

THIS IS A FLOOD

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This is a flood and we are turbulent with color.

I.

We make good of this rain-punched scene
all color-drained & pallor

befriending dark patches of sky & culling sticks
to kindle.

Who has never seen a bruise
never tasted their own flaring skin?

II.

I open the book of colors & read to you.

It seems light is all we need
to do things.

To believe there is a road where you hold your finger
to mine—where we are is so dark
& full
of blown stars.

Luster is the color you choose

I choose fog
& we move.

III.

You say you know how hard it is just to hold a book
in your hand the black spine the birds dying
 every time a poem ends.

*[a movement that lacks directional orientation
and depends upon the intensity of stimulation]*

there are minutes we spend staring at pigeons
until their bodies unfold,

reveal the gnarled maps
we don't understand but are giddy with
sticking fingers in—kinesis in this

& in the brutal energy behind
our knees
no compass here
but gravity

& it's all mixed up with our feet, with the holes
in our heads where the air is trying to get into us
fill us with what's been abandoned

& today I feel very close to the city
the way it is thick & hurting with your name

we are part of this interruption
& it doesn't matter how many days I've been alive
except this one, where my mouth is spilt
with trees

Today is an argument against clouds

both flimsy
& miraculous.

Nobody talks about happiness

how it turns hair to mercury shot
to the ground

& how eyelashes break a cheek.
I can be this woman

whose eyelids peel back

into flightless moths
burning for light.

When I was carrying Ohio

In the deer stand I wash your spoiled face
My reeking fingers shed their
marks in the wood I do not believe in the crosses under your tongue
Nothing has ever died there I am seeing all the white things I am
surrounding your belt loops I am tuning your cuffed sleeve I am throwing
peaches Against the wind something is running Rampant we feel rampant
I think you are still growing into this place My fingers are starting To keep
everyone Above our heads What sky Through our eyes The wind tries to
go We try to go Through each other Just so I can say this

Once

His face was open

I thought he had something for me
Even my blue eye

Clouded over

132 North Main – 16600 Tyler Road

Our first apartment
studio with a hallway

We rode our bikes drunk
at night
between the corn

All poems with hallways are that hallway

The bridge over a creek & a guard rail
he wanted to see how close
he could get

My hair was long & knotted
I lost my wisdom teeth almost every day

He lost his watch in a couch
we looked all over
the broken pavement

We had three windows
falling out

There was no light
but the dim moon & stars (I might
have been light)

I mean pulled, they were pulled out
Our mouths dripping glass

The wind barely
allowed itself
to blow

teeth leave a body this way

he wore buttons
whiter than skin

was ripped
or already open

something flew into me
(something flew me)
his teeth little stones
treading against my own

button tethered
(to a cotton sail)

button hole
sucking thread

I invited him to wear holes
in me
skin begging
to be buttoned

he threaded
our teeth broke
my eye to his
into chimes

Like a boat caught in the slush

except the ocean
is inside my mouth
I should use the word "barnacle" here

there probably is one

& that thing I always call tonsils
but isn't:
an anchor waiting to drop

to cut loose

When he puts his ear to my mouth
& closes his eyes
he says he can't hear

the sweet ocean

at all
So I slap him
watch the clouds

falling out

Nightlight

broken things took a bath
with me

we were all in the bath getting cut up
& broken

his face
smelled like deer

he wanted to kill a deer
with a knife

& he tried to chop
but he hit a wrong part
(fluid him)

antlers raking, reckless tools
 trying to swim

it made me feel
really out of

mouth puckering, tonsils
 like lamps

all the broken things
in my bathtub
shiny & clanging

*I tried to be blind to everything we carry in our
mouths—*

the wires shooting all the birds
into the sky

the red stones you brought back from that dark house
in the woods
 where your dead friend lives.

I started hoarding clouds
under the baseboards of this apartment
 with all the radiators old & unleashed.

Not because of how she died
or how you tried to lay yourself into a road for her;

in every memory there are things that aren't important.

How often we try to turn clouds into something else
& they aren't even alive.

If I am a town well-populated with bright things

your hair is gold and so are the pieces of death
in your skin

it is why a bird flew
into your mouth

that day I wasn't with you

& my death is something
pond rock |

the blue
we think water is |

I am hidden in rain

while you are in Pittsburgh
turning fog

into a new planet with a bird
for a moon

Tuning Forks

Ribs look like antlers shed
 in a field.
My fields are white, not snow—

a cloud is making babies in that field.

