

Aholaah Arzah

Here am I in the thinning of my skin

Stale cells balled lint in the toes of old socks there were so many moments when something shone in light in shroud of air that is always invisibly there and I was struck by all the unseen in which we dwell the entering of through the eyes and ears and tongue I was going to love you better this time I was going to let the needle of knowing sew dry leaves and pretty paper tethers together pronounce it art but there was always ever something distracting a listing I wrote out and I forgot how to live in any good omen much less this dislocated knuckle I was going to make many small things right pay a little more attention but I have already forgotten what it was I wrote yesterday it is only ever the act of writing itself the spasm of finger over nubbins of plastic the sound of words tapped out the first erratic drops rain on the thick tarpaulin of fall leaves the shells of mollusks the crows ravage and let rattle down my roof once I asked a sax man to play the background music of my life it seems I may have squandered all my best lines

You forgot to wish me happy birthday but I don't mean this as criticism

I only note that whatever compulsion drove you across the years to interrupt the activities of your day to acknowledge my birthday has faded and I am okay with that with your self-release from the obligation of being the good friend the faithful notary of details your release from memory's sticky little fingers I wish only that when you read this you feel acknowledged not obligated to respond I probably forgot to thank you for a myriad of small kindnesses and sacrifices so slight that maybe you did not even notice them but I noticed their nettle they entered my being tiny glass slivers and when everything else turns to slime they may yet catch a ray of light and shine I was going to ask you not to call anymore not to tell me that you love me not to expect me to return the favor I loved you well enough once but in has been so very long ago neither of us is the same our livers replaced dozens of times by new cells fueled by the choices we made even when we were not really choosing but acting on convoluted impulses alone I don't even know you anymore I can't get past the constructions you have created your smile feels calloused your eyebrows are tangled mats still I remain most fond of the one discolored front tooth and the nervous articulation of your fingers it was always as though you were clutching at birds disparate in their flight

In those days

when I was new to being his mother I often felt the rubbery drag of their eyes the carnivorous thrill that drove their rank breath toward any bare skin exposed felt it agitate the hairs of my forearms settle into the damp roots of my nape a sodden persistent nettle even as a child I was taught not to stare but these shop apes lost all cognizance of decorum I had been admonished not to adopt a special needs child as there were plenty of mothers in the world while not so plenty many artists still some irrefutable recognition was determinate when that tiny photo slipped from its manila envelope in those days we couldn't go anywhere that there wasn't always some sanctimonious sap sidling up to him with their fish fingered laying on *God bless you child* lisped rapturously filled with the heady grace of their own benevolence as though they held any real insight into what a fitful god might deem a blessing or a curse I tell you now that this child was my undeserved approbation the greening of my witheredness a rarified sintering that I have stepped into and jealously joyously taken for my own

First you must disavow yourself

of any misconceptions any delusions of grandiose accoutrements illusions of glandulous attachments it is advisable to take pictures any cuts or bruises bromide discolorations any fissile discretions record any comments any confessions anything confided in moments of stress as these are likely to be revealing and make excellent documentation take a lot of pictures devise a strategy of self-protection as these children are culpable of great misrepresentation due to the trauma suffered at the hands of their defunctionalized ought to be institutionalized poorly structured parenting units tenuously attached biologically in some cases largely by circumstance in others it takes some time to delineate the legal custodial appropriation you are only a temporary abatement do not become overly appended take more pictures some foster parents have been successful by taking an effusion of pictures creating documentation constructing a life story that later may be admissible in court

Obviously I could have loved any of them better

if I had first learned to love the materials at hand scrap paper rusted pieces of tin rubber tubing hair of the dog that nipped me any old cache or cavalcade with the passion reserved to zealots and trustingly gifted to heart's slime and gristle a kind of practice does make a kind of perfect assuming perfection a virtue that the claptrap of hands clutter and stumble shins isn't its own lovely music but be that as it may I have never had any acute affection for namby pamby puppets who snag and tangle their strings on the barbed wire of disregard who wouldn't rather dote on the oil slick black feathered audacious spirits that shriek outside the window and eye with suspicion any proffered morsel so I didn't fairy tale love them so much but yanked them along petulant kites ripped loose of snarl's clench until they took their ragged solo flights and that was more than love alone could have done I thought