

NAKED IN DOG YEARS
(naked in dog years)

poems april 2024
cover image by Noah M Smock

LOSSOLOGIES, OPENING STATEMENTS

Jesus lied about who he was, then god
took him in.

I fix my car with pain.
I fix the showerhead,
the cricket
problem, my children

with pain.

Not place. Not with
place. Place
is a bleeding
footstep.

I will let you kill me.
It will take three days.

I won't come back

AWAY

I could touch this in my sleep. It hasn't changed.
Attraction is a hole that breathing can't find.
Your dark mouth kills circle after circle and
nothing from before makes it back. Not the angel
making helicopter noises at a second angel being
grown in a bloody deer. Not the face that
became a face after seeing god's face in a toilet
not made for gods. Not the children. And not the
children counting how many children can fit in a
tank. Promise me something. I will eat this entire
room.

AWAY

For the second tower, I turned on the radio. The world isn't actually the world. Rain finds a replica of me being nothing and death gets distracted. Hour, hour. I carry my fourteen year old son from room to room as I wait for air to sound like air and for one bone to take another under its wing. Make it about birds. God's been here long enough to be real.

AWAY

The name of the ill child is password. The name
of the dying is night. It doesn't get too dark here.
Quiet ant machine. Very shy moth. My parents
are alive and were when I wrote this. Sleeping
where god knows where.

AWAY

Aftermath
is dead

Let the bomb believe it had
a rib
to lose

Let the image of two birds sharing a stone be the
end of my eyes

In pencil
ghosted
pen
let her write
lifetime
supply

Childhood is necessary
bc god
can't swim

AWAY

The rare
the sober
cigarette. The blinking

start
of a toy
fire. God's name

so long
it cured

my first
stutter. The homesick

spider's
unmoved
hunger.

AWAY

The poor, when poor, comfort god with horror
films.

One misses
with others
with a single
letter
an entire
language.

Being is everywhere.

Angels erase death for having a memory.

Thinkers in the violet
capital
of atrocity

invent
thought.

God
is ok.

AWAY

You're still mentioned
in the poem
that kills you.

Children confuse god.

(Suicide

for how it tells me
perfectly
nothing)

Even weapons
in Ohio
let silence
leave.

.

AWAY

There is not
in me
a heartbroken
ghost

It's okay

My whole childhood I treated my thoughts
as bones

After all, after all
After all this light
A moth

can't be starved
by god

AWAY

frostbitten
birthdays
the moths
vanish
all except
the one
that I press
to my stomach
like a mother's
mother's
mother's
ear
yours
mine
mother
who

AWAY

God is only god when god stops watching.
I ask for my weight in longing.
I ask
in the after of our again-death

for my weight
in Ohio
longing.

In Ohio
Ohio
is worried. The called-off search

for the person
who's never
lonely.

HUMAN EFFORT

I don't know
what's worse
god liked
me once

WE'RE IN THE DREAM WHERE YOU BRUSH YOUR
TEETH AND THEN WE'RE IN A ROOM WHERE
RICH PEOPLE THINK ABOUT DEATH

Sleep has its own stomach

Which one of us
is hungry
changes

so one of us
isn't

OUTSIDE OF THE DREAM WE SEE MOSES BREAK
A SKATEBOARD OVER HIS KNEE

A black leaf is trying to make a fist

A baby
is scraping
by

DREAM FACTS

Our son has been laughing all day. We don't know if it's the medicine or if it's joy. He can't talk to himself. Say bomb and I'll say god's brain is manmade. Angels are ableist. Have one seizure and they look for any bush on fire. If I wanted to, I could live with a deer and learn sign language. The hospital is there and the hospital is there.

CHILDREN, COUNT YOUR FINGERS ON YOUR
FINGERS IN A VERY PERFECT NOTHING
AND HIDE YOUR EATING IN THE STOMACH OF A
MOTH

Name your pets twice

Forget to be children

DEATH HAS NEVER LOST A LIMB AND EVERYONE
IN HEAVEN THINKS YOU CREATED THEM

Land is where land
is afraid
of land's
ghost.

Kill me.
I'm new here.

THE NAKED NUDE TRAPPED BY TOUCH AND THE
BRIEF ANIMAL THAT SLEPT ON US

Look like someone who's being looked at

Cut yourself
in circle's
home

IT SNOWED, I DRANK, AND THE FAINTING
MOUSE OF MY CHILD'S STOMACH WOULD NOT
STOP SLEEPING

I thought
reading
would last.

