

the paper dolls have been cutting your hair

poems

barton smock

these poems were written 2007-2011. while standing by any one poem is daunting, let alone hundreds, these at least have in them what I consider to be crucial to being called as such: a great avoidance or that sudden thing, sometimes both. for each there is a certain failure but also some vague success, and for that they have been allowed their passage and, here, their place. they are truthful in the sense that they were my thoughts and that, being so, fell to me.

the order is, for the most part, chronological- earliest to latest. some of the individual sequencing may be dyslexic, but the wording starts in the beginning and ends at the end.

the sections are not meant to be a guide, nor are they lofty in theme. while I wanted these poems to be together, I did afford them their perceived clique- a payment I've made in pause by way of a single blank page. other than that, they were meant to hear each other- however muffled.

Blank pages are as follows:

4,60,102,139,194,227,250,312,348,376

orphan's vigil

i.

strength
not the strength
a statue keeps.

ii.

mother's hunger
the hunger

of marionettes.

iii.

the beggar
father hides
and the beggar
he hides

behind.

iv.

brother
don't sleep.

the paper dolls
have been cutting
your hair.

the meek, the meek

i.

in him like the sewing needle of god's mother; is lightning.

in you a koan.

ii.

now that she wants the surgery removed
they tell her
the womb
is a hook
that looks like a womb.

iii.

everywhere work.
stalks
pitch

the golden blood
of brooms.

iv.

mother in her rocker
her eyes
tire swings
her tongue

a cat's tail.

v.

fourteen
my sister
martyrs herself
under the monkey
mad
in the stoplight.

vi.

in a church
hangs a coat
with a man
in it.

vii.

does not break loose
like they say

all hell.

upland glyphs

woman not womanly.

living's dry gesture
at the open gown of the sick.

scraped by leaves a body.

a second son
in a blanket grandmother makes.

of god we've been speaking.

hospitals when we were younger.

the tree where snakeskin.

hope not for. but for

statues of them.

live in a dent. the electric

left in a crater.

we release, outside, a balloon.

bury in the land an arm made of earth.

to curtains as fingertips

of babies
to scars.

click in the hall of yesterday with.

heels of irretrievable mercy.

hope not for. but for

statues of them.

an agreeable virgin in stirrups. a cradle
taken by birds.

glide ohio

i.

eating is done fast and alone. teeth
chatter
in the corner,
 a rabbit
muscles
in the mouth. sister
visits
 naked
save the sheet
she learned
to wrap in college

while

haunting
tents.

ii.

dogs at the door.
father
shoeless in the basement
negotiating
claw
&
cigarette.

iii.

grasshoppers press the palm, spit.
mother swats
her magazine
at hard
boys hits

the wall, these pictures
that have
her smiling, shrug.

iv.

sleepwalking like something brother won at the fair.

we nudge it. put the bread

back of the mouth. injured

deer, slanted

mailbox. wife

a gown
ghosting
her legs

keeps
taut
the clothesline
from hospital
to home.

transit

we are walking on cold stones with enough writing on them.
my daughter and I. she has two bruises from the sky, yesterday.
I'm holding my wife's head on my hip. every mile or so, I trade
it for the school book my daughter has. she has questions, but
they take a long time to reach me. when we get there, are we
going to tell them? are you coming? I think of my two
cloudless sons on the day of their fading. say. how quick you
are, you

with your mother's body.

cigarettes

the second
to last
man
on earth
sets a gas can
by a hissing
tire
and struggles
a box
from his pocket

not knowing

how many
are left.

the goodbye

baby I'm sorry
my penchant
for last things

does not end.

film town

she likes it stark. shadows cast
no person. her frozen tits and nerve
hung
thumb.

cracks
in safe places
move.

he wants a boy, gets
one. fills

urgently the cab of the truck.

her eyes

are empty, turning

dryers.

you can't have babies here. they eat all the snow.

brawn

in every river
a rawboned
mother.

my days
pass
low, airplane.

a pilot
with bones
in his eyes
the bones

we took
from our food.

house,
your faucets
grieve.

the strip clubs, gone.
the children.

our father
every man
in god's
eatery

pounding the table
for salt.

kairos

the window
it renders
a bird
on a burning
mouse.

why you suddenly
stand
in the tub.

you are wet. the world spins.

your double hand
groping for the edge
of a towel
dragged by something
out the door.

the wire
worming
in the front yard
over the bike
your brother
is under.

soon enough
you land on your back
and see yourself
turning the knob.

it matters
that you would have.

jinn

sorrowed
itch

of mountain.

hands of mountain.

stillborn pup, cupped.

a letting of light.

made moth
and a letting
of light.

on acolyte road

brother says

how thin
we've grown

on the fat of self.

I hold the map.
am

its only
reader.

a bone drops.

desert & cathedral
I tell him

the words

I can figure.

bone like that don't break.

he has come to see the marrow of angels.
and I

what devours.

graduand

for all he knows

it's the museum
of still
dogs
he passes

his mouth
open
as a leash
at the neck
of nothing.

the audition

the event
of my hurried
father

well attended.

by whom. by hunger.

with forks
we fan
the stove
where his top hat

spins.

day makers

the well
it called me.

speech of hooks.

shot once
into the air
and left the horse
to hang
in the barn.

goodbye
town that I know.

little black feathers
on little black ants
better
that this also be
goodbye.

I saw many things
wrong
as a child.

the way the living
not the dead
would turn.

the night
pared from the wall

a thin thing
over the thin mouth
of my sister.

I thought it all
a circus
sorrowed
but a circus
still.

now I watch
a barn
being raised
and want nothing
for the swallow
on my arm.

a human word

is rape

and human
to go
when called.

I wanted the space
between the skin
and the fruit.

was not my place
to take the knife
from the boy
in the well.

to think it
merely shyness
keeping him small
in that drawn
bucket.

the bartered present

'a man doesn't ask too many questions when his mother is suddenly brought back to life; he is much too happy.'

- Ray Bradbury, *The Martian Chronicles*

we look for ice
in the dark.

count only
the cats
that are living.

brother
he hears
thunder.

we put
seven wheelbarrows
in a field
and wait.
we wait

like giants
to move.

in the morning
we go to town
with our carriage
of rainwater.

I have
for the scarecrow

a dollar.

if ever
a last crow
my brother
has its claw.

this
I am careful
to believe.

our father
is a careful man

careful, too,
with his cigarette.

it is
he says
the white leg
of a woman

a woman
not at all
like your mother.

the lord of saying

in the cabin
that haunts
his wife

hunger
has lost
its tooth.

*how red
was yesterday's
fox.*

the author
has only
today.

*which tree
still wounds
the axe*

*my father
raised.*

*could I have made
this drink.*

tomorrow
a mouse
will go-

a fork on its back.

the messenger

whittles
from the puppet
its mouth.

cuffs
gingerly
the leg

of a fly

and closes
the matchbox
where one scroll
has become

one hundred.

hope

yours
that the bird
not have to carry
its cage.

mine
that the bird
not have to carry
its cage
in its beak.

ours
that we are not tired
sitting together
this early

easing
fish bones
into bubbles.

day of hands

leave me
like you leave
pianos.

point
where a crow
should be.

be it
an hourglass

hell

and we
on its floor.

be there
withdrawing
one bird
into the clock
when it claws
noon.

to night, I say me

i.

leaves that would've been books.

and there a fire trying.

fells an owl

my son

the upper bill
of its beak.

to night, I say me.

ii.

a paucity of stones
and brothers.

with ink

what once

we made.

houses to bell the wind; my work.

or widow and skinny tree.

aliment

hollow stone
the old well
holds.

slender
the wind
to unfold
an arm.

admit
my teeth

the half tick of sleep

thin are the dead

a toothpick,
a bed.

consonance

i.

pulls
father
from my mother's womb
the forelegs
of a calf.

false gods
are the sons
of belief.

ii.

piano in the moon, no. cut rock.

the valves
when you're dreaming
mother

I can't hear them
working.

iii.

blood
housed in a pebble.

at the end of a note

a knot.

where silent ropes
gather

I have these:

the language of my neck.
the swayed bridge
of my spine.
the wild pain
of a calf. in my knuckles, in my knuckles.

bounty

where I gutted a man
who could not hush
his hunger

see a snake
scratch its belly
with sand.

yard bones

as a child,
hard gum
shadow
on a baseball card.

as a man,
a cot.

carnivali

her first love
a clockmaker
in a forgotten
teacup.

her second love
she abandoned
in the topmost car
of a ferris wheel.

her third love
an eyeless
thief

who once emptied
the coins
from his hat

onto the counter
of a small balloon

shop.

her fourth love
left sugar
on her back, and a hook

breathing
under the coat

of her fifth.

extant

closed mouth
of a shopkeeper.

his finger
an abandoned
cross

the length
of jesus' spine.

forgive
the hush
of forgiveness, forgive
the state
of my house.

we open
early
no light
is first.

we single out
the second
sons
to copy

scripture.

the barber
the dentist
good

and absent.

morality
we use it
when two people

or more
run down the street.

we know
it's a bone
rolls down
the roof

which bone
for years
we disagree.

rent

where the night drags
on the one light
left on

I stay

to smoke
in a bright square
at the building
I've been chosen
by.

a man
I often see

yawns open
the window
I am under.

the distant lake
he looks for
moans over
its shadow
as the long
tenants

of self
stretch to occupy
a dark whimsy.

visitation

the children
in a dry tub
 their shed clothes
tight
at the necks
of dolls.

 crash
of mother
in the kitchen, fathers

in different cars
aiming
for bottles.

god inhabits
a plaything
 separates
each finger.

the oldest
puts one hand
on his head
and forces it down.

the youngest
comes up for water.

the middle
child

on his way home
from school
yesterday

saw the devil
prying horns
from a tree

and felt very much alone.

crosspiece

the wreckage is easy.
and easily
we move.

the wheel
from a wheelchair
chasing
a dog. the freed body
of a loved one.

write a name
sadly
on a wooden bleacher.

you can be the first.
it will happen
again and again.

grab
from the air
bits of a wedding
dress.

take the child
still holding
an iron
for his mother

into someone else's
basement.

after the tornado
you can find anything;

the abandoned
model
you now have
the parts for.

in pursuit of the bow tie's bloody print

a bulb
flickering
in a showcase.

the arms
of fallen
eyeglasses

flailing

at the errant wheel
of a suitcase.

the curator's wife
drawing a bath
just as
the stone-choked rain

begins.

easy
I say
to the hands
I took

from the piano mover.

the hand's silent film debut

as a duck
behind the moon

what moves?

her purse begins to sob.

we pass
a fire escape
choked
with books.

also
a mime with child.

catholicon

slicked
with sadness
a branch.

the skinny
legs
of rain.

into the wood
a man
whose daughter's
hair
is a ghost
fighting a ghost
for her head.

whose daughter
has not slept.

such cures
the town
talks.

put the sick
every morning
on a different
porch.

use
the same
nail.

if one is awake
kill a crow-

old tree
the man says
I am tired
of the crow
moreso
of its shadow

and is not seen
this early

filling
with wine
the stop sign.

cenotaph

i.

half a smoke
there in the ice

and your brother
his fable;

I am under the stone
until snowfall
and then I am
the stone.

ii.

wage
the announcement
of your body
as a shepherd
to his staff
with which
he'll urge
the dead horse

dead, but it's as true
as a sheep
shaking off
snow-

you know this horse
and the rider
beneath.

this ground
not for praying
wave

as to a widow
herded
from the station
cursing
the train

its freight
of veils.

antiphon

the first review
of my father's work
was a secret
he couldn't keep

at home.

in the tongue
death speaks
I heard a lullaby

ease
understandably
forward.

the books
left open
under my blanket
they turned
into the mouths
of birds.

licked by night
and starving
my mother

with black squares
tattooed the dark
I couldn't swallow.

father continued
his day job
amen.

he has been
so long
swimming

I fall asleep
while mother reads;

the pause
in her voice
an old
light house
light

on a higher
wave.

a note to the custodians of breadth

it could've lasted longer; the hurt.

infant as warning.

god
for stealing his image.

we'll say
a minute
to trace
a rib.

we'll say it lived.

out of character
for the seamstress
to leave the blood.
the fool
his glass
eye.

found itself
today
did fate

watching others work.

top hat days

for your neck, in the morning, I am lucky.
presently, coffee. and a pushed open door.

sugar on the paw of a neighbor's cat.
my arm, its little cast. problems big as mice
and the wheel, regardless, we use. our health
far away, rain on the roof of a dollhouse.
our day, the length of nineteen-twenty-seven,

our evening the foot of a black rabbit.

the finished ocean

I am trying to keep it. the frail
argument of my voice. there's a
darker hand. a choker she traded
for a diamond set palm. I am not about
poking holes in the body. I say it
as a rerun of lightning
trapped
in the scale
of a prehistoric
fish-

still fin

for a meaner
time.

Moses

everyone called him Moe, and not just his friends. Moe, he didn't believe in beginnings, but his wife would tell people when it started. it started, she would say, when he stopped eating his lunches. and he guessed that was about right, as right as a wife can be. he'd come home from work with his pail and set it heavy in his wife's right arm as the baby, the youngest, would be in her left. he'd say, no I didn't, maybe tomorrow. then he'd go out to smoke but he wouldn't smoke. he'd leave the cigarettes in their pack and walk out to the yard and think about putting his fat neck in the tire swing. he'd come back to the house and put his fat hands on his daughter's shoulders and say he was home and he would be home tomorrow to eat with her and her brothers. he wouldn't be, though. not right away. on the weekends he'd sit on the step with his oldest son and watch little men die. such a small drop, from that step, not enough to kill a man. his son would just look at him and take the man from Moe's hands and place him on his back again. soon the day came that he left work on his lunch hour. his daughter said thanks and poked his belly. he could hardly move in his pants anymore but he managed to sit down. he asked his wife for the special and pinched her leg. coming right up was a plate of canned ravioli. fuck ravioli he said. but he didn't say it mean. he said it as if he'd just asked for permission to hate ravioli. he said it again. he said a lot of things just then, his mouth full, his wife opening cans in the kitchen. he addressed god directly. after these many years, he addressed god head on. he made for his truck. god, Moses here. it's the ravioli, we have too much.

revenant

today, ghosts with canes and the fragile strength
of birds. you are my wife and we worry,
tightly, the rags. our son's head, hot, as a
spent rifle. the blood rowing back through each
hole in his body. a gauze of red clouds,
slowing, the blades of a helicopter.
your voice, gone, up the spine of a feather.
it's not the whole story. this bone you were
not born with, ambling, under the skin. knob
on the bath I was supposed to fix. wounds
dressed in your countenance. even the dead
get cancer. once, an angel, stomaching
an anchor and your grandmother wheeling
her hospital bed into the surf. arms,
bandages at the sides of the healed. legs,
hobbled dream of the crotch. upstairs, our boy
moans like a pipe for its water. old house.
late night. we spool the dark from outside, wring
it over a glass. if it breaks, we leave.

periodicity

bones
in the low bed
of my knuckle.

*

she cooks
hazily
sets food
on the floor.

*

there are bruises
that don't
bruise.

*

rubbing pictures
with our thumbs
are they
lamps.

*

always
it's others
that live
behind a hill
over which
the sound
of kept time

a late
knock
on a tin
belly.

*

godspeak
that would be
cognac.

*

it was not
to breathe
that clutch
at the chest. everyone
smoked. everyone

from their neck
an unmade
key.

