

**SIMON PERCHIK**

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■  
Eight months your heart  
that blinking flag  
mountaineers still carry to the sun  
—you came down with only a cribsheet  
folded around the light

—it's enough! the air  
ignites, cries out  
pours down your bones  
gutting your throat.  
You drink maps  
waiting for a name

named Eight.  
The July you couldn't find  
looms in front  
covered with snow —Eight

just born and your heart  
one month short  
rises as each morning the sun  
somehow must be carried down  
tiptoe, asleep on its side

and the July you couldn't climb  
will always be too dry, too hot  
your skin burn out  
—a druggist walks past  
wraps something for shade  
and inside the jar you hear that fire  
folding around your name.

July. The highest month  
lost, climbing to claim the sun  
without you, step by step

like a small breath  
tossing among the snowflakes  
or the beautiful shadow from your heart.

■

Where your arm was empty most  
you fit blooms :worlds  
looking for each other, stripped  
from their roots —even the clouds adrift

oceans cut loose :Leviathans  
gasping forever :each wave  
looking for another

—you warm these flowers  
as the shallow pond once gathered them  
before the sky had learned to rainbow

to thrash till yellow and red  
blue and every blossom still tries  
to sweep away its color

its side-kick :the Eve  
it still needs  
to climb that pig headed double helix

or fall —to climb  
wandering the sky itself homeless :a sister ship  
that points :a mast cut from a star  
different from all others :the Earth  
all Earth is looking for, points

as a magnet hooked into polar ice  
spinning day and night outward  
—you will toss these beauties

to begin a current :the arm  
that will soften under your breasts

—you will fit petals  
into the ground that came loose today  
into the pieces, your tears broken off  
glistening like feathers.

■  
Each step closer, your coffin  
crack open as if a great weight  
and these flowers sweeter than your hair

—one step more and the Earth  
just learning to arch  
to rise from a time no one wept

and you are standing, your eyes  
filled with seas lost long ago  
—I walk with nothing you can hear

or hold together —your small boat  
will splinter and under my heel  
the rocks can't leave either

—one foot learning to fly  
while this ground crawls to safety  
—one step more, overhead  
coming to an end, folds its wings  
diving against your heart  
against the darkness growing from this spot  
—even the stars expect your nightfall  
your hand held out, by now  
your flowers and planking.

■  
Don't —this frosted branch  
is weighing the Earth —one move  
the leaves and count all over.  
No wonder it's winter again.

Try! How long can it take?  
Don't move your lips—the ice  
will only darken—with a knife  
it opens your whispers  
as if they weigh too much —your mouth  
caked open, trying to say something  
and on the snow, on your fingers  
ounce by ounce hollowed out  
and its stillness.

Don't. Holding your breath  
won't save time or hiding things —your lips  
will close on a soft, summer evening  
a breeze start up, a train  
crossing some river —deep in your mouth  
tasting like one name nearer to another

—don't move! This branch  
is weighing an Earth once heavier than sunlight  
than the ice on your tongue —say nothing.  
Nothing. Not even the trembling  
that comes down from this tree, closer and closer.

■  
Heated over this stuffed manhole  
she waits :a winter solstice, ahead  
trees across the ice, in back  
the sun still bleaching her hair —she stays

while her shadow sweeps the iron cap  
as if a sundial could forecast  
the chance for snow. Or tomorrow.

She can't get up. Each tear weights more  
than the shadow moving without her.  
Funerals are like that. She looks around  
at the flowers. At the cops someone will call.

She's done this before, convinced  
the Earth got so big  
by hiding all those summers  
no one ever sees again —certain

the cry she hears is the baby  
she was and listens  
like a mother will forever  
for her child —the crowd's

been through it all  
and traffic doesn't stop anymore  
makes a wide, slow arc  
as sometimes your arm around my shoulder  
helps someone we don't ever see  
keep warm, and we hear that cry  
not yet a sound, not yet left the heart.

■  
My father was a weaver  
—by the dozen, threading spools  
the way all silk flows into the sea

—this horse must be thirsty  
tugging straw loose :each strand  
gushes along the ground

—he shaved with a soap  
that floated and the foam taking hold  
some iron-grey streak :his moustache  
almost clanking

—the horse doesn't hear  
and this paper bag  
bronzed the way a bell  
counts outloud and looking up  
means nothing now.

Even on the night shift  
he worked each stream till the cloth  
slowly rolls into pasture  
into oak fence rails :the loom  
somehow jams in the distance  
needing parts, adjustments, rest

—he would life a small bag  
to his huge head —the light  
was never close enough —he ate  
this half-light  
and the wrinkles around his mouth  
as if he was calling for more water

—even now, even this page  
wants to be folded again :a bag  
filled with some sandwich  
smelling from straw  
trying again to root along his throat

—this old horse  
half blind, half deaf, half dead  
—a miracle to a child

leaning against the rotting fence  
filled with apples, with rivers  
that carry off forever and the skies.