

infant * cinema

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this book is for my family, before and after

god save mantra. the baby. the unicorn tantrum. god save the
ventriloquist. the museum of shrinking things. the things themselves.
the angel working the knots from an extension cord. the exodus
followed by the exodus of my father's turtles. god save the condom.
the flag of the scrotum. the handcuffed mother of sleepwalking illegals.

lordy that's a lot of people

observes the refugee. what the dream tells us about the headache is worth repeating.

I cross my legs in the soul's bathroom and suck on the business end of a squirtgun. if I jerk enough, I can make the newspapered floor into a headline that reads *season slows for Ohio toddlers*. I can't remember the last time a toddler ran past me or, for that matter, the last time a toddler ran. god save the translucent. the abused are never more alone than when their abusers get help.

my child. my diver who wets the bed. my worrier who rescues domestic
scenes for animals accused of gaslighting. my swimmer. bather of
grasshoppers. my lovely bird alone in an airplane.

two things to do on an empty stomach are:

hold a séance.

follow the spider's trail of abandoned birthmarks.

in the video, the young woman is being force-fed cake by a man with a ruined tongue. my mother can't eat and watch at the same time. your mother is holding me and wondering what happened to this thing. our fathers are veering into the realm of film criticism. where you are depends wholly on my sister's makeup. god's parents have no concept of time.

what was pain? was pain the spoiled dog of the blackmailed priest?
was pain the story of the bear that triggered my father's insomnia?
before it began to go everywhere without him, was pain god? was it
holding the note so long the cured forgot they'd been? or maybe it was
entering the high corn disguised as my brother mid-seizure? was pain a
rival church? as we ask, is death being made to account for its own
disappearance?

I am on vacation and this dead body is kind of amazing. you remain my sweetest brother. brother, god is only the end of the dream. I dream the ocean is a doll that comes to my knees. suicide has a room all to itself. can narrate what I'm saying.

I smoke because I can no longer tape record my anxiety.

it became outgoing. buried fish by the bucket in the backyard. brushed
my teeth while calling my mouth the secret of the washrag. boated
darkness from stone to stone. chose to love. loved duration.

inside my father I can't hear one tv over another. I have a body fit for radio. I picture my mother as a woman who can eat without moving her mouth. the people watching the fight want to be seen looking at it. I'm not the only one pretending to cheer. my first word was said to my first dog. that dog told dogs to give a fuck.

she is pregnant and he is not. at the same age of the boy before me, I am given by sister a blindfold to place on any woman looks like my mother. there are so many. I tell myself it's my body and my body where every bone believes that god lost his eyesight to a vision man had of a moth bumping into a crow.

nightmare: her father prepares the pull-out bed to show her Jesus is gone.

I know you from Adam.

one of us is dreaming I've entered your body. brain injury or no, I feel I
can do whatever the devil can do to the scream that wakes him. who
was it found me with god's help? I have some names. all middle.

one could create food with a mouth like that. one has no stomach for violence. one swallows like a gunman whose right hand knows you're missing the back of your head. one is a chewing machine. one is quick to cook for the tortured. spoonfed, one is hunger. artifact of the longest meal.

your human life distracts god from the animal's plot to kill him. those
tagged as dog meat can eat their weight in nostalgia. in the end, your
mother will confess that the absence she felt was an oversight. as for
the world I took you from, you're all it can think about.

insomnia sends to the attic the dog-walking angel. the dream's cripple
breaks its own thumb for losing a child's nose. some melancholy kid
explains to my son how there's a fly in the body being sad about bones.
my son nods his head as if sounding out the severity of his mother's
double vision. disability, like belief, has the patience of god's ghost. has
the time gone from nothing's noise? god save the book of now. I don't
want to be seen as a person.

god does my mother's work while father lands a night job as a yard sale cashier. my sister continues to believe her baby is a lightweight. my brother goes from motorcycle to breathing machine and back. dogs pace and cigarettes last. the postman's darkness moves into a paper doll at which point he asks satan for an airplane. I was here when I got here.

satan worship expands to include birdwatching. the first thing a boy hears a father say is enough about me. such a boy finds his mother not only talking to a bird but telling it what to do.

she shakes the baby she thinks is fruit. she screams at my mother for covering my ears. at home, I am made to tell father the whole story which has somehow come to include a fork. it is not uncommon, he says, for an ugly person to hold a fork where others can see it. then: two things can light the cigarette in your brain, and one is masturbation. now: a good ghost story gets you into heaven.

grief. grief in that, beside any baby, I am the one person competing for my loneliness. grief in that my brother's fasting secures a pair of scissors.

grief in that I glow in the light.

oh skeleton made in my image. oh you. oh you and your baby. cereal
of ant bones. oh the hills of the uploaded hills. oh men men only.
quoting the born. collected sorrows oh passing of the nest. church of
the stalled car. oh as we attend.

sickness paints the house of my mother's conceptual therapist. the devil
urinates in public as part of a retrospective honoring the films my dead
brother didn't make. as a ghost, I am given to haunting the confessional.
I hear little more than how my mouth is a magnet for baby talk. the
beauty of the father isn't pain. pain can create the present it predicts.

open with

in the numb habitat

it calls home

where an example

is made

of clone

sadness...or,

if it learns to walk, it'll never be the same.

the child asleep in the astronaut's photographic memory. the child
asleep in its father's arms. the child asleep in worry. worry as an
inquiry attended by the stairmaker's angel. what do you resist?
helplessness. as in arrest. as in christ.

if found unresponsive, know I am doing one thing well. if god was alone,
why speak? torture is part of my country's space program. ask any
swimmer if the body ends in the body.

headaches that keep a mother from needing shoes.

nightmares
not about
dissecting
the piglet
but dissecting
the wrong.

dreams
of feeding
a snowball
to a scarecrow, of not feeding

the disabled.

fighting for a mind of its own, the baby settles for the mind of its own
god.

year eight: your birthday
spider
frees itself
from your brother's
eye.

before we jump,
our father rakes our clothes into a pile. our mosquito

killing
mother
saves one
for jesus.

this is me
praying
for a photo
of my father's
last meal.

me

praying
to have
the allergic
reaction
my mother
faked.

for proof
of animal
suicide.

a mirror for my toys. dirt for my brother.

we are writing on satan's baseball the words we use for lonesome
objects. we have in common a mother who can't take us anywhere. a
father known for dieting and forgiveness. my wife who married nothing
to take its name.

I am not tired of being born. as a man, I can tell my body nothing it doesn't already know. when you hear of a three-eared baby, into what memory do you pull the third? with any luck, you'll knock on the wrist your father cuts.

in the library's dream, the abortion clinic is no bigger than a fingerprint. it is because of this fingerprint that I am left to plan my morning around making a fist for the angel I only meant to frighten. I was blind but now I ghost.

church of intermission. church of the rolled-away church my fever
follows. church of it ain't a baby until it spits. church of the lawnmower
left running. of the space you give the grieving horse. church of you
when you die in my sleep. of musical suicides. church of the
disinfected high chair. of the false bruise. of how to become a balloon
in the church of touch.

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He writes at kingsoftrain.wordpress.com and, like you, made it this
far.*