

DIETS OF THE RESURRECTED

The baby has jumped. The baby is trying to find its place in the home of having done. The baby will land and maybe you can say something over it in that voice you do. In that voice your mother loves more than ruined gender-reveal balloons. Cold prom balloons. Than your father's spit. Than a star. Horse's forehead. Than a horse clapping for a lap-dancing horse.

~

The baby will be dead and bleed like a dream. For now, it licks without you the insides of a tree. Have you read its book? It wrote a book.

~

When an Ohio rabbit stops eating, every couple not married thinks they are. This is how baby, not how rabbit, happened. How babies not how rabbits. Ohio.

~

The baby was on a date and began to feel sick. Suddenly, the baby's date was able to crawl. It crawled into the sea, or something nearby. Something nearby is always the sea. A neighbor girl in a pillowcase. All of her, the whole thing. And then the sea comes that thinks it's the sea. She is saying we have bones because angels don't know how to eat.

~

I love the baby. Apple's footprint I love the baby. You love the baby and you lord often that you've a more alien emptiness. The baby can't see mirrors. That's not why it jumped.

Jesus wants to come back, but god isn't old enough.

~

I remember as a brother I fought with mine for the number of toothbrushes we could spot in a horror movie. I can still tell what's caused a bruise by the baby it's on.

Baby the thinking man's miscarriage. Lung's lookalike. Lung's missing lookalike. Psalm the plural of palm.

~

The baby slept on and off in a prop oven. In Ohio, holding your breath underwater is called insomnia. We wrote poems with lines like does anything look more abandoned than a table of contents? Titles like priest of snow, pipe tobacco w/ showerhead, and abuse was better as a sitcom.

~

On tv, the baby guards a salt lick while wearing the crown of thorns as a belt. Outside the tv, a random sister pulls her thumbnail loose and a paper doll starts to breathe. The fish watches all of it through a hole in the fish.

~

Its favorite movie is the wind. Its mother found its father waiting for a cat to die.

Is there no one to hold its mouth?

Even god is afraid of sex.

~

Mom I am the third boy to finish my wolf. Mom the baby likes you when you're eating. Mom the snow has picked the water clean. Mom Ohio. In the food you couldn't help.

~

Some history:

The baby had heard of a quiet glacier searching Ohio for the lost belly button of nothing and so left us in God, the capital of Death.

~

Some current:

Absence spares no one and birth keeps a record of who birth skipped.

~

Loss is just an absence that's outlived its helplessness. I say this knowing there is a tree that my mother keeps two of her teeth in. I say this unsure of the shape my stomach makes when on the moon my siblings gather the bones of god.

Our skin is afraid of angels. Have the baby that makes your ghost cry.

~

The baby holds its breath beside a bag of blue flour. My stars I didn't mean to die so plainly.

~

This rabbit hole we use for the shadow's mouth. These squirrels bowing in the priesthood of sleep. Do we have briefly what we want? Each of us a bad hand that drops a baseball? Is fasting a weight class?

A tadpole is Ohio's nightlight. Babies, when touched, belong to the same alarm clock.

~

Ohio:

Sounds from the childhood of god's vocabulary. Animal hair in a father's shoes. Lightning. Brothers reaching into scarecrows for ice.

~

The baby tells me in its own way that its mouth is sad and has been for longer than mine. I need proof, but the movers eat their moth then come for the dark.

~

You know that spotless child, dead from swallowing a question mark, who believed you could scratch a bullet with blood? She says we all have a second body sleeping in a hole that never comes.

~

The color of my toothbrush. To miss god. Which bible stories still have nudity. Small things, new to the history of my forgetting...

Those creatures, that boat.

A smaller vessel with one of each.

~

In the mouth of one who opens a sentence with the word verbatim, there is a sorrow searching for the breast of a shadow. Overheard is not the name of an Ohio street. The baby is no cook but is the only knower of what my eyes will eat in the dark. No one in Ohio laughs when you say bornography to your sister who says orbituary. One can be pregnant and study the wrong children.

~

Jesus was the world's worst ghost. I hold my son but can't say what I hold him like. Dad paints with ache. Mom with grief. Our empty babies rate the void.

~

In most of her dreams, someone else is falling. Sound is the child of two footprints that lose an earring. If there, see my wrist signal yours.

~

I am allowed one imaginary friend as long as it's a boy when I share it with my brother. This story has no bones. Its seesaw turns to salt. You can't watch porn and say you believe in ghosts.

~

Ohio introductions:

A god finds its mother in a joke about the food chain and is no longer
sad that human babies don't walk right away

Hunger remains your painting of the angel's predicted appetite

The wind gets that way by looking for its twin

~

I think of my mother in her block of ice summoning a curling iron and of
my father sending a robot to prison. Of a leafblower named mercy
hugged by my brother for outing my sister's electric chair. Of
nakedness, poor nakedness, always playing itself in the story of had we
not been invented we would've had to exist. Of how daughter she
highlights an entry on hair loss in the cannibal's diary. Of how one holds
the owl and one pours the paint and how both, knowing how to dream,
choose this

and how they are both a boy in a bottomless mirror asking if death is still
known for its one mistake.

~

I was not in love but I did go all the way to heaven to tell someone I was
tired. They were there, of course. But there like a sister. Sweeping a
church.

~

Ohio exits:

Owl is maybe a lamb that's having non-lamb thoughts like did I forget
inventing the bruise?

~

Every mother wants a five letter word for grief but has instead a son
whose thick hair grows when yanked. Outside means either tick season
or John the Baptist. My blood type is God became trapped in an Ohio
dog when the color blue saw his ghost.

~

I quit smoking and bought a fish I was told had stopped eating. No one
noticed. I got angry and then got angry for the fish. The fish did nothing.
Like God when it snows.

~

The name of this church was Mouth but is now The Baby Holds Things
Up For Us To See. No reason has been given for the change. Ohio
disappears from two places at once as a mother might from two
hospitals. We will never be as young as death. Even now, our eyes
touch under a roof that mourns thunder.

~

Ohio prolonged:

My drug use writes to a jellyfish

~

There are certain rooms I walk out of to make my son heavier. Certain
campfires disguised as nests. God is here but has forgotten sending
Death to fetch the infant brainwashed by sleep. Death is here but
location lasts forever.

~

Ohio cut short:

I am gathering the eggs and giving each one a name as if each is a body part favored by those angels of the geographically vacant and then my mom calls to me and then accidentally to my brother and her voice it never comes back

~

Ghost and angel are never together when they see God. Their loneliness keeps us apart.

~

In our hair are the bugs that believe they've died on god's skin. Does emptiness dream of its original? I still think babies learn to talk by saying they itch from being looked at. One of our children will deserve to be lonely.

~

A stone waits for its absence to mature. I count for the infant my knees and do my hair. What I know of tornadoes can be forgotten. God was naming your bones when you started to bleed.

~

Ohio sexuality:

X mourns outdated baby monitor by scoring a commercial for rabbit mascara

~

When it gets cold, we tell each other it's okay to use a photograph instead of soap. It is not common for language to keep its word. If you're poor enough, snow takes the pulse of the moon. We don't believe in the soul. But ate something to bring it back.

~

As grief swallows those insects made of repetition and As god locks herself in the bathroom built for her father and As I mimic choking on the cord that wants to belong to the phone that reads your mind and As her baby waits to hear if it's a boy or a girl who meanwhile touch and As the beekeeper befriends for reasons known to homesickness the owner of a gun

that was used

~

Ohio children pine equally for ice and for cigarette. They have hated the holy spirit for dying and have loved it for tracking blood loss in those with longer shadows. I don't think we'll ever be young. Even the fires you set are shy.

~

Ohio sexuality:

A private pencil erasing nobodies from a blue past. A way for fish to keep passwords from God. A toy car from the world's saddest drive thru and sirens in silent movies overlooked.

A pink light. How it cared for snow.

~

Poverty created the moon as a place for loss to process God.

It helps to have no one.

~

Some future:

A pop-up book about Ohio mosh pits is lost by a beloved chiropractor
who has by default become an expert on unicorn pregnancy and who is
wearily attracted to cures excluding those for bicycle legs as present in
our newborns

~

Ohio alibis:

Two sisters learn from the same angel how to use an insect bite as a
fingerprint

~

Ohio introductions:

Listening to the rain as it runs interference for echo's disappearing hair
is Satan with her mousetrap

~

I want to sleep again on the kitchen floor beside my brother who is
reading to himself from a book of baby names for the dead as if such a
book exists and I want to imagine the velvet life of the thing that stirs
itself so immediately soft in the garbage disposal that it becomes your
fear of swimming and erases mine of having bones

~

Ohio exits:

When you find prayer, ask music how touch knows where where is. Ask hand if it was ever more to blood than a lost slipper. Ask ghost why its miracle spared the angel. Ask horse anything. You are dear to me. If horse is even there.

~

Satan was the first to name the animals. I know we watched ours die. Anyway, I'm not sure there were two of us. The child was a footprint trapped in a shoe. I disappear and still you vanish.

~

Ohio math:

A museum of mothers who sleepwalk to get there.

A father's collection of crying insects.

Yes I forgot to love you.

~

Oh moral permanence, oh distracted beast- no one asks God about baby number two. We make guns together in the dream of the stray hand and there are exercises a mother's puppets can do that will bring a doll peace. Angel can, but won't, let mirror look out the window. I still wrote all that stuff. I'll touch zero if you trap its tongue.

~

Ohio auctions:

A dress worn by the child who ate sadness. A gas station snow-globe
prayed away by a father's dying goldfish. A town,

or three people surrounding a dogcatcher.

~

Get a blood clot and sister will say on the moon they worship these. If
you sleep too long, you'll become a color. Rate your pain from one to
ten, with five being the highest. God still thinks we don't know.

~

Whose death got you into heaven? The baby is older now but has the
kissing wrists of a failed skier. Your children don't love you because
they will.

~

Ohio postscripts:

Shy, I could not collapse in front of mothers who were born on the
moon. As for the children, they'll die for baby. For any last fact that
others exist.

~

Dream supply:

A pile of white leaves in the corner of my father's mind.

Wind and skin, or the angel's
forgotten
spells.

No longer a fire hazard
the wagon's
grey hair...

The suicide of God's first.

~

Not much happens before you can say Ohio. Still, we keep quiet.
Depression breaks a mother's toes and we listen, in a stickless field, to
what we hear.

It continues. The misgendering of past selves.

~

My son writes to me about the piece of glass they can't find in his ear.
He says it is like a dream. That he can describe its shape between the
hours of this and that a.m., and its size to a newborn making a grocery
list. He says they have people who look like him, which helps. Like her,
which doesn't. My writing isn't even close. Aponia, I write, and also,
ballet. Everything in the cold is cold.

~

The coordinates a son's illness leaves for God. Cigarette

and a mother's
secret

typo. Camera the consoler of miracle. Elevator worship. Our food's
invisible dark. The gag reflex of his favorite astronaut. For whom we
carry

goodbye.

~

Every life is long. Honestly, I think I just wanted to see my handwriting. I
sang for my children. Never cooked for my mom.

Owls okay with needle sharing
would explain
Ohio
trees

~

The boy, before going to bed, has me kiss every toy in his room. If one
is not there, it is missing, and its absence is more vaccinated god than
bad child or raccoon's eye. More mother than sister on wrist number
three.

