

"Crazy"

Caroline Bybee

my brother is Crazy.

that's what they tell me, and i guess i believe them.
he is not like anyone i've met, i don't know if that
constitutes Crazy. he stares at me with liquid eyes and his
hands never stop moving.

i don't know what to believe.

...

when they told us - all the doctors and other people who
get to wear white coats and act like they know more than we
do - they didn't even seem sorry.

a little shrug of the shoulders, maybe, "oh well," and all
those clinical terms.

as they prattled on, my parents wilted. or maybe it's
better to say they melted. like candle wax, or the action
figures he once burned: twisted, mangled together, one big
hunk of sad black plastic.

...

now that we know and he knows and they know - everyone
knows - it is easier. there is a reason, my parents say.

and then they give up.

...

my brother is nervous. not the nail-biting kind of nervous:
the violent kind, the pull-out-your-own-hair-and-scratch-
your-face-until-it-bleeds kind of nervous. i once papered
his fingertips with spiderman bandaids, just so he couldn't
hurt himself.

he peeled them off.

...

sometimes, he calls out to me in the middle of the night.
"caroline," he cries.

he talks so fast that the sounds slur together and the o gets lost. "care-line," he says, and i always come running, fearing the worst.

"i'm scared."

...

when he was just a little baby and not old enough to be Crazy, he had sapling limbs. he could bend with the wind, graceful, pliant.

even saplings snap if you bend them too far. he broke his arm jumping off the couch.

he was two.

...

at school, everyone knows. "that's the Crazy boy's sister," they whisper. "do you think Crazy is contagious?"

i don't care.
i break noses, make bruises.

i'm tough.

...

i decide one year that i am also Crazy.
i spend several days locked in my room. i stare out my window like i've seen him do so many times.

he makes it look so easy.

"go help your brother," my parents say.
i oblige.

i guess i didn't try hard enough.