*

I know
people

the appetite
of their legs
under blankets
on benches

in a town where I fought.

hawk

it is the season of my father's newspaper.

the earth turns
in its mask.

good
for her age
a good woman

walks

the spine of a thin road.

underway
a reunion
of the uninvited.

baby names
like branches
in a sack.

carry the holes you watch for.

he says
tenderly
nothing;

this figure no other stick figure seeks.

a tree was here, a soft
black
tree
 its one
leaf
held
in an absence
of wind

held

as a pencil
suggesting
its mark
in the shadow
of a wing, momentary

the headline
of periphery

and careful the lid with its eye.

accident

because
when mine stopped
your sadness
was still

moving

all I want

I have.

this longing
for Eve's
childhood.

tobacco

my grandfather
pulls a nail
with his teeth.

in a hole
could fit
my mother's mouth

he puts his thumb.

a clock
keeps
its bird.

he doesn't spit.

anima

on our bread
the last of it
we have spilled
water.

we do not plead.
nor do we
rap

the neighbors
away.

note
each window
its negligible
catch- we do not

rap the neighbors
away.

we cannot read
because our father
could not read.

the paper
when it comes
we give

to our mother.

there are pictures;

a man
under a man
on a tightrope.

a cigarette
in broomstraw.

in halcyon jest

a local teacher
making scissors
of her hands.

better to wait.

address
winter boats

and wait.

never any trouble

you and I, we are kissing. we are kissing in the bed of a pickup truck. when we are not kissing, you are telling me about your father. if he is sitting alone in a house, at a table, you don't know. we pass houses and I ask about the driver. I don't know why I care so much. you have lost a button, I can see your breast, and you are closing my ears with your hands. my head is a rock loosing the tread. there are two poles without wire in the bed and I'm going to steal one of them. you are looking for your button, you are praying it shows up. I can tell you think this is going badly. you are really looking now, it's nobody's business now, and I can see more of your breast. the kissing is done with but I don't operate like I know. the houses are getting farther apart and soon there won't be any. I say this out loud and whatever you want to say about it dies with the driver as a car with three small bodies in it moves through him. we are okay and I tell it. you pat yourself all over, find your button had the whole time been nestled in the lip of your jeans. I think of us when we were making out and how that button might've been cradled then not cradled by the hole in your belly. you look at the button. it's like I'm not even there.

you are sad but I am sadder

one marionette
says to another

you're getting fat.

the second one says

who said that.

courier the less

tell the maker
of shrouds
the lamb

is dying.

the one lamb
we have.

tell her
the babies
were returned

and are standing
by my uncle.

tell her
my aunt
did not want
this place
to be here
still.

tell her the babies don't cry
and the lamb
sleeps often.

tell her
yesterday
at the market
one recognized
another
and spoke
all night

through a mask.

that tomorrow
you will be a mother

this towel
with my breast

so she knows.

kid

paper bags
in the grocery

still

as want.

bee
under my hat

not moving.

from the hands
I sidestep
I keep

a yo-yo.

on carnival grounds

posters
of towns.

comics

it was our dog
killed

the neighbor's dog.

hours
my brother and I

we washed its mouth and cried.

dad came home early.
black as

stove.

mom
whatever she had to put on
she put on

for dinner.

we ate. we were a hungry lot.

they have another dog, mom said.

dad
he just howled
and pulled her to his lap.

he put his hands all over her dress
which she had worn the week before
to a wedding.

cant hook

up in the night; *crow-waked*

and broke
as hat.

leans into father;

slant bone of collar.

gut groan
of outhouse.

let him think I am dead

mama say

let him
to murder.

I am young. I don't know
how young. sex, cant hook,

and christ. not being able to shit.

having shoes. to set. by a brook.

chalk tree
mama say
no such thing. chalk tree,

ossein.

it was not so late in life that I began to pace

the headstones
of factory
fathers
dust
into grey
grin
of moon. see a gun
by frost
and fissure
on the seat
of a dead
car, on this road
poked thin
by sticks. man
or man's antique
punching
into a phone booth
his whore.
her shirt
then
in his hand. see that, too.
the colorless
head
of a stick figure; her knee.
maybe.
for what I imagine
the vast
may tarry.

1955

good works done in a dollhouse.

her dress, catching.
on the word, 'jut'.

the eyes that can be closed, close.
the eyes that are open, are.

leave the train
on, its toy lights
thrown mouths
by which
the other toys
breathe.

settle not
like dust.

brother
that rare passenger
of proof

pins her face
in the curtain
she who had just been
outside.

years, disrobe.
that any of you
would have known
to be kind.

even the soul prefers women.

such that it opens
the door of a car
onto the door of another
waking

he who had just
believed
not in purgatory
but in its lobby.

two

it is not widely known that death spent some years at the breast
of the woman

mothered murder.

it is more widely known the story of the man who summoned
his mistress

in her towel
to the window
of her front room

while he clicked open a pocket knife. it's my nerves, he said.
and that car

it's been there all night.

atavist

drops, the man, his book. *it has no end.* but what can be said
to men such as he,
not open to the closed terrors of want? I've doors to lock. the
head librarian
may never return. presently, sir, I've a candle to light

squired as I am to the dark aisle of sighs.
the girl, there, on her belly
pretending to read
the intricate press
of your thumb
on her heel-

I don't suppose you'll find her shoes.

the masters

we pulled it up mean
from the yard.

the three of us
living in the house
and a neighbor.

four strong, it took an hour.

an hour from each.

our women
would later
ask
that we not
kill them.

that we say something.

when we were done
we said nothing
and moved
to fill
what it was
in front of us, the earth.

the thing, it stood. we gave it
something to see
I guess. other than soil.

no eyed dogs.

grand lonesome

mostly, they are mistakes.
are mudstone and earthworm,
shud'ring. are ho-hum.
and thrum
ho-hum
on silos
for god. are homeless.
the homeless
when they are having
sex. not cinerea, nor
takers
of hills, but orphans
of canyon
overlooking
the gargoyled
furor

of cities.

brides

i.

aubade for a nocturne:

made of sister
and perch of dove
she covers Eve

the girl I love.

ii.

to see such a thing
as a rain
of birds

I have waited.
I have waited like a string.

iii.

every night we move the chain.

and pray
the dogs
return.

iv.

etched into a dish
we cannot break

how first the hunger fed.

v.

stewards
of scarcity

have you
a proxy? wound has wage

to wed its dress.

long straws of rain

bodies
that have
in them
strange words.

sleep of cigarettes.

light, the grill
caging
its bulb. a fork

no one
steps on.

an empty boot, a window; black mouths.

*an eye
keeping dirt
keeps all
from the earth.*

walks a devil
don't know
he a devil- ma says
that's why.

a half buried hearse
gone pale in the paint; this building.

I talk to god.
I whore
my hand
its contradiction;

puppet
the jawbone's
x-ray.

my family
they sit.

call it hell
when they stand

what they top.

post cain

the tin mouth
of that box.

its bloodless flag.

I'd open that mouth
and walk my fingers
in, out.

claw
days
at the name.

nights,
I'd say it.

out there, under god.

stretched
in the mud
like a smile.

the land
flat as movie posters.

mostly silence
what I had

or mostly
on account of it.

the postman
he couldn't wink.
but he tried.

shot wing of a bird, he tried.

I clapped my hands, nothing.

an echo, pacing.

that I might
take its name
as my own
the postman

he give me
a box.

tea

I ask her
has she brought
the baby. sister

I have. her other children
listen for cars
by the road. the three of them

like dogs; distant, loyal. I should say
good dogs. they are like good dogs
your boys. the baby is unwrapped.

it does not scream. I ask her
does it scream. sister

it does. it puts its mouth
on the inside
of my belly. the people in my dreams

have dreams. I tell her

what nonsense. I tell her

the dirt
was dirt
and our mother
I would catch her
eating it.

ii.

my quiet sister and her quiet boys
visit so little.

you
like your mother

whose mouth
would deny
my fingers.

legwork

going nowhere
like a cigarette
goes nowhere.

croc foot
trying
underwater
to shake

water off.

tell anyone
here
they've a lace
untied. that a boy

can disappear. would guess

even in drowning
the boy was lazy. might say

he was beaten
by bubbles.

laurel

not by its neck
my grandfather's
bottle.

his penchant
for the bodies
of things.

were the prayer
of his line
too broadly
cast

he'd say
good fish
and go hungry.

saved
every Sunday
christ
in both cheeks

and fought
all day
drunkards.

once fattened
a crow
for his son
run off

but could not
watch it go.

once choked
for nine months
a man.

so full
of stories
I am not like my father

who died
today
in a field.

penetralia

i.

forgive
each victor
his loss
of sin.

as a painter
of white horses

my talk is my talk.

the topmost button
corks

the wine
in my throat.

ii.

if you've blood in your mouth
you're a hooker.

you've no mother
but it's her hand
lifts your shirt
to cover

that cigarette burn, that peephole
of god.

ditches

they are not with us now; the babies.
we came through a bad wood, we offered
what crow
took.

there was a morning
after the road
and its guardian fog;

of abandoned wicker-work.
of mountain
dragging river
uphill.

that morning we prayed
for clock tower
and crow.

for bells with tongues and for
god.

we pressed
our cheeks
with branches

that touch
would again
be remote

that you would think us gypsies

red ribbons
we dug
from our thighs.

man cross man

i.

horrors of the gentle;
a list.

father

in a son's grocery.

all things tower.

ii.

I am weak but only for you.
I am weak but only for you.

iii.

if your only fear is that you will be eaten
you are not

afraid.

iv.

the mirror's
most fervent
devotee-
has no face

and in these last hours
has no face.

v.

perfectly round
the muscle
that slides
from its arm.

vi.

state your grounds
for burial.

vii.

a scroll, flat. or a tongue.

viii.

*an elephant can be opened
with the tusk
of another.*

*its belly can accommodate
most families.*

ix.

the under-shepherds
under

the train

cannot lift
a single crow.

x.

what one takes for god's coat

is probably
just a moth.

xi.

my house
is your
inherited
house.

and death its own angel.

abroad

sorry, church, that I am here
only when
no other.

these ants
on the horn
I've made
of my hand-

I thought you knew I was coming.

coming not for brick
but for the blue
blood

of brick.

I locked a man inside a tennis court yesterday.
he sat down and was glad.

my son is dead.
just this morning
my wife pulled him safely
from behind my car.

I know you're tired of hearing it.

the after parade

the day
the dryer
was delivered

I said to my brothers
listen. not one tire
on an overturned bike

spun.

coaxed
my mother
from the copperhead

water.

we were naked and it died.
we were children
with children

made of cloth.

we knew our fathers had gone

south
to lean
ladders

on vacation homes.

we knew some men
had tricks. that our mother

would laugh
at each one
breathing
lazily

into a lunch sack.

I think of it now
as I am late
with my charge
of balloons

too long figuring this picture
of my father's
hand

holding a bird
wrapped in a flag
out to my mother
who's ready to pop.

space is not lonely

but we were wrong
to change
our poems.

the come upon table

for rain
you do this:
set your tin cup
mouth side
down.

for sleep
leave the sheep, leave.

for shelter
we have always
been small. like a pill.

the winners of midwestern game shows

had we one mouth. had our teeth been field workers swept
into a bar after a fight. that we could find them. that we could
tell our wives where to look. had we not been dragging our
shadow by the foot. had the ground not shrugged itself lower.
had it opened. had we cut the palm, not the throat, of death.
so that when it prayed. so that when it tried.

had they not banned, so early, the dogs. had my best friend
a suit. had he not talked so much about getting one. had it
not been his hand I seen come outta the earth to take its pick
of hats from the wounded. had I not laid his fat sister. had I
gotten money for it. called her fat and not loved her for
standing upright what was another's tale of composure.

to the readers of fiction

*you can
with a hacksaw
save most
of your leg
and its double.*

writers of fiction

was a man
bit a dog
and lost a tooth.

was another man
bit a dog.

same dog.

wasn't a day
went by
the two
didn't wake
to the howling
other.

equipoise

I pull each hair
from her head.

I pull, slow day, slowly.

she does not shriek, but winces.
and, for that, is atoned.

she has filled
seven glasses; water.

no one, yet. we've a silent
knocker. a place

for god, for god's
girlfriends.

my asking
mother

how would we know

is a horse
bellied
by a whale.

by which I mean
to talk
of that day

on the shore- the white herd, the limbs
made wild
by wave-

the five thousandth mistress of hunger

sleepily
breaks
one arm
with another

and pulls it
under the blanket
where

as if
covering
an imperfect
square
of ice

her skin
taut
with mimicry

cedes
to a pliable
mania
of welts

that
at first
if any
glance

seem to be
the removed
eyes
of fish

cirque

made not
into a fisher
of men
my father
pushed off
in the little boat
of his wound-

so filled
the weeping bowl
of my mouth.

the off-screen

angels
lesser
than father

have beaten
before
this bounty

of heed
and horse
at the grocery

where coin
if cut
on the rail

will buy
for its bread
also pail

and train
without station
to stop

may grind
the root
of its halt

past the open
burning
of crop

whence cleared
I'm reading
a book

saw your dog
says a friend
and I look

with my eye
so rained
it is dry

as a drop
on the back
of a fly

naked save a sheet on the line

see my mother
not knowing
it's only

an angel
thinks heaven
is lonely.

local verse

wing, small as a bitten ear.
tongue of a dinner bell.
firefly, unheralded
in the flask of gabriel.

soon

is a congress. of pale wagons. house to house. dragged by
devils.

now, mosquito on the breast of a robin.

many loves
men say
had the man
in the moon.

say unmissed men
in taverns.

so worried, that woman.
that gate hungry
woman

waving off wolf
with her used book of warnings.

are devil

broken tooth, top half; heart of a mime.

a miner's fork.

one glove, still. one glove, not.

ghosts, arthritic.

statues of men pushed onto women.

statues of women, listen. like pockets. for coin.

sun on a stone. stone in the dark.

rubric

seen a man
talking to the door
of a church.

there are good doors
doors you can
imagine
opening.

maybe into a tree.
barefoot
you would step

think you were floating
on black rabbits.

seen that man's baby
crying. silent film
with a car in it.

a car and a baby.

I wanted to tell the baby
bough don't break
baby.

but the door opened, and I seen
another man. seen them together
those two men

crossing the tar.

eidolons

my mother's jaw

for it
to become
my mother's jaw

for it to fit
both hoof
and hell

had to drop
not in awe
but dead

and demon

as a sack
of sticks
in a hunter's
heart

and for the deer
to free itself
that womb
of glass

had to bridle
its hoof
that human bit

with which
it barbers
now
and limps

past small men
touching
stick to stick.

having lost the moon, I confront the wreckage of my sons
for James Wright

and notice, in my knee,
pins, toothpicks. randomly.
the kitchen, softer, than recall.
than rain, than book, or empty hall.
than bird, than bee, than tooth
in straw. what bird what bee
I wouldn't know. save sounding
what a day might own. I wouldn't know
my wife has left
but for this brush, its night haired theft:

my wife has left. she wasn't tall. my sons
have gone
to hobble dolls.

Saturday

I am out here sending rocks into a scarecrow. I am a good shot. I have an arm, ask anyone. there's a boy from Thurston, a sorta home run king in my team's division, who is having trouble walking right now because of my good arm. I think of him, with his cleats still on, limping to the refrigerator, for milk, for its lid, for the milk again because the cat's back. it makes me feel strong. makes me want to eat something. I wonder if mom and dad have moved from the kitchen to the living room, or maybe to the car for a drive. I listen for the car. I stand behind the scarecrow and make binoculars of my hands. I reach into the soft back of straw and retrieve two of three rocks. I missed the first time, but I got over it. hell, this third rock came almost clean through. I love that they say 'the cancer is back'. and then they don't move. and ask me to stop so much of my own. I set my binoculars where the scarecrow's eyes should be. and whisper all kinds of shit in its ear. I imagine my brother doesn't know I'm here when he starts shooting, and I imagine when I'm thirty and push these silver balls from one side of my belly button to the other I'll probably have a different story for how they got here.