~

Ohio we:

save pills as a god might
the eggs
of a ghost

~

And what would you have me say? That I feel it was given to another,
the meaning of my hidden life? We name people every day. Our
yearning, overlong. Our mother's mothering of poets and of the
creatures they can't use. This priest with an ant farm. Eating's moral
theft.

~

two
Ohio
types
of sleep

the bee
that stung
my bee

~

Eating is magic. Hunger a rabbit removed from its environment. I can
make some sense now, I think, of death. Of a grandmother's life of
cooking and loss. We wore our frostbitten noses. Did things with frogs
might an infant laugh on the inside where a nothing was still in boxes.
Took from blood

its blue
now. Which was wrong.

~

Ohio sexuality:

Cain faked her death.

Ghost is that itch the wall can't reach.

~

pregnancy dysphoria has been found in angels
to spread
like fish

(do you remember
in an oyster
the arm
of a squirrel)

mom
is a dream
leaving
a pack
of cigarettes
under
an Ohio
pillow

or,

facedown, a photo

of God
with braces...

~

Ohio solastalgia:

In hell I am passing a cemetery when during a housefire she makes a memorial to the last time you won a staring contest

~

While close, this is not your messiah's insecticide. Are you happy with my body? Sex is the breathing my teeth do for your hair. Faith a stork in a sea cage. Food is no expert but grows anyway

brevity. They say crow after an apple sets a stone on fire. Lonely people for appropriate play.

~

I want for my son a more regular sadness. Not touch with its vacant *déjà vu*. Not the stutter, untapped, of his far beast. More the fasting of an unknowable fish. A marionette

gazing
at a toy

car. Are these hands? They say so little.

~

Ohio auctions:

The unseen wildlife of the ill. The handwriting of a moonless toddler. A whole language saved on an angel's thumbnail...

~

I can't tell if I have nothing or if I'm down to three photos of God.

I sleep
to know
that you're
asleep.

~

I will take for my childhood a mother's unicycle, a father's raincloud.

The broken moon of any man on crutches. A dog drinking water in a
white house.

Brothers
who draw me naked.

Bones from her smaller baseball.

~

Sorrow a glove. Grief a mitten. I see in fire the small

for a whale
whale
that my son
saw
in a wave.

Ohio gets to keep its hidden season. Poverty

its sixth
finger.

Childish, but everyone who's looked out this window has died. Our family was too close.

~

Ohio stories:

I am fondest of recalling my sister when sister in her sleep could sell drugs to angels.

Men walk away from their fathers one of two ways with our favorite being Stars Reading Snowfall Before and After My Career-Ending Injury.

Our mother was a spider
once
it's why
she smokes.

~

Their translating of the terrible things we've said has created elsewhere animals that don't need to eat but bite anyway anything that moves.

Neither silence is real

but both belong to God. My son

my moodkiller
of ruin

in no dream I've had

pours gasoline on himself and leads an abandoned bear onto an empty school bus. Am I pretty this third

time

if my parents are yesterday and grief?

~

Her Ohio of war and sleep:

what if I said
I see
in a land of tire swings
your fishboat father
rubbing perfume
on the knees
of stowaways
would you consider
the cricket
God is trying
to land

~

My mother knew she was pregnant when from a darkroom her surgeon emerged holding a piece of chalk. Before I had hair, I had hair my sister sang to. Interesting men didn't make it to earth.

~

Early for foster home karaoke, she announces God as the exit sign over the door of her body and sleep as a museum owned by death. Because I am lonely with not being there, I call it her best scene. She doesn't clap. A ghost gives birth to a chair.

~

Jumping rope in Ohio:

We burn the house might God see everything we own

Her movie puts them all in one place
the photos
a photo
prays to

When I kiss my son, his ankles glow

Mom I did not succeed

~

As if speaking were a way of taking back what one has yet to say, the people are quiet. A group of smokers, perhaps, expressing their fear of needles outside of a funeral home. Who know of no god that can bury a swimmer. Whose children say birth as bird and are not corrected. Whose food is a memory of water gone sick. Whose dogs get passwords from dolls that blink.

~

Moon's hair on a hospital plate:

oh with the eyes
of a lost basilisk
does god undress
in deprogrammed
rivers
my son's
deer drunk cow

~

Shaking the breadcrumbs from his pipe, grandfather goes quiet on pointing out the weak spots of passed over anthills. His poetry disappears but not before it buries half a baby in the backyard of a surprised mouse. He is not sure what surprises a mouse. Nearby, I am only here to chew the distance from the foods my kids won't eat. I have with me a change of clothes and a lunch box named God in three toothaches. The fish aren't biting, and we say it's because grief must be getting an x-ray and that it likely looks a ghost praying in the last of its birthday fog.

~

Moods for dying wildlife:

Missing pacifier spotted in fishbowl. Barbershops on fire in the childhood of your puking shadow. Abusers who rename their dogs.

~

By poor, I mean they are strangers to brevity. Like babies and glass.

By rainfall

the bomb
maker's map.

By god, our kiss blown god. By death

that it's been
replaced.

~

Ohio poetry:

Escapism
loses everything.

With what other formless art
could one address
nothingness?

Infants
in the phantom fit
of a rolled
tire. A mercy

the knee
in kneel

~

How we end up in Ohio is

I saw in hell a star

that in heaven
I did not

~

Moods for whale watchers:

As god's gift to the suicidal mother, a stuffed crow goes a long way.
Balloons here lose their mannequin air.

~

Mother as one who gives birth to avoid confrontation. Years from now, I exist. I want a cigarette, a puppy, and Jesus

on the cross. I wrestle the brother who wrestles as if he's sobbing inside an elephant. People die on purpose. The world's smallest inventor tries her thumb at bulletproof bullets. Pray puppets for puppet rain.

~

Moods for bloodflow:

The skin listens to itself pray.

I am never more than a peephole
taller
than my brother.

Overheard in god's pharmacy
(that's
gonna leave
a star

~

Baby Teeth, Ohio:

I have
in the rain
long hair
like your mother

~

Ohio math:

If born, your baby has given your name to God. If not, not so fast, your baby has a sister who has two sisters and together they eat what can only be described as a chameleon abandoned by its ghost. Here are things to keep apart: My understanding of musicals and my brother's of bulimia. He and hymn.

~

Perhaps, in another past, she cares for those beasts removed by God from the path of her loneliness. And maybe it was there you listened for her supplier's footsteps

when it was lost in the move the empty bird of your faith

~

there were three in the garden
they were sharing
a cigarette

their god
had said little

no names, no pets

no lonely, allergic

baby

~

Ohio puberty:

they sing
in the locker room
to what
is mine, a scarecrow
for insects
etc
and then

they are saying
it backward
my safe
word

~

make death
fear you, not me

we all hear
that kid
& poetry

can't be
the birthplace
of god

~

Ohio religions:

someone I don't know
described you
to me
not
recently
but anyway
there were animals
not created
by god
confused
by the naming

~

Moods for closure and then the thing itself:

The one I'm destroying and the one you're saving are not the same. I
was ugly, once, but they called me a lifetime behind my back. Poor,
twice, but took over for a clown abused by a ghost. On three, my sister's
flashlight takes its little spot from the world. Many of our dead will switch
gods.

~

Ohio aggressions:

I've only to pinch myself
to get into
the dream

into the drop of blood that loves my eye

and I hope

it is there

my brother's
suicidal
chameleon

there,
in the lap of my mother

who was the last
thing noticed
by time

~

Ohio moons:

the child we could not bury
and the child
like it

a ghost crying over the loss of a plain colored pet

unmothered sisterlight

the time between oranges

~

How we leave Ohio is

the first angel
it protects
an erasable
birthmark, the last

angel
a campfire
both

en route
to mother's
sunburn

~

Moods for the vaguely exiled:

our leaflike
leaf
was once
a leaf
a shadow
as its
brain

~

Moods for slate:

memory
is a young
king
whose god
eats
to forget

the pain
our pain
was in

~

Moods for slate:

touch
to father
was a white
apple

long
on the tree
in his mother's
dream

~

A poem for every ghost I am dead to:

god has grown your teeth in blank fruit

~

Moods for the outgoing:

Poverty's extra owl.

This painting
not called
Jesus
and his last
birthmark.

A broken
his and hers
umbrella.

Two birds, two stones.

A god whose parents meet.

~

While counting the same sheep, one of us will die. It's okay. One baby eats another baby's message to god. I still don't know how to write. Babies are like that everywhere. Dad had this tattoo I couldn't see of a simple fish and that's why your mom not really but maybe taught herself how to keep her eyes open underwater. My simple is not your simple. I fell asleep once on a lost arm and I hear it sometimes in piano music. We've all been old.

~

As time moonlights as indoctrination's sole souvenir, hunger and sleep have again been separated by death. Let us say a movie was for years being made about my church. I did nothing. I sat with my mother between bathtubs and faded in and out of child. And children. Both needing the before of that first bear.

~

Moods for neurology:

snake that can fetch a bone can mourn lightning

~

Time won't be poor forever:

the child of a former smoker
makes
for frog
a cup
of her hands
no matter
that no
frog comes
nor frog
like it

~

Lying to the basilisk:

You spoke to me through an egg for so long that the back of my neck
changed moons. If I think hard enough, I can still see your mother
putting in her mouth the glove her god treated like a baby's hand. I cook
a mirror. I cook for an orphan made of sleep. Will our breath always be
the bone that didn't make it into the wing of thirst? If it's a boy, pick for
an alien a flower. Dogs forget their human year.

~

Moods for believable midwestern symbols:

When we realize that water cannot take us to where water lives, every television in Ohio stops what it's doing to wash a ghost. Our friendless baby calls no one. I am not kind, but put my body between mine and yours.

~

Moods for nigh:

Sipped from worship, a mother will hide in her throat the lost paw of thirst. How long are we? No one says loss anymore.

~

Lone high, Ohio:

stars, I guess

and a trapdoor
for a certain
kind
of turtle

and stars
for sure

~

Ohio's underwater cure for hiccups:

how sorry

I am

that ghost

is bored

swim

in a way

that says

~

Most boys in Ohio have carried that rare dog that can worry about growing old into a store that only accepts prize money. Ohio can't be everywhere. A hole falls out of the wind and the abuse stops.

~

Moods for screenplay:

It is always just before the sadness that I stop brushing my teeth

It is always just before the sadness that I stop brushing my teeth

It is always just before the sadness that I stop brushing my teeth

It is always just before the sadness that I stop brushing my teeth

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It is always just before the sadness that I stop brushing my teeth

It is always just before the sadness that I stop brushing my teeth

Small again

the star is little

~

We had over two hundred children and gave the same name to each.
We were both impossible and lazy. Bedtimes, fuck me, were harder
than funerals. Sometimes a story would go around nearby about Jesus
pretending to put his dad in his phone and we could almost see it. No
one died waiting to be the first.

~

Be eye:

be eye
the nest
of an unmade
god

wrestling
the wrong
shape

~

I want to write about grief in the way another writes about grief. For
example, your mother avoids god by telling god what the dead do when
they miss their dead and my son has an idea that is also a scar that was
once a ghost too gentle to land a kite. Something simple. A dog three
times around a pool. Four, if no one has baby news. You cry like a star.

