

She is here in this place again—a running fly on sap. If she holds her legs up any longer she might die, but they move. She lets lactic acid fall, tries to rub her muscles numb. She kisses her wrist. She kisses her palm. All of her fingers. She tells them they're beautiful the way her father used to. You are beautiful, she says to every single one over and over—a rhythm slack and long. She is on a bed. A full. Her tongue is swollen from Chardonnay—tastes like vomit, iron, comes in a box with a chartreus label (this should be a warning sign). If she stops kissing and moving her legs she might drown. She knows this. She's seen drowning. Her father does it. He is Lazarus. A certain type of Lazarus. A merLazarus, a man who can live both on land and sea—has gills, is immortal. Sometimes she comes into her room, explains his drinking, tells her his search for help or God. It is 24 December 2014. He pats her hard on the back. She writes about this. She gives a detailed description of each pat.

Right now she is on her back because of too much wine. She has been on her back before: with and without men, with and without women. The quilt is melding to her back knitting pearling moss stitching to her pores. They let too much air out, she says, wool is warm. She baas into the dark. Outside the streetlight blinks like a satellite. She asks it a question. Searches the yellow dim hum for an answer.

Sometime earlier. The woman, then girl—thirteen years old, DR, is playing catch with a lefty. Lazarus. The ball has a curve. It hits her face. Twice. She is on her back. The clouds are stratus. She is in this place again—a fly running on sap. She stuck her tongue to it once when she was hiking, loving the weather. When she was eight she was under the impression that the tree was bleeding. She wondered what it tasted like. Today, she notices, is nice and gray and a little red on the right side. High-gloss. Like a photo-realist oil painting. She went to a museum with her school and has seen paintings like this: The blue white stratus on the hood of a shiny black car. The people staring into it. Undulating. All in fedoras—little feathers sticking out. Bird men (Richard Estes, *Reflections of the Woolworth Building*).

Bird men, all look like dads. My father is a gray and brown bird, she says, has dull eyes, a limp talon, a chronic cough. She is on the ground spinning up at the sky. He looks at her—smiles wide. Rub some dirt on it, he says fist full of clay. It smells like her dead cat. He puts it in her mouth. She dies and comes back. She thinks this feels like baptism. Once her sister said, what if they hold you under too long? I can hold my breath for almost 60 seconds, DR says. How do you know?

Sometime earlier. She is here. For him. He'll know this. She gives him a name, *da*. All men have this. Have those stitches in their hand—FATHER. They'll say: I've never held one, it's too small, it moves its mouth too much. He moves his mouth too. The same way. She heard they tried psychoactive drugs on him in the 60's when he was seven before LSD was illegal. She knows him as a ring round of smoke—as yellow stains—as bass voice and big hands. Her hands are here. Why can't you stand them anymore, she says. She says so many things.

24 December 2014. After the talk. DR keeps her laptop on her nightstand. She is a poet superstar.

That's what she tells everyone. She is working on a book right now:

December 2009

It was cold outside and she told you to walk her to her car. You do because she's older and nice to you. You're wearing yellow and you think that she hates this. She doesn't. She borrowed your scarf. You let her keep this all the way to the car. She's parked in lower away from the school and your mom's car. Debate boys are down there. They smile at you and the girl. She flips her hair and smiles pretty at you. You swallow. You swallow hard. Your throat sticks because it's cold. She breathes and tells you not to look at the boys to look at her. She presses you to her car. You let her keep the scarf.

Later the older girl give you waterbottles of clear liquid in her bedroom. Says, drink up. You inhale. Closes your eyes. Throw back.

January 2010

Two girls are in a hallway. One girl has long hair and one girl has short hair. They've cried together before. Right now they don't. They're looking at each other. They touch each other's waists and hands. They tell each other something. Two girls are in the hallway and they mouth things. They mouth these things into the other's mouth. They skip class like this every day. Some days they sit in the cold in the older girl's car. The younger girl's breathe fogs up the window.

February 2010

Two girls are sitting in a living room. They're sitting with the younger girl's parents. The older girl tells them that they're in love—that she will take care of the younger one. The younger one—let's call her DR—doesn't say anything. She cries. Her parents tell the older one to leave. Her mom stands outside for hours. Her father asks DR why. Why?

DR doesn't eat for days. She listens to the door. She is afraid of the older one. DR lies.

March 2010

Three girls are on a track. Usually there are four. They all watch each other. One of these girls is DR. They all watch each other and run. They stretch in the grass. DR has trouble keeping water down. Wants more, wants bitter eye bite, the numbness that follows.

DR smiles at the other two girls. One of the girls—a girl DR has known for thirteen years—holds

her shoulder. She tells DR a secret.

April 2010

A girl—her name is DR—shuts and refuses. Refuses water. She plans to live without it. She is always walking. She watches herself naked flex and unflex. She wears dark and writes poems. Keeps them in a folder. Shares them with other girls. They hold them in their mouths. All ink and teeth. They write them again. They show everyone. They show everyone.