Sunday

a hotter hell fore I got that praying mantis in the jar. tighten that lid tight said god said father as he took a match to the tick on my neck. he went inside, I picked up a stick. stick I threw short the length of heaven as heaven I thought was a road. the road, at that, our house was on. get yer brother's dog and call it a night and I did. and the dog, too, making it in, before anything fell, that stick caught on the bottom frill of some curtain calling down the middle of no show nor audience for it.

if it could have been reached, the blackest point in a man, it wasn't. but the point just before, my mother knew- to turn the bulb, in her white hand, just so. turned as a globe with a knot in it, knot made of knots from the belly of my brother, nervous fat friend only friend of the outdated world. he would take with him one night his dog

and shoot himself. they'd argue what night for a week after. loaded the gun proper at least and my father would be dead today white hands or no had there been more than one gun she knew about. I never told, not even the night, how that mantis stayed alive on its tack beating its wings at the frog-throat black like an eyelid against a thumb and my brother I told him he can't sleep through anything but go to sleep anyway with that dog that was my dog long before you were born dumb as a retard in a mirror.

the etiquette of disappearance for Bela Tarr

it's a long take. it's dusk. as *dusk* as the sigh of a bus. the poor are leaving. spends a shadow the coin its head is under. caws a shadow no wail but its length. so, singer, sing. ribbon the nude. artist, toll the clothed. sleep, right leg. sleep, left. the heroic twin of the trapezist is dying. apocalypse, a mere horse thief. the woman faith stands between two bathrooms, achieves a scarecrow witness:

a patient border middling the screen of a drive-thru. town of men, sojourned, to the town of more. a girl in a pick-up with her leg out the window. as a tie that's been lit, that border.

stir

my mother carries her mother to bed.

there's the desk I sit at
and the desk I don't.

tiny lamps, winking out.

her father once called it the town of sleep.

where he went
with his gun

I could walk there.

maudlin

a late swimmer, touching
one side, then the other.
night window, this wine.
a walker, beggared
to the wend of a wheel

loosed from the lean of its car.
a bad man jawing
a gradient slur
of hand puppets

on another's dark drive.
a second swimmer
I hadn't seen, touching
the first. same stone
on the pool's bottom-

unmoved, unmoved
by the yaw of the moon.

egg moon

a nice touch
that spoon
on the table
of patience.

night soup, dark bird.

bread knife
abandoned
to its drowsy
gash.

be this
one day
the house of sleep.
the next, of eats.

what theft
I have
left

takes my mother.

limn

the ancient anxiety of dogs.

has winter
no levy
it cannot call.

bread;

the saying of bread.

bald man
in a hair salon

religion.

but also, bravery.

our present loss, lost
to the foreclosure
of immediacy.

litany's take,
a rake.

treads your boy
to banquet-

passes my own
pulling a mouth
from a wire fence
and waves.

was not believed
a child

this faith.

the strength of my father
to damn his due.
the strength of yours, too.

be still. and full.

has place
no debtor
in lull.

the best

odd, this park.
no pigeons, no
mothers.

tall babies, taller straws.

a man
in scrubs
on a bench.

I've brought bread
and am suddenly
quite sad.

if you can't picture
how sad I am
think of your friends
leaning

into the door
of a cane factory
where you've given
notice-

think of them eating this bread.

the end of snow

we believe in the coming
of the white fly-

in the demotic ear
of angels-

that we will enter
the lottery
of rape, else rock-

and clutch
at the neck
of god.

or swat.

nigh

boy, muttering
to the mouth
on his knee.

his bike, exhausted.

the girl
from science class
he loves.

her mother
the model

he's loved.

their first child
a mute
neither
speaks to

might someday ask

could it be
our breath
still stirs

the thin doll
we practice on.

winter showing

he's punching
square
them angels

your father's
god

mumbled
a man
I did not know.

in his mouth
a snowflake
had broken.

beware the tyger

whose stripes
mimic
prison bars
behind which
a man is on fire.

I will want to hold the baby

on the weekend, we will go to a play.
some will bring their children.
the play will change many lives.
at intermission, I will want to leave.
you will lead the hand of the man
sitting next to you
to my ankle. he will use
the weight of his chin, the lullaby
of his baby lolled head.
I will not be able to hold
the brief kiss of my knees.

to see his hand
you will lift my skirt
from behind. I will ask
that you
be furious.

the fixed

i.

one crow
watches another.

your father
lifts

the patch on his eye.

as a daughter, you believe your mother
when she says

love only
what lands
what thinks
it can land

on its shadow. love only

the second
crow.

ii.

you are weak
but hold
that man

like a ladder.

seashell

the blur
of your thigh
in bathwater.

the deckle-edged
howl
of that baby
on the radio.

grandmother's cough.

the rag
in the mouth
of the woman
washing

your husband.

stockings
you wish
would reach.

the one-handed
memo
of a painter
who slipped.

shirtless paperboys.

the infidelity of strangers

scrape of lake
at the collar
of coat.

the coiled plea
of a wire fence
that the wind
not take

its gown.

in this, in shudder of trees, the car of a train.
also, unable to be held-

the pit of a plane.

pilot, oh watcher
of abandoned presence
what a teacher of english
your wife could've been-

noting all manner
of branchless swoon

the pull of her stockings
to the book in her lap.

verger

from the carcass
of a coon
dead

in its can

he has taken
a bone.

he is happier
for it, and maudlin.

bone
be with us
he carols-

the glove
on his right hand
missing.

old ache emporium

the mouths
of two gods
at either end
of this alley,

open mouthed gods.

one breathes in, one out.

feels like mine
what they share.

and this dog
pulled into a store
by an owner
whose hand is asleep

is the dog
I once had
behind me

after closing
the shop
to shelve

what I had been shown
by the daughter
of the man
who hired me.

keep watch, he had said.

so I brought my dog
and kissed his daughter
on the back
of the knee

while she took
whatever pills
the stepstool allowed.

ghosts

our only quibble; the mean

of the haunted and the moreso. outside
a bullet misplaced by its gun and children
chased into jars. outside turrets of tanks

turning. bruised earth, sorrow soft, rain
puddle. palm passing through a plum. all
outside. white paint and bed sheets, our lot.
our only imagining; corridor a ribbon,

or the fabric belt of a woman's dress.

we think her a fool; god's wife. she brings
to her neck the neck of a soldier

while kissing the unscented wrist
of her son. she tells us to wait.

that a ghost can only be killed by a ghost.
that it happens
only in heaven.

the shadows men believe we are
we take as lovers.

hobbies

buying cigarettes
and twine
for my daughter
whose dollhouse
needs a fence-

oh, and chasing
that little dog.

care for Timothy

in small boats, wake.

think it rain
the lips
of fish

that pluck about
your wooden
bed.

make of sky
a desperate room
the door of which
is night. turn

its moony knob. send for your mother.

she
who is already
there. think of the messenger. how long

he will stand
at the window
where five months
before

I tapped
with an oar.

the collector

while prying
the tooth
of another
from the exiled
receiver
of a phone

in a town
where earlier
he'd bought
an apple

your father
his face
gone rent
was gutted
from behind

by a man
whose right arm
cursed
the moon
its crescent

whose left arm
your father
had found
then sent

to your mother

who cared
for the arm,
its hand and the rose

it held.

summer

my breathing
had to pass
an airplane

made of paper.

I was tall for my age.
sexless. silo.

I would fall, plane would fall.
a fat kid
would come
and talk to me. he would sit on my bike.

the school bus
on a dry run
signaled
we had

little. when the spokes
like fishing wire
eventually
snapped

he was on top of me
and then he wasn't.

he ran. his body
chased his body.

I stayed on my back.
I held my breath
until I could feel
the nicking
blade

of my father's
razor

in the crease
of the plane's
middle.

I thought I would care
who put it there.

the devoured room

his mouth
having it out
with bread

the hooded
man might know
of a tree

fathoms
in its branches
babies

under which
birds
eat birds

chattered
to crumbs.

hush banquet

a chicken
fat
with terror

under
a white van
born

parked

is careful
not to
cluck-

its legs
charon's
oars

tread
the myth
of headfirst

babies.

the deliberate

the ball
one must drag
from its bounce, and the slow

well
slurred
with rock, and your brother

his cough
when he sits
as if
the trade

of stance

had been skipped
by the school
his father

drove by
once
with a gun and once

with a girl, your mother

following him, stopping
at a bank
cleaning it
and dabbing
her laggard
eye

with pantyhose, the hole
in her leg
waiting

to blink.

the long party

the woman
upstairs
her hands
they root
at the interval
of her legs
as if a tail
there
had vanished. her large

eyed
child
arrives

as a host
in high
windows. the man

to the many
downstairs
is using
in two sentences

epicurean. the many

they are holding
cups, believe

only
in small
babies. the knowledge

that one
in the neighbor's
pool
has drowned

has been as wine
delayed. whether it be

body
or soul
that is guest, know: half

the moon
this night
will last.

vinyl

the soundless
backside
of moon

and nightly
road bent
trees

and mother's
tipsy
glissade

to yawn
white men's
shadows

to the somber
length
of her neck

where a cube
of ice
timid

as a dancer's
bantam
heel

drinks
from the maw
of dark.

how to keep friends

before you hit
the dog
imagine
what he might
look like
praying
you don't.

nave

god is a shadow.

and, I think, a woman.

when my father was a child
the cancer
he didn't have
came back. my mother
had a box.

in pictures, she is always
lifting
something
above her head. because of her breasts

one picture
per day
was burned. I have little. some shoes

full of rice.

sis

i.

he gave us each
a bell. in a field
of high corn
I kissed
your elbows.

ii.

our dog knew, and stayed.

better girls
would jump
rope.

iii.

windows
were portraits
of neighbors.

iv.

I believed in god.

mom had the knife
and was cutting
a tomato
had rolled
between your legs.

I think
he thought
he could see.

v.

mine
were drawings
of people
half clothed. yours

were naked. when asked

you would want to know
how else
to take them
with you

in the bath.

vi.

to you,

my chary walk. as if

my arms
are broken.

palmist

a man
who has not
been home
removes a glove,

lets it rest
on the hood
of your car. he is careful
with the door, as if

it might
fall. your beautiful songs

play. this man in your car

had a wife and two kids
and knows
how long
it will take you

to find your purse. (it's on the piano)

homage

with his finger
he had turned
many wheels.

the hand
within his hand
he knew
would widen. winter

would end
he would be
unmarried. his favorite

professor
would drop
a glove, a woman's, and hurry
on. loved a man

they might've
in a time
of cassette tapes.

alms

at his chore
of stringing
lights

an old man
loses
a shoe. old

in that he owns
two coats. one

is with him now
on the roof
of a church. the other

he held
pouch, were it

wounded, and passed it

to a woman
he'd only
just met.

there will be a boy
soon
on a bus
thinking

how gingerly
he will hold

his puppy. a shoe,

it may fall. no butterflies

lower.

prosaism

I can see what they wanted.

I, too, had many times
imagined
kissing her

toes, making
thumb
out the hum
of her ankle.

her

saying
leave my shoes
on.

I can see her still. sitting
in church
while we
stand.

can hear
get up
whore.

one of the boys
that done it
had taken
a kitten

back to its mother.

when you have older brothers

I guess
a week
is a long time.

Bukowski

feminine. the way my body
kills
a child. my knockabout

teeth: *blankets*. the small ones

lived. but

for the cum
of a ghost,
I never drank.

I had your book, I held it
baby, you wrote
too many. every son of mine

is a writer. *thanks*. who am I

to close
for them
the gates of hell, to leave out

the window washer
at the gates of heaven, the fucking chariots?

riddance

the mothers
brought my mother
a metal
bath; in it

a single
apple
kept

to itself. my mother

took the apple
in a cloth
to the least
lighted

room. that a sponge

might fill
with dark.

idyll

I think of the man I saw earlier.
young man, aisle 17. adrift, shirtless.
I think of the nervous
cashier
I hired

yesterday. how she might
have liked
this young man
paying
in cash
for a dog
collar and using
his card
for the bowl. how she might have used
her discount
to buy him
a shirt. and where they would have gone

with me in tow
had she come
even briefly
to work.

tannin

we file
atop
the flooded
graveyard

its stones
reminding
our boat
its bottom

you ladle
a boot
with water
and drink.

a child's boot
soft orange
blood
of pumpkin

that yesterday
came
in such
sideways
purr

you called it
cat
and saved it, loath

to remove
the bowl
we'd yet
to allay.

solicitors

I, too, would ask.

mine
the miscast
crow, the cameo

pigeon.

bread
staying
in the puppet's
mouth.

gratis wolf.

I, too,

am unlike. would sell

knives
in pairs

that they
restore me
unmade
to the house
where I
stay

up late
with arthritis
unable
to write

of not
having seen
a cricket.

victual

a man
stood
seconds ago
in the yard
across
from yours. the grass

over there
is very high. the same man

with the children
of those
who have them

gets on a bus. when he waves

without looking
his backward
hand

you think
you could put
that hand
on your wife. or take a toy

with you
to heaven.

raillery

my father
has not
for some time
been able
to hold
a book. his hands
are

the memory
of being
left. one

under
a train
that has gone
and with it
those
who were so

afraid. those
who would give
two sons
to be
that scared

once more. the other
winds

a clock. or tries.

it is just a hand. most books

I place in his lap. they burn

he tells me

his paper

thigh. his fingers

far off

score

moving

ash. when his cock

lifts

I take off his pants. most jokes

are about

fucking. my father

and his bookmark

know.

unawares

it is always
the moving
makes

my terror. not the heavy

cow hearted
come upon
basket, nor the top hat

full
the black wine
of ants. but the corner

of the blanket
curling

compass
to the muddy
handprint

on the back
of a dress
in bodiless

stroll
at the periphery
of its person

long toed
atop

the roots
of this touchable

torment
of trees
the wind

to be so
abandons.

the pool

trill of body. milk
poured low
on a locust. men
in high heels
coming
for my mother's car. a stone
filling with blood
in the nostril
of a horse. the mouth
of a woman
on the mouth
of a woman-

means widow
what I hear
underwater.

three loves, and a fourth

i.

In the car of this train, my handwriting improves.

I misspell *Chekhov*. I leave it; my handwriting
Is that good. *Dearest brother,*
Thank you for sending Chekov. I have not yet
Read a word
But am only
44.

Yesterday, or yesterday, you told me
There are two types
Of girls
In Argentina: one believes god made man, the other

That god
Made mosquitoes. That because of the netting
Everyone
In Argentina

Thinks they are married.

ii.

Brother, I write you on the verge of no longer being a good
person.

Just kidding.

The nude paint the nude. There is hope.

Our brothers, what clowns
To be told
What they are told

At the ends
Of rubber

Knives.

I love your wife; because she is not.

iii.

I have written your brothers.

A short story
Has made you
Happy.

