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P O E M

The Ladder

Jennifer Grotz

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The Ladder

BY JENNIFER GROTZ

"I want! I want!" cries the figure climbing up the skinny ladder,
such a long climb to be filled with wanting, such a long

shadow cast onto the surface of the ground
while the ladder sips like a straw from the moon

it leads to, here as tiny as a rind of fingernail, suspended
in the night William Blake scratched and darkened

save for seven fuzzy stars. It looks like punishment:
you hook your leg on the third rung and look up,

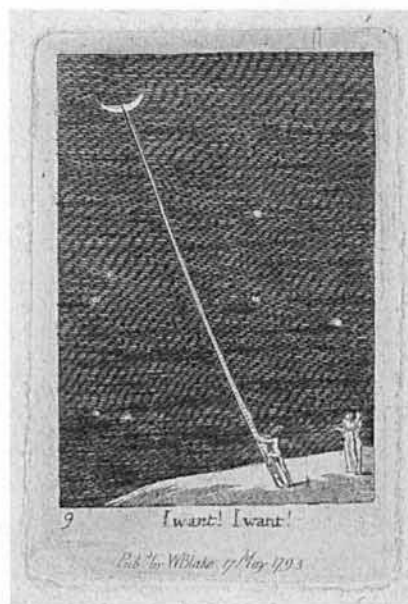
such a long climb for what you lack. It *must* be said twice
to show how saying does not in fact release it.

Perhaps, after climbing, you will reach the reclining crescent
and sleep upon it like a hammock before you realize that home

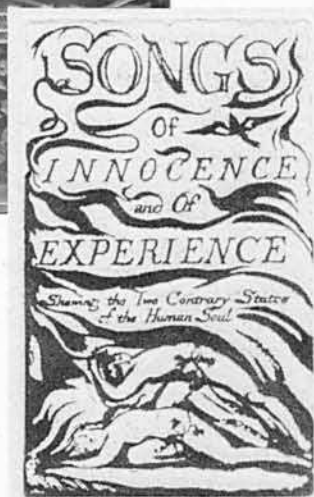
is the barren moon below: beautiful, light-reflecting,
but missing you. And if wanting is a ladder between

two moons, then the stars will hang neglected.
Surely Blake made the print no larger than a playing card

so that the ladder could lean without tearing
a paper sky gently pierced by stars.



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