~

These are my hands,
spider's yawn and blueless blue.
A son's belly cradles the crushed eye of god.

Even in a glass,

milk
looks lost.

~

It is a secret life that denies the double. From grief to grief goes a new strain of quiet. Rain of quiet, we wrote earlier. Did you know we were together? No god but this ghost of a thing that never was.

~

I don't care what the image has gone through to get here, as long as it's not me who's seen god. Before the movie starts, a father asks a mother could she love an arsonist in a wheelchair and she answers no. Most scenes you pretend to pull the unkissed ear of a secret child. The movie ends and I'm not sure how long I've been wet. Touch is diversion's heavy reward. The afterlife a shortcut to loneliness.

~

In Ohio when they bring up the ocean:

the moon
sends to earth
a ghost

~

To worship god is to love the ghost of the alien you dream of killing.
When I was a child, there were no children. All of them had guns. Most
of my teeth hurt from forgetting

that blue
wants to be
a circle.

~

In hell, you can draw a blank and nothing happens. I have proof. My dog
is afraid of birds. My son has never fallen asleep in his wheelchair. I eat,
and my shadow has a dream smaller than that of any fish. This is not
hell. The past is

abandonment
looking
for an equal.

Thinking it matters when, god tells us we're dead.

~

to preserve
our obsession
with longing

this mark
death makes
on god

~

Ohio handcuffs:

two poor people
trading facts
about circles

~

The boy balances a basketball on his head outside his father's bar. His mother is somewhere a girl on a trampoline who sings to a white pup named Fossil. The baby he keeps seeing hasn't done much beyond biting an arm and eating a crayon. His abandoned sister is giving birth so calmly she is not blown away by the fact that it's only her second time wearing the blindfold her angels wear to fish. His brother is in therapy to process the loss of others who think we're gods when we smoke. I joined the boy once to look at an empty crib. He drank tea from eggshells and I declined. Nothing goes missing, he said, when your hair is a nightgown. I swatted him to let him know I was dying, then swatted him again to let him know I would live. The tea was gone. The rest is sadness.

~

I can't afford to know that I am sick.

My children call sleep
the long
nakedness, and death

the slowest minute of an imagined hour.

A ghost is an angel that can tell a story.

~

Ohio genitalia:

Blue, leave your stone. Stone, your blue.

~

Ohio genitalia:

I am heavier than the one who listens
at night
to my ear.

~

Resurrection
is prettier

when our bodies
betray us.

~

I can't keep creating the devil that the bogeyman beats you to.
Repetition has no birthday.

Time is still the time it takes to draw a creature untouched by human thought.

~

Ohio genitalia:

It changes nothing that my boy body leaves the seesaw for a tree on its way to lightning.

~

In a poem called Despair

despair is the wine we age imagery with. In the poem
Tornado, poverty has too
many gods.

~

In Ohio, god means:

I don't want to be here when it finds out it's lonely.

The blood we drank
was secondhand
blood.

Water is time's ghost.

~

Poverty is a town that's killed everyone it's named after. Also, it is a very maternal thing to say out loud that being born in Ohio just means that Ohio won't discover breakfast foods for another eight years. Look, it's not like the babies died because one or two of them couldn't cry into a pillow. This is what I mean by plural. Most movies don't make it to the death of my son.

~

{ from }

An Old Idea One Had of Stars

BRINK ACHE

we died
in that dream
but continued
to understand.

I thought
sleeping
skin-to-skin
with my children
would cure
your fear
of flossing. every bomb

touches god.

I forgot
to be in pain.

DRAWINGS

i.

a mosquito
on the thigh
of god

losing
its mind

ii.

an old
idea
one had
of stars

iii.

waiting with an uncle
for any
colorblind
doll

to pass
the salt

iv.

child in a hospital asking does time have enough food

v.

is snow
the mother
of distance

ORIGINAL ACHE

younger, I skin my knee in the museum of the dropped jaw. you say
blue is a color and I say it's a clock. god is there and is asking no one
we know to leave space for a birthmark. we are somewhere between
my grandmother dying and my grandmother dying. a noise outside
could have come from this painting of three window-washers kissing the
same egg or it could have come from outside.

BEGINNING ACHE

the crow's fear of inclusion. eve's perfectly forgotten ribs. the nothing I mean to my dentist. the cemetery where all the un-boyed went to eat paper. the band-aid in the belly of a baptized child. yawn of kites.

EXILE ACHE

I didn't lose a tooth, says the child, there's just one you can't see. not a single horse has remembered to spy on the devil. that fish went right through me and I dream it back. mom never has a stick. the food in our stomachs dies at different speeds.

TRINITY ACHE

not a yesterday goes by I don't pretend to know everyone. mom has
eaten the snail. her father is still being shot.

GUIDE ACHE

if I could love them all, they wouldn't be here. movies make her father angry. he asks her what is always trapped but never surrounded. her heart is an owl with a heart. mirror, she says, but doesn't. a rain relearns the earth.

FAST ACHE

not every tooth makes it into the group of teeth I know about. a mother is told by god that her writing appears read. you eat like a bird then eat the bird for saying nothing. I warm a hand on a burning fish. our water seems distracted. by the ghost of what he's killing.

HURRIED ACHE

after slamming my fingers in a car door, the hand looks for days as if
god has tried to pry a nail from a piece of bread. people kiss me and I
tell them my footprints can't breathe. when a bug hits the windshield, my
blood gets a star.

PLAIN ACHE

I write to missing things of knowing what took them. given the chance,
what could god describe? I don't know if what I hear is a sound or
sound's hostage, but it's enough to make light remember losing a child
and with it a boy and with him the fourth wolf he killed in his sleep. we
don't come from love, but we love.

CLOSING ACHE

you were born that you could be shown where you were left. wasp didn't
get that way trying to move a scar

but a spider can dream

ACT ACHE

as a telescope
skips
loneliness

please love
this octopus
embracing

the outsourced
beehive

CARRIED ACHE

I like to think of my grandmother as always on her way to an obstacle course for invisible children

(as combing her hair in a spiderless wind

LANDMARK ACHE

the skull of a child who can't swim. whose friends
tried.

—

a horse for my puppet. a shadow's first bone. the pill
in the egg in egg's dream.

—

forgetful
lightning.

the deer dad resurrects.

KNOWN ACHE

I won't keep you in suspense. I was born and then at a strip club crying for those tender people whose children put in private the final touches on god. also there is a meal being prepared that you won't be able to finish before you die. the preparer of that meal has a least favorite creature and believes hundreds of corpses were dragged from eden by animals that were trying to experience joy. save it when you can

the last of the robot's short grief

CORRECT ACHE

an angel leaves heaven to touch paper as a circle from my childhood
rolls toward an empty jack-in-the-box. I am old enough to be sad and
too old to separate deer facts from church facts. my children fall asleep
before their hands fall asleep.

CLEAN ACHE

punched in our stomachs for remembering the sea, we are in a church
that goes to church. it is here that a drop of god's blood can change
paper into plastic and here that bread is the bread and butter of hunger
and hunger the oldest child in nothing's choir. here that I count for a son
who cannot count. for a son who sleeps on land on the lamb of his
illness. (water is still the smallest toy and our mouths still come

from the same
noise

SALT ACHE

perhaps I am the thing that overtook me. that in its becoming was able to feel guilty about doing so. what if death is just looking for the one it's named after. lonely I can almost see my eyes.

RABBIT ACHE

I can't sit
for very long
without wanting
to smoke.

this is the flower
I pick
for my ghost.

REALM ACHE

I stand in a ruined field and preach longevity to a god that stares
through me at the empty highchair of some freckled thing. my age is
with me, there, and there to mean how far can I throw my food. if I close
my eyes, I can see touch as a mirror that's been used by my mother to
describe sleep.

LIT ACHE

upon waking, my son knows he's been moved. beside him I am crooked
until he bites my arm. he is as heavy as the stomach of the angel that
nightly kisses mine. illness has the patience of a shadow but cannot
teach my eyes to kneel. time is god's tenure as the lost tooth of sleep.

YEARS ACHE

my children haven't gone a day without their stomachs. sometimes I lift
my shirt and I think they mind. I want to tell them but won't about the
party we can't throw for a dog whistle. fish are still building the sea.

ELDER ACHE

show me
the fireflies
of yours
that get
sad
around human
stomachs

(there is
a table

rain
will set

WITH ACHE

a lonely child makes no fist and snow arrives to draw a snake. I mean to
chew but forget. your knock-knock jokes have gotten better. I don't hate
your stories. the head-kisser's

bowling
score.

tornado that lost our emptiness.

CLAW ACHE

the soft spot
god has
for the nest
of a fasting
bird.

the stone my brother
saw
give birth.

aspirin
that will put

plastic
in your stomach. crucifix,

or the kitten
unseen
by swan.

a clump of hair in the newborn's hand.

DRIFT ACHE

creation
gives guilt
an afterlife

—

the neighbors
found dead, we learn
to miss

the dog afraid of everything

—

(sleep is a movie a mom was in

GOODBYES FOR EXODUS

i.

there is a girl on our street who for a dime will eat any insect that
doesn't die on its way to her mouth. her dad watches and talks to us
about god and how lonely it must've been to not know for so long which
language to learn. if there is food in my house, it's gone. hunger is proof
that I've struck only those people who've entered my dream oblivious
that they've come back for more. the girl tells me that if I don't close my
eyes

her ghost will think they are seeds

ii.

the night my father loses his teeth
he holds my hand
and confesses
that he once
punched his sister
for eating
snow

iii.

before the film starts, a woman tries to sell us on mouthwash for
newborns. my friends say she looks like my mother and then realize that
their love for my mother makes them sad. I tell myself that when I get
home I will block the dog door with the small television that lightning
took.

iv.

(our best bowler is a man who doesn't shave because he thinks there's
a parrot on his shoulder)

v.

brother sits in a rocking chair and goes through the motions of
pretending to be electrocuted. I am tired but not so tired that I can't shut
off the chair. our animals continue

to not
pray.

[BURNINGS]

Nearness

we share
an invisible
drop of rain

but not
a wrist

(the grass
looks a little
lost

Farness

seeing
a frog
makes frog
an orphan

have I
the poem
we wrote

Pill

but mom
even sleep
dissolves

{BURNINGS}

Tattoo

the spider in my left eye
is also
on the kitchen
floor
of a house

that's gone

Lifelike

fog has a better
memory
than rain

Grief

yes there is one
footstep

left

Rain

and the pulse
to god
a scar

{BURNINGS}

Frogsong

depression
decorates
a bird

Miscarry

perhaps a deer
had stepped
on my wrist

Osmosis

the son takes with him a knife into the bathroom and

Church

entering the body after a stroke

Sex

two
as if they fear
a third

COUNTER ACHE

my son trades a mirror for a shadow stuck in the ice and horses won't
eat the trampled birds of my hands. we dream and dream but cannot
fog the whale's eye. it's a small life. perhaps something will land on the
angel's neck. birth helps god move the body.

AVAILABLE ACHE

what we don't do is tape a dead frog to the chest of a doll and call frog an airbag. what else we don't is laugh at the woman who with a skateboard and a pool stick retraces the river that took her dog. what we will is look for an ashtray as a ghost might for locust.

NO ACHE

what we're seeing hasn't reached us yet. what is it a sister says? a god
dies when its coffin is empty?

