

For Little Jude

“At the back of the door were fixed two hooks for hanging garments, and from these the forms of the two youngest children were suspended, by a piece of box-cord round each of their necks, while from a nail a few yards off the body of little Jude was hanging in a similar manner... a piece of paper was found upon the floor, on which was written, in the boy’s hand, with the bit of lead pencil that he carried: ‘Done because we were too menny.’”

- Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*

On days like this in Brooklyn,
I’d hide on the roof, amidst broken glass and rubber,
letting the grayness seep through me like sheets of starlight,
a slow burning,
released until boiling... melted gold:
flat and forgotten on his small bed.
I would cry inside the mouth of my piano in the corner,
the one I’d covered with a blanket,
wishing to disarm the elation of vibrations
and forget the prospects I may have had.
I let him dig his forefingers into any opening they could find,
as he stared into me,
those wet, red coyote cries,
like a whetted knife – a plea to cut into tomorrow.
I would drift then to the sweet failings inviting me,
those swift slits beside the bathroom window:
lovely skin canyons,
pale, yellowish...
difficult to break through
by the crevice of that corner brownstone window
and the hollow of the sky;
a stained, cold pavement, gentle persuasion of
my own quick, hackneyed
Hardy ending...
the dagger of absence unleashing
a perfect, papery prick.
I thought of you during such madness,
your soft, yielding voice questioning a mistaken existence,
your body cold and blue, limp, suspended
from the flaccid, textiled ceiling –

your reverence and abandonment,
the letting go of this hemmed, senseless outline.
I thought of all the unwanted children of the world,
their small hands and wistful eyes,
like the little boy
in the apartment below,
his mother's four-day absence swallowing
a fading, distant hope.
And suddenly, I have emerged as
one of *too menny*
to dismantle a seemingly idle reverie,
surrendering to a world absent from sun,
forever in the silence of frigid affectation.
I wish I had been as brave as you to end it all,
or at least to have realized that everything I write,
though I know it well,
will never console me.