God
He made
Cookie cutters; gave them
To the moon. What you are eating

Is sand.

emic

novice angel, tell crow: god

he is very
sick. those rocks

roll not
with ache, but with

bats. those hills? hold babies.

how sick
is god? novice angel, you are talking

to a fly.

sons

i.

even
if under
your breath: saying

damn. asking

a man
in a wheelchair
about weather. not liking

halloween. laughing

even
if under
your breath
when your sister

drops a seashell. reading

poetry. aloud.

blowing smoke
into a room
where your mother
makes

a bed. also,

ii.

dying
is rude.

an exaltation

town, not only
small. nor full
a pack
of ribless
dogs. cigarettes

half sucked
as mummies, sure.

some hand
passing through
an old web
in a field
with a tree

where a tree
hunches

over husk
of beehive

like a long fingered
priest
at the orb

of his crotch. vibrant husks

of once were
insects
in womb
o' that

spider stuff
side a shack
where death metal.

buttons

fingering
the hand
on her mouth
my mother
hangs
with her toes
a curtain
while on the floor
of this room
not a moon
needs a woman.

remote

coarse, now,
the part
of my belly
that prays.

dry ribbon
this road
I could take
to the one
could tell me
it's autumn.

dogs, here, they parrot
the passing
sirens. and trucks
pull nightly
away.

lissome

soft middle
of a sad
tree. magician's

knife
in my

wife. you want to know

what kind of tree. *tree*

that hates. if I put

my puppet, its foot,

on the hill
of an ant

you will say
ants. that sad

and wife

are exhausted
as trope. branch

it can mean
beauty. can scratch

without waking
the spine. can call

into it
rain.

the yield

he pick up a stick. raised it
ragged tongue
of creek. licked himself
with it
thin. he'd been
not a meaner day
awake. not since father
had booted
his bottom teeth
for saying
pussy
into the roof
of his mouth he'd been
not a meaner day

awake. right now

someone say
lord. look them
let go

kites
the girls
like they knees
don't work

without them.

lovemaking

you were given a glass of water. the doll hissed hair
into its head. its mouth seemed, for the first time,
open. beads, as if the doll were crying upward.
father took the match, put his tongue on it. he put
his palm on the doll's skirt and said

heavens. your tiny mother said oh oh. a third
oh

would be
too much.

very new, so afraid

fathers
hold flowers
early

on boats. in flat hands

mothers
lift
a marble. under the double

chin
of god
trembles

a razor. very new, so afraid.

the tragedian

your stop is second to last. you are the tired daughter of a woman whose house is also a hair salon. the boy you love can hold a comb. when you are on your belly he puts the comb low on your bare back. the string in your womb is pulled by the puppet you buried. the comb deepens. the bus driver's mirror is very long. a girl with a coat like yours gets off and is hugged by your mother. the liberals down the street brush your cheeks with ice cream. you are sleepy enough to love a cat licking a paper doll from a square of milk.

alike

when we fell
in love
on this bench, we couldn't
talk about it: the house

with an oven. the bread inside

our habit
of eating.

for Conrad Aiken's poor

in anything, uncoupled, there is death.
carneys, clowns. canaries, in them, that sing.
soul: one of many karaoke bars
from which the devil was primarily
thrown. august, and secondary, this work

of taking, from the body, its death. work
for men whose eyes if shattered would release
nothing. men at your window. men watching
you watch
horror films. the cant of each head
as if polling, in its mask, a sameness.
the dividing woman, tertiary.
two men where before there had been two men.
two men
mouths awash in bloody visage so gummed
of smile's rent. soul's arbiter: toothless.
because it is a tooth. the poor, they take
the head of an ant; that it means decay.
a bodiless burlesque on the fleeced die of god.

bright

the boy had screamed without wanting to. had scared the ghost his mother would not believe he had seen. the ghost which was not a ghost but to which he had called anyway with *ghost, ghost*. his mother had a sentence, and she used it. patted his head, sighed a cigarette from her bra, then went. the boy waited all night. once or twice thought he saw what might be a hand, white and waving; its broomstraw fingers sweeping the many floored dark.

his former scream stayed the morning. his father, he saw him put down a razor then pick it up. his mother was blowing a lot of damn balloons. tying them and sucking her finger.

eleven years ago, for three minutes now, the boy was born sad. but it's not something to be sad about because he is not very bright. when he speaks, it is only so his parents will also speak. they will come from any room, out of any aisle, to speak second. they will fall over each other somehow without touching. when this happens, the boy must remember he is not bright.

there is a cake, a birthday hat, and a storm. the boy is not sure which came first, but they are here, now, at the same time. a candle is lit, then another. if he slits his eyes, it seems the same candle is being lit eleven times by his one handed mother. his father steps in when all the candles don't go out but he is too eager and his breath seems to have in it a crying baby. the baby goes silent. the boy sits in the dark. a dark so heavily settled the boy forgets he is wearing a hat. that when he slips under the table the hat in some final nod of a scarecrow goes unaccounted and the boy thinks he is being pulled by the hand

of the ghost that is not a ghost backward into some happy and useless chore.

under the table, taskless, the boy is humming into the cone of his hat. for so long it is the only sound. it takes a single frog outside to mention its locale for the boy to know he has stopped. he puts the hat down tent atop a toy truck he cannot see. far off, an engine idles then turns off. it is dumbly comforting to know that in the real world there are miles between hands doing hand-like things; turning keys, toppling hats that shouldn't be there. hands that curse as puppets curse; by not.

it is by this thought of hands the boy is stilled. he has not spoken; his parents are waiting. his parents swimming their aphotic mimicry. he can feel his father's thumb puddle the air above his head; his mother's elbow cotton closer the black to his eye. his wish to see a ghost after seeing a ghost- the boy wonders what he has done. what had marked the world in all its heaving inaccuracy was an exhale; now, an exhale dismissed.

he had once cut with his thumbnail the tip of a red crayon into an empty bra he'd never seen his mother put on. when she later dressed it became a drop of blood and she screamed and went on to birth a stone that it not be the center of a dark balloon.

sober hosanna

on my way to a rose, I passed your father.

he was brushing a moth
from the ageless fly

of his eye. his body

he said
had been called
by a bell. *balefire*,

mine body.

claimed
he'd counted
ever hill

in the midwest. his bike

he'd pushed up
all three. in the late field

your father
did not ask.

I told him you were.

the lake

my father is trying very hard to think about sex. he has a brick
in his hand and is saying how it shouldn't be
here. it is the only brick we have come upon. honey, it is the
only brick

for miles. my mother is not smoking. she is taking the brick
now from the man she did not mean

to build. she is tossing it then straight up and stopping. my
brother lets his balloon; his angel does not.

in the lake
are my hands. I straighten my arms and my body trembles.
could this be

the same balloon
I've tenured

in bathwater.

rime

I swallow the bird that is god.
I wait nine months. I wait ten.

any shape
I make
with my mouth
is an egg.

when I grieve, I grieve
in a worm.

the whole show for Charles Simic

he

felt heavy, and died.

heavy
from cake
and coffee.

from pretending
two legs
were better

than one. died

in an unhappy
poem

from no
sadness.

days of meat

while you are smoking

I clean
one dish.

reopen

a letter: 'I am dead.'

signed
by god.

I hear you leave.

I put
food

on that dish.

where I am looking
becomes a fly- from the lower

lip
of your sleeping
son

to the fork
I possibly
placed.

I wish also for the common house bat

i.

in the clay bed
of my son's brain
where abides
pillow

the print
of my thumb:

flower, lie down.

ii.

maid

in the foreign
house

of his death,

despair
your mouth
of its vase.

possession

the lesser
howl
of a fan
left blowing. the stopped

knowing
of house. the car

the dog
pissed in, the dog

its toenail
collared
by the ring
of a talking
doll. the dog

lover
asleep
in a car
being

towed.

a brief custody

glove, I do not say
empty. *hand*

abandoned. a leaf

at night; a scribble

in the hard
breathing
of gods. in the details

I did not know
the devil
was real. he took

my boy. placed him

in an orange
crayon.

I draw, all thumbs, in autumn.

heraldry

my grief is often russian. angels I make in midwestern mud. I
understand my father; why he would scrub his knuckles with
wire and keep walking. why he'd turn homeward but make it
only as far as bird. my happiness

is any bird. I have only been: front room, bedroom, attic. of
those, the attic only once. to smoke the hunch from a cigarette
I'd stepped on. dark as my grandmother up there. I
remember: *bedimmed*. a word from the book of mother. and,
be tactile. hug

darkly. I was up there

looking for a bird, or to eat
grandmother's cane.

hymn rag

your cigarette
slant

for the stone
in your mouth. mother

she sucked
the blood

of towels. made l

from a lesser
stone

two birds. things, like singing,

that didn't
happen.

the absurd sadness of a bridge

i.

all wood, old. tracks
lain
like baby

mummies.

ii.

my brother
he holds
a spider
from its web. he has given

blood
and is weak.

iii.

tiny planes
wince

the air.

iv.

in every car
of the train
god
from his lip

whistles
a fly.

v.

I am under the bridge
when it tries
to move.

lure

I seen it
first, the fire.

said
to my friend
that boat

is coming.

we had time
to cross
our lines
and curse.

a black room
set sail
it seemed
from some house
we might've

been in. I am sleeping

he says
with your wife. tomorrow

at a party
my son
will bite
clean through
his son's
cheek.

when I tell this story
to others

a man
jumps
from the boat.

we save him.

our boy

we do not know, his mother and I, the exact day he stopped aging. for awhile we spent our weekends looking at pictures; though looking is not really the right word. if you sent someone a picture and they called you saying that behind you, just above the half moon of ice cream, and in front of the ferris wheel, a ghost stood, you would have them send it back, you would be afraid, and you would see the ghost. you might start seeing the ghost, after that, in other pictures. in every. we hung them with tacks, we numbered them. we took them down; renumbered. the wall seemed a still of ants. or actual ants, not working. the doctors, they touched him. *he is five years old, a healthy five year old boy.* patted their stomachs, the built in sigh of our backs. by doctors I mean anyone we saw on purpose.

we told everyone. we made money. money it seemed was being made right there, those years that didn't move. we could not read him different books; had to buy the same bike again and again. three years in, our daughter began lying. about what she was eating, about her breasts. her breasts, she would tape them. she would ask us to read to her; she had forgotten. she went the other way, too, started seeing men instead of boys. when she got pregnant, she said she had something to tell us. though tell is not really the right word as she said nothing. we recognized the toy soldier she proffered immediately: the last gift that meant our son was normal. the soldier had gotten older, and was obviously sick. from the same set, we looked for the medic. our daughter told us: *no use.* I took the soldier in my hands then passed him, alien bird, to my wife. he coughed once and tried to raise his hand but, well, the weight of the gun was just too much. my wife said: how sweet. that night, we made love. our old bodies; our coughing soldier on the

nightstand. if we kissed hard enough, the sounds in that room seemed to come from our teeth. I thought about the tooth fairy, about not being rich. how we could afford, but probably not find, a coffin that small.

reading for my mother

in the city, my father crosses a street.
he is somehow
holding
a great many
ants. in the not city

a fast light rain
ruins
outside

a magic show. years from now

there won't even be
a briefcase store.

the regalia of optimism

hairbrush, the hand
of my wife
can wait.

like sadness. in a cup.

it is sorrow
to not have, sorrow also
to have
only half. there is not a crow

means
disabled. not a fence, not a girl

in the wood
of fence, not a woman with bread.

crumbs in her hair.

the hour cottage

you have let
again
small birds
land

on your collarbone
to gag you
their empty
gullets

or

you've again
swallowed
a red
insect
and it

walks. the ink

of your looking
seems
a hammock
but you say

far off
a raccoon
is watching. a stick

out there
separates
on its own

like taffy. your hair

has mostly
fallen. three shadows

I will never see:

under leaf, coffin, or strand

of your hair. when I hold a glass

the faucet
tries
so hard
for milk. I can't kiss your neck

and that's okay. I don't think our boy

would've been
silly.

to my brother who loves pussy

if you put the future
in your mouth
you will eat it.

gravid

when pushing
any door
open

check
for small fingers
untied

laces.

marriage

your whole life
you need
two plates.

tremolo

I come in from the car. I look at the kids.

there are still
three
of them. I unbutton my shirt

and put on another. my daughter, my oldest,

has kissed her hand
behind a curtain- but I am not

to know. their mother

stays in the car
each time

much longer. in a few moments, we will huddle

at the window
watch her
not light

a cigarette. her daughter

is also
that strong.

soul of a screen door

clap for your mother; she eats.

slightly, move that bible.

half your father's eye; allow.

put, in the paper, that you will sell: dinner bell.

put that it is real, real as
weighing less
when you die.

for christmas, write a letter
to your sister

in jail
for rape- ridiculous.

sound horn

a letter does not reach you.
maybe
you hear
sobbing. the lady with the dogs

she hung herself. her bare feet

you cannot
stop seeing. when she was told

she had a son
his death

mattered less. you wait in the garage

most days
for your husband
to get out of the car. it turns over, it dies. he looks up

much like them dogs
looked up
you think

for the one at the end of the rope.

uncial

I have been kissing
out of Joseph

handwriting. I am worried

my baby's
health. I am worried

he might be
ugly. Joseph

is a good man. my mother

says he
is somewhere

so beautiful. I am held down

in my dream
by two boys. they are holding

the hand
of a third. what to call this boy,

not three,

touching me?

I wanted to tell you sweetly

of
velvet crow.

what moving here
might mean.

that waking
beside you
is old; and land. that the land
beside you

is asleep. beside it

a creature
indigenous
to another.

that something
in me
is rich. not to place

in drawers
used

tape. that if a train

is crowded, it is crowded

with libertine

balloons.

the word *chthonic*.

flatlands, or lowered

beds, when we get there

the top bunk
is yours.

the christmas tree

the day after
jesus
was born
my aunt
moved in
with my dad, my mother
called me
a wicked
boy, I waited
beneath
her twiggy
arms.

hiatus of yen

she opens her mouth in the dark. she watches my mother
swim. my father, it was found, cut himself
on purpose. but not a lot.

tomfoolery

when I told my father
there was a lion
in the backyard
he came out
with his whip- his pants
were down, my mother
had forgotten
his hat.

my father's hands

good with ropes; the necks, bibles too
of other men.

to the left
he had me tie
a flower. I used my mother's yarn. I knew

she would measure, but he'd given me
my second
imaginary

trumpet.

her cut fish heels

a woman

(mother
of
a fingernail)

kneels
in snow. a man

we miss
like a film

thinks

(canvas
of
yen)

the greater part

what she called
sleep
she would rub
from my eye.

I had two, like my brother,
though one
was born
swimming. I told him

in the dark
I could see
the dark. my mother

when I asked
removed
her scarf

from what
she called
her same

neck. she had great thumbs; the two thoughts

my father
had
in prison.

the body mirror

in a stopped
train
if you listen
you can hear
a moving
other. any man

in your bed
is you, but

taller.

the hour before an hour

I wrote the most amazing poem
today. I had dropped my cigarettes
in the bath, and while they were drying
in a line on the edge of the tub, the box
they were in

fell apart in my hands
like tissue paper
atop
an umbrella. the most amazing thing
about the poem
is that it was not written
while I was drunk. I was looking at a cat
and eating a peach. I had no metaphor
for the pits of your arms
after chemo.

an adoration of thieves

you pass
from the dream
to tell me
you hold

a kettle. your robe

is open. the tips

of my fingers
touch

the bottoms
of teacups. our bread

will be
this morning
the color

of firewood. I will begin

but give up
peeling

an orange. the orange

won't matter. if a man is angry

he is not awake. if a man

sleeps, he will give
then call it

taken. I miss marrying you.

relic

soft pilot
she lands
open field
in a chopper-

it is
not as loud
as chewing
on a leaf-

could
minutes ago
have touched
the bald heaven

head of a boy
naked, in a low
tree, the white

socks
of his feet
dipped
in ghost deer.

the chance meeting of kite and balloon

a potbelly
scarecrow
itching
its backside

on a tree
in a wood

where aliens
grieve.

tryouts

facing me
she stood
behind
scully
the skeleton-

we named
in anatomy class
everything-

the dry
skin
on her hips, the pencil
that rolled, the foot

she would lift-

we went so far
as to add

mr. and miss-

her father
mister

fatso
because he ate
everything

love
and foul
balls.

sleep of stairs

I try to put an apple in my newborn brother's mouth. my father is on the roof because it is raining. the round mouth of my mother as if the same apple might appear. the wounded cared-for beasts take turns being equal. a man on a footstool decides to leave his wife. her eyes are open, he cannot see. church lets out. the old allowing bell cannot, like an umbrella, close. the eight fingered organist misses only quotes. her two legged husband lacks an adjective. their son the young father buries what he thinks is a rattle. a day earlier and it would've been like digging into the forehead of a horse. two angels start the same sentence about god. or, two squirrels chatter. the ransom road they are on paroles a warped crate of chickens. hangmale dogs look on. an egg breaks on the head of a witch closing her knees to the lift of a broomstick. in a vacant house, one room hallucinates. my taller sister seizes while sucking an ice cube. bites for the pea in her tongue.

praxes

the raccoons, tonight, are angry.
in the horror film
there is a woman
biting
into

a stick. she seems
full
of red
gowns. the sound

is off. my father

would call it
down. meaning sad.

tornado

we gather
what we can. like other families,

our basement
is full. god

we are told
has put
a puppy

under
a jacket. we split up. I see

the part
owner
of the ice cream
shop

licking
my mother's
wrist. no one cares

about
the puppy
my copy

of the invisible
man.

the necessary hand

mattress, not mine, by a river.
pebble
in my hand, white as the mouse
thinks it
moon. in the poem
behind me
my sister
rag doll young
loves
sleepily
a tremor, a man, a wild. I left my mother

in the morning
kissed. once here, once there, tired
as a room.

