

SKIN TO SKIN IN AN UNMARKED LIFE

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POEMS

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MY SON FORGETS HIS SECRET IDENTITY BUT REMEMBERS  
WHO I'VE TOLD

Grief cuts itself from the movie it wants to make about wind. I  
design, sometimes, hats in a dream. I don't mean every word. I  
thought loneliness would be taller, that's all. Not this god who  
knows we exist.

## SOME OF THESE CHURCHES AREN'T MINE

I don't have anything poetic to say about names beyond that we killed the animals in the wrong order. I remember a rabbit disguised as milk as clearly as my dog does a dream of a whale moaning a verse from its lonely size into a bullet hole meant for something smaller. I'm not sure that wordplay tricks trauma out of its inheritance, though suppose it's possible that incompletely by accident the fleeing angels of our absence return harm over and over without a scratch to a satellite touching itself in a photograph developed by god's avoidance. In a town for homesick people who use sex a lamp, there's a first time for everything except recognition.

AS IF SNOW WAS TOLD TO FINISH SNOW

Loss gets older and befriends its childless parents without  
knowing which of them placed a glass of toy water beside mirror's  
bed for the you in all those video games where I stopped moving

BONES FROM AN EXTRA MOON

father making book covers in the nude

his longhand moving in the veins of a giant

his name an ant sleeping in the center of a band-aid

what if the end stops coming

a crow is not a star

the eyes know nothing

but know it first

loss is the salt of now

NO GREAT TURTLE TO STRAIGHTEN THE DEAD

no great turtle  
to straighten  
the dead  
no  
not here  
in Ohio

an Ohio  
that eats  
its weight  
in spiders  
an Ohio

of slow  
obsessions  
effortless  
sorrows

a lifejacket  
on fire  
a pebble  
named  
after blood's  
ear  
a thunderclap

the late  
crawl  
of a dizzy  
child

A SLOW LAND

in the mother's dream  
a brother and a sister  
watch a movie  
without a name

a movie that between them  
is called  
This Is Not  
A Dream

there's no one  
in the movie

water holds an animal  
and sometimes  
there are buildings  
that buildings  
describe

death gets to name every baby but its own

## FAR NOTES

-  
In my son's eye an unnoticed lamb has forgotten which eye  
gets a lamb

-  
was there a moment I was wanted  
past life and all, was there  
a nest a whale, has this  
been me  
in a mothered  
before)

(looking at a pill while picking a flower  
time  
temporary

## BLOOD NOTES

-  
there is no earlier dream  
no slipping  
from the past

of every beast we haven't eaten

-  
god has two sticks  
dog  
and echo

-  
all snow was born in a cigarette

## BLOOD NOTES

-  
Loss isn't the only child of death,  
but is the most spoiled.

-  
Disappearance has its limits.

-  
Animals  
don't waste  
their pain.

-  
Sex remembers death as the skinner of sleep.

-  
Touch invents a past it can fix.

## SECOND NOTES

a birthmark the shape of a bird's cough  
inside of which a wound  
is bidding  
on a shadow...

I don't know when sleep became the movie I put on to fall asleep.

children are the past.

## FIRST NOTES

-  
sleep became sleep when it missed its audition for death. what  
keeps a mouth in place? think loneliness, say dream.

-  
what the ghost does over and over is bring suicide into the story  
of angel.

-  
when you have no one, creation devours your discovered  
hungers.

eat fast, and let god believe.

THE CHILDREN DON'T LISTEN TO RUMORS OF THEIR  
HUNGER

The children they dig a hole and give the hole a name and a backache. They ask was I ever their age and slip a housefire-in-a-seashell under the pillow of an endless angel. It's not what I say but in truth the older a thing gets, the younger its god.

