."

Matthew said to him, "You are a wise philosopher."

Thomas said to him, "Master, my mouth is altogether incapable of saying who You are."

Jesus said, "I am not your master. Because you have drunk of me, you have become intoxicated by the bubbling spring I seem to you."

And he took Thomas and withdrew him and told him three things. When Thomas returned to his companions, they asked him, "What has Jesus said to you?"

Thomas said to them, "If I tell you one of the things which he told me, you will pick up stones and throw them at me; a fire will come out of the stones and burn you up."

"He who will drink from my mouth shall become Me. I myself shall become He; all things that are hidden will then become known to us."

"Damn the flesh that depends on the soul. Damn the soul that depends on the flesh."

## **preface, or after he spoke the word Suicide**

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[

perhaps this is not about you or  
me. perhaps this is about the irises.

:::

in the middle of your room  
there might be a tree waving high  
its fingers. sharp,  
isolated / irreconcilable

if i cried loud  
your name, in tongues  
would you come  
down to me

or would you stay.

what would i do if i called & some  
one else answered, said you were gone.

the brown cat even,  
in its circling round the room,  
misses you.

on the wall above the tv  
van gogh's irises  
assume their sun has abandoned them,  
or else they assume it  
is winter. either way  
they close  
their petals.

it is hard to want you  
when you do not want your self.  
if you were asleep  
(if that were the case)  
i would roll you over, force  
you to face east



make you wait for the morning  
to bloody your features,  
to soak the bed in  
the sun's menses light.

you'll look swollen & filthy  
& of course angry,  
not wanting to be found.  
you do not realize that  
i have already found you  
in this heap; that i have touched you,  
not minding the red  
ness. the

brown cat hates me for  
running my fingers over your body.  
we fight over territory

you are on the bed  
straining against the light, red  
dening / seeping through the blinds.  
i am  
not  
with you.  
perhaps i am never  
with you.

atop the sheets  
you'll writhe in fugue just  
as you walk through day / night  
devouring too many pills

you taste always  
of desire. i am not sure i can calm you.  
of linen & hash.  
of the city, rolled up in  
to itself, unsure  
of its own co-ordinates.

you always appear to be running, frantic.

i am watching you now  
in my mind  
because how am i to know  
whether you are  
alive or  
not? how will i know—

the light will rinse the room  
clean of its stench;  
the irises will lean more toward  
the door in an attempt  
to quit the scene;  
you'll taste of water rather  
than Valium &  
i will  
not  
flinch beneath  
your fingers  
no matter what  
the blood says.

we have always been furtive  
in bed. maybe it is  
you & i trying to divide  
our selves, evenly  
with respect for the blood  
& the irises,

with adoration for the morning  
we have not yet seen  
together, though which (when  
it does come)

commences its restoration.

i am trying to make you see  
(can you tell)  
how important you are  
to me.

*Come on, i'll say. Let us greet*

*it.* pull  
ing your body up,  
in to me. the colors we  
walk through are  
unimportant

(i open your  
petals, i speak that  
word soft so you  
in your rising  
will not hear) what is important  
is that

we do walk through.

]

## selections from the Gospel

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o.

(god i miss his skin,  
the words i wrapped him in)

i.

at the end of the river  
where the iron & the lime deposit,  
where the carcasses line up  
two-by-pallid-two  
praying for drought

i pull you out,  
examine you

ii.

i think i've found the meaning of love.  
or if not its meaning then  
at least its symptoms—

head / moles / heart  
all afflicted. there is some  
post-modern rage in our bodies  
as they join an  
other.

love is not something we can write.  
nor is it something we can  
fight to maintain.

the summer is not yet over  
though we are

iii.

one pill is me. you swallow,  
selective in your apathy,

the door is closed but unlocked.  
the cats orbit round  
the room, circle us. they sniff.

too bad the cats have more  
intuition than either of us.

too bad i cannot open myself up to you  
as easily as you can unscrew  
the bottle's cap—

your pill-induced, addictive &  
inevitable nap  
ping.

