

HOW SHE LEARNED TO LISTEN

When the father's car pulls into the drive (it was green, he used chewed Juicy Fruit and Bondo to cover the rust), she slips off to hide

in the closet, the one used to hang coats still cold from the outside air. (The muffler was bad, an unplaced rattle rattled his nerves.)

She slides behind wool, long and black, behind the brothers' hooded sweatshirts, the smell of burning leaves. She slips

like air that swallows sound, lets it go, steers clear of her own flowered slicker, afraid its lightness will tip off a sequence of sorry

clinks, empty hangers that clang like the sideways U of the fence gate as a hand shoves it up (and the gate swings open and a boy walks in). She stands

like a lamp, like a ketchup bottle, like two trees on a windless day. She stands like a bookcase, a refrigerator, like a broken leg. She stands until

the father opens the closet door, head turned, arm reaching like a blindfolded kid with a stick, a piñata. She sticks her arms out, yells *surprise!* (as if it really were)

in her high coat-muddled voice. He goes along with this, mouth puckered in a small O. (A tunnel. *This is where I came from*, she thinks.)

Sometime later, she can sit in a room full of people, hear behind their voices the secret of a heater turning on, the soon-to-be clank of air trapped in pipes.

EVERYTHING

This has something to do
with what your heart does
when you see a crow
walking on the road
toward another dead animal
whose tail moves in the wind,
brushes against blood and stones,
says, *See, I'm alive.*
Tell me I'm alive.

And you're driving the car
heading toward that crow
when you remember fingers drumming
one at a time against a table.
You realize that sound is not a clock.
Fingers pounding in the quietest way
are not a clock. They are not time.
Time is an attitude toward a crow.

Statues of saints, arms raised, guard a cemetery.
You think those arms ask you to come in.
You look at your hands,
the steering wheel's simple circle,
and forget about blood.
Because that is everything.
Looking up and going straight is everything.

HEAVEN, AS WE KNOW IT

My dead sister and I
are walking down the street.
She is here because
I am lonely and she understands
and because
this woman with the most beautiful breasts
just walked by,
and no one else,
not even this friend
who hasn't died yet
and who is walking with us,
can understand what I mean
when I say,
Her breasts are so beautiful.
I wish this street
were the desert in winter at sunset
and we were lying down
talking about the most perfect foods
we have ever eaten,
and that is simply all.

I love these beautiful things.
I love putting words together.
And I love all this listening,
which isn't just in my head,
which is heaven.

WHAT THE NEXT VOICE SAID:

Simple advice:

Take this with a grain of salt.

(Sweet potatoes, green
green spinach,

tomatoes pink with lies.

Salt pinched
between forefinger and thumb,
balanced, antigravity,

above carrots, onions, lentils bouncing
in a pot.

Salt thrown over a shoulder,
traveling to linoleum, a wish—

health, love, a new car—
on its back.

Thick utilitarian salt

leaves a history, raised and white,
on the black leather boots
that leave their own
damp history
inside my door.)