

Listen to the family

The records are getting slower now.
The conversation dimming, like a red giant star.

My sister holds me in her belly
Each word, full and patient
Jumping in her tummy to the time it takes
For a gurgling baby to incubate, consider
The emotional implications of what is said
Behind, and holding, each sentence
Like a lion holds a lamb

My brother has opened the cabinet
(Considers his options,
counted their truths.)
Jars of jam, jelly, trembling on his chest
As if the syllables, deep and resonant, are hairs
In his full beard

The sparrow singing outside, the other watcher, next door to me
The neighbor, the child on its plastic trike
Doesn't know what it wants, if it's beautiful, it's ugly
The after-breakfast morning sun
Glanced of the surface of the aproned table reminds me
It values too much what *is*

To know, to care, who is deadly

Which one waits with the moth at its mouth like a broom
Waiting to sweep everything into it

Which one keeps beauty in her column
to climb up it, Saturday

I have so many people I love.

My sister sings to her husband
Her footsteps ringing up a something between
A harsh word, a kind word, and a stare

He keeps his cool: the waiting
To know what she wants a fabric
He knows well

Those other faces, all those past husbands

All those people I could have *had*

Their hands a mere inch from my waistline
As if rings were membranes in the air

I stop at the sink: only
to redemption in it:

In the dish soap: in the dishes, watering down
Their grease—this is always the wish

Isn't it? My brother on top of the porridge
By this time, waiting to butter his toast,
Waiting to be married, *himself*

His bride a blue wait, a dirty blonde sprite

Waiting in ribbons and music

Her ownership a thing to be coming, now
Am I the only child left in the house?
A small one, braids brushing over my ears

Bangs casting their shadow across my face

The jet plane of their past lives a break in my chest
Waiting in halves, a holiness, to be *heard*

Nicole Eisenman has Sex

She started out simple
Like an ant singing music
Like light glinting off the topside of a leaf
Like an ear of corn waiting to come out

Of all of its wrappings.

She said to all those people, all those lonely ones
All those *colors*, on the verge

Of denial or rage or life in the middle
Sequestered in her paintings, the apples on the trees

Keep up! The good work. Keep going!

The end is a rotten tool with a tire in it.

Keep it simple. Be told.

Then she kept painting.

The next night, she was in bed
Unromantic, with the woman's arm
Curved over her body like a simple worm

Replete with topsoil, totally
Nutritious, on top of heat

And language: and she thought: this is not it.

She arose, and carried forth

Those brushstrokes, spent from the value
Of life and the body, keeping

The heart cold on teeth.

My sister is talking

Her voice, low like molasses, high
Like cupid keeping his head high on speed
An angel graced
With the strange mix of fear and anger
We all hope for, sometimes, after dark

It is something
To listen
The wrongs, uncounted, counted
Like wounds, or sheep

The men forgotten, bandaged
To her arm over cuts and bruises
Foundlings of a cradle
Grown old—

The last time she dared
To speak to me, eating
Her feelings, wanting
A swan in a pool, underwater

Drowning fairy tale, those lone brothers
Who flew forty miles after
The witch turned them into birds;

This is what we're after: not
Reconciliation, resolution, accomplishment
Or freedom
Pure brute love
A dough in the cheek
Pocket: a chewing
That never seems to end

A keeper of cotton spun thin like
The spindle that killed the princess
Sharp as a lost star
Wound around that elbow

The one that is bleeding still.

i., i.i., i.i.i.

i. Storm

a hole in the sky
big drops of rain
coming down slowly

like bees into blooms

a mountain of wind
perched under clouds

singing its season
into fume

i.i. The Body

nature, a mother
like breasts pinned onto chest

keeping milk
tied under fat

colon, twirled
inside stomach, dust purse

a hole at the bottom
a hole at the top

i.i.i.. Baby, wrist, language

where is this person
that ties me to you—

the eye in the socket
leaf in wind
oil in vinegar
hunger in taste?

oh, all the behemoths
stacked on this rock
from all of the ages
where do they lock?

2. heroin poem

1. advice

any
stupid betrayals, keep them close like a light.

you won't find the herd in the sheep pen.

you won't find
(your body in the mining bin)

your life or your light in the dark.

my friend, you are precious

a ladder to the heavens
loud like a fart

2. I was high and happy

a burrow in a den

swept along by three grey sparrows

mice falling on gin

the end of an orchestra

sacheting hallways

governed light

an elbow in the hall.

A mouse in the hall.

A death in the hall.

3. if a body was meat

if a body was meat

in its anger

a shift to go by

a wood it wanted to walk through

to get to the heart of the thing

if cheeks could be eaten:

eyes left to tilt

sideways

seeing and being seen, like photographs

of all city ladies and lost men
dying in New York
there would be more here, the artist
of those lines and these wheels, awake
calls for more:
generous

if a body had a meat
and I could eat it
all bloody and cut up
asleep in the seat.

4. The last time I was high
There was a long left turn
forgotten, a baby in the oven
a plant on the seat
dying in the hot sun
alive in the rain.

That was what we needed:
a hymn to fall into
a leftover pad in the trash can
swollen with blood
two calves on the farm property
weeds tilting under feet
sun beating down

a rage in the wind.