May 2010

DR lies. She tells people that she's a poet. DR has been saying this for years. Everyone starts lying. They say that DR is a poet. Something that she must live up to. DR buys a turtleneck. This is a step in forgetting.

This is a step in forgetting. This is a step in forgetting. This is a step in forgetting, she says.

DR opens her mouth all the time. Warmth comes out of it and she imagines it touching everyone she knows. She imagines a heat lamp or an air vent in winter or your lover's mouth—all of that in the Arkansas winter after a frost. They begin to look to her for warmth. They're all freezing and shivering and dying like babies, wanting warm marrow cuddles, sustenance. DR sometimes pulls out the old photo album—WINTER 1994. She is one year old in all the pictures. Has happy pink cheeks. DR wants to be there with her—hold her hand over her mouth—put her down in the snow and count. One two three four five six seven eight nine ten eleven twelve thirteen, she says. She stops. There.

First memory: Linoleum floor crisscrossed in white and cream a man kneeling in polyester pants leather cracked work boots hands out smelling like menthols yellow rough and unfamiliar—a woman saying she's leaving. Movement. Small steps. A crying man. His eyes are brown and his face is hard. He doesn't know how to hold. The woman leaves in a blur of noise. (Everything is violet and fast). He walks outside with DR and stands in the sun for hours. The grass is high. DR chews on this. He forgets to watch.

25 December 2014. She learns how to move her legs again. She wakes up. Groggy. Early. Smells coffee and cats. The room is periwinkle, a color for children. She cries about this. She tells the room she hates it. I hate you, she says. She is at her parents' home for Christmas. She has a duffel bag of bottles next to her bed wrapped in t-shirts. Evan in the blue T-shirt from her 6th grade swim meet, Jack in the green T-shirt from her 9th grad track meet. Her mother is smiling by the tree with a video camera. DR hates how she sounds on camera. It's blinking. Hi, she says. They unwrap presents. Her father is already gone. She heard them this morning:

MOTHER: You need to leave.

FATHER: This is my house dammit.

MOTHER: Nobody wants you here.

FATHER: You're a real bitch.

MOTHER: The kids might hear you. Just go to your parents.

FATHER: It's five in the fucking morning.

MOTHER: Then go somewhere else.

FATHER: Cunt.

A two door silver Nissan starts and skids out the drive. The dogs howl. The woman howls too.

Later Christmas day. We're going to your aunt Kris's later, the mother says, we're meeting up with your cousin—Jerry. Jerry is the dead cat, DR says. He was black, a stray, a birthday present.

Jerry died in the fall when DR was twelve. He was in the front yard and clawless. DR's father was supposed to be watching him, but he was slow. The neighbor, Dave, forgot to close his fence. His Doberman got out, had already killed six cats. Jerry—DR imagines—never saw it coming. Just snapped his neck. He was so red after that. Four weeks at the vet. They got to bring him home for Christmas. They ordered book on how to take care of paraplegic cats. He cried all night. DR couldn't take it. She held him when he died. She blamed Lazarus.

Christmas dinner is on the table. DR is wearing her best sweater, it's so red. Say grace, mother says. Make her do it, DR says. You're never home—just say grace so we can eat, the potatoes are getting cold. DR says grace. She excuses herself for a moment. She unwraps the bottle in the blue T-shirt. Remembers how her father drove them home from the meet. She'd found liquor in her water cooler, didn't tell her mom. She held on to her seat the whole way home. She takes a drink. Counts to thirteen. This is a step in forgetting, she says.

Meanwhile a gray and brown bird, one with a limp talon and dull eyes, is circling. He is always circling. DR imagines what he might be doing:

The bird is giving nuts to his parents. They love nuts for Christmas. He is talking about

his old band, fretting the air. His parents don't know what to do. They blame the psychoactive drugs in the 60's. He's lazed out on their couch. His beard smells like cheap beer and nicotine and whiskey.

25 December 2014. DR is making a pecan pie with her mother. This is her favorite pie. She kneads out the dough. She loves the smell but she can't eat it. It's too sweet. Her mouth doesn't know what to do with sugar. She misses spices. Spices, she says, spices.

DR leaves, takes a swig. Remembers when she was nine and her father found her with her new presents before Christmas. He smiled, said, don't tell your mom. DR breaths deep.

26 December 2014. When the cops come DR's mom shuts the door in their faces, puts palm to mouth. Doesn't cry, says, go to your rooms. DR, bottle handed, imagines herself at the wheel. Busch in the console, Evan Williams in hand, turning to look at the gutter lights flickering, plastic Santas' on roofs. Her legs are wedged somewhere between safe and the periwinkle wall. She is here in this place again—a fly running on sap. A still cat felting to a quilt. Air stops. She is in a space, playing oracle. The wall is red.

DR breathes. Somewhere the circling has stopped. A vibrating orbit of glass of steel of slosh and snow. Spot in the great open.