There is a brightness to the corn
that is also a sort of stabbing

color speechless.

What carries you home?
I carved beaks to carry a yawn

stole antlers from a carcass

to pluck new alphabets from things I know:
elbow crease, crooked knee
each slide of finger split into stalks.

Broken Hymns, Limbs and Skin
from O'Death

the house was never on fire we painted it
that way

I am a burned room you a window frame
 punched through

sooted & shoted
sure-footed worn-through—

the loveliest broken things on the hill
were made up of rust

we are so rubbed orange in our mashing
we still dear the grass too lovely & broken
still dear the rain
into lighting our skin still want
to be the house & window

 broken faces we are planting
in the ground
dear fingers & toes go-getting the sky

Its feathers are dusted

in gold
& we build a yard for it plant uncut diamonds
in the roost sit in lawn chairs

watch it preen
The peacock is an even bigger metaphor than its feathers
each of which fall out

sprinkle the yard in gold & green & blue &

too bright on some days
when the sun comes out

We lay in our white bed smelling
each other's hair

He tells me I am the new

color & when we die
we will go to a place just like this—

our eyes wideopen—most stunning mirrors

It is noon—hammocked in the yard
we are reading everything there is

I touch his hand in the spot where all his feelings are
the sprinklers come on sit beneath

How does anyone not love wet grass he asks me
naked except for tinted lenses

The grass we do not brush off
it falls all around the house in the evening

picks a piece
places it behind my ear

says all the things
unfiltered unfiltered unfiltered
until the green bends my eye

find a broken phone & lick the receiver

I.

We are told our limbs are full of wires
 & in truth
 even I think we move too fluidly

The old men are afraid to look
 for veins

beneath the skin

when one of us breaks
 but we perform anyway
pat legs until kneecaps

 are oily, rub their thin hairs
until they are full of electricity
once more

II.

 Nobody's tongue is touching
nobody's ear but my finger

is on your gums & checking
for ways in

When you die there will be no autopsy
no funeral but here, in the joints

 of my shoulders, I'm writing you
with the tiniest alphabet

which thinks my bones are the current
of some big, meaningless ocean

New Mythology: June 4th

So I make you into something tough and mean. Into something with a hide, to be contended with. You are in the woods now. Behind the house I grew up in. The stones are full of other people's teeth. I write you a canine from an old friend who has grown thin and sinewy. That's a word you like. If you saw her, your face would break. I am coming home soon. To the trees marked with our names. As soon as I'm done hunting for musculatures big enough to write the real things I mean to say. How even my elbows are printed with leaves. How the leaves have begun to look like your eyes, dark and alive, and always moving into me.

City, make me the big promise

that will crush my eyes
where we limp | through your streets
in our best boots

made of dark matter
the sky is rich with leather streaks

I feel the glitter caught in my throat
when the rain puts out

all the bright | bright tongues

I don't know who to look in the eyes anymore

how to keep fingers | to myself
these tunnels of hair | the myth

about the five senses | city—don't
look up
nothing's there but some frozen men
who | once tasted the moon

Split the face of this sky

this boy grins so good—I see the way silver
train cars shift his hair
make him dance a little

a small piece of the moment is swollen
|three carcasses
in a window |how lost am I

in this internal abundance
where we leave each fingernail out
for the wind
|hack away at us |

a little existence &
|lights on |
all the trees

*[a usually rapid chemical process that produces
heat and usually light]*

I am somewhere in this combustion
today | of this life

of sitting with the window behind me
the new weather here
the new poems in my chest

I am trying to be ok
with being alive
with being responsible for my mangled wants

my face gets heavy | behind the eyes
with all the world trying | to get in there
this world we call beautiful because a tree can live

but that's easy
& I'm too much

a little emotion machine all wrecked
in the heart sometimes
with wanting | what's holed up in the eyes of that one

to be my eyes | & wanting even more than that
my eyes
to be my own eyes

Landscape in contrast

A pond poured so blue you could hide a hundred girl-
mouths under the surface and nobody would hear them
turn coral. My limbs were so female, so sway.

There are times when the city is full up with trees & every human woman is sitting cross-legged near a windowsill asking something of the light.

I am not so small inside as I once was.

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