Loss has the appetite of god.

I DRANK, IT DID NOT SNOW, AND WE CRIED AS
ONE OVER THE THEFT OF THE WINDOW-
SHOPPER'S HUNGER

Rain
writes
to god
mostly
about
skin

A mirror
traps a mirror
Our proof

is the same

LITTLE FACT HAS ITS ONLY DREAM

The silence
is fake
it's that
good

I READ WITH MY BODY THE LATER WORKS OF
TOUCH

None of us know how to move. We've been here
since god went to get god. I see a stick and you a
stick in the shape of a gun. In my first dream I'm
a bird that can't breathe and fly like that for
years. It's selfish. Some are kidlike. Even in size.

MOST TOWNS HAVE A WEEK THAT STARTS ON
THE DAY ALL THE DOGS PLAY DEAD AT ONCE

Grief is sorrow with bones. I did things slowly, then. I could enter a room without an empty room knowing. I didn't have kids and there they stayed listening to the hunger pains of drone operators. There are bodies death cannot experience. Being poor just means you'll go up stairs that are hiding from stairs. Fuckers say weird stuff about whales.

I LEFT IN YOUR MOVIE THE BOOK OF MY
DRINKING

I'm poor. I'm poor, too. All last week, the wrong year. I am alive. I'm sorry. I am not in the right place to touch god with plastic. Eat someone who knows the future. Don't tap the animals.

WE'LL KNOW BY COBWEB THE CHILDBEARING
AGE OF GHOST

A lawnmower and a chainsaw
while sharing
insomnias

make
a quiet
horse.

I am not a tactile writer.

God fills my son with sand.

A FROG HOWLS ITS FROGNESS TO THE TOTEM
MOUTH OF GRIEF

Before I can name what eats me
it eats me

Rabies and roadkill are two gods away

A dream sequence
skips
my brother's
death

A frog howls its frogness to the totem mouth of
grief

Here is how to create a spider: Rub sand
in your eye
while your eye
holds its breath

No two gods
are god

The exploded foot of an angel
The microphone left in hell

IN SLOW PAIN DYING THE WRONG DEATH I AM
ASLEEP OUTSIDE OF A CHURCH FOUNDED BY
TWO FORGOTTEN SEARCH PARTIES

Body
isn't far
from boy

Silence skips my son like a letter

Mirror ain't deep but mirror can hear my unclear
twin
breathing
erased
ice

Scrape god from a sentence that god has read

THUNDER HEARS NOTHING AND THIS IS THE
NUMBER OF DRINKS IT TAKES TO LIKE ME

I dream myself into a fact about god

How to heal
your sick
son: Wait
his whole life
to miss him
then don't

In Ohio
we kill
our dead

OHIO SNOW AND OHIO ICE PROTECTING THE
SAME LOSS

Death is lazy. My kids don't say this, but I tell people they do. I say to myself that my hands are asleep and my wife's blood asks for a night off. I am in America when I say anything. Don't bomb this place bc a friend of mine ate food there. Four bodies touching is it a season or is it seasonal. I keep my son from pointing the wrong way. I don't know which muscle hates which bone. Amazing how long god can stay in one position.

ANTHILL'S UNDREAMING GOD ACHES
THOUGHTLESSLY BELOW OUR USUAL RABBIT
PLACE

Data usage, teeth, xmas. Angels attracted to
angels passed through a bomb. Waist up, waist
down. The moved body. My son's age in being
carried.

POSSIBLY I WAS ONLY EVER A SHAPE BEING
BENT INTO A BATH OF NAKED BLOOD

A bombed place is a place remembered every
second by time.

Touch has three fathers
or a mother with double vision.

Was god told the mirror it could see.

THE ANGEL THAT TEACHES BEARS TO COUNT
THEIR DEAD

Taking this pill will put seven fingers on the hand
of god. I don't remember what sleep does, but
neither does sleep. The pill is the second of its
kind. Heartache was a dentist eating snow.

THE MELANCHOLY OF THAT FIRST NON-BABY

The eyes bring back nothing. Ballplayers trade suicides as the high diver's ghost makes a bed of still breathing condoms. A word you can read creates a word you can't. A swimmer on a hunger strike breastfeeds beneath a tornado in a play about a weeping oven and piano that can't hear footsteps. I test my brief mouth.

It says.