CESSATION ACHE

A little
off the ears
my crucified
barber-

The more I sleep, the more there is
of the future.

WEAPONRIES

i.

he shot three of us in the stomach for throwing a snowball at his pick-up truck. none of us died completely. by none I mean a priest and a pilot are changing the diaper of an indifferent baby. by scar we mean we held sticks and surrounded the paw

that our god had filled with fog

ii.

it takes we guess three low-flying helicopters and a herd of wheelchairs to scare jesus away from eating the bomb that we made

for men
only dogs
can hear

iii.

by stomach I mean both field
and church
are empty
and that whole
meals

reappear in the newborn's outstanding loneliness

STOP ACHE

patient me above a footprint with my spoon and my fork and then old
jawing at nothing us as food misses our mouths in the after of an almost
deer and then for a very long time an emptiness a kneeling a here and
there balloon and now it's just this falling asleep on trains that are also
asleep that are manned by ghosters of the misgendered who misgender
you me what knows what their sleep is sleeping with and I guess it's
possible to be alone if possibility goes years maybe without
experimenting on nostalgia and now it comes to you how it didn't seem
to me to be a turtle until we saw it eaten by a shark and then I needed a
name to give to its friends its turtle friends all dead in a kind of before

{ **from** }

Animal Masks On the Floor of the Ocean

ALONE

he points a pop-gun at a jack-in-the-box

(in hell
and on

your birthday

TREATY, GRIEF, MOON

no clock
fast
we live
in the house
beside the house
we bought

treaty, grief, moon

some far
tornado

some nakedness

I KNOW BY COBWEB

(I know by cobweb)

the childbearing age

of a ghost, that dream

has taken
mirror, and also

that I cannot reopen
the mouth
my mouth

erased

I AM SICK BUT I DON'T FEEL SICK

birth
knows everyone

MATERIALS

mothers
while jumping
rope
reminisce
on those
crucifixions
not postponed
by thunder

~~~~~

nostalgia no longer has a church

if these are your children, I've lost years keeping them away from bugs

like her, I've never seen her starvations touch

it's like waiting for god to donate hair

~~~~~

I hate baseball but enjoy covering my left hand.

headache
oh pearl
of birth

~~~~~

a painting of your whereabouts. the popcorn stoning of your first  
wheelchair. soft edits. pentagram. spider.

the look of a thing that wants no hands.

~~~~~

eating for the child lost by ghost, you are the second of three people
who know god's middle name. oh how I've written to avoid reading. to
impress death.

a babysitter's tattoo. the bird-sleep of ache.

~~~~~

she is cooking with the father of an ex-lover a meal for someone who's  
just had surgery. god is there but might as well be listening for thunder.  
she hopes the dream is not a big deal.

~~~~~

god twisted her ankle on a toy phone while thinking of the child you love
least. mother was passing for an underwater attraction based on the
inherited imagery of oblivious angels. photo credit had been done to
death.

~~~~~

an aversion to sleeping on my stomach. needing to be alone after eating  
in front of people. my father asking in the library for books on Nagasaki.  
field trips to indian mounds where bullies would worship my retainer and  
put mud in my mouth. my permissive mother and her essays on the  
grief of a social god. not understanding how in some films there were  
women speaking on what was heard in the distance and how in others  
just men sitting around to surprise satan. my brother threatening to run  
away and me showing him how my ghost would look breaking his toys.  
sticks from a dogless future.

~~~~~

Q: what is a ghost?

A: you have a mom and god finds out

~~~~~

you have to count them quickly

the bite-marks on my son's arm

-

either you touch a goldfish  
or become  
a dentist

-

does it matter whose dream  
my mouth is

-

make art and make it empty. god has run out of room.

~~~~~

it gave me nightmares, from mating call to church bell, that air
conditioner in our third floor window. thematically, the poor are closer to
death. my people don't move. god is where you left him. god where I
put.

~~~~~

as you do not struggle to recall the titles of those empty sermons we composed while biking uphill after our sister's head, I tell you that a baby eats like jesus in a haunted house and that dad was right the lawnmower dies because it knows where in the yard his mom was deep enough to bury doll and I deny that hibernation is real

(is more a ghost started by two wise men dressed as animals

~~~~~

boomerang or pop-gun, grief makes its choice. your father hides his blurry hand might god invent scissors. there is a model of your city and some leftover glue.

~~~~~

eating before surgery, the child is like a dream cut short by a violence that promotes longing

~~~~~

you are not allowed in the barn where underway is a puppet show for which your father dreams. instead of holding your breath, you are catching grasshoppers and keeping them for an amount of time your sick sister would call ridiculous. you are too young to know, but know anyway, that your dentist prefers the rhythm method. I am sorry for the things you know. for our hearing of this riddle mistaken for language and for any mouth openly tricked into being small. space is not lonely but we were wrong to change our poems.

~~~~~

who better to orphan the cyclops than she whose other possession is a  
neglected baby breathing on its own in the flawlessly managed absence  
of god

-

too old now for baptismal abandon, my dreams eat the pigs that Dorothy  
touched

~~~~~

as hunger's sole worry is that revenge has no one, I do not reply when
the boy gets an erection so painful that he says he can see me sleeping
in his past. what does your stomach know of mine? to believe in beauty
is to let blood do all the work.

~~~~~

it's midnight and our mail carrier is trying to recall aloud a proverb in a  
language she doesn't know. her hound, barefoot and dressmaker, has  
two names. she wants to smoke but can't bring herself to imagine god's  
forgotten thumb. her tv is on and I watch it as if dreaming was always a  
sin.

~~~~~

it skips our father like a language the meal she pulls from her tinfoil
purse and god he stops at the roof of my mouth and brother short of
beheading an egg...

(fluency

our only comet

~~~~~

grief the star of my overlong nostalgia  
& owl the mouth I put on god

(in dream the embedded curfew

~~~~~

god is just a patient creature that swallowed a lonely. did you love him?
as an infant blowing kisses to a bruise. a mother born to look seen.

~~~~~

as written  
the word  
why  
looks a thing  
forgiven  
mid-bite, a chicken scratch  
left  
behind the ear  
of a boy  
by an angel  
erring  
on the side  
of pink, a puzzle piece  
blocking the airway  
of a god  
with a tail, a worm  
suspended  
in the grey  
afterlife  
of a swimmer

once the weigher  
of nothing's  
limb

~~~~~

in their hermit's longhand they write of sobriety the unreadable grief and
then subconsciously outbid god on the hamster wheel from
grasshopper's dream

~~~~~

years from the event of my body, we pass in the grocery. I tell your  
children they are attached to nothing, that my arm cast is made of  
fingernails, that a bruise has a shadow, and that a mouth is where a  
mouth goes to die. truth has no attention span. it is not my favorite  
dream. partly this is so because I can remember how with a grey marker  
I drew on my belly the easier fruits might the identified heal the  
recognized. (but the kids are ugly and seem to know

~~~~~

one thing leads to another and they call this the past. I don't sleep
because I don't love god. son I am a barber in the body of
a dentist. son loneliness is just a museum of recent prayer. there are
crows I haven't seen.

that other crows have.

~~~~~

we were allowed to keep any item we could draw perfectly. mothers  
counted cigarettes and fathers died in threes. no one had a sister but all

her hidden talent. on the hand of god, the scissors I lost...

~~~~~  
a genetic forgetfulness
in jumpers
of rope

all the turtles
have been touched

~~~~~  
ache as a hairstyle. teeth that pray for frostbitten squirrels. a shadow, a  
circle, their secret

limp

~~~~~  
with my body as a thing that existed from the waist-up, I became to
swimming what I'd been to lightning and told my brothers that to dream
they had to fall asleep before god touched his food. loneliness left its
skinny tree and followed my mother into an outhouse where once her
sister had counted smoke-rings and where twice they'd sung for their
mouths the one about zero the forgotten letter. my father looked at me
and I at my son. time waiting to create the sick.

~~~~~  
it's not a children's book but does have chameleons looking for their  
dead. I wrote it might you remember that I'll watch anything. my brother  
lifting weights while he says resurrection that lonely mouthful. horror  
movies to win back my abuser.

## RETURNING

my angel is a scarecrow in a sleeping bag. heaven a movie theater in spain. she walks that way because she is trying to step on her blood. the boy at the gate is lost and must choose either frankenstein's childhood or a more diverse nostalgia. orphans on earth smell like bread.

~~~~~

there are pictures of me sleeping that are responsible for my brother cheating on his diet. apples the shape of going home. sex addicts fighting to direct a musical about the number of people disappearing

to let death
mourn. there is a chair in an open field. a throbbing in the palm of sound's publisher. a kid under a blanket asking god

when did she know
what perfection
was. a mouth that was a bomb

/ before I had teeth

~~~~~

with sound  
the second language  
of absence, with

mother, bible, bee

(I am trying to memorize missing you

~~~~~

god as a girl reading her father's fanfiction

fixing her mother's
ghost town
water fountain, then god as a boy

tired, in a dream

~~~~~

you think we are the same.  
your unlearn, my re-know.

our place wants the person I'm from.

church

of the removed  
stitch. what I would bite

to have your mouth.

~~~~~

in the history of newborns
not one is named

shelter, and we've called

only two
attraction...

my dream priest

dies
in the desert
after making
with death
a movie, no...

the blood's
search
for brain

~~~~~

they took  
the body

lamb  
stayed with star

~~~~~

you can train
a bird
but not
a fish
to care

for a thumb...

fire is the skin of god

~~~~~

a father  
at peace  
with how many times

his hair  
has died  
is standing  
in a museum  
before the shell  
of a giant  
turtle

his infant's mouth  
has gone home  
to lose  
its shape

he is alone  
like any  
grocery cart

some  
cribs

~~~~~

all information
new

your abuser
could've joined

the circus
his chewing gum

the age
of your mouth

~~~~

when drinking, I think maybe in a past life I also drank.

sorry, poem. absent  
your suicide  
hypotheticals

we all  
speak silence

~~~~

I never heard my father cough

I must
to say so
be dying

insect is a thing

cannot be
surrounded

the rich have their ghosts and the angels

their seaweed

~~~~

I exist / too / often

(it's okay)

his father

had a beekeeper's  
wave

the recurring dream of my blood

is loss. dear ma,

your book  
how to appear  
edible  
to a thoughtless  
creature...

I don't know. birth is whose

burned  
hand

~~~~~

death in its dream home
had a psalmic
memory
to rival
odd-numbered

women. hell was empty

and we wrote

what words
believed

~~~~~

is it written or is it said that the word tells you its language?

I built my house around a crying baby.

-

Q: sister spotlight has a brother

A: whose blood is a stop sign

~~~~~

long gone are the insects
you forgave

this storm, the whale
of oblivion's
white feast, this moon

the word
moon

~~~~~

childish nicknames for the messiah

these desperate meditations  
on the ghost  
of a sober

twin

I am not death but enter  
like it  
the church

of so many  
canceled  
spelling bees  
to ask  
whose punishment

for being born  
am I

~~~~~

father is sitting in that snowplow like he's seen every baby and mother is
mock burying herself as if daring the holy spirit to make a fist

and sister wants to weep
for an eyelid or hear
a helicopter

and the heart has too many ghosts

~~~~~

I go places  
in my ghost  
that are children  
when I arrive. they call me

high grass, lord  
of the wind's  
blood. most of them  
have lost  
babies  
with dog  
names  
to birth

or touch, our brief

attractions  
to déjà vu

~~~~~

the father is a shepherd in a hall of mirrors. the son a man on all fours
salvaging a puzzle mothers use to predict snowfall. We have goats but
they act like goats that deep down know they've been imagined. the
daughter is a hallucination color prays to.

the goldfish a marble from the psalm of dry lamb.

~~~~~

in this dream, the father stops halfway up the ladder and blows on his  
hands. starvation is a drowsy snake. the dream has time to think and  
figures existence needs a distraction. when my son bites himself, it is  
because his teeth are feeling lost. I offer him to the dream but he is not  
godless enough to throw his voice. are you sick in a language that has a  
word for what you have? skin is the longest dream.

