

—The 6/6/6 W.P.—

### THE UNSIGNED CONFESSION OF MR. ZERO

No car, no road, no tires, no hands, no fingers, no feet,  
No gas pedal, no turn signals, no stoplights, no watch cap,  
No legs, no pants, no worn shirt, no blank eyes,  
No heavy lids, no cold voice, no threat, no dark skin,

No lying in wait, no click of a handle, no mother's scream,  
No silence at her questions, no height, no weight,  
No strange needs, no sense of adventure, no breath,  
No nappy hair, no memories, no one to impress,

No hunger, no shit, no piss, no weariness, no reaction,  
No family, no ideas, no history, no favorite song,  
No blood pressure, no guilt, no sleep or dreams,  
No steering wheel, no rearview mirror, no ID.

Somewhere near the bushes. On the periphery.  
A noise you can't easily locate. I am the heaviness  
The sheriff thinks he detects on Susan Smith's tongue, ✱  
The story she tries to hold between her teeth and gums.

## WHAT I'M MADE OF

Susan fills our hands with plain objects,  
Key, door handle, steering wheel,  
But my hands are nothing:  
A song you can't remember  
The words to,  
The button that pops  
Off a vest, a comb that  
Falls out of a pocket  
Or purse.

Susan fills my lungs with air,  
But what do I breathe out?  
Parchment, ink, low growls, the  
Blank gap between words.

Nothing fits upon my back,  
Nothing actually catches my eye,  
I am hidden and found,  
I am North, South, East, West,  
My dark skin porous, in-between.

Susan claims my name is muscle,  
Bone, calls me tissue  
And sinew, fills in my blank  
With the absence of her boys,

But I am water, pebble,  
Silt and gravity,  
Evidence under her nail.

*The italicized language  
is from Susan Smith's  
handwritten confession.*

**BIRTHING**

*When I left my home on Tuesday, October 25, I  
was very emotionally distraught*

I have yet  
To breathe.

I am in the back of her mind,  
Not even a notion.

A scrap of cloth, the way  
A man lopes down a street.

Later, a black woman will say:  
"We knew exactly who she was describing."

At this point, I have no language,  
No tongue, no mouth.

I am not me, yet.  
I am just an understanding.

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*As I rode and rode and rode, I felt  
Even more anxiety.*

## INTERROGATION

The children were fussy,  
Susan tells the FBI agent,  
So we strapped them in the back seat  
And drove off to go shopping  
At Kmart.

How can a black man drive  
An old, beat-up Mazda  
In a southern town  
With two white kids  
In the backseat,  
And never be seen?  
The agent would like an  
Explanation.

He binds our arm to the  
Polygraph,

But we swear we were in the  
Parking lot,  
In the hours before  
I officially arrive,  
Under the brute light  
Of the mercury lamps.

Who could have misled us, diving  
To find a bottle, wedged  
Under the back seat?

Who didn't notice us  
As we walked the aisles,  
A cranky family among  
The other cranky families?

He insists: what we say  
Is not what we mean.  
He tries to spike our heart.

We say, as evenly as we can: the children  
Were twitchy bombs  
Of sugar; first  
We exhaust their eyes, then  
Cruise the town,  
Like any family,  
Bargaining for sleep.

Susan parks on a bridge,  
And stares over the rail.  
Below her feet, a dark blanket of river  
She wants to pull over herself,  
Children and all.

I am not the call of the current.

She is heartbroken.  
She gazes down,  
And imagines heaven.

*I felt I couldn't be a good mom anymore, but I didn't want  
my children to grow up without a mom.*

I am not me, yet.  
At the bridge,  
One of Susan's kids cries,  
So she drives to the lake,  
To the boat dock.

I am not yet opportunity.

*I had never felt so lonely  
And so sad.*

Who shall be a witness?  
Bullfrogs, water fowl.

*When I was at John D. Long Lake  
I had never felt so scared  
And unsure.*

I've yet to be called.  
Who will notice?  
Moths, dragonflies,  
Field mice.

*I wanted to end my life so bad  
And was in my car ready to  
Go down that ramp into  
The water*

My hand isn't her hand  
Panicked on the  
Emergency brake.

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*And I did go part way,  
But I stopped.*

I am not Gravity,  
The water lapping against  
The gravel.

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*I went again and stopped.  
I then got out of the car.*

Susan stares at the sinking.  
My muscles aren't her muscles,  
Burned from pushing.  
The lake has no appetite,  
But it takes the car slowly,  
Swallow by swallow, like a snake.

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*Why was I feeling this way?  
Why was everything so bad  
In my life?*

Susan stares at the taillights  
As they slide from here  
To hidden.

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*I have no answers  
To these questions.*

She only has me,  
After she removes our hands  
From our ears.