

Confession

Forgive me,
for I don't know shit about believing.
I don't know how to say that I believe in anything I can't memorize
without sounding like a blog post or a Hallmark greeting card
or a teenage girl who tries way too hard to write something deeper
than the holes she dug in her backyard when she was six years old
and desperate to find more than dirt.

Sometimes I think these words pretend to know more than my hands do
about meaning, as if my hands weren't the ones who did all that holy digging.

Thank God
for fingernails and open palms.

Thank God
for believing we could learn more about people
from their hands than from their mouths.
I don't know anything about reading palms,
but I know I'm a much better liar when I keep my hands still.
The dirt beneath my fingernails
is the same soil that teaches plants to grow,
so I know I've been looking for life in all the wrong places.

I talk big, like I trust some great-big Whatever's There
when I don't even trust myself to be real —
my poems try to act all profound,
but my hands are still shaking.
I don't ask to be any purer than I am now.
I don't think there's any part of me that needs to be washed away.
I am clean as a whistle,
even when the world plugs its ears.

And it's been a lifetime since my last confession,
so I'm just here to tell you that I'm trying to listen to all of life's noise
without letting my head get in the way.
I've heard that hunters used to put their ears to the ground,
listening for buffalos' distant vibrations.
If I could hear God and understand,
I think I'd think myself too far above the ground to stop and listen like that.

I don't have any idea who I'm confessing to or why
so I will keep leaving these fingerprints everywhere I go

but never expect them to last, still holding tight to the roots of my turbulent faith. So thank you so much for your time.

Thank you for all this time.

Dani Cooke
July 2016