subjects

in my town of white windows
and ghost ladder
streets

a man
pours
from a jar

milk

at the foreground
of mother's
stone. the nude

I am painting
she turns
very pale
wants

no longer
her fingernails. her mouth

stays open
helpless

as a clock. the nude

she will try
to unhook
from the talon
of a terrified

owl

her tiny
coat

before
becoming
in fog

a flaw

I cannot
draw.

trove

snow, we let it fall. our cigarettes nod off. ear shaped mouths
fill with cake. our mothers open windows, and worry. lovers
leave a bed, unmade, on the moon. a stolen truck swerves to
miss the charging bike of its owner. a man straightens the
misshapen hand of a clock. on any missed elevator there is a
sack of gold; on any train an idiot wedged in the bathroom. a
young boy, mid angel, says he can feel the blood in his body.
he says it to a girl and she punches him. I wish to remove,
myself, my clothes; every figure we drew as children. a blind
boy with acne makes light of god and god's face. our books
have in them legless men losing everything; we give them as
gifts to the blind boy and say carry what you can. a boatman
vows, on land, to be good. we take turns calling his wife from
different hotel rooms. our sisters refuse towels; we put our
hands in and out of a glove. our uncle we can hear him pissing
on a broken lawnmower. we pass our father and damn him for
taking, already, the cat's frozen head from the madman's
shovel.

an early baby knows to cry

a mime
polishes
your thumb
with the face
of a quiet
coin.

suspense

she is
by the tail
easing
a mouse
from the bell
of her pant leg.

present tense
my love
I have broken
the teeth
of your purse.

he thinks
of a pill
and bottomless
rabbits.

the only only child

I had left the table
for salt. my foot
was asleep, I might have
held it
above
the dog. in the bathroom upstairs
my father's electric razor
worked its magic. my mother
waited
to kiss him. back at the table,
my plate
was a plate
of bones. I moved my mother's
plate of bones
next
to my father's. I knew
they would not be happy, but thought
they could at least
be close. my mother stood
in front of a small window.
she lifted it and brushed
two pebbles
from the sill. my father
tore bits
of napkin
for his cheek. when they called
my half brother

imaginary, I took it to mean
hungry.

today's lord

and brother
pretty bad
was beaten
to eyes

of sheepish
hosannas
and pop

having left
playsets
himself
alone

sat
without meaning

to swing.

toy milk

in a lake on another's land
I swam and my father
lived. the two rooms
of my mother's grief
swelled. my wife
willed herself
into a doll
with a broken
eyelid. her father's
sister

one day
happy.

baby feet

a second
smaller
bird

sleeping
you couldn't
have known

on the first.

moony

the monster in the closet has clawed the calendar. three days, no children. the room has been calling other rooms into it. yesterday, the bed moaned in two voices. the light that had been left on, gave up. eventually, the monster will open the door and make its way downstairs. a mirror will catch it, then let it go. the wine on the kitchen table will be warm; the monster won't know. a dog will bark and the monster will knock it woozy. a lamp, a lady in church, will fall. under the bed upstairs, a toy phone rings; it will be the monster's first missed call. in a toy store a man will set down a red receiver and vow to keep looking.

having a disabled child

means:

clapping.

youtube.

the word devastated.

inbox. but more, outbox.

curio.

ransom.

jesus. jesus lookalikes.

cover bands.

quality of life.

eighty percent. twenty.

collectors.

terminology.

mysterious ways.

faith.

having three others.

luck.

being told. being obvious.

a donated bear

wearing a party hat

in the living room.

odd gifts.

poem, with a bear in it.

a goddamn clapping bear.

men laughing

my rotary phone, today, rang. I was eating toast in a closet full of children's books and there it was trembling beneath a red handkerchief. I dropped my toast and lifted the receiver, keeping it inside the handkerchief. I eat loudly, and it was early; I don't usually take toast with me into the closet. the children had kept fever all night and my wife had wanted to play the banjo. I too had wanted something else. I said not oddly hello. an old friend did the same and plans were made to meet for lunch. one of us was out of sorts. we were to have a drink. we were to choose. on my way to the bar I threw my coat over a puddle. I like to imagine naked women holding umbrellas, mid-step. sometimes they are wearing heels. other times, mittens. I was halfway thinking of scarves when I reached The Low Joy Bar. it was still on fire and I was furious. I hadn't seen my friend in so long.

men terrified

the men have gathered with small boys on their backs. each hopes to be, briefly, in the shadow of a plane. the boys can only think with their hands how warm their fathers are. a shoelace or two teases tired the tongue of the devil. wind, the maker of mask, makes many. mothers at home pick blankets from the floor; fold magazines without looking. one of the men swears on the grave of his best hound he once saw a woman parachute naked. most of the men keep her there in that plane.

cooing, it wept

for a day, I followed a sheep. there had been a party at a house next to other houses; I had been there. probably, the sheep wasn't real. I sent a big wheel down one driveway and it crossed and went up another. it made like it was going to roll back, but didn't. I kept my eye on the sheep, yard to yard. it seemed no one was home. I stole a red ball; kicked it under a car and it stayed. I was surprised at how much this disappointed me. some doors were open and the sheep would go in the front and out the back. in one of the houses, a piano was briefly played; the sheep came out and the playing stopped. I did not go in any of the houses; either I would push with a finger the handles of lawnmowers and say 'howdy' or sit on the edges of dry pools and put my feet in without taking off my shoes. at one point I stepped on a cordless phone that seemed too big and the sheep turned for a moment to look at me; some grass fell from its mouth. my stomach purred, a moving van idled. for my hunger, the sheep made good time. I watched it from the cab of the van; I turned on the heat. those poppy fields in the wizard of oz; that castle. I wondered how many of the houses I'd passed had porn in them. I can tell you today they all did.

nostalgia

my father
he was in
this poem

yesterday
so deeply
that I- damn.

they repo
even
dark.

totemic

but she's black.

I was on a swing.

a butter knife
shyly
entered. the wall. of a room.

thought my house would be followed.

by a rabbit, into oz.

my alice, my dorothy, my alice.

I would swing to god
or cum.

totemic

you have two bellies
you should have had
twins.

mother of one
she lose
weight

when she hold
baby.

you have two bellies
or disappear.

display

in a museum
smaller
than the one
your mother
remembers.

a mother & father

blowing

on soup, a newborn's

head.

poetry

in five
short
complaints-

the grieving arm.

elemental sadness

lightning
might find
sixty
people
per year
one of them
foreground
of oblivion's
lucky
bee

acquittals

I was touching oranges every morning and throwing nightly my head back in the company of tossed off grenadiers. the hotel staff boys and girls alike would come into my room naked showing their teeth to me as smuggled envelopes. an oil soaked rope ladder moved with the wind under my window gifting the square shouldered gardeners with black dots deeper than any woman. if the hotelier was on holiday it would fall to me to schedule any hanging that had been postponed- seven men, one woman, I'm not proud. I wrote eight poems that year, one for each blade-followed blade of the slow fan sipping at the maid's diamond drunk back. when the man I worked for brought his men I jumped into the pool, it was lunchtime, and came up swallowing and came up collared inexplicably by my trunks and for this many raised a glass because it took many to raise it.

taxpayers

from my mother's side I had gone to see the happy blood. I left her there, and she read without me her own lips. I couldn't tell if she'd been defeated by the box, its contents, or both. I passed a bucket on wheels and a mop dragging a man for water. I felt old; my dress, older. I stretched the soft loan of my neck into the aisle the boy had made most of on his knees before the slack of his youth spent itself bone and pitched him the lesser length. his sister or his young mother lifted him by his shorts and tucked his smaller parts with her fingertips as into the private mouths of even smaller fish. a package of sliced bread fell from a lower shelf and relieved the moment its alien drama. the boy convulsed as if he'd been allowing now recalled tape measures from the coil of his belly. my mother yanked me away from the rent of that scene so quickly a star from my nose loosed itself into the voyeur's acre, the white of my eye.

boys

we are sure of it. the ball has vanished. we are puzzled and still. two shirts, two skins, four dumb. our memory is so beautiful we cannot agree on the shooter. our mothers will soon arrive. we cannot predict their anger, their wardrobe. this boy on my left ran his sled over a raccoon once and that raccoon made to bite him in his mouth but got nothing but its own tongue, which bled, and the boy he didn't cry until his mom showed up in her swimsuit. she lost a sandal then and one of us has it. the boy on my right is my brother and a bit of a joker. it doubles his sadness, I can tell, not having a hand in this ball business. when he gets to the top of its ladder, he sits backward on the slide and takes the joint from behind his ear. his lighter makes the bottom of the slide but he's got another. he shrugs and I love him. our father, we think of him, or I do, fighting over there in the war-

just kidding. the length of this day is peculiar.

on the day I became greatly enamored of my own peasantry

I was trying to write about sex.
it's not like I was planning to be there.
I had a cotton ball in my hand; I walked out.
a bird circled high.
I could hear my garage door surrender itself, flatly,
to a low heaven.
I was sad not to have the work of my arms behind me.
sad god would not once be startled by an animal.
the leg of my pants drooped from the mouth of my mailbox.
gentle cloud, and I quote

I thought of you in uniform and was copiously delivered.

wild lives

the baseball
had un
bloodied
all the blood.

the nose
gave cry
like an arm
very long.

the father
the mother
both ousted
their fog

were suddenly
my mower and flower.

city worry

I was writing a note to my father; I had gotten this far- father, the birdhouse has become more than I can bear. it was a note I should've written weeks ago. my wife wouldn't eat, my kids kicked arrowheads or didn't bother kicking them at all. my first thought on my not breathing so good was: it's this goddamn note. I took a walk, I passed father's orchard. I opened my mouth many times very wide; many times I had to kneel. it was so quiet I failed to panic. the hospital seemed as accidental as my being there. an ambulance had its sirens lit but I heard nothing. two young men were fighting passively over sitting in a wheelchair. one of the men gave up and sat on the bumper of the ambulance which took off so slowly he needn't hang on. his legs swung and he waved to me or someone behind. inside the hospital, there was a bell to ring and a rope to pull. it crossed my mind what exactly was my emergency. I was getting weaker; it took me an hour to reach the elevator. there was a little girl going down. she was holding a silver bird like an iron and she was pressing it into the stitched back of a man on a gurney. she looked up at me and dropped the bird. I picked up the bird, it wasn't real, its beak was missing. I pointed to the man and asked the girl is this your father. the girl was very young and stupid I think because she told me no, this is Tweets, and asked me what room my son was in. I really just wanted to go up and down and up again. make it to the roof. be the first one there.

barns

red words
on a page
in Exodus.

the yielding
bird red

in paintings
grandfather
gave.

glass
in grandmother
breathing.

her hands
how they
would fuss

bow ties
to the palms
of jesus.

mother's
yarn
too tight

on my finger.

visiting my brother's neck.

attractions

the middle finger
on your left hand

shorter
than the others.

the shoebox
that I swear
moves. your small feet.

the baby jesus
I've never seen
walk. the cartoon

flat
part of your

stomach. the tip

of the mumbling
needle

I never hear. book

on a bee's
heart
you tell me

you wrote.

kings of train

snow shoes
gone dry
get them
huck feet
in'em
skid them

huck feet
down track
like you scared

cows
wake
deer

and headless, rear.

any widowed ill

I have dreamed your death, mother. I have set the stone
of your womb to float on the back of a toad. new to me,

the toad. I've seen it hop only once. how long

had it been there, unbidden, and what called it

from its cloak

of presence? not your death. I was awake

for that.

*

oblong

the insomnia

of melancholy:

casket. to preface

white

with

bone

we have learned

not to.

*

in the dream, I held
in each hand
a toad. I knew it was a dream; neither toad
was light.

*

made of stone, this. made of stone, that.
stones:

some are

and the others are

safe.

love lord

then weep for my eyes.
if a pencil, moves.
for the o
my mouth
is not, to make hot

the heads
of crayons. salt

the bathwater. stand over it, offer

to wash
my knee. I will pull myself

by the maudlin
prop
of my hair. then return

and return
to my shoes.

VHS

the movies
I am proud
are sad. most men
lead lives
of quiet
auction. because I had

a pocket knife, a broken tv;

this profile
of hitchcock. on pause

any actor
fears

performing debt. I knew the count

of every
dressed
woman. what scenes

made uncle
smoke.

absinthe

we cannot forgive her the piles of her own excrement.
say 'we', not 'I'.

to be a woman you must stand for all women.

if a man
also stands, call him god.

say O Father. leave the girl
to lie
lazy

as an *h*.

think of a tree, its kittens

taken
by a man
on a ladder. a tree

mad as any.

often memoir

i.

my father, in the kitchen, turns backward his baseball cap
on the head of my kneeling mother. she has in her hand
a dish. she will, before and after and now, rise and the dish
will rise. my father, he will take it on the chin. pretend

he has bitten his tongue. hey slugger. hey mister.

ii.

that kitchen, they would talk money. teeth
I didn't need. the empty
goddamn
swear jar. the lineage

of mimes
that kept them
without mask, without
two tongues
to tally
the debts
of kissing

late.

iii.

born then
were my brothers
to bank robbers.

iv.

was one year was calm.
someone danced on a table.
that's it.

v.

the roman numeral
for six
left.

the disabled room

tomato, sugar. the upturned
legs

of a lover's chair. nerve
ends

of marionettes, two, caught
in the only
fan. a man
at what would be

a window, we guess

behind his back
a quarter, an ear, not both. it changes

every morning
its corner, we keep count,

the bucket
we've yet
to fill. you and I

suppliant
beneath

tabletops, separate, and too high. my hands

the wear
of my hands
on each
of your thighs, my mouth

but for
a breast
a dimpled
voucher. our clothes

go about
the house. we listen. my many sleeves, your one

dress. might well be

a world
out there
a baby
kicking over

a bottle. wants

sugar. the door's

red knob.

exile

i.

the one you look for
will be swimming
in grapes. it will be the day

the rain
stops; a dog

tenderly
exhausting
its jaw
to the care

of a blurred
baby
possum, a lover

reading
your note
written

in bruise, a rope

you will somehow
know

to daily
wash. no longer

will it be
enough

for the tattoo
to change
arms. it will need
rest. a detour.

rivers, mountains, maybe. if people

they will be
for the making
of soap. the occasional

basket. if you see them

they are women
say hello. cask and saw

will thirst
the stillness
of their lying
unblest-

perhaps

the one you look for
could part
wedding veil
your knees

then shoulder
each ankle
with grief-

ii.

any bird
you are free

to tell.

the day I left the band

the moon
come low
I lost

half a dime
in the morn

arcade

it rained
dogs

my mother
I could see her
naked

her account
of clothespins

my father
long dead
yep

tall.

in a crowded bar

two friends, adrift,
on the sadness
of a third.

I think of hell, I think of a chair

sit, and worry. my uncle was a follower. he would sit wherever
my father pointed. mostly on the roof with a lollipop he'd pray
to turn balloon. in from rain, he'd say he was licked by god. I
heard him ask himself for money. I heard him answer. I
wanted nothing he told me to be true. I wanted all my fingers
to be straight. we had a week of dry earth. my uncle he dug
for six days. said he had a rope the other side could pull. had I
not taken the rope, surprised there was one, out of the hole

he needn't have gone after it.

the abandoned books of women

hurry, grief, your mice
to a nearby
field.

close, silence, your mouth
in the virgin scar
of mine.

distill, wind, the river
your nude
fiction.

scarecrow
if I am worn, let me help you

undress.

timbre

locally, goodbye
is death
twice. good, death. bye, death.

deathdeath.

baseball is catch. sometimes, hit.

man is work. woman is work.

son is son. daughter is girl. my girl

is your mother's
son.

work is a secret, a bandying

of o and o
in the sweet

boy and boy.

phenoms

adolescent my sorrow made me taller. I could fold my ears
without effort into the backs of my knees when I sat the
unchaired ground.

when we walked, sister she rode a worried duck. we stilled
ourselves on many an odd bridge; pray, such pairs, that below
any bridge passes the conscious river of horsehead and
mudhoof.

it was hard to tell what came first; the duck or its worry. hard
to tell its not broken neck from its broken.

the minute my sister and I were orphaned seemed an hour. our
mothers dropped easily into the same bottomless pail. when we
walk now, we listen. my unmatched sorrow parallel to her
mother's appetite.

