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Post Script: Read This Backward, or at Least Remember the Beginning Like You Would the End

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POST SCRIPT: READ THIS BACKWARD, OR AT LEAST
REMEMBER THE BEGINNING LIKE YOU WOULD THE END
Kristin Abraham

I

Imagine Mom
wringing her hands, but
this is the '90's version; women
don't wring anymore. Not even
dish towels, really.

Yelling, *this is important*. Lives start as one word, two. It was a
mother who didn't listen, or worse, didn't respond. Changing
language became the movies you weren't allowed to watch: *sex
words / bad dreams*. Twisted white. Poems and lies laid down.
We knew to keep driving would always be one day ahead of the
weather.

II

The—*oh, I think I have a broken arm*, the over
and over of your own wrist / a pair
of your father's pliers, or pushing
yourself down and riding
your bike to the doctor.

Even though you're standing in the cold, everyone's forgetting;
you don't make time. *Someone else will*. And your cousin eyes
you over the up and down; he can't stop your chest from rising
and falling. Your teeth click *great-grandchildren and new green
grass*.

III

Your father never yells
with hands, but he
is your father.

There are things we forget. Orange reminds you of listening;
the eye in the Plexiglas box. *Then there are things we distort.*

IV

Okay, and bedtime.
A little girl, book to read, a lot of
be quiet and *no nightmares*.

When the birds got
into her head,
she was / wasn't.

V

Creed: *This is how you
use language.* The rules of
this is how we are sorry.

In the end, he was a long clench, a pill like stain, a stain like
ocean. He had just finished lunch. Your words were a string of
beads: *Our Father / Hail Mary.* The priest couldn't say his name
right.

It was clear: to pull the wool was taking God right over eyes.

VI

She fell down the stairs two weeks ago;
she has the cast to prove it. She has
to come and get you with crutches, is yelling
at you in the waiting room:

This is important.

Another warm something. *You give him words; he gives you the Word.* That and a thin white piece a bit like bacon. All the time paper like smoked meat, like tonguing a piece of her blessed breakfast sweater. More that than body. More body than blood.

VII

A story more exciting: the loose hand
of a T shirt. Underneath, she is
the sore bounce of breasts
or a movie and she is running.

(Mom wringing
and offering herself
in the form of a sandwich, a re-heat, a
can I try again in every breath.)

Lucky she knows
the doctor or you look
like an abuse case.

VIII

Not a lie; a story more exciting.

Rooms like burning butter.
The little girl had already
learned sex, had taken
the young priest out of her
mind to the hole in the wood
behind the altar. She learns
death words / prayer.

The shadow of blue green
behind you: lines where neck and foot met wall.

IX

*Your stories in boxes, your language
little bones on the hillside.
Little bones made of—.*

There's one dry pot, one faded and cracked plastic baseball player,
sour knot, hips and shoulders cocked in a ready-to-swing pattern.
Grave: a hand, a three-legged dog, and a field of dry, winter wheat.

X

Some days just the fear you'll fall down
and be her. Her face loose
and covered in flour, wet eyes out of
flour, almost pink.

Phone hanging from its cord, dangling sound, and you know
they're words, but all you hear is different tones, different ups
and downs. This is a hallway, and walking is the same as standing
and washing in the shower: you can't move, your arms hand,
you're porn star dead-eye sexy.

XI

Your remembering depends on what you forget. Wiping the small white worm out of everyone's eye; putting it back.

The host was never paper or paper circles, but your mouth open: language. Teeth tight, the space in the back shaking. An absoluteness of silence *even in the act of telling*. You are wire screen, filter and distort. Tiny closet and ears. The most frightening dream: *either no one is listening or no one is telling*.