

## Cold It Stings

Lately I've been knitting a scarf longer than I am tall, which, if you know me,  
Isn't that long. Blood-red, hand-me-down yarn choked around my fingers,  
Threads through itself like artificial arteries. Upstairs someone dances lightly,  
Soft *onetwothree* of a waltz shifting through the ceiling, coming down like dust,  
Layers of paint peeling off water stains, cold seeping through hard-wooded floors.  
Do you remember when I started preferring long-sleeved shirts?

I remember the first time I saw two men kissing on the living room TV.  
Static-shock, my hair stands on end from across the room and my focus shifts,  
Sharpens, and I don't avert my eyes like normal, don't feel my intrusion  
Like a sinking cinderblock tied to my eyelids, and my gaze isn't propelled  
From the screen like I'm shoved down the stairs after math class.  
No, my eyes are drawn toward them, magnetic, like when you're taught  
That opposites attract; but these like-charges pull, stronger than anything,  
Drawing me closer with every frame, and my heart begs me to let it climb  
Through the tubes, to clamber out, pounding violently, into their world.  
For the first time I wanted to see more in the redgreenblue of the screen.

I like to think there's a strange moment of tenderness that is experienced  
In the mutual understanding of certain things; for example:  
A glance of eye-contact in gaps between shouldering beasts, or  
A brush of cold-to-warm fingertips brushing absentmindedly, or even  
An indistinguishable tear-or-raindrop clinging to a nose piercing.  
Some things can only be known as such: liminally.

I'll keep wearing long-sleeves in the summer, like a secret compressed  
Against my chest for all the world to witness. Remember? I liked to hide  
During hide-and-seek, I didn't like to be It, you know that. You know  
I'd rather keep quiet, keep still, and not let anyone know I'm there.  
*If a kid falls in a forest with a secret in his chest, splits his head on a rock  
And dies without ever telling, was he ever alive at all? If he kept quiet, kept still,  
If he never made a sound, was he ever alive at all?*  
I'll wrap my hands careful, more careful than I used to, because  
Care comes easier now, thank god, but it still aches  
To take a deep breath in after a long walk out in the cold.