

[SOMETHING OPENED]



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

You Ask What Happened	1
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[REMAINDERS]

When I Think About My Brother	9
North Carolina, This Will Be The Last	13
Found Inside My Mother’s Journal	15
Dinner with Matthew & His Friends	20
Twenty Miles Offshore [I]	21
Notes on a Conversation with My Sister	22

[RESPONSES]

Placeholders for a Father [Found During His Mother’s Funeral]	29
My Feral Parts Apologize [In Response to a Letter from My Mother]	31
Delayed Response to the Question, “What Happened to Your Leg?”	34
Sometimes I Want You to Throw Things	36
Prescriptions for Pediatric Survival	37

[BLUEPRINTS]

Regarding Older Sisters [The First Thing I Remember About Living]	40
PTSD & Tree Branches [Involuntary Recall on a Sunday Night]	42
Argument in the Parking Lot of Matthew’s Apartment Complex	43
Two Minutes [Skin for Skin]	44

[TRACES]

What the Water Knows [Natatorium, Theology]	49
Under Construction	51
When Matthew Walks into the Atlantic	53
Twenty Miles Offshore [II]	54
Taxonomy of an Automobile Accident	56

Notes	59
Acknowledgements	60
With Gratitude and Thanks	61
About the Author	62

“By dividing each into its particular species, and by defining it, I still find what to say in my memory and it is from my memory that I draw it out.”

“I name the image of the sun, and this too is in my memory. For I do not recall the image of that image, but the image itself . . . I name memory and I know what I name.”

—St. Augustine, *Confessions*

YOU ASK WHAT HAPPENED

& I tell you

Car accident

You ask how

& I say

We hit a tree

You ask—*How old ? You ask—Who else
was in the car? You ask—Did it hurt ?*

What you do not say is—*What*

do you remember?

* * *

The theory goes like this:

All natural human languages share
a set of properties. The ability to learn
the rules is hard-wired into the brain.

I could whisper my brother's name
in your ear

I could tell you he was sixteen
I could tell you he was the driver

but I cannot speak the sound
of it—can find no metaphor

exact enough

to translate his teenage arms—no
equation to decode the dark
skin of his thin

wrists wrapped
around a steering wheel—

There will never
be a polite way
to say—*What happened to your body?*

* * *

The moral of *The Book of Job*
goes like this:

There is no moral, no cause, no purpose. Sometimes suffering
is just suffering.

But the real questions are never the ones
we ask—it wasn't Job's "mistake"

[*What do I do to you oh
watcher of Humanity? Why*]

It was his assumption
he could speak the tongue
of God and understand

[*hast thou made me
a target*] [*a mark
against thee*]

These days, I want only
to tell you what I know

to be true:

[*I heard the paramedic say, "He's okay—
the boy on the driver's side—minor injuries"*]

A broken windshield is simply
a forcing

between, nothing
more than a matter of sudden
stress & covalent sharing.

You will not hear it—

the chemical bonds undone

the whole of the solid world metal-stained
and out of place. When he spoke

[*James was squatted beside her
saying, "Look at me—Don't close
your eyes—Breathe Be okay Keep Breathing"*]

his voice was pale as tree-bark static.

* * *

Supposedly, there is always more
than one answer—an inside
and an outside to every surface—
but no one
considers silence.

[*He will not suffer me
to take my breath*]
[*not mortal*] [*that I
might answer—*]

If you want I could tell you it wasn't
a big deal; I could say it wasn't as bad
as it could have been.

I could give you the book
where my mother wrote it in ink
I needed
to make it real—she said.

[*The truck was sideways in the road
the top was off and the glass was gone
I couldn't see her*]

If I asked, would you tell me
the words
you've never said
out loud?

[*I found James squatted down beside the tree
He had cuts on his face
blood on his shirt and hands—yours
or maybe his own—I couldn't tell*]

Tell me you want to see
the marks
and I'll lift my shirt; I'll show you
the nature of interruption

You should know
the act of opening
is itself
a container—everything
about the language of body
is public

[*Sticky gas station smell
skinny arms shaking like he
does in the snow*]

Earlier, when I said—I *was lucky*
I left out the part about
what the brain keeps
in silent storage

[*Breathe—
he won't stop
saying it*]

If you want someone
to know how okay
you are
 don't ever
close your eyes, don't
ever let your neck give
in to the weight
of your skull

["Stay awake Look at me
Keep breathing Keep your eyes
open"]

* * *

According to a different theory, every language
in the world needs
 pronouns—which is to say:
 sometimes we cannot speak
 without replacements.

But I've traced my way back
a thousand times, dug synaptic
path after synaptic path, sent
out receptors in search

[She kept saying, "Just take off
the wires." She wanted to know
if it was still raining]

of the right referent . . .

Accident—the word in-place-of-name

a tag sewn

into the folds
of my family. O still point

of the turning world—consider

the moment at its most singular—

[*The call came at 1:38pm on a Friday—*

how

everything that will be
is now *after*

and everything that was: *before*

I was washing clothes.]

* * *

In old pictures my right leg
looks exactly like the left

[Masks, cold metal, I can see
my own hands and feet
in the air above

somewhere]

When they sawed off
the cast, my mother took
a picture—*Don't worry*
she said—*They won't*
be red like this forever

["*Not so hard,*" she was—

] [everyone talking

but not to me]

["*Let go,*" She said—"*Put my mom*
where I can see her"]

* * *

For years, it never bothered me.
If you had asked, I would have
told you—*I wouldn't change it*

The human body loses
consciousness for many reasons
but sometimes, it doesn't
Would you look away
if I told you there is a pain
that ought to snuff itself out?

[*They wouldn't let me in the ambulance.*
She was still awake. I told her not to fall
asleep]

[*She told me in recovery, "Let me die now*
and go to heaven"]

These days I want only
to say it as it was

I want only to understand
what it would take
to translate the heaviness
of the human head—

For you
to make eye contact when I say:

I didn't know I'd wake
in the dark for years
to my brother's sinewy
teenage arms lifting me
from out the ditch—
right leg split

ankle to knee like a torn
seam, loose threads of vein ["Look at me," I told her]
and skin—something open ["Don't close
your eyes"]

where it should
have been closed

For years I told myself—one day
you will not remember

For years, I thought I'd find a right way
to explain:

*I remember feeling like a broken toy
I remember loving the softness of the grass
I remember not caring at all
how I got there*