iv.

in the patriarchal hierarchy  
that is the fashion world  
there are always two men—

one calls the shots.  
one receives them. you  
in your long-sleeved  
oxfords, hiding your arms,  
ashamed of the holes.

one who sits behind a mammoth  
mahogany desk &  
chews the end of his pencil.  
one who smells of steel & cotton,  
hands calloused & filthy  
from the machinery, fingering/  
feeling pairs of breasts  
for measurements.

there are no erections allowed  
in the fashion world. at least not for you.

that is my job, as muse,  
as infiltrator.



vii.

i read a study in some magazine or news  
paper about people living in  
basement apartments.

i think the study was limited to those in  
queens or harlem but

in your basement apartment  
there is no light coming in to burn  
the irises. to complete  
our equations, all blue & needy  
at the foot of the bed,  
perpetual mid-  
night.

how close to the groundwater we became.

you are both queens & harlem, water-  
logged or on  
fire. Troy, even.

in the study the people  
adapted, as people tend to do.  
they fucked. they birthed.  
they developed webbing between toes.  
it's true. i read it some  
where.

i bring it up to perhaps exonerate you,  
to expel you from the  
concrete confines of our love—

the basement where i plundered you—

or else to prove you  
Amphibian. as if *that* were enough  
to allow both of us  
to leave,

to walk up  
stairs                      ascend

viii.

i wanted you to teach me how to dance.  
i pictured us in your livingroom,  
stereo turned loud, your hands on my hips  
just swaying. though your  
dances (i imagine) are too fluid to hold me,  
loosened by the drugs, the

music—look at us two dancing/ eyes in eyes  
only the maroon carpet watching us,  
supporting us until we  
fall

into rhythm. beat to beat  
resounding against our chests,  
palatable/  
palpitating.



ix.

now i've an image of you  
in my head.  
he bends you over a chair,  
he does not ease  
him self into you            he pushes.

eight-years old & opened like that?

my story is more silent,  
drugged in its remembering  
though it is still  
alive.

i say, at the end : *i never once thought of you that way.*  
no. i never felt more sure,  
giving my self to someone.

you are / you were  
enough that he was erased, moment-  
arily forgotten. what power  
you had & did not know—

it was as if you were already inside of me  
& i had just noticed your presence,  
called you in  
to being

x.

oh! the words i spoke to you  
while you were gone,  
absorbed or caught up  
in your own dreams.

i never asked you what you dreamed.

i knew you  
enough to wait, open-  
eyed. watching  
you.



xii.  
the flowers now  
even  
look different  
without  
you.

xiii.  
if you were more similar to your  
biblical counterpart

i could withstand the misogyny.  
though you have never  
in your pain  
raised a hand to me.

xiv.

i am kissing you right now.  
can you feel me? trying to  
find the irises lodged deep in  
your throat,

can you find me?  
forever at the ends of rivers.  
i am both the iron & the lime  
& your mouth is

pressing hard on mine.

we are dancing. an epitaph  
tucked behind each of our ears.  
your hands curving  
round/ over my body, perfecting me  
marooned on the carpet, its reds  
emprisoning us.

where are you now if you are not with me?

kissing you, feverish  
trying to keep you next to me,  
both of us swaying  
in time

though we are out of time / we lose the rhythm

the water stops running,  
the lips curve over their teeth, im  
penetrable. swallow me  
intact as those flowers                      irises changing  
their own apertures.  
we open / we close  
the diaphragm

the light somehow  
gets in.

the flowers growing like eyes  
or lips even  
watching us, waiting

at the river's end i am unsure  
whether to un  
-lock you & your  
floodgates or

shut my mouth & refuse you a way out.

one day  
when the music is right  
& the night  
allows me to sleep  
beside you  
if only in retrospect

i will find you                      finding me

& we will end  
hard

like the river wringing its hands.

there is music in that.

## End Matter

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### ***the Gospel according to Thomas***

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