~~~~~

he takes baths instead of showers

the boy
who believes
in ghosts

~~~~~

to be unthought of is to be one more person away from pain. no cricket you hear is alone. in my boy's drawing of jesus, the ears are all wrong. his first sad poem is about an oven. his second calls dust the blood of a seashell. his third is so terrible that I tell my friends I'm just a gravedigger who wants to open a hair salon. my friends they are made of grief and brilliance. they say they like mirrors that have in them, how do I say this?, a lost theft. I sleep and my sister paints my nails. kisses my head. she is no shape and then a shape that occurs to a horse my son thinks will live.

~~~~~

this was after your brother had died everywhere

I was calling shotgun for poverty's mistress
during a game of shirts and skins

I think by then
jesus had fed
nearly two of the five
thousand
with a sunburn
and an ambulance

& most animals were still having four dreams)

anyway, something flew into your mother's mouth
and the look on her face
told nobody
it had teeth

WE BROUGHT HOME THE WRONG DYING BABY

I ain't been talked to in so long my wife's kid thinks I have amnesia. ain't been touched since Ohio's ramshackle symbolism swallowed up some organ donor's shadow. I went yesterday to a funeral for a woman's ear. told people what I was wearing was a bedsheet belonged to the man in the moon. told myself I had this microscope could see a ghost and that I've only ever lost an empty house. I don't know how old I am but I know what year I want it to be. before dying I saw it flash how I should have died. low creature. tugboat.

~~~

father an optometrist inspecting a replica of a totem pole and mother an eel collapsing at the thought of a play performed in a stone.

and there, at the bottom of grief, a cup of dirt with nothing to bury.

~~~

mother is chewing gum like something fell asleep in my mouth. I say dog for both dog and puppy. pray for things I know will happen. a rooster through a windshield. a dried-up toad in a deep footprint.

~~~

mother and father give their word that all narrators are orphans. that blood is a short leash. sometimes, a fence. be, they say, the symbol your god remembers you by. tell your brother to act like a chicken. your stickmen to share a toothache.

~~~

I saw a cigarette with its mouth open. today was hard. hate is amazing.

god will die with his ear on my stomach.

~~~

the darkness has many stomachs and we've no one to tell my son he's lonely.

seller of the disappearing stone, the mouth names everything and is born after eating a blindfold.

~~~

for desperation, boy puts a bird in a hand puppet. here a finger and there a worm, sadness has no family. oh fetus my moth of many colors. oh mosquito that bit an angel. time with my son

in scenario's territory.

~~~

atavism

(god is someone's calendar

-

valley

(a girl with a marble who answers to overdose

-

pulpit

(rooster ghosted by elevator

-  
subculture

(in my years with the poor, I wrote nothing down

-  
alpenglow

(the scalp will baby its grief

~~~

on muscle detail, the clapping boy from the cult of thunder brings a wheelchair to the last rocking horse known to model swimwear for the few dolls that remain married to the same mask. the boy is weak but maybe he puts two words together. like ghost

and exodus. for the second coming of the handcuffed animal.

~~~

the boy picking flowers for my shadow loves no one. everything I touch remembers being my hand. the world has ended, or started early. god's heartbeat. sound's watermark.

~~~

because her son can see the future, she is not yet born. god matters to the discovered.

~~~

overtook no cigarette. surprised no sleep. keyed the car

of a minor  
toymaker.

radar is getting possessive.

~~~

for the gone and for the nearly, brother has the same stick.

I call belly
what he calls
eye
what answers
to limb

~~~

to speak  
it needs gum  
from the invisible  
purse.

comes with everything. cries like me.

~~~

she says
three times
the word
brain
to her stomach's
blue
mirror
and scores
sight's wardrobe
of rags
in earworm's
dream

~~~

there's a comb  
in my narrative, a goldfish

coming to  
in a beheaded  
angel

## FOOD

how to bathe  
a red chameleon  
from the childhood  
of Moses

~~~

the boy on my shoulders says my hair is on fire. it is our longest running
joke. he laughs so hard my ribs fall asleep in his childless stomach. he
takes the cigarette from behind my ear...

his cough is a paintbrush. no father can kill god. the resurrected miss
death.

~~~

books to step on, scarecrows

to kiss.

animal  
a thing left speechless.

night  
a lost  
suitcase.

the apple, the quiet. brother's

double  
nodding off  
on library's  
secret

horse.

door songs.

mother, mother, father-

~~~

it changed me none to see my father rubbing a lamp in a time machine.
mother, too, ain't been different

since.

-

mirror miss your clock.

~~~

I lost three days of my life. four

less  
than my father.

I am sad when two people kiss.

I appear to animal  
sounds  
that my brother  
makes. sister

tells me  
with a look  
that giving  
birth

is the same  
as naming  
your source.

mom likes the way I say  
hypochondriac

after every  
meal.

~~~

a fish looking for its graveyard

I was in the dream
I was writing
down

~~~

the audition calls for a woman to pretend she's missing her right ear. a day before I'm scheduled, I wear heels and have my boyfriend mangle my left. a day after, I'm holding the baby of those who've never underestimated their power to look away. I don't get the part. and mom turns it down.

~~~

I can't write and write at the same time. there are drugs in my father's shoe and bread crumbs in my sock. sister can sing but says church gives her two left knees. mother squeezes the hand I feel sorry for. ah, sorrow- no bird walks on water and your babies

are all
neck.

~~~

I'm sorry you have to see this. if I could starve invisibly, I would. my son's surgeon worships ventriloquy. do you dream of the sleep you've already gotten? or of a thing so sad it gives birth? my abuser talks as if one can lose track of a mouth. in god's favorite book, my ghost gets a hobby.

~~~

my stories go nowhere.

god
and his tree
of hunger

~~~

some were delivered by one who wore a monster mask.

the smallest mouth guard. viruses

transmitted  
by dream

~~~

keep the baby

eats
during thunderstorms

~~~

while pacing the hallway of a floor that elevators skip, an amateur eulogist pictures an error-prone barber in a bath of milk who gave as a gift a rocking horse with a bad stomach to a child healing a cobweb for a starless bear.

## SOFT FACTS

we peck  
in the darkroom  
at the wrist  
of a fish  
our body language  
proofing  
the baby's  
dream

~~~~~

body

like some use an alias. fingerprints

manna
for hand.

-

I was dreaming I guess
in the face of brevity

-

of god's glassrabbit ocean

~~~~~

at a time  
unlike this

the father

is all  
appetite

the chicken, gone  
he points

to its ghost...

-  
my mouth  
is a church, my clock  
a Sunday spider

in a dry  
toilet

-  
(I'm passionate about my grief)

your shadow

dolled up  
in the yard

-  
cyborg, minotaur

not once  
did I watch  
them sleep

~~~~~

I don't know what she saw
in that jar

but she's been hours

rubbing
my head
with a balloon...

dad switches out the bag on her head
and slips something in my mouth
while saying
mouse
in the dollhouse

I doze for a moment and see a priest
pretend to fall
from a horse, and a stork

act
as it should...

~~~~~

I see myself  
a form  
forged  
by a twin, a reincarnation  
that perhaps  
impressed

my photographer  
son

~~~~~  
pills
minus the pills
given
by shepherd

~~~~~

the cause of this grief escapes me and I worry can tunnel breathe. the  
snake in your love letter sounds real. it takes my belly to things

that are also

~~~~~

dream is a boy dressed as his abuser sizing aquariums for the hand of a
spider

~~~~~

the first person to use these steps went down these steps. violence is  
the new past. I see a dove and think god will never know who it was ate  
his crushed light bulb. I betray my ear. the seashell of the stomach.

~~~~~

I try, but can't make my bed. mom says maybe I'm grief. after coming back to touch me, she wishes herself a bird.

I hope she eats.

-

then

I had a word for marble that wasn't marble. both were swallowed.

-

thirst is not the same as forgetting to drink. god talks up his handicapped friend.

~~~~~

what  
will I never  
see

lost  
arachnid, a triangle

drawn  
by others-

my legs make me lonely.

dream, put me down.

~~~~~

upon my double
being seen
I am set
to self
destruct

I am no sadder
than twin, no sadder
than dog...

my wrist
is nothing's
neck

~~~~~

no knife in the dog of absence. not a scratch on wind's throat. winged  
things that belong to the tooth in your shoulder. lipstick. the unhummed  
ribs of your wrist.

~~~~~

night is the sound of my father's adding machine. of mother narrating
the life of a stone. lake is my brother's action figure learning to swim on
a full stomach. lake is a bird going from dream to dream as a mouse.
hole is anything I bring home that isn't my body. home from the city
where sisters drink in silence to footnotes of future fictions.

~~~~~

life is a shapelessness to which form describes its pilgrimage

dream a grave dreaming  
of a cactus  
for nothing's  
crow

~~~~~

shape is a future fashioned from god's inability to reflect

-

(she thinks her hair came from an egg. she is not alone.)

there's nothing in the food

~~~~~

and there I was, sad

my robot  
giving hell  
to an elevator

and I was forty-one  
and still not there  
the day that kid  
got beat up  
for keeping sadness  
close

and I was never the poorest

in any room

is this what being poor means or meant

grief  
that we can brush at the fossil  
of grief

~~~~~

suicide took the person she was named during.

I am old, here. a klutz abstaining from revelation.

bald as any
lover
of maps.

~~~~~

had he not been all those years  
writing a review  
for the last book  
in the world  
my father  
would've been  
a poet

there are only so many crows  
one can see  
outside a laundromat  
for the drowned, scarless hawks

so maternally nudged  
into the travelogue

of my staying

~~~~~

angel of the old well
speaks to god
in rabbit, I wish

jack-in-the-box
your films
were longer

~~~~~

I don't know the name of the animal that slept with god. that ate the pea  
and left a rib. that moved the angel's grave. with help.

## SEPARATIONS FOR UNLIKENESS

god bless the hypnotist who takes up smoking when it goes uncured  
(my transformative stutter...

god bless the breathing machine, the fog...

the donkey so beaten it recalls itself as a whale's untouchable nose...

and god bless god for my short life as a father, for my son who says,  
meaning eyelash (cyclops...