I tend the bad back of a gravestone. a broken tooth in dust-
bleached shortgrass. sister's run off; but corpse

there are faster things in the body's riddle.

anniversarie

the train, son, was very real.

you roared in your mother.

*

it is so loud you cannot hear an angel thrust an angel.
or a bone from the body blanch.

*

the country had a leader. the story was
she had a whiteness

no one could see.

*

I've not understood the saying
of weakness.

for tunnels. cloche hats, dropped hats. for Africa.

*

your mother
she had this
strength

for bad jokes.

her vicious dog was an alligator before she painted it yellow.

*

it is like telling the golden rope

go free.

*

thing is, in her night dress, paints.

colossus

a lover of movies sets a chair in a field. sits the pillow here
then there upon it.

his daughter her new trick is to bell the head of a spoon to her
nose. to move is grotesque.

up close their house looks merely bigger.

her strange shoulder he sees it same as her fall down three
steps. sees it without looking.

the spasms, the dormant minutiae of curse that by their
accident of suddenness have killed held mice, continue.

mice the minions of mute thunders; the exiled scars of clouds.

the deaf curvature of your knee,
the low nod behind you of a humble balloon; these I address
that I have returned the lover of all things made

his chair might the monstrous pass.

lot

his girl sleeps. the drive-in has been closed a year. they thought, last night, they could pretend. if there are seven days in a week, if it can be proven, then she is happy for three. it's his job to space them out. you would probably believe me if I mentioned a car accident, a third friend, a former lover. but I arrived only to meet you. minutes from now a white dog will drink from a bucket of red paint. the girl will shift in the passenger seat and tug the skirt of minnie mouse past my idea. the driver will start the pick-up with a fork I mistakenly told you, in a letter, was a crucifix. in many places, for that, I remain sorry.

harlequin

as a father, I auditioned alone for the part the boy did not get. others were listening, the teacher cried. in the cardboard forest, my daughter picked up a wand. for the focus doom affords, I was happy. the play would go on; the boy had been seen and would be looked for. his parents, the dog they brought, barked. to my audition, I carried two eggs. it would be my last. cancer, family, but mostly cancer. my wife would dab her eyes twice during the play: my heavy daughter both times she twirled. that you would scrub acne, daughter, as the puckered lips of tiny men. men with breasts they cannot throw.

extras

the loose bow tie, the crossed legs, the moving mouth. were I
to lay the bricks that made my father I would be distant the
doll three fathers. a woman jogger with a potted plant, as if
one has placed chaplin in horror's trademark moon, forgets her
hands. the park's birds flicker. I throw them

mother's voice.

lethean

simply, a father
mills about
in the mind
of his son

kind of scared
he's not alone.

the deepened cradle

think
of a shirt, small
in some places. the child

whose chest
means
are there

chest bones, the child

whose lips
are fossil

to six
teeth. how those that go,

go, our stationary

remembrance
of living. a visitation

of ghosts, guffaw. think how

married
the undead
remain. in the market

of ash, a leg, an ankle

its bracelet, no, necklace

of a man
she

imagined
would smile, cut apple, cross

her ear. the holy bible

how it loses
two by two
obituaries, and once

its book
on balloons. in 1844

the rubber band
invented
that knew

the thumbs
of jesus.

storm door

i.

talk myself outta church.
put my body on a body. not like that,
but on my back. says you
if the moon is out
and it's day.

ii.

ain't sad enough not to goof on a tricycle. jesus.

iii.

nuns in garters. I can't remember
or be expected to
all

the titles. but that one, we'd out

our knuckles.

iv.

she slid under me. it was like
she was able,

had space.

v.

I loved a boy for his dog. broke a ruler
for my cock
in half. after that,

did things to my knee.

vi.

are afraid most water snakes of water. spend they
lives

being fast.

vii.

to keep us from being poor
my dad
kept us

in one room
at a time
so we'd have rooms

all over.

viii.

batman's mom had pearls. made it hard for me not to be
fucked-up.

ix.

storms don't have doors. imagine my talk.

candied moths

the light bulbs that broke upon my body

come all the way from hell

on the current of a shithouse fan-

I thought they were moths, at first

loincloths of dirty angels, wrapped round the toes
of lollygaggers-

I come from mountain, my fingers retrieved
the bat's
longest
eye-

the overpass took rain, three ducks in a pulled boat
braced, went yellow

among the dimmed.

pain

i.

this is what I was thinking:

blow blood from your nose.
the word

stem.

and lead me to a flower.

ii.

dies adult
the child
of god.

iii.

wheelchair, from its

handle
a ribbon
you can flick

like a blue
ear.

iv.

the door,

an eyelid on fire.

the father

my brothers

will never see. on his belly.

in the shower.

v.

her soul

like foil; why mama

pillow

the coughing

iron.

vi.

a red oil

ants carry.

poor mind

a new book on the passenger seat of a clean car.

slippers sold softly in the preferable
a.m.

rolling cloud and in it the hand of a woman
whose body
you've seen
swim.

money that may oh god begin
to know.

a girl and her dog, her balled up dress
on its tongue.

news of your son being born. a boy.

a box and a stick they are believed. it's that you had
the bait and put it there.

when you've written your first name but have yet to write
your last. sitting, standing; lying on your back or on your belly.

coal in an open train car brushed with the backside of a
handheld
woman. the imperfect ladder of teethmarks
in the band
of your watch.

the scared tail of a mouse and it should be.

his name was jack. he was to study
all kinds
of music.

replica

a heart, a dream, in the museum of apples.
my right eye, born, before my left.
spoons, made of wax.
by these I mean

he had opened the window and allowed the branch
to feed his mother.

plans

my father would not entertain guilt. he was a one glass man.
he ate late, a single meal. my mother told me once, very gently,
that she wished I was not her only child. the 'only' was there, I
believed, to be removed. my bike had broken almost in two for
the weight of the dog I had found. its ribs on the right side
had caved; looked as if it were trying to lift a bowl of blood out
of itself. so now I was pushing my bike and had pouched the
dog, upright, in my newspaper bag. I thought of who might
find the pile of papers I'd emptied, and what they would make
of the blood, the fur, the irresponsible mystery. I had only been
the paper boy for a week, and we were new in town. the dog,
therefore, was mine. as for the house my father came out of,
who knows. maybe one day.

darkroom

in your
sleep that
makes you
blush.

alibi

water leaves its house.
the only word I have for absence is mouth.
some pills, on other pills, sail.
egg shells, halved as born that way
bubbles. paperbacks, swollen, zippered
into a mattress. doors ajar
the awe of room. ark, whale, and a third

in her like jonah: a loss
I'd touch
to abridge my hands.

to those who have longer lived

I shot, one summer, both my hands at my brother.
the tree he climbed was the most realistic tree
he could find
in that city

and I
missed him.

moons

the vacant eye of a birdhouse.
a tiny black plate
that in a dream
you cannot pinch. the mute
cat's meow
in your belly's
lack wink. a dry
cookie
at the pursed
fanfare
of mouth. your thumb
moving over
your mother's. dark foods
untouched
as the shadows
of fish
by water. your father's
ear
taking blood
from the tilt
of a baby swing. the peasant
swallow
of a mannequin
whose nipple
once fattened
your brother's

lip. the paw print dice.
the negro nurse
her long teeth
packed away

like cigarettes
in the shirt pockets
of men

shy
by this
much.

park

a heavy cat on a bare belly. the come kite. a nice guy stands
beside a nice girl; they pass a book back and forth. a boy my
age I am sorry for holds higher his arm a summary of bees. a
woman's toes soundless as the window they tap keep wilt their
custody of a coasting car. a swing goes missing. like a job, a
man, this box

for puppies.

things we do at night

carry the kids upstairs.

pause the credits.

put water on for tea.

whistle.

leave a comb, lose a pigeon.

wonder the deep couch in the drawn bath.

find it strange.

use my razor.

don't worry. as a favor.

vacation house

my mother's pink purse
slouched open
on the bed-

my brother has none
I spit my gum

in the lake.

gratis

mothers innocent of crow chalking about in white grass.
fathers, guilty and gospel. gardens

and pocket deer. my sister has a stone, one cheekbone, and a
kite. how you are seeing

that stone, let me this- it is not god's tear, tooth, godcrumb.
nor is it madly

a raindrop. she loves it she says for its milk. but she's 12. digs

in the night
at her ear.

fete

faster my god
made the world
in two

names

namely, mother & father.

gave them steps, some audio.

a late tree
on a mountain
they could see.

two leaves, apiece, on which

they could stand
if they wanted

hands.

to one of them, cart. to one of them, wheel.

night maps

the thinning
floorboards
of sleep
like lines
at rest-

old fight
to be called
the corpse
of your gaze.

man on a stretcher

wooden animals on wheeled platforms. such as

a bear to its work, a lion

I could use

were it sleeping. a cat

tasting

an unfinished

mouse. this one

makes me believe

I have somewhere to be.

distracted, I guess, by your beautiful shop.

later work

your book of poems, each page, bottom right-
a hand drawn mirror.

page 3 your bare back, and 4 your breasts.
in both I have either removed your towel
or gone to get one. some pages
are missing
numbers. these I mark.

*

for what it had done, you write, the belly turned itself in.

*

say you
menace
hoping to manage
menagerie.

or,

cur dog quiet quite cathedral.

*

these I mark:

speech merely renames the mouth.
his hands as if they'd blown away.
shit kid I'd hit you sober.

*

you were holding
with your knees
a black leaf
you fell
it fell

the world
was treeless.

(this, I don't-

*

we were young.)

on your father's mirror
I put my thumb.

butterfly net

we don't know what they look like here
you said
about tigers.

they could be very small. they could be
the most desperate
four legged
things.

after that, I didn't want to see one.
I put my thinking cap on, and went to my corner

of the cabin
supposing

goddamn hats
have feelings
too.

mm.

the man as he pinches sweat from his yellow bowtie into a shot
glass is also the man sadly at your ear.

it means to be sadly: bug eye and burnt leaf. big child but
small hands like sleeping bats. try brushing
your knee
that way.

is there a certain rowing in dogs. the first jobs, and the last,
happen in boats that are warehouses and dogs
slip in and out, past flour.

open doors we had this trick called for a snake and called for
cutting it. the size of your house, of mine, then could hush
apostrophes.

I sat anyway on my bike without wheels. you stopped to take
off your shoes from behind but I wouldn't zip it.

then a school bus, dawdling, in the word
doom.

dear you

I am at a word
for loss.

the crosses, the three additions

here, ferris wheels in a manner much the same. costs a quarter, lessen your mom's a looker. cheap times but you gotta climb that hill, retarded brother on your back. smack you in the ear he sees them girls slip into their daddy's white basket, part their skirts left bit in the hinge. in your stomach all the food it sounds like they're eating. there's a story out there and it's your mother's or your aunt's or anyone lullabied you roadside with fruit in their mouths. not too spectacular of a tale, it won't keep you up. might wanna stop a second, put your brother down. it's him or it's you, at the top, running them levers all three else some kid starts howling.

for sis and the plural of sis

a man has eaten a nail. he must bed before it's too late a woman with a breadboard back. the man's brother is married to such a woman, but does not know it. the brother's tongue is raw and wouldn't know good eating were it a thumbtack in a lover's heel. the man decides to lounge hungrily in the slim wardrobe of his brother's shadow. the man will drink it like milk and let it slosh in his gut for three weekends. the wife will shine more and more light on her husband; she will bend reading lamps around corners and forget she has things to do. she will have well lit dreams of a man she can sense is behind her. her husband will run from the light and she will jump on his back. the man will come to this empty house and he will be angry and because of his stomach he will need to call someone. until then, imagine we are in a box held by a thief.

ohio

two of my brothers gone to see that witch ohia. cain, the older
of the two, tells cain the younger:

best break the handle of that broom you insist to bring it.

the neck of a goat pulses lastmost into a fence's top wire.

their way is lit by a river soaked in rabbits. their impetus of
road by an exodus of crow.

three ants they formerly would have stepped on are allowed to
resume the full carriage of a cigarette.

a man they meet says he needs nothing but this here knife and
that there trailing duck. was the duck
he says convinced him.

because they are sad they let the man go and later the duck
which would've spoken had they.

some of the houses less so but all are violent. these two they
recollect me in kind, an echo's cough.

the older cain notes the dimming rabbits and pulls one for a
fire and the younger cain reveals from his coat
a second to put over the first. they eat gingerly as two sides of
a dark hat tight to a frostbitten ear.

ohia is woe. a prank of dialect. how I

could with this list of dry grotesqueries live a good market's
hour. I would buy eggs and toilet paper. hope
these two
believe that.

conventional wisdom

“the conventional wisdom was that hoppers liked salt, and so they would eat the shirt off your back, or wherever else sweat landed.”

wood brown, varied as clothespins, the grasshoppers
if you see them

dipping lower for the weight
of your true love's
dress

wet your lips
a scar's petition

and wish them luck-

she'll bite you
berry picker
to feed
her father.

the horse and the parrot

in deeper ear my dream dog yips.
my wife is alive, she has a stick.

the horse she rides is talking shit. I guess about
the mother ship.

house!

for lack of a better god
god put a house, I was
year seven, in my mouth
so that the roof of my
mouth was *also*
and you were there
and you were watering
outside of the house
and you were so cute
not to come
inside-

two men, years twenty,
bigger than you
took the house.

left your shirt.

walker

baby socks
were held
to my eyes-

odd to cry-

spilled milk, cold thumbs.

plastic bubble

there are men in my life would find it sexy to look in on a woman bathing a puppy. they are good men, and wrong. I met your husband in the waiting room of an abortion clinic 101 miles from where you live and 73 from where you work. I know some intimate things- you were driving, your son was playing the flute. I know the damage a flute can do- it does a number on the lips. I was moving my hands in my lap imagining film trays of broken water as if I might guess with my knees the weight of a newborn. your husband has a wobbly right knuckle. with that face he could be a mime. he could be armless. I tried to think of my belly as a balloon with a manageable amount of candy on the end of its string. the night last to this morning I put a pillow under my back and tried to fall asleep but I have one eye insists to understudy the moon. pregnancy as idée fixe- moon and balloon. your slut daughter wants a puppy but where would we put it.

by porchlight

a man did nothing
but care
for a moth.

if need be, he'd cup it
to the mouth
of a neighbor's
horse
gone lame
in its grey
little heart.

locus

father was gay for a week.
I looked at my hands.

church lighting and bell.
bachelor saints.

every hour, mama, on the hour.

*

I had been reading burrough's *soft machine*.
hated the parts I read over and over.
to myself, to my brother
who read me
ginsberg.

every hour, mama, on the hour
softly with
clean it up.

*

I learn

within the same mile
be it country or no
give or take
a couple

it's okay
that we
for fast food
remain.

because we need to talk
the hour we're in.

flight

flood times

1 lower

dogs

into trees.

it gives them hope.

korea

morning my grandfather wheels with one hand his chair and with the other dips a net into the many tops of a pool. he taps the rim of the net on the walk to better appraise the wet calf legwork of a grasshopper. he lets the net touch bottom then releases it wholly to its listening. he will avoid feeling like the net and instead allow his hands their errancy to the tugged down caps of invisible boys. a healthier man, a more nervous man, would smoke.

he rolls his sleeves and can better see dropped pipes, freed hammocks. an ant in the low, upturned hill of his elbow makes for his palm and is quickly there and lost. not today, but others, he has heard children skin their knees at which point houses appear for them to enter.

from the chair he lifts his forgotten buttocks and they hold for only a moment their dream of sitting. he circles then the cement sides of the pool and then it's dark. so dark that when he is visited by two bright shoes he believes they are alone and so ties them underwater.

western missive

simply trying to remember a certain coat that took me like a
mouth.

a coat my soul left me for.