## COUNTRY SILENCE

has a father worshiping a balloon animal and a mother caring in  
her sleep for sleep. has a sick son relearning in church how long a  
past life lasts. has you writing this beside the ghost of a fish to a  
god whose thoughts on children have changed. has in it no maker  
who hasn't already made field recordings for those who miss  
emergency rooms. has in it owls lost in the attention span of the  
gentle. owls born with all their teeth.

## INTERIORITY

A mid-day animal on land dumbstruck by the holy effort it takes to forget god. The nocturnal grief of apples. Alien and angel having a quiet moment before abducting from the high-dive our least favorite swimmer. The naming of the star my cigarettes worship. A pawprint sleeping on a heartbroken whale.

BLISS NOTES

-  
I live in the future with an animal known to predict nothing.

It runs out of food when I forget what it eats.

-  
In my wrist, the heartbeat hidden from me  
by my ears.

-  
Eye:  
The first fossil of my blankness

-  
God only takes suicides.

SLOW MISSINGS

fog's invisible feast, a flashlight

kissing the itch on the face  
of god, the toy

baths our machines worship, the hunger

that returns my ear to my father's  
stomach, the soundless

fasting  
of owls, the first camera

that knew what would happen

## ATTENDANCES

A palm overtaken by the long audience of touch, a hand

left for god  
by a spider, a child

packing snow into the dream of a mother's knee,

a shadow  
eaten by a rock, a rock

eating nothing  
in a church, the angel

assigned  
to a lost  
microscope, the order

in which  
we're imagined

## ABLEIST JOKES ABOUT THE MOON

Tracing his toes, my son breaks a bone in his finger.

It's scary because things mean more in a simulation.

Somewhere in his body his body wonders  
if it's unguessed by god or by ghost.

Bath. Both.

Sabotage time not yet

## LOCATION NOTES

-

It was sick for three minutes and lived for eight. I haven't seen a picture in so long that I'm not sure you'd know me unless I was there. The dream is using us to remember god.

-

We weren't alive long enough to stop pretending we'd lived. If you don't have something in your hand, don't get a dog. I open my mouth but am still saying star.

-

The interior life enters heaven here or there in a bitemark. No splinter leaves a painted church. Distance is one meal. Longing, a puzzle.

-

The deathplace. Our losskiss. The inventors of *déjà vu* dropping everything for touch. Touch with its borrowed memory and urgent past. No one mistaking noon for none.

## LOCATION NOTES

-

Darkness never gets to every creature. I like that it tries. A cigarette taking sad thoughts from a ghost made of breathing. The ant-same memories of a toddler.

God doesn't change, and knows it.

-

Do as nothingness has done  
and cover  
that scar  
with god

-

There is a room  
that knows  
where you die

## LOCATION NOTES

-

As quiet as a doll's neck  
a bell  
dies  
for the wrong  
church

-

I watch it again and again  
your goldfish  
outlive  
a bowl  
that's frightened  
of sleep

-

No animals were created in the making of this harm

## LOCATION NOTES

-

In one stopped car, a baby with a staring problem is on hour number three. In another, my sister takes photos of her dog. I leave my own car to find the icicle that will become the mirror's rifle, but I know I'm to be killed by the wind for a thing as big and as little as rattling a scarecrow's keys under any table that ain't been set. No story needs told yet here we are outing angels to a god best remembered for how it covered the noisemaker's brevity. Does shape forget its poverty, or poverty its shape? I ask you on a train about the wheel you're asleep at. If the food came early, we'd call it starved. Dying is a chew toy. Be as unmoved as your attackers.

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Loss changes its name to loss and then back to loss. Time runs out of death. As a kid I wanted there to be a fish that was alive because it was the only fish. The gone, to themselves, will always be the last to have left. I don't sleep and you don't sleep and together our not sleeping is a blessing that disguises scarcity. But god has nothing and keeps even less.

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SCARED OF MY SON'S BODY

there is in fact a time

exactly like  
the present

AS ALONE

as aliens needing god

## LAST NOTES

again we speak

(they are making  
it now)

the forgetful  
weapon