~~~~~

it's not my imagination that I'm the only foreigner my body recalls, but is
that god can change with my stomach the shape of his tears

~~~~~

waiting for her cigarettes to dry, mother starts a bath and says above  
them that it's not like any of you are becoming a rib. death, short a  
person, continues to eat the language god hasn't. trauma makes a  
compass of time and place

and brother is not yet the sitting creature of a thoughtless life. I am not  
there but am allowed to be. I so miss birds.

(the ghost fame of each tadpole

~~~~~

a shadow's private gravity (a fly on a grieving radar

~~~~~

the boy whose clothes have been taken will swim for hours and for  
hours know why the soul hides death from god

~~~~~

do they not
look

finished

ear to ear, the toddlers...

their tornado
still theirs, and today's
sermon
still in the mind
of their mother's
exterminator
boyfriend
who is having a thought
as rare

as his past, of a god

spotting
from a cobweb
a carcass

and deciding

~~~~~

apparition, or mom  
at her most forgetful.

mouth, a shapeshifter's  
chew toy  
godless  
as a belly button  
and babied  
by grief.

face, face.

~~~~~

tell me again
how it is
that dream
stops
tooth decay
in angels / why it is

that I can hear
in the darkroom
post-god
the ghost
muscle
of weeping

/ when it was they found the suckling

and not the bones
of a wave

~~~~~

not uncommon in a household of grief

for one  
to be bad  
with names.

(the radio  
an animal  
that misses  
its bones

~~~~~

I would ask that you name
your dog
loss
is not
a teacher (then love a longer kitten

(like an angel
might
an ashtray, more

even
like your mother

a thing on its way
to being

bird
(or shaped

~~~~~

I eat more in your absence than you do in mine. our animals never  
meet. I've a painting and you've a picture of eve reaching for an aspirin.  
an angel is a ghost on fire.

~~~~~

pushed a lawnmower. jumped on a trampoline. ate with symbolism the
freer meals. painted for death what death could sell to a mirror. accused
my hair of arson.

~~~~~

before an astronaut can miss a tooth

I see my mother

her face  
in a cobweb

~~~~~

pushes
every smoker
a grocery cart
for a six-
fingered ghost

not

true
all children come from god (the theatrical

parent

~~~~~

there are ways to be happy. you can say priestess and watch your  
father's cigarette slip in and out of sleep. you can crush a pill for the dog  
that's begun to move like the rabbit it died chasing. you can lick the  
spoon the mirror's

(map

~~~~~

father likes to say that touch has lost its mind. mother

be like hunger
and forget
nothing.

(the boy is the boy who teaches death
to read
and I am sad
for death
for years

(in the toy aisle, in a circus
restroom, at the roll

of my son's
spotless
eye, and at the gate

of the all
girl
cemetery

(also shyly

in the more traditional
babies
of god

(their hesitant
fatigue

~~~~~

in those moments when non-fiction scares only the grey brainchild of  
poverty

(that fucking angel disrobing a stone with fog...

please read  
to feel  
nothing

~~~~~  
how long
for being god
should god
be punished

-

to how many mothers have you reappeared

-

are these
the pebbles

fingerprint and footfall

(have they been
betrayed

~~~~~

match your mouth to its bowl  
and lift the bowl

it is very light  
be as with  
a beaten  
angel (careful

lullaby baby out of its hair  
hold me (like death

will  
as you've seen  
a brain

(does it look  
in places  
like a ransom  
note

the skin  
god hasn't

~~~~~

(if there's a god
then why
seed

(a son this ill

an angel
obsessed
with paperbacks (is this

Ohio

or a gift shop where none have prayed

~~~~~

a dog-tamer by day, he'd lose at night his stomach's paw to a sleepy hand. not there to feed anything, I'd set anyway a fishbowl down for a rocking horse. sometimes a woman would shock me with her finger then put on her shoes. then leave or not exist.

~~~~~

being earlier drawn to a pilot's imperfect nostalgia,

a hypothetical form
goes online
to cry...

(eyesight is sorrow's smallest garden
(a whole

church
for the errors
of fiction

~~~~~

a shirtless child sets my food on fire. I want to cut myself but part of me  
is still teaching god air guitar in an outhouse. stun gun. riding mower. I  
learn how to point and bulimia

is the ghost

anorexia  
isn't.

mother, in goodbye, means goodbye.

~~~~~

there is
oh sin

a firefly

in my grief.

& the eater of chalk has the body of god.

~~~~~

look long enough  
at a bird  
it becomes  
a bird.

frog  
a boy  
both arms  
broken.

~~~~~

sheep because sheep looks as if it's waiting for an angel to have a thought and sheep because the saying of sheep guides the mouth into silence and sheep because if you close one eye in church

the circle my son draws looks like a fish

and circle because I made for it a church and church because he once saw a rabbit that wasn't and a stomach that was and the two of you

we could not lift

~~~~~

the abusive baby  
with its crying (or

the blue  
saint

with its bruising  
thirst (will turn

the knob (the clock

of the door

~~~~~

years later and I can't convince my brother he's been shot. he wants to be naked all the time. one day he wakes up with four legs and another with two he's forgotten. he doesn't draw but claims the things he draws can't sleep. mourn god, he says. he says he can't see me when I wash his clothes. so I wash his clothes.

OHIO DEATHS

every stick I throw

a ghost
of my grandfather's
wand---

I don't throw many
it is not a sight
to see

not some cow nudging awake the weakest deer

not pipe tobacco, not smoke, not that spider
from an injured
fog

not a small child
a dog even

trying to use
a spoon

~~~~~

god's been gone nine months and all this talk he's done of being  
stabbed in a dollhouse struggles to fill a baby (do animals have songs

do they know

to miss  
missing (leave the bragging

to grief

~~~~~

handstands and loneliness- what infantile reactions we have to
existence. I want to eat

but how will they know there was nothing here (this finger

once a rib in the back of your throat

~~~~~

my son knows his birds by the hands he draws for them. anatomy is  
perhaps what you make it. grey bruise, blue tongue...

this dream goes nowhere. hell, these chickens

(as if their god was struck by a ghost

~~~~~

this body was never a child

(& birth a spoon
bent to the little

I long

~~~~~

father cuts my hair as something gentle he can do underwater. he's  
broken the bowl that caught his mother's mouth. we have our mirrors  
and you your nets. I am the last of his one-eared boys.

~~~~~

his cigarette going bald, father prepares his food while we touch ours.
god swims long enough to miss wind. if there are two babies in the
same room, they switch cribs but not teeth. god is a time-traveler selling
nostalgia. I can never remember which of mother's ears is insect and
which is litmus. it's always the second meal

comes from heaven

~~~~~

I want to be loved so badly that I promise your raccoon the sea. dying  
means:

my boy falls asleep drinking from a toy boat. god has no friends but  
even better

my mother has one was born

without a birthday. can an angel

do this? says ghost.

(grief is a thing taught to breathe by its stomach

~~~~~

it's dark and all of us are in the wrong stone.

the floor is clean where I learned my shapes.

~~~~~

I cut the pills  
sometimes  
in advance. (love

that no matter  
the day, there are three

god spent  
with his son.

~~~~~

(between

online
searches
for tire
swing (mother

sells chalk
to a ghost

~~~~~

I didn't miss god or think I was ugly. had mud enough  
to make  
from memory

the scarecrow's  
stomach. I ate my brothers

they ate  
me back. any loss

became a hole

in a snake, any needle

a worshiped  
feather...

~~~~~

think of wind as a thing that's mastered its nothingness.

cradle
the unfinished.

yes think, then cradle.

hands shape their own leaving.

~~~~~

I wait in the outhouse to hear the ghost of my brother speak.

time  
to him

is grief gets a puppy, spider  
a tail

(in the story of the fish  
that wanted  
to pray

~~~~~

mom says she ain't had a dream since trying to bring jesus there to hear her poem about the fetus and the bookmark as found in her collection (a warning describes home to a crow

~~~~~

because in an insect, terror has no room to grow. because I can count on a handprint the number of times you thought me from nothing. because my daughter does a somersault and thinks she's pregnant. because god worships the storm for its light touch. because I can't sing. because when I do, my mother knows where I am. because on all-fours I call my blood to bathe me in its blue past. because loss eats its plate. because I brush my teeth over a circle my son will make in dirt. because his ghost mans a ferris wheel he refers to as piggyback. because my father can forgive a shape and I cannot a poem.

~~~~~

I wore
to bed
a dog's
collar
and in
the dream
broke your leg
on mine
do you remember
being spanked
the ant
on your cheek
lonelier
than a stick

(I think
god

he put
my hand
in a hand
done
with growing (there is

the star I sleep under

the toothache
you

~~~~~

god is the word food spells in my mouth.

you have to be this tall  
to be hungry.

(there is a ghost looking for its rock collection)

our absence  
unheard of

~~~~~  
older
than mine
your missing
child...

the spider
it's thrown itself
on a drop
of blood

~~~~~

I'm here, says the soul.

the body will need me  
when you're gone.

~~~~~

I find my hands wrapped in yours in a field we call rifle. you're vomiting
in a dream and your son is asking

(is a shadow a boat that's been killed

~~~~~

if caught  
early,

sickness will erase the body's memory of dying.

(late,

will make  
from god  
a trapped  
ghost

~~~~~

permission
to report
sightings
of uncommon
roadkill

and

or

to estimate

multiple
longings

~~~~~

you're getting better but birth is still a joke that grief gets wrong. that  
luck forgets. dog is too old to look at the animal it younger replaced.  
care is mostly silent. a cricket in a cake. my tiny saw.

~~~~~

every year
on your birthday
a buzzard
falls

to earth
from the mouth
of a flat

footed god
and gets

(its chance to carry

the owl's
food

~~~~~

at the very least, I think god could've given loss a tail. I take it anyway

my cut of longing-

say keep my daughter from caterpillar and my son from cigarette.

from each other  
both

~~~~~

I am seven
maybe eight
and some boys
are counting
the holes
in my shirt
and asking
if I bite
I tell them
what I love
and that I'm studying
the poor (that I can talk
underwater
but it doesn't
help
there is always
a book
that poverty
pretends
to read (a lake
that hates
my shadow

~~~~~

because a ghost can do what time cannot, a father gets over being ugly.  
I have a sister who rings a bell and you a mother who swallows a  
whistle. the order of my love is wrist, wrist, neck. my brother thinks he'll  
be crucified for having two left feet. acts like a dog when it rains.

~~~~~

the clown while cleaning a paintball gun watches a kite as if kite
believes there's a puppet in a cornfield. this is what I mean and don't
mean by loneliness. I learn smoke by combing knots from my mother's
anthill hair and snake by setting a rope on fire. certain diets will bring the
baby back. whose blood is this, whose ball

of yarn (were soft things said about losing teeth

~~~~~

today, I will cradle nothingness for a star I'll never see. ask my sorrow  
what it remembers of yours. soften the mirror

in its yester

place.

~~~~~

the room
listening
for a room
in the home
of god, the soft
chase
given

by toothbrush
to birthmark, the nothing

we want
like children

SPIRITUAL CORRECTIVES

you think
you might
be art. her mastering

of his blindspot
for imagery...

