

The First Part

I

I must imagine myself
older than I am
I cannot tell about you, Unknown You
hiding under your mother's skirts
Drugs leaking from your fingernails like ink
Linguists must have a name for it.

She ate spices from the countryside
Bunches of tomatoes-on-the-vine
She'd bite them all one by one never
removing them
from the vine, moving on to the next when she hadn't
finished the first.
Juice would fall chin to neck to sludge
beneath her shirt -
Chest still flat and hard.

II

Water collected in the tire swing after the rain
We'd dare each other to drink it
Sometimes I could see pieces of moon in there
I never told them.

III

I want to make one beautiful thing.

A Breath

There are stories about your America
you do not tell:

Like when you were a child and you
held clumps of soil in your hands
layers of textures scents
There were worms you knew loved touched.

Your father told you break the earth
with your shovel you asked
what about the worms
Circle of life he told you but when
your mother died
he wept bitterly and you wondered what
was the difference between a worm
and your mother.

California Kiev

Tonight a young man or woman
puts on her coat, bright
and orange. She prepares.
It is her last night.

My arm the axis on which the earth tilts
I spin
I do not know which way is up.

Tonight I will go to sleep, I will love or hate the arm beside me
I will worry about the laundry
I cannot prepare the young man or woman
in her bright orange coat I cannot stroke her hair or hold
her head in my hands.

My arms ache with the vastness of the world
the simultaneousness of lives,
Stories. While I fell through the kitchen floor
my sister shaved her legs
my mother was watching the news
Even I was not there.

There are a million stories there is only one story
a calf hangs in a barn somewhere
My heart cannot be stone and melting at once.

It is a high price to pay she says. I
cannot tolerate. Once
by the Black Sea she found a jellyfish her mother
told her it would sting she felt pride in her chest like a balloon
She swirled under the sun. She throws her petrol bomb into the barricade
like the jellyfish into the ocean she has no rage but pride, hope like a
balloon. She grasps the hole in her ear the hole in her eye
inexperienced hands around her chest. It is a high price to pay she says

I will not forgive.

Sand

I am dragging my feet in the ocean
dredging things up: hair,
mistakes, identities. I am sure
we have already seen the ending,
in our veins spoiled milk
only.

The objects which come out of me are always on fire
between my lips a knot of hair, a bubble.
I am drowning my legs
in the ocean. Nothing grows between them.

There are trees around us the trees have names
we edge ourselves away from them.
We find a foxhole. We avoid the curves. I am
stirring my sex in the ocean. My words are boiled.
My heart is a miscarriage, my ears
a drum of skin.

Ten

It does not matter what we tell them
In the end it will be our elbows broken
and folded into our scapulas
It will be our bodies packed under
the sidewalks

our teeth pulling through.

They will make streetcars from our hair
our scalps the ceiling the sky

They will build our arms for trees
and we will not ask

We will not ask

Still we will not ask.