

## MOTHER'S LOVE

I

Give the child up, says the warm blanket

Give the child up, says death, says  
ruination, says torture, give the child up we will care for him  
say the men with carapace faces

You can grieve, says the net  
you are my favorite, says falling out a window

Grief has rules, says the raven, grief has grades,  
sidelines, crowds to cheer you on  
say the friendly faces smeared with dung

you can ace it, say the men with beetle-shell faces

II

The baby is tearing up tissues one by  
one each  
in pieces with a strengthless  
ripping

On my eyelids the fibers linger

Pale filaments of fairy dust, the hairs  
of donkey ears  
creatures under spells

The fairy makes a sound like cellophane

The baby answers in lighter-clicks  
*pab* of little flame

The baby looks upward into a weather system  
it settles round his head, a crown

He makes a sound like eyeliner coming wet and thin onto a brush  
He makes a sound that wet and silken  
you are getting very  
young you are getting very  
very

Wake mother wake this is how they take your baby  
when you are drowsy with enticement —

### III

His voice comes like a veil onto my eyes

Lightly a mother's bridal veil crumbles

The sweetness has come up to my collarbones  
shows yellow under my chin  
The mother is marked, tired. Tired and marked.

"Let's play on the bed"  
(Don't speak, it will pull out the slow drip  
anaesthetic of his voice)

He pulls a book off the nightstand  
I am helpless  
We are addicts, an old boyfriend would say  
This is not that. But it is  
I am helpless

My hair fills with sparks

He is eating the rare book  
curls the corner back so prettily

So what, say the hairs on my arms  
so what, says the water rising in the room  
He is melting all the books, tasting them  
eating the corners—

In between, that sweet voice of no-words-yet

His sounds turn words to eyelashes, a fine fine net  
a white powder

IV

The baby pulls tissues from the box

Out! and then  
the next  
one he pulls

that one one more  
with equal attention to them

all the pleasure is up to my skull  
again the feel of my hair, new-cut, on my back  
a rabbit asleep there

He pulls pulls  
a white, still rabbit from the box he would  
hold it up till it became vapor

The air gathers in pleats of vapor

I lie back

We are pulled together toward—  
Are we are alive on a planet

“My son and me”  
(try to speak)

The words heavy as cured meat can't push them  
outward into the street the sun

The baby holds up an erasure  
tears it, tears off a room

V

floats over the edge of a breath  
of a stand of milkweed

His breath exists as sand, slipping over my elbows

Water is pouring over the bed  
Where is any fierceness

The traffic holds the house like a five-point harness

click

There is no traffic  
no door just the edge of an infinite pour

there is not even that

open your eyes

Anne says: "it is like mother's love"  
(heroin)

What is it  
I asked her  
what does it feel like?

VI

Left alone with the baby is boring

woodfloors knees clockfalls make rounds  
of hours

Then the light, milkily, comes

We are sugared in a medium, he and I

He is smiling  
Happiness is on me like a scratch in a car door

The floor is dirt and chalk  
and cool as a henhouse

He has crawled into in the bathroom

“Can you open the door?”

“Can you close the door?”

The tub’s cool slope  
frames his head with stone

I smell like done bread  
Turn over the loaf, tap tap—  
hollow sound—door open. He is smiling

A fishing line, clear, thin  
drawn through my legs then tight across my chest  
a line fine as a rapidograph  
constant, narrow, even, drawn  
round my wrists, shoulders, I am bound

back to front, tied up lightly in

VII

in what?  
The light

is beautiful again.  
Outside in the stopped air the animals have stopped.

The baby points at the light.  
“?” he says  
Answers sparkle and turn like coins on a line  
Look at this look

how you are a fish-mother, silvery and still  
on the pond-bottom  
can't breach the surface where the boy  
churns up hard light—

There is a spreading through me like snowmelt

He is in the milky world of the bathroom, the daytime  
dry chill of it, he is suspended in marble

All at once he points at me

Then he is out the door, stepping onto a silver wing

How to describe to you this height, this opening?