I have been to the tub I would sit waterless in-
typewriter like a girl on my lap; the vaporous acorns of bliss
winter squirrels, *ash*,
in the desperate curls of pubis. I have been

to the gym, its court of passed and passed back fire, its
auditorium unfilled
as a church in spain. I have been to my knees.

to the egg of bird, the grief of cow, and to the lengthy absence
of train's tunnel. I have been

with boy, with baseball, with book- smoking late on this fence

with these my trinities
soon to strike
for the house of my anna

cheerless and bare, not russian, not there.

guesswork

like the contents
of a purse

my sorrows
shift

a few
are darkly
touched

some are
chosen

one I think
for a baby's
lampless

mouth

whistlestop

some dog a bicycle
jumped over

its paws
little models
of blackbirds

its nose
as palm
carried pie

high

and its tail
to a home

less mother

flatfoot

the missing man's yo yo
between the hours
of this and that a.m.
was no doubt cared for
by meadow mice
our estimate would be
by all of them
what a service
they've provided
we would advise

forget the tree, the tire swing, and with these mice

forget the man

without incident

free home
to a good dog
other

signs
quite neighborly
side by side

as emptied
drive-in

cars-

pop away, corn-

care
in the world, pop away.

early you

morning falls
more often
wednesday

the gallery
of my life
of your
art

wednesday
is open
to those

risen by
lowercase
viragos

out of weak
nailed down
beds

to eat
from the bowls
our eyes

but later
forge

a schoolteacher's salary

a dim prayer
of basement
light-

stalled yellow
of a toy
bus-

we start with
two things

each other, the last step

last
because it fell

limbo

he wasn't overseas to be difficult.
he had pain in his arm, he thought

he could find a snake. a cut-off toe.

our insides were still inside the time
that we knew him. his arm it sorta

came like a slug you might see freed

from a puddle's hinterland eye. slow

like that, wrong like that. like these:

hippies and father time. a mole enters
an infected shoulder: yours. a mole

has been your heart, and peacefully.

your mother doesn't know about the mole.
it's not in the letter.

retrieval

a box in the basement of my mother's house- austere.
there isn't much left. in my own house I dream
a man with a fork is naked and he is horrified
by the box. by its *potential*. the box is my father,
or was. I hold my mother's foot to a lamp-
she cradles
a can. not much left. bored spider. black dog
made of light
bought for her

doesn't shed.

the tent

she is not crazy, the mother, this happens:

her children die, in a bathtub, silly.
her husband, on a banana peel.

later, she calls about the tent. the police take it down.

she says nothing to them until they leave.
a boy stops walking, says lady, and whistles.

each day until her daughters are grown.

ohio epigrams

sorry, birds. the night's

keyboard
had me google
crickets.

*

a car
is a place
to sit, think of
houses

chairs
adorn.

*

ohio
spelled frontward:

ohio.

*

for the graphic
of light snow
the weatherman
cuts

his baby
picture
teeth.

*

the devil's barbershop
is always empty.

(its magazines suck)

*

two men carrying a ladder
pass a cemetery
with one thought
between them.

*

turn the other cheek-

get a better shot.

*

the first widow
out of loyalty
never married
the second.

*

last words:

no and dead and grandma and poems.

*

his head is very still
he fears
any suddenness
may tally
the stubble
of his cheeks, may number
each zero

two bubbles.

*

stickmen
go to prison

good for them
and for

their art.

*

ah, stickmen. you won't see them
playing hangman. in front of trees.

predicament

in the shed, in the apple air of hem and haw
a pacing uncle blank as a broom regards
the love making half of a doorknob.

his niece is in the field she will soon be missing from.

a wooden horse with painted eyes begins to rock.

in looking for the horse, we find it. a couple of spoons, too,
with bent necks.

the broom is too heavy for one of us. it is split on a foreleg
and divvied- mine is the straw of grief.

wasp

news of death.
goes

winter's crow
from cup
to paper
cup.

it might mean father.
it might mean
the nose
of a mole

has poked
a pebble.

when do we not
piss ourselves. lick

at salt. paint
the elderly
only
clothed. say

our mother
who art
in heaven.

make a small crow.

the young and ferried

we see the boy setting three stick boats where the creek, for him, begins. then the boy is running and looking back. he falls twice but has a hard time believing. we stay with the stick boats for as long as they are together and then you and I have to choose. the faster of the three is yours. I keep my stuttered pace and cheer. last time we did this I found a mitten and then your hat, and then you sleeping on a swing. I hope this time is different, but already I am worried about your ears. last time we did this I carried you home and put you in the bath while I scrubbed the insides of my arms I'd been sucking on. nothing took us to the boy.

where ruin

not a place we can go to have my grandmother tell you again
how my uncle was born with a tooth.

where slavery just a star watched and watching and porn just a
rainbow bent to its work.

where babies are shaken like hollow gifts and we want people
and the emptiness of people put to death.

where grey flutes billow.

where milk is in our blood and ghost letting.

where hope is ugly but don't tell it.

where fathers disappear into the dashboards of looted trucks
taking with them their once employed hands
and taking with them the heat of those hands .

where disappear is not a word we lightly loft.

where envy is the work of nearby grass.

where a man moves over a woman so that she is equal and
equally ransacked
of travel.

where in a field this far away one can do finders keepers to a
body scraped at by others and poked.

where a pill is like a mouth but smaller. but wants a bottle.
and roots at the tip of your tongue.

sleep for my wife

I stand, and lean to my right.
the person beside me- left.

cheers

it is so cold I want to go somewhere and hold a baseball.
two cups are waiting and they are my hands.
a young girl I've nothing else to call waves to me
from behind a big window. you wouldn't believe how big.
or the house how small. or that a separate toast
how raises all.

please

say this: the street is quiet and the wall.
the children bring snow to snow but haven't
a guide. a car is also quiet. blankets
in the back of it.

a baby is flying. a small one has come
for the blankets. but the car is moving.
the wall stays put and the street.
the small one it is clear is wearing
two hats. nothing more
on the baby.

row homes

a street vendor's cup game in three geese.

a slim parade. even the clowns.

a bus stop where you can
brush your hair.

a girl's arm
based on
loosely
others.

a cell phone beside a dog. ringing, then not.

a notice, a nail- the police cannot save them all
they are leaves
after all.

a returned
front room
window. left to right
the life
in it; the van of flowers.

writing her leg: dear leg, I've written
your cast.

two men saying yep. then nothing. then a third man
late with
yep.

divorce. but I would be remiss
to drop
its equal-
a baton.

candy wrappers at the base of an oak
we call
tree.

a boy walking his fingers into his mother's purse. a boy and a
purse

that abandoned year.

fetters

a naked woman held from her dying plastic doll.

a police dog yanked, and thankful.

the doll's husband full of pity. free to go.

indicia

balloon, blushing into the side of a mountain.
the hand, that came from the arm, that came
from the room.

the first finder of mirrors.

hair, brushed over the blindfold's ear.

hair, tucked under.

pet rocks from Palestine.

wrist, dropping like a slipper, from the mouth.

or like a newspaper. nine months old.

afield

no bigger
than your hand
a robot
nearby
is dying

in the bed
of a mouse
a mouse

with an odd
belief

beep beep
in the world.

citizen swoon

your brother slips in the shower, and then down the drain.
friends, with other friends, get on a plane. your mother calls.
she is angry that you're not angry about not being made to
scale. you say into a curtain- one piece of red cake please.
today, you will make it to the top of a baseball bat. father will
make a little promise below his arthritis. your wife will make
you happy. she will say happy birthday- it's a model of the city
you wanted to drink in.

seizure

I am driving barefoot. my brothers are crying.
my mother's wake

the wake of my mother's powdered cheeks

is over. we pass the house my shoes are in. they run
to one side of the house which makes it lean.

my brothers to keep from crumbling are sharing bread.
hansel dum and hansel dee.

in the end my mother was mostly an ocean dipped into
by lightning.

when I was a boy I sat a whole week in plain view
with a diecast car behind my teeth.

if you are one to dislike 'in the end' and 'when I was a boy',
you can hate this all you want:

a nightmare is a dream the heart is having.

hill & winter

here is my brother, walking away from a horse.
I have been painting all day: and my brother, walking.

I had a dream you were leaving me.
that a homeless man was trying to fix the leg of a wasp.
you were praying for the wasp.

the man was homeless and you were leaving me.

I had a second dream a trinket jesus came poorly
from its cross-

that this was the wasp
I gave to my brother.

the kid is mean

a week into our boys' club she came to us bit. her shoulder
perched on and some of it taken. we knew the kid was four
years under the least of us but we still had to vote how we'd
mark his body. we took apart one of them hot wheels
racetracks and went whirring awhile at the trees. every leaf an
open hand. some of us made voice to plea the thing its
nearness. I wasn't one to do that instead I kissed the boy
behind a tree and here she come to drape him. I looked for the
boy all over the long time she let me.

boy's poem

my son and I are standing.
if our eyes have met, they have forgotten.
behind me, little lambs of worry.
in my son's eyes.

girl's poem

it seems my daughter and I are arguing.
though we haven't said a word.
if she keeps it, that's okay- but to feed
a cartoon bird?

the wild horse

for a father and son
the bow
of their heads
I give you a horse
that will stand
on two legs

dream

gangly I walk and my hands swing and the small hands at sea
inside them. my sons are filled, my sons, with believing.
once warm and looking at a balloon, I lost them.
we will make the fat wall-

I have seen in pictures myself seeing
a tree, grown, or done with fleeing.

city

said they had seen my father waving his arms and that he'd been eating something raw because it was on his lips and he was a different man. said that many were screaming their mouths onto the windows of the subway or dropping their heads between the legs of weak children as if they were to carry on command bowling balls to the sober dammits. said they and said they so early my ear I had to put it on the table next to a spoon my father used quietly last week everyday of it. began god his forgiving of bears being seen downtown and began I to get very hungry to hear my father mock blowing mock broth to keep it in the bowl.

reasons

the straightaway of the track where a runner yesterday paralleled the brief twinning of a long jumper is today where my brother and I race, fight, and find a stroller. my brother wants to push it home but I am worried it's been left for us. I win, and am lonely. tomorrow, on the clearest patch of road, our crumpled dog and my father on his way home thinking he'll hug us just because.

dura

glory I was mute, mouth only. you could hardly walk, hardly flap, had taken from the tree certain branches into the length of your limbs long clothed. myself I was in the tree deeply and had hidden there but it was not my plan. below me you straightened and I could tell I would love you later and you would be still. there were women bumping each other in the prison yard but my care behind me had become a mice carried river. ably you stood before god and ably you stood after. men scoot themselves into pajamas and it takes a good while.

the unwed

the dream
you were having-

out there
having you.

legerdemain

I had scrubbed at it once in the bath with my thumb-
the pail we thought a birthmark on the infant's hand.
my success was short lived- his other hand opened.

I ask you to imagine not knowing for five months
you are holding your son and he a pail. then god

drinking from your mouth.

abrades

inside a wall, like a sponge, moves god.
when my hand moves, my hand is upon him.

my son was born, part of my palm, in his brain.
many walk into a room, and recover.

renderings

how I keep
my health
from you-

chests, old men, and heart
balloons.

baptism

the home's weekend janitor placing ball caps on the elderly.

something is said, and he is fired.

his kids recall the egg he'd make of his hand. the delicate knock
of his joke. their hair, or something in it, weeping.

world of frost

a man is asking to be filled. he's been stood straight by snow.

his feet are teacups rattling and this is comforting: women with spoons.

in warmer times he had taken a kettle from an open window. he had put a hand over its mouth. the hand he had not, said nothing; not to the hand he did,

and never again to god.

the rooms he summons have in them mothers he has known and mother cats and their jaw lifted kits. have lovers lesser than looking good but naked just the same. have children with stoved fingers held high. children slapped into sizably bigger.

the rooms are smoke or are taking water and there is the tactile glory of fumbling-

door, drawer, bible.

the hat is his that covers the hole in his head. and his the hotel of the body thought house.

slack

sister spent the summer making a horror film.
she had begun to show and father was wanting to be sober.
the depth of our poverty knew no mirror. here's how mom said
it:
mirra, mirra. it made us laugh, leave, and come back.

mirra

show me my mother's back, and her elbows.
the faucet's spit on neck.
eye black to eye black my brothers checking
for teeth.
show me insomnia, the pacing witch hats
of a dog's great attention.
my father, but don't
take sides.

hoax

your wife had just begun to draw her bath,
you had your book and the comb
she'd no doubt
call for. your poor mind
a slipper, made once.

the hospital room was not yet yours,
and the staff had gathered to discuss
the spelling
of another's name, and to raffle
its origin.

you and your wife would turn back
the forward thinking
of your small car- she had left the water running-
and you would pass the comb, pull the drain.

it's a dry joke, now, this going back. as if
you could turn the water off, and have faith

one or both
would be home.

men by day

my neighbor carries two white sneakers in one hand.
they are pressed topmost to her nightgown. she is in
a kind of hurry- a child, perhaps, with two of three
schoolbooks. a driverless car is honking.
some lights come on, in some of the higher windows
I see women. later I will put them back
like so many clothes.

I See The Scars On Your Face

I see the many beds of a single tear.

norther and I quote

the land here is so beautiful one can forgive all kinds of bad behavior.

see rabbit knock into a pail, then knock it again, so it is upright.
see the later mother believe ghost and for that in the thirst of
ghost.

see angel, being seen, pained by a bell that aforesaid rings.

see the hand of god once thought to sweep, sleep.

see slow the jeopardy of dog ticks. see bullets in a wall

or track them their holes; some in a line and some stepped out.

see a film, the south in it. your lips with your teeth.

the picture

I will tell you our names as follows: we.

we who have gathered the old house together.

behind us, the day, and it matches, the day.

the picture, in its fourth year, produced a man we did not recognize.

we did what we could, those years of tolerable scrutiny.

each exacting the picture to pieces of cloth, to be here,

as we were. traceably sad.

entireties

I am painting your toes. you will need them tomorrow.

it is far too black; the dog the robots made. the dog the women languish beneath.

younger, I could hover. I was far too small; a piece of tape. balled up

nightly straightened

by mother.

a fine finish

midway through your book I became worried.
so many were waiting.
the mother eating but not tasting.
the cop asking to use her mouthwash.
the half egg made precariously whole
by window.

I tell you my hands were cuffed invisibly.
that they followed the boy
until he turned, and took them up.

the center of your mind

you and the ground both angry. then asking to be forgiven.
then friends.

the unbroken horse, gone, thumps into a tree.

your legs, together, affect some pillow, some space you know is
filling.

urine, blood. your mother's neck backing into the spider

of your father's hand. everyone jolly, squealing, saying

spider spider. the drowsy freedom of trucks and truck beds

biased with tire. the boy who vaguely hangs himself, as if

from a tree in the center of your mind-

but is fat and for it saved.

film white

scissors and hand, making amends.
man, god, chicken, egg.
my first year at the age of three
became very tender. a trash bag
was fit to my father's face
and poked. the rope of his maleness
was paid, daylight savings, the length
I'd walk
in circles.

under her eye, calling her tom.

ago

father lost his fingers and thought me dumb.

gone for a walk, they have.

I hated the gloves, and the arm of his coat

they worked in. I hated the talk

of field hands

we couldn't afford. my father saw this-

me twisting myself

into more than one

tree -

said aim the devil

you'll shoot yer foot. and he told my mother

the boy's leg is dark. and she climbed it, and cut it clean

that its bone

mark the night

so roundly.

apocrypha

the red dog, having died, was orange. sat one day and kept at it. the red dog came with the farm and knew its name by name. red dog, in the sun, and red dog iced. in the house only once, to eat a bat, be beaten. the bat flopping and the silly broom. cries crying more for being outside the body. for dwelling, the red dog wilded. wilded a word that also came to eat and be heavy. trussed with red string, like the dog, passed beak to confounded beak.

the strongest man in the world

my hills they surrender
a flat grief. my hills are treeless,
white, made of owls.

health

it is just a puppy, it is often
just a puppy, limping
uphill and down
equally, each paw

in turn
aloft, very serious
puppy.

town entirely wind

hats.

exter

when we are to it and then from it, our life is a white wall lying
down.

we scrape them, bag them, and bury.

the road's protest is either coming or going.

we jockey in the dark but do not argue.

we step in puddles we cannot see and agree

the carrying has no god. one is, and one is not

the heart. the huffing animal's nose.

a record of birds at war

this basket
of cut
hair, the gum

stretched like
truth, the boy

manmade
and the girl

hand
when touched.

heaven

cutting room
ceiling.

eyeglasses

movie, graveyard, movie.
a left book.
sockless and blind, a woman.
her boy bullied deeply into the gulped
bridge
of his nose.

sex with her husband.
thumb wars.

bruise me twice- I'll work.