WEAPONRY THAT DOESN'T NEED BUT GETS AN
INTRODUCTION

A canary, a microwave. An ambulance that can
hear itself think. To hurt anyone, I had to prove I
was asleep. Sunburn, blowjob. The deer that can
only in headlights

give birth. I know you are drinking. The last poem
for quite some time has been perfect. Images
wasted on being seen.

NO BOMB GOES UNBORN IN THE
FORGETFULNESS OF ZERO

Apple-sized pain loses itself in the shyness of
god. Time longs. A toothache becomes a
toothache. Touch can't swim. Is always too early
to exist. Ah, ghost, you young

dream-fossil
of the wind.

DON'T, DEATH, GO

The book was too blue for me to open. I slept
and let my fingers touch seven places. I was a
grey animal with a grey baby. I know that now.

NIGHT POEM

One says god
when many
think none
are dead.

Many say god
when one
thinks god
is dead.

The message, again, reads kill
the messenger.

God says god.

YESTER POEM

I'll give you
if you give me
let's both
have nothing
more

EVENING POEM

God's eye brings a glacier to a blood stain. I don't drink with my children but listen as they say to each other that the bible is one long suicide note. What a small past. Dogs turn blue in ghosts that miss our pain.

MORNING POEM

In the note, I'm always dead. No one knows how
to write. A kid who can't read is passed out in
the driver's seat of a car that's being towed. Part
of our dream is the kid wanting to whistle.
Sadness has ribs. Deer point god to the slow
present.

TOUCH POEM

God's least suicidal child crying like a fingernail
over a record scratched by a mosquito. A family
of bitemarks huddled in the heel of a footprint.
The broken ankles of a lover's last hunger pain.
Look in this mouth. Ache has no echo. The
mirrors that take my body starve.

LOVE POEM

I worry that in heaven I'll think about heaven. No animal under a bomb has seen the churchbell of the missing earth. If there is a place you are looking for, I love you

there. Death doesn't need god.

GARDEN POEM

Adam had a gun and Eve said do something with
your mouth. God asked the gun to make
nakedness. The gun heard loneliness. The
animals ate each other because there was no
fruit.

FUNERAL POEM

With each
new dream
I'm dead
longer
to the same
people.

I learn their language
by knowing
what to say. Mine

by sleeping
naked
near a god
whose creator

is a changed
creature. I get

about as far
as a bullet
dragging
an angel. Sound

is a small
collector.

Sound
is a small
collector.

ORDER POEM

We're seven babies away from god finding out
that no one has heard the ocean. I say pain has
an angel and you say it has a ghost. We eat for
the last time. Some blank grief that not even a
mother would save from a staring contest. I eat
like a devil. You like a devil on a skateboard
crying over the death of a ribless boy. Poverty is
neither dream nor transport. I step on a nail in
my scarecrow puberty and you bend yourself to
rabbit, grocery cart, wheelchair. I run the shower
and say things about your body into a coffee can.
Birth is wrong about people.

DEATH POEM

I don't write
like that
anymore

FINISHED POEM

Rainwater's
first ambulance
never makes it

to the shy
legless
angel. Your mom

is still
pretty. She says

the mouth
starts
in the mouth

and that language

creates
a reinvented
scarcity. Anyway,

there's this
southern
thing
that happens

when I talk. When I wear

a bra
and don't.

DEATH POEM FOLLOWED BY A POEM ABOUT
DEATH

We play rock paper scissors to see who gets the gun. I've already pointed my hand at your stomach and I've already apologized like a fever for saying that your prophets needed headache medicine. Jesus was looking for his sister. He was on the cross and his father got the day wrong. The problem with pain is that it knows when to stop. A friend lifts the baby and says I don't know what you've been feeding this thing. It has more memories than god.

WINTER POEM

Underwater my brother the birdwatcher lets
people twist his arm. His favorite owl puts a
single person in charge of loneliness. We're not
close, but we both miss animals in the dark. I
can't have all my teeth at once.

BLUISH TOY POEM

In a book about the ocean, the number of deer
allowed to be killed in a book about the ocean
stays the same. Grief gives god to the wrong
insomniac. A paper churchbell waits for the
blood in my sister's nose. No one in hell has been
there. A seashell is a cyclone crying in the wrist
of your ghost.

FINALLY I AM TIRED OF GREAT THINGS

We're just
god's search
for evidence
of us

A CHILD FALLS OUT OF GOD

A cut of my body

for one
glass day
in the slow
photograph
of sleep

END naked in dog years.

poems, Barton Smock, April 2024

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