(every rock you throw is a bird that can't breathe

~~~~~

sons says he falls asleep reading to his teeth. son whose size has gone  
to confess.

put

oh son

god's hand  
through a wall. a fingernail

on my tongue (rib

in luck's  
grave

~~~~~

I don't have time
to be smart
but everyone
in this movie
thinks a snowglobe

is a moth
on fire

-
for years I thought the pain I was eating came to my mouth in a dream

-
argument for there is: were it otherwise,
we'd both be the child of two rotting forms

argument for there is no: a country dog
nodding headcounts
to a family
of sticks

~~~~~  
about the birdhouse  
dad found  
in a church-  
I ask  
the wrong  
storm

-  
is your son a mouse

chewing  
on a star?

our blood  
wants to pray  
outside

~~~~~

the worst advice that hunger gives is to dream of eating.

let your mail tell you where to live.

let there be
in god's mouth

a bread crumb dressed as a fingerprint.

the shape of this stone makes me worried for symbols.

~~~~~

sobbing

(a form of abuse

-

sleep

(god, mid-miracle, dies

-

saltshaker

(the cowbell of grief

sobbing

(there is a boy  
for every  
boy

born

(outnumbered

window

(they caught the person who was painting our baby blue

~~~~~

smoking over the empty crib, he calls anything that's crawled on me the
lost hand of god. I don't care if you're alone. for the skydiver (whose
thoughts on crucifixion

~~~~~

if presence

be a nakedness  
survived  
by nostalgia  
and by  
homage, then presence

a milk  
in memory  
of shape  
or shape  
oh shape

-

would-be astronaut

your head  
is too small  
(but oh how light

the gun you make  
of your hand

-

I am not as alone as I remember

or only  
our only

possession

(the belly-dancer's  
muted  
radar

~~~~~

I know it happened slowly-

his private
recognition
of every
face.

a leaf in the mouth
of his jesus-on-the-cross.

that aggressive dove.

~~~~~

what is hunger but looking at the shape your mouth didn't bring? what is  
the past, the present, the future

but glue stick, puberty, grief

god but the nothing

my hair  
does at night

~~~~~

rabbit's wheelchair

to re
trace
the half
circle
of loss, god

checking

on the length

of her flight

~~~~~

can you tell whose handwriting I use

for fiction

and for non, whose scar

was rubbed

the wrong way

by doll, whose mother

keyed cars

while pregnant

## SOFTENINGS

ghost wouldn't dream the angel but to see it naked. wouldn't dream god  
but to understand. moth  
but to disrobe.

~~~~~

to make is to disappear with something at your side. god is still
remembering where places are.

~~~~~

I don't know how sick  
to tell you  
he is

-

it could  
well be  
that violins

put the humming

in the wrist  
of god

-

sleep is where one learns to faint

~~~~~

I know now how one looks after losing a baby

says the maker
of frog. how to get

mouthwash
to an angel

no...

can we imagine
this, can we imagine

for the scarecrow at the chalkboard

(fossils (I ask

because we are naked
not nearly
enough

I ask because so often
it comes
before child

this word
beaten, to put

our shadows
to bed

~~~~~

hunger has no moon

yet  
these noises  
are made

the children  
of chew toys

whole lives

the sound of god

choking  
on a dot

~~~~~

I am looking with wolf for the dream that raised it. I mean, not really.
but I do miss you.

wolf or no

~~~~~

is there a path  
my mouth  
didn't take  
does birth  
adopt  
the poolside  
language  
of a signature  
absence  
is god

a swimmer  
a talker  
are there  
hobby coffins  
for nesting  
dolls  
can we

(kiss

~~~~~

on all fours, I am bad with names. a hound
in the path
of god.

I drink from the same bath
to the angel
muscle
of my mother's
mouse
(as things
underwater

yea high
hallucinate

~~~~~

sound horn  
if you bruise  
easily, if you've seen  
a tattoo  
artist  
with your

half  
of awake  
pining  
on the floor  
of a nursing home  
for the oceanographer  
who trades  
nightly  
a jack  
in the box  
for the ghost  
of a turtle

~~~~~

the immediate church
of say
pretty,

this snow an over

shadowed
fog, a story

where old
rib-finger,

long struck by lightning

(tries to use
an ashtray

~~~~~

to get its dog back, the angel had to burn a bush. tell me I'm pretty.  
father fusses over a line-break and mother over the milk we trade for  
paper. I'm sad, but tell me anyway.

~~~~~

for me, to look at your art is to know just how quickly I'll go back to
feeling nothing. (my little stories

about the success
jesus had
impressing
his father...

to pulling death's leg
or the leg

from the insect's
shadow

~~~~~

home and work

oh places  
to be safely  
poor

oh tonight  
I am sad  
a zoo  
for zoo  
laughter  
I kiss  
my son's

elbow  
the elbow  
the knee's  
farewell

we listen to the dishwasher  
as if sound  
will make us  
close, as if he is not

alone  
in hearing  
his flat  
blue  
rollercoaster

## BLUE MIND

and when the creatures came back they were all the same size and my  
son was still sick and I put my ear to my mother's and asked for the  
maker of god-painted sound and my son was a hole and I was grief in a  
gravedigger's dream and we ate I think apples there

~~~~~

I miss
learning
of you

does art
lose everything
made visible

by grief

~~~~~

I don't  
on boats  
believe  
in the devil

~~~~~

poor stone
to have never
been painted
(a child

becomes a place, forgets
being born
there is

(a second lookalike (angels

are ugly & some
know the sex
of your ghost (how birdly

of her
to un
the alone
in the jesus

of her legless
(light

~~~~~  
when little  
of one is left  
one  
is born

my son's  
look  
is not  
far off

(fish  
they struggle  
in the water's  
hair

~~~~~

between hearing thunder and seeing deer, the dying woman tells a story
in a language she's never spoken. I swear to use smaller words. ill, far.
farm. in each of us, perhaps, is the lost faith of god. the bread of our
anthill's home.

~~~~~

hungry for kindness, each of us pretends to see the other's  
hallucinations. I admire the backstroke of your perfect scarecrow and  
you the focus of my choking owl. when we see the same thing, be it  
mouse or frog, we chew to keep our hearing in place. to have you as a  
brother is to be alone. our father makes robots for our mother to mourn  
while our sister opens an eye in the blindfold's mouth. rocks have the  
softest shadows.

~~~~~

a toy, brief and doomed. cat sadness. oh there are days the kids say
nothing beautiful. soon is a painting but when. of a ballerina leaving
Ohio for a gas can. of god giving death

a blank puzzle. of how to dress if I'm ugly.

~~~~~

which  
angel's elbow  
is  
the mouth, oh body

you are a life's  
work  
in one

language (when mom

says

mom says

(a clock to a bruise was a star

~~~~~

we had beautiful conversations but the earth was dying.

you remember god and I

god wanting
a child.

mother with her skin condition was at the chalkboard.
so alone / as to be / inherited

(we thought
in poems...

a doll
we said
a doll

pretending to miss its empty
bar
of soap. (I was

unpray
to your

longlessness. art was the clock of the poor.

~~~~~

it is god until it hears its parents fight.

what her brain does to language could fill a tail with the dreams of a  
snake  
some of which

are

my sleep  
is my blood.

touch is the music of hell  
said we

(sang mom

~~~~~

I lost my voice believing in ghosts and before that

spoonfed my brother until he tied me to a chair. this was the beginning
of wanting my kids to play dead in front of the nothing my eyes could do.
one sockless and one sick. not forever.

~~~~~

we're drunk in the backyard with my body and your grief and you say  
you're hungry and this is how I end up holding a plate in the bathroom  
mirror where once my mother ate so quickly that a baby remembered its  
face

~~~~~

because I'd chosen eyesight over memory, my brother believed he could draw a spacecraft that would make our animals happy. we weighed what sister sent. (fishbowls from the places she'd died

~~~~~

he would sometimes wear his sister's clothes under his father's spacesuit and once there he'd dream of his blood mixing with god's blood bread crumbs and all