The Pencil

A pregnant woman touching a window with a napkin
To stop
A black spider.

Her other hand, of course
Keeping towel.

The spider, then freed, under the door.
The scared leg it leaves

This woman of chore.

Her audience wider
I've asked her to cross-

But I've looked from my longhand's impossible loss.

Feedbag And The Mare Run Off

At her mouth goes my brother.
He was a colt, then.
God don't see them as wild, them dogs
On a hill. So says mother, lice comb calm.
My brother is lifting the girl to his face.
He is trying to pronounce his name.
I see a river how it swallows a cheap raft.
I see, riverbank, a thigh of dirt.
Mother cups my chin. I don't know I'm hungry.
I don't know that I've called it wrong, The Book
Of Palms. I know I'm younger than my brother,
That my brother is young. That the body takes cloth
But can't take it on.

The Attic

These are the hymns. Bedimmed,
Where Saturday resides. And I
A window's peer, stained.
By a shard or two, sane.
I have run through a fog.

These are my clothes. Evoked,
Much belittled. Eyelids, left vigil.
I have run through a dog.
I have crawled like its chain
Then gone straight, like a cane.

I have prayed, saying *devil*.
Or *uncle*, who's napped
On a deathbed, my aunt's.
A temple? Example:
My temple is ample.

In Ohio A TV Proves She Was Gored By A Bull

If any footage of her mother remains
It's been erased.

A barn was raised, her father was lit
By a shower.

There were things to do, they took an hour.

Her father's thumb hooked topmost to the P in Pamplona.
His belt loop a koan, empty, below her.

Her mother's life
Her longest encounter.

weeks of practice

it's me, train track.

I seen two men on a bike, a strange bike.

it was longer than a bike should be,

its pedals were not in the middle, but way in the back.

it had two seats.

the man in front had no legs, the man in back no arms.

I know you're not talking to me right now-

my girlfriend, her tightrope act.

but something about those men, excluding me

their weeks of practice.

*An Unfinished Sermon Left For A Young Man Passing Farm
Machinery-
In His Car Or On His Bike Or On His Own Two Feet*

And his wife would dab at the foreheads with a steam cloth and she would murmur leave my sons and he would count his sons and come up with four. And he would keep it from her that this was the bruising work of the fifth whom he had beaten in a hidden room and left for dead. And he would leave the kitchen walking backward and his heart would try to stay.

When finally God spoke it was not with mouth but with hand if one can imagine an emperor of puppets.

The heart it jumped back into its rightful cave but was not afraid and could no longer beat.

And the man took the boy by the ear into the room and asked for a quarrel and one was provided. The boy though was protected by an upturned glass and watched his father bat himself as a puppy will its nose.

After which the insects began to land but always the blood would come back to the face of the boy.

And the father was made to spit on a cob and with it brush his teeth. And he called them his sons what were four spheres of water.

otic

people kill themselves all kinds of ways. round here being millersport ohio. dark and stormy is how we talk about hair. the dead before they go. my mother's hair was dark and stormy. wasn't a monday; her boyfriend was upright and able to hold a pan. she took a couple to the back of the head but kept walking. went to this particular barbershop that's still there, same barber, still cuts out the dark. passed people no street to be on so they were milled about and missed her darker and missed her stormy looking up as they were. something coming and it wasn't my mom. all kinds of ways and my mom had to use a tornado. the upper half of her body was too much for the tree but it got its mouthful. her boyfriend held that pan for a week in the same hand. as I am now turned out you might call me on the disconnect, heck, the dialect. you might want it to be horrible putting only half of her in that tree my own mother. truth might be, tree, my whole mother, and no tornado. I might take you at your word and tell you the tornado carries nothing but my home. that my mother locked herself in the cellar on the sunniest day of the year. that I knew beforehand what the year would bring weather wise. that she lived through all the following malevolence behind those would say to her son she ain't all there. that when she came out of the cellar it was because of a bird she'd claimed to have heard in her belly. then that tree and from the window, see.

the spared

a dusty toad has given my father fits. my sisters run through
cobwebs.

I pluck ticks from my dog's fur in much the same way
as he. don't think him not gentle.

it is good to be afraid. to step once and smallish

away

from bare backs and on them the spiders.

theater of peace

the hand has come, puppet, but not for your life.
the hand has come to carry your death.
I see that you are nodding. I will get your hat
if it drops. I will dust it on my knee.

some have pets, but I'm a man of puppets.
note my briefcase full of string.
heaven, I haven't been there-

makes it doubly hard to leave.

broth & cigarette

the bible open in the house of my father's walking.
a magazine of my mother's my hand deeply in.
a bowl of water. dog, dementia, dogs.

a new bowl of water.

hips

to be moved again by the stillness of things a still thing I
muscle into.
it is why when you walk you are above a cage afloat.
it is why your legs do not fly off the handle.
I am bound to the world and my head bobs. what great arrest
to be under- in this room survived
by a wounded curfew.

stowaway

peering from the lapsed hood of a boy's coat-

it must've been
my joy.

on its way to school.

bedfellow

his offered wrist
recalled to me
the knitted
mouth
of my sister's
favorite
doll.

groundhogs

the first called to us horribly as if it knew a woman once had
swallowed a cigarette to see her broom catch fire. in a tree
above our dog calling cackle from such a surgeon's witch that
first one stayed and died and slumped like a bag of feed spoilt
by hose water. my dog pissed and we thought it gentle.

the second came under the head of a shovel brought kingdom
by my best friend and I had to watch and then poke the strange
belly of it with a rake and when asked is it dead I thought the
rake would answer.

the third, as the others, came mid-winter. I had learned by then
of my skin and what rolled out it would cover. I waved the
barely held leaf of my hand for others to pass and farm
machines all they did scraping the road as they went.

careerists

literally, clean slate.
inside of your house, I am outside of mine.
with that I am already chalk.
first, my fingers. I care what happens
after. dunce cap, crow mirror.
the learning
curvature
of god. she her anhedonia.

soul with its push broom. the tired blackbirds.

the odds, and they are decent

the boy has two weeks to care for the book
he reads from. the day before his mother dies
outnumbers
the day after.

preterition

my mother and father, both from a set of twins, are very happy.
my mother is the fraternal twin to my uncle, my father the
identical to my aunt.

my aunt is often sad and my uncle believes indifferently in
nothing.

I come to this now having dropped an ice cube then another.
I've used my hands and my mouth and am running out of
options.

my middle brother has hands numbering two or I'd ask him and
make no bones.

my aunt is calling her mouth a desert lost in a person and my
uncle claims he has a friend of a friend
drinks piss. my sister is making the cups of her bra talk. the
twinkle in her eye I'm pretty sure
should be in both.

mnemonic

eventually, I was asked to write about a dog.
there was a letter, and a man above it.
in my own letter, I asked for the woman behind him.
she arrived with the very little I came to know.
I could've been a room she sat sewing in.
her one hand nibbling the other, the foster door
of her back. my whole life in front of me
on another's fours.

son in bathwater

nose to nose, my hands under his armpits and his hands soft
and missing.
his legs holding onto his feet and the river or the rug pulling
away.
I haven't looked at anyone like this.

if somewhere a knife slips in and out of consciousness, I don't
care.
it will not be news.

girl on skates with bucket

all of nine, girl on skates
with bucket.

I once had power
and at thirty three
could easily piss.

avoided parks, happiness, and socks

eraser pink

a merrymaking

the sons they share the window from the inside-

they overuse nothing; not palm, not forehead.
they do not fight, though one is older.
they share a blanket and under it nakedness.
their penises rise but not for long and both sometimes notice.
mostly they giggle, but with patience. the ice storm
they relieve by saying stupid ice cube storm.
the wires they have been watching sag with branches.
one branch alights middlewise to ash but is whole
for the loft of the wind's crowding

-as two might share a sole thing willed.

fantast

on any hill without a cross, they pause, and the father points.

when they are tired, father and son, they plunk into
then off
the sides of valley homes.

one home in particular remembers thinking
kids these days
roll anything
looks like a tire.

your own father smacks whichever finger lifts without the rest.
says you sleeping don't mean your epilepsy knows.

in your dreams the father does not point, and there isn't a son.
just a man on one hill after the other, sunlight purling
into the seeable
dark yarn sea. his eyes leaving his head,

somersaulting,
somersaulting,
godbraving.

poise

middle of the bus, man with nothing.
his work cut out and the work of his chuckling.
he puffs twice then stands it in his palm.
a good trick.

proxy

I think he is being morbid, this boy my mom babysits. him on
his big wheel, dragging a knuckle, lifting it to his mouth, then
dragging the other. made his own puppet by chin and by spit.
his fake pitch forward into pebble and pebble dust. the blood
his nose commands and the red clothing it leaves behind. part
of him missing-

traveling.

traversal

we moved. it was hard. I made up words. I said them in front of my mother. I said them out of reach. I wrote them down and they were tamed. I thought that was bad. I was convinced. we got where we were going. my mom looked at the house. from the car.

I got out. I looked at my mom. I saw dog, dog bowl, basketball, and hoop. I kept seeing. I got back in the car. we thought the trip would be longer. I had spotted the letter *n* but kept it. for later. I think she knew, I think it scared her. I was only outside the car a few minutes. I was okay, I am, with dying.

exegesis

speaks nowhere, of being from a place, what you everything
know. the heaven and the earths. the ocean, ask it, film of spit
we are under and weightless. rather I would tragedy alone my
love mine and my plural

of hate *mine loving*. a death *a death* and not the world over.
much as I wanted the word rape much as I want

you to take and unstitch the dog its demon squirrel. dog had a
name, a long one, I spelled it
my own time
my own tongue's toothy braille. you want I know the same sea
to cross us

in watch the all day eyeful of absence, *the moon*,

the good moon because we both see it-

god going only so far.

vows of surprise

sad is the man convinced he will one day beat
to the mirror
his reflection. sadder still

the cognizant woman.

clemency

the boy kicks on his back, which is good for his memory.
the house does not clamor for care.
the dryer has a thought, fantastic, like a pony.
the mailman, jesus christ, the mailman has caught
his sleeve
on a branch. the boy's mother is laughing. indeed,
she may die.

sidestep

a beer bottle holds its side, inconsolably green, and a pacifier in
a glaze of ice projects itself into the throb of a thumb or a thing
thumb-sized. the glass doors of the building said to house birth
and death certificates swing and the items are briefly guiltless. I
am here on this odd day for my father and for my son and for
the foreign way I can turn my tongue to sublet my mouth. my
father never drank, my wife she breastfeeds. I cannot argue,
apologize, or be in two places at once.

smoker's autumn

the boy, short, and his breathing.

his brothers, soon to be off. his father, that man with the wagon.

whose own breath is taken by a rake, wholly adequate for breath, but far too young

for leaves.

men far

no matter how you might hold
that which is presently
the future
of your body

the beauty
of a book, the hour
it took

no matter

man who learned
how to piss

addicted

anonymously, like you.

to food for my family.

a diaspora

don't worry, because here is worry:

a stone in a grounded bird's nest.

it is easy to say, I guess. to come up with
the fed multitudes.

hell is to be in two places at once that are both hell.
see above.

see below:

shade of stone, kind of bird. knowing, here is knowing:

the poor write good.

marvelous

tenement house, to scale, with elevator.

up and down, a man whose hands fight.

his family, stock. as biscuits and stairwells.

his family a thing thinking it can help

it's delivered.

I have tried with my ambling farce of lost dogs to send him a
cat.

good sport, best whistle.

the arrangement

some have god inside it's true. they carry him, place to place,
talking heaven.

I back away from them, usually into a waiter. I have food on
my shirt, which means:

a feast is being remade.

the room I live in has a man in it. there are two of us, then,
and specifics.

if I come home, he picks the food from my shirt. if I don't, he
dreams it.

if I don't, I may have hit something. and now

am kneeling beside.

the cure for depression

i.

I am on your shoulders, you are passing me an apple.
I fall. then eat, on my back.

I add, when I tell it, a tree. gravestones.

the father becomes a mother, and I become her daughter.

I remove the apple. the daughter is put high in the tree- I
skimp on the climb

because it doesn't make sense. I focus more on the screaming
and applaud my humanity.

the mother walks away, she has her reasons. she has a cigarette
but it could easily

be a straw. it's a different bone breaks every time the girl
jumps.

ii.

I add a note some think is about my wife, but it's not. it's
about her body

taking turns.

play

the coughing though was fluid. you could afford it
its own bubble, the way you made the room
having not seen the room. having seen
ghost

one moment and soul the next.
bedsore a term could usher
a portal.

if you were running
and you were
it was because your back started running
superstitious to see the bubble

make the overpass- rock, ghost, soul and all.

Probability

First girl
I brought home
Ma said
Pa said
She's a fucking tart

What he did
He did it
With the lips
Of others

Kissing that girl
Like taking a pill
For a pill

Pa got better
At being right

I told ma
Tell him
You're dying

This was later. This was a joke.

racket

swooping his handheld figure into the river
the boy clears it up
what he was thinking-

father does not dig
but deeply bathes.

a jointless man is well behaved.

cutaways

the understudy square of absent carpet, the exposed planks, the light the late man carries beneath, the light that is carried by a crack and moves as on a thermometer, the magic woman, the marriage, fevers.

the valley graveyard, the after pour looked upon and still called rain, the stone ladders of the half dead, the peeking.

between each house the run wire, or ground, wholly known for the size of one's feet.

the boy, a misnomer, the boy goliath, the boy's father junior to david.

the jail, the cells unable to meet, the transferred men, like it is.

the overdue notice, the librarian, the signature of the librarian, the book, its fled twin and fled twin's author.

the peach of a body imagined by a box, the yielding of that body, its more local parts

to the sawed light.

em space

his tongue out and pressed to the side of his face by a wind
none could feel.
his right forepaw, gone, and some bone unnamed stepping
forward to be robbed.
seemed he'd been paused. my mother lifted him- but her
hands were asleep,
were many ants at once dreaming. our dog fell and no big
thing happened. even less
upon landing. he was perhaps now a baby's crib, partly
assembled. my mother and I
like parents to be. our worry over nothing, our new promise
that the baby will sleep
in our bed. for those driving by, no age difference.

in situ

no animal I know arranges the present.
the sleep of an animal ends and it is awake.

water, for the glass, dreams. clearly, the glass is thankful.

by holiday my brother decorates his trache,
which I've not seen him do.

it's christmas; I enter the room.

I am taking wonderful pills for a possible morbidity.
anything can happen- a bunch of adults in my building
still my dog's jaw by stapling an ear at the fold-

I'd knock on some doors, but logistics they snarl this home of
the bold.

the seriousness of games

in hangman, how the head
is first. in chess

how father.

identifiers

in the manner of deciding which side of the face to shave first, they each take a chin then another of the dead. I wish I could tell you of a bird and from there we might reach the edge of a puddle- who knows. we could call for the bird with last night's rain. and these I call they, what else, what else- could open a shave shop and be pissed at us for loitering. they could open that shave shop together, swivel the slow times away in a chair. one of them, then many, pretend to mistake me- but I am another's son. my mother would say so, and to each: he is his father all the way through. disappears he does into himself, that recognizable post from which one is rarely relieved.

what I want to tell you, brother

is that when I say
little baby
it is not to be
precious

but to warn my hands.

white baby, black, illegal.

and to warn your mouth-

make your way
with the mechanics
of your swing
to left field.

foreign country, bullshit.
the past is a rival township.