

# Baptism

Claude McKay

Into the furnace let me go alone;  
Stay you without in terror of the heat.  
I will go naked in—for thus 'tis sweet—  
Into the weird depths of the hottest zone.

5 I will not quiver in the frailest bone,  
You will not note a flicker of defeat;  
My heart shall tremble not its fate to meet,  
My mouth give utterance to any moan.  
The yawning oven spits forth fiery spears;  
10 Red aspish<sup>1</sup> tongues shout wordlessly my name.  
Desire destroys, consumes my mortal fears,  
Transforming me into a shape of flame.  
I will come out, back to your world of tears,  
A stronger soul within a finer frame.

## Textual Note

This poem also appears in *The Liberator* (October, 1921).

## Editorial Notes

1. Aspish: Like an asp, snakelike, full of venom.

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1 ;] .  
9 ;] , *Lib.*

10 .] ; *Lib.*  
13 ,] *om. Lib.*