~~~~~

I wonder what the violence in your work did to get here. did you know a photo can starve an entire family? (no matter the animal in it

~~~~~

there is a book  
dad says  
(they say  
is for children.  
god  
and the long  
day-

find it

and we'll stop eating  
the creature you couldn't describe

## I WANT TO TALK ABOUT JOY

but instead  
ask the holy spirit  
about the two  
action figures  
cleaning  
themselves  
in the dark...

(choose the god that will know when you've died

## I WANT TO TALK ABOUT JOY

be  
as an owl

and envy  
the bat  
its dancing  
in the voice  
of god (pray for the giant

who with  
a camera

holds creation  
over  
the nude (then spider

your hands  
to cover  
the ears  
of stones

### **SEASHELL NOTES**

(no creature feels beautiful for more than seven days

(behind an owl, a crow takes out its teeth

(you've the belly button of a dead angel



{ **from** }  
Motherlings

**ASK AND SMOKE**

as a zombie  
obsessing

over  
a star (why

would an angel  
learn  
to eat

## **BOATS**

I don't have very long  
says the stone / all sadness

recent

## STORK BLOOD

my sister brought a tub of snow inside to dig a baby from and god's little  
narc shook a rattle at a fish tank.

-

are you barn  
or missile

silo

sad?

-

(across town, a silent alarm is pressed by the anonymous smoker of  
wedding cigarettes

(across town, a mother scrubs at a dinner plate with a clump of hair and  
tells her boy she is not balding

-

look: I love your father's thumbtack moon and I love that bruises recall  
to us the botched renderings of paw prints.

look: when I read to my son, he tries to fork the fireworks in the back of  
his head. there is no place where nothing should be.

(and it is so  
never suddenly  
late

-  
in the dream our longing prepares, memory is a man dying in the ocean  
and becoming a ghost there.

-  
each a form of angel hazing  
are bewildered  
church  
and stray  
field

-  
mother touches the doll with kid gloves that fit. externally, I believe in  
masks. internally, that a sponge is living off my hand.

-  
I wait for my mother to fall asleep, for my father to carry her upstairs,  
and for my brothers to go outside

-  
their fingers as horns  
on the sides of their heads...

-  
a chalkboard eraser  
still strikes me  
as useless-

-  
a boat  
in the hand  
of god

## RETREATS

I believed in having the one thought that would make me an idea

-

the mouth is not a trap / the mouth

is trapped

-

my daughter asks me if there's a word for the feeling you have when  
you're a kid and your father is washing your hair and you think your hair  
is bleeding. (if there's another life

there is  
now

-

look, anything that grows is theft.

time passed us by because it knew we were here.

-

(my eyes weren't long enough

## WE GAVE TO THE POOR

the leg I called footprint. the bread that had skin.

### OWL BLUE

a baby  
teaching a baby  
to forgive, a birthmark

as it prays  
for bite, the future  
appetite

that moans  
for god- and.

my half-eaten son.

the hole in his sleep.  
his pawprint ears.

**THE CIRUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE DEATH OF THE  
EXAGGERATED ANGEL**

i.

for every balloon animal  
you finish  
after stepping  
on a nail

a child  
will live.

ii.

tug my arm gently. complain

five times  
to a starfish.

## JAW NOTES

it is okay

(in the afterglow  
of a mother's  
childhood  
hiding place)

to live  
as a dull  
child (on bits of eggshell

from the angel's mouth

#### FORM NOTES

you are poor and have the wrists of a beachcomber. god writes a play  
about sleep. I rest my eyes and my father's microphone becomes the  
nightmare my mother has where she presses the fingernail no ant is  
under. you think you're the ghost of your mouth.

## SNOW NOTES

waiting  
to photograph  
an Ohio  
bathtub, my father  
chainsmokes  
in a stalled  
car

(a peephole  
disappears

and a rabbit's  
foot

## DEER ACHE

i.

my god a failed author who describes

the creature left in eden  
to the creature  
not

ii.

my...

iii.

a rocking horse taken by helicopter

## DESIGN ACHE

how sick  
was christ  
we'll never  
know  
but a bird  
and a fish  
dream  
in halves  
of outlasting

touch  
(this ghost  
that prays  
for its jailer  
the mime

### **TAME ACHE**

soap carvings  
of birds  
pulled mostly  
from a son's  
thunderstorm...

here and there  
a worm  
wrapped around  
a stone.

all imagery is the same.

if the food  
is in your mouth

it's too late.

### **SCENE ACHE**

in Ohio, a father mows the lawn of a friend and swallows what he thinks  
is a bug and that night

as he wonders if the bug will ever be finished  
kissing  
its eggs

his children tell him  
to drink  
something hot, his children

who compare  
rug burns  
and wait

for their invisible toys  
to believe  
all at once  
in god

## FILM ACHE

at a certain height, nudity loses meaning

-  
if bunk beds collapse in a museum made for emptiness, does Ohio

roll  
from a crystal  
ball

-  
no hawk  
is a wasp, but every  
wasp...

-  
I remember also when you called a tattoo

postage  
for the afterlife

-  
I see a tornado  
and my teeth  
turn yellow

## DARK ACHE

when in  
a church  
you lose  
your sense  
of smell, it's okay

to drop  
the baby

(its shadow  
could be anything

in the right  
light

## LIFT ACHE

we itch for baby and guess at what it might be that god is drawing.

baby won't age

(not past  
rowing machine, not past

rocking horse. (if I leave, it's to worry

on the smallness of its feet

**COULD BE YOU'LL DIE**

in front of something  
god remembers

## **SLEEP**

/ the broken hand of my whale-watching mother

// bruise  
that plays  
god

/// an owl  
from the waist  
up

### **CENTIPEDE**

a bookmark made by mother from the fingerprints of god. a stretcher mourned by a ladder. the last nerve of grief. recipe from the beginner's guide to poverty. neckwear. dream's comet.

**BEE PAIN**

all of your mother's paintings have two names. father with cigarette or  
jesus

meet ghost.

-

four pounds / of my birth / were missing

**TOO OLD TO PRAY**

one has  
in Ohio  
that crucial  
dream

the wasp and the footprint

## BOREDOM

i.

a hospital  
window  
painted  
by a siren  
that doesn't  
sound

ii.

the fossil brush that sadness drops

**BEE PAIN**

a pregnancy, a grief, a photographer

of rapture themed fashion shows...

this increase  
in childhood. her wolf

raised  
by astronauts

**EVERY BIRD I TAKE FROM THE OCEAN BECOMES A HANDFUL OF  
SNOW**

& somewhere the small machine that your father fixed

is on its only leg

### OHIO DREAMS

the pale finger of a mother's purple god.

the eyes  
the eyes  
eat  
while being  
watched.

a son  
skipped  
by certain  
animals.

#### QUESTIONS FOR STONE

when  
did you know  
there was nothing  
left  
and why'd  
you tell  
color

**WRITER AS A BOY IN A SEE-THROUGH DRESS**

an angel is the bed of a ghost. god a crow

warning anthills  
of milk

**ANIMAL STICKER ON A SISTER'S KNEE**

beneath a star  
with the brain  
of a swan  
the infant  
makes it  
perfectly

god's  
bitemark  
soup

## READING

inside  
an apple  
by the light  
of a tooth

where nothing  
has belonged  
to god

## BREVITIES

if told by your hands to set myself on fire, I would pray my father into a snake and death would cry in a whale for every bee that lost its voice.

**I LISTEN WITH MY BROTHER FOR FROSTBITTEN THUNDER**

(as sleep makes oven the birthmark of the home

(as god spots crow at the grave of a rooster

## MORAL NARCISSISM

fossil, cloud...

it's okay to like your little life.

I have proof.

#### **ANNOTATIONS FOR ALL**

to lie about god is a kind of prayer. what you hide matters. the eggs, the cigarettes. the third wish from grief.

**LOVERLIKE**

(tree

with frozen  
stomach) (the wrong

grave) (movie)

that ended  
god

## GOODBYES

for very little  
over a bowl of nothing  
all of this  
has been to pray

## DETECTIONS

we talk of teeth and of how a son closed his mouth in a dream. two of our children hug and as one are mistaken by mirror for the jawbone of god. dog is half-thunder, half-ambulance. limp if you love me.

## WITHHOLDINGS

making owl sounds  
for my son  
he is so  
tired  
and there was a time  
I invented god  
thinking  
I'd outlast  
my body  
a time  
I carried  
my mouth  
as the stone  
of the dark  
and I guess  
that's how  
I slept

my lips  
on the head  
of any  
creature

**ANIMAL MASKS ON THE FLOOR OF THE OCEAN**

mouse, teacup of the missing stork-

owl, lamb of night-

this was god. he was sad and everyone noticed.

## AFTERNOTES

Knowing one will have a seizure that the others can watch, ache invents three empty-handed people who are closely based on the two still dying on the roof of a strip club. My first thought upon seeing any horse is that each horse is all the time thinking of its mother. I wait not to be taken but to be taken by the alien attracted to god. The family we don't talk about burns trash in a silent film. No woman loves grief, but will check its facts.

~~~~~

what nightmares might boats have. do small bits of Hansel and Gretel enter the oral history of stowaways. oh pacing son of god, why does father worry his belly over an ant at peace

inside
of a worm. what if our whales are mostly absence and death passes me
like a room

~~~~~

At the end of the day, it's a very long day. The mirror believes it's covered its belly. You ask me what hurts and I say earshot and show you the traffic cone my mother lifted from the world of tire swings. Everything you've written about the void being free is true. I secretly want your fingerprint and you secretly collect stock images of the born again. Will god never finish  
the wind

~~~~~

and its use? this yearning, this alien attendance to the unsupervised moment? a childhood, perhaps. rugburns on the bellies of those who fall asleep to the song of you swimming from the water in your body. god returning to find again that our absence has been rearranged by the last infant to receive nostalgia. our self-harming sock puppets fresh from the diary of touch. an egg in the churchbell's brain.

~~~~~

There is a part of my left hand that seems to know a fish with a nosebleed. If I could open the book of touch, I would open the book of touch. My son has a cough that haunts the leg of a wasp and his singing lives in a blank mother's bottle of glue. Death recognizes more creatures than god.

~~~~~

I don't think it was ever a child, my body. more a changing loneliness. a thing dreaming of its planet while being held or not being held by a thing distracted by a comet. this is how I worry that what I'm reading is elsewhere beautiful to others. I die and you know or you don't. I pray of course that in the stomachs of the ghost and the angel the same spiderweb is found, but longing is a mirror that looks itself to sleep.

~~~~~

touch is at first

a bowl

and then

a smaller

bowl

as

for sleep

I'll die  
in yours

she writes  
to notice  
nothing

~~~~~

could be we're only attractive when thinking about the past.

I know
how long
you were old.

~~~~~

You can't lose your memory in a thunderstorm

—

Every surgeon  
but my son's  
surgeon

has  
a lookalike

—

The plate in god's head  
is older  
than god

—

Those cricket  
funerals

took so long  
to plan

~~~~~

and here I tell my son, who's never heard a cricket, how long I believed
in god.

*
NEW
POEMS
**

THE YEAR OUR SON SPOTTED DEER ON THE MOON

it made
some sense
then
to cut
our past
in half

THE YEAR OUR SON THOUGHT WE LOVED HIM

lasted longer than most dogs
but there was
this one
stray
we saw
often

it had one
abandoned
healthy
eye

inside of which

our belongings
were small enough
to have

MORE TOYS MADE IN HUMAN SILENCE

a god touching itself in the ghost of a shy hand model. a boy failing to piss on an animal born to kiss nothing. a radar's unreachable dream of giving blood. a daughter's pillow for rabbit police. a shoeless painter's sleeping bread. an earful of sugar with an ant for a mouth. an invisible puppet based on the death of a slowly named fish. no then no in the no of this field.

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

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.

ALL THESE ANXIETY MACHINES

but no one to fix
an invisible
button

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.

FIRST NOTES

i.

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

ii.

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

iii.

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

eat fast, and let god believe.

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.

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

WRIST

newborns
playing tag
in a dream

TIME

when an animal
reading
dies

**I OFTEN BELIEVE MYSELF TO BE DYING AND FAIL TO MISS THE
RESTORATIVE ABSENCE OF TOUCH**

On a blue
arm
a mosquito

born in god's
erasable
kiss.

A clown
so early
to the unmoving
dog.

Most movies
are hidden
by sleep.

SWAN AND SWIM NAME EACH OTHER SWIM AND SWAN

Sadness never gets around to introducing its young.

Poverty
hates
magic.

Unless they die,
babies
make movies
longer.

Angel is what I call my plan
to catch a ghost.

SLEEP INTERRUPTS THE WRONG PAST

A swimmer doing a handstand. A wrist from the world of dolls. An Ohio squirrel sharpening a baby's tooth. Doom as it strokes thunder's hair. Vandals protecting the dreams of one beached whale. The earaches that learn of my son whenever my knees touch. The suicide recorded by the longest god.

BLOOD NOTES

I can tell by my arm that I am not always there when they burn my cigarette.

—

Abortion. Tire Swing.

I don't know all seven stages of staying warm in Ohio.

—

Loneliness changes often the name of its creator.

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.

BLOOD NOTES

Sex remembers death as the Skinner of sleep.

Touch invents a past it can fix.

BLOOD NOTES

Comb your hair in Ohio
and to some
you'll sound
like a radio.

You were not a sad baby
but your mouth
had a twin.

The shelf life of nothing
is absence.

THE CRUCIFIXION

I'm in water up to my chin. No one looks at my body.

STORY NOTES

Death and god only ever had one argument.

Light and touch
compare skin.

The children ask How long?

Sadness
by the bee.

NIGHT, YOU

Dad is trying to load bullets into a flashlight. His tv show is having trouble sleeping. Sister opens the oven for a doll she thought would be taller. We like you but not when you're lonely. The first groundhog calls to us horribly as if it knows there will soon be a woman who swallows a cigarette to see a broom catch fire. That my mother can sleep, a pea goes dark in the eye of a deer. I think of my son and how it's not every child gets its sickness from god. I jump rope might I later move into the land of plague my acre of miracle and find for snowfall the farm machine that once cleared lambs from the formlessness of habit. There was 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 anywhere had ever been home. I borrowed 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 into any of the houses. Either I would chin handles of lawnmowers or sit on the edges of dry pools and put my feet in without taking off my shoes. At one point I pretended to be on the phone and the sheep let some grass fall from its mouth. My stomach purred. A moving van idled. For my hunger, the sheep made good time. I watched it from the empty 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.

E N D

rocks have the softest shadows

\/ \/

poems

December 2020

Barton Smock

/ \ \/

pages 1 through 41

DIETS OF THE RESURRECTED

pages 43 through 80

from AN OLD IDEA ONE HAD OF STARS

pages 81 through 167

from ANIMAL MASKS ON THE FLOOR OF THE OCEAN

pages 169 through 207

from MOTHERLINGS

pages 209 through 212

AFTERNOTES

pages 213 through 235

New Poems