Phil Kaye – Repetition

I remember just floating there.

Apart, apart, apart, apart.

My mother taught me this trick

If you repeat something over and over again it loses its meaning

For example:

Homework, homework, homework, homework, homework, homework, homework, homework, homework

See, nothing

Our existence, she said, is the same way.

You watch the sun set too often, it just becomes 6 PM

You make the same mistake over and over; you’ll stop calling it a mistake

If you just

wake up, wake up, wake up, wake up, wake up, wake up,

one day you’ll forget why

Nothing is forever, she said

My parents left each other when I was 7 years old

Before their last argument they sent me off to the neighbor’s house,

like some astronaut jettisoned from the shuttle.

When I came back there was no gravity in our home, beds floating

I imagined it as an accident, that when I left

They whispered to each other “I love you” so many times over

that they forgot what it meant

Family, family, family, family, family, family

My mother taught me this trick

If you repeat something over and over again it loses its meaning

This became my favorite game

It made the sting of words evaporate.

Separation, separation, separation;

see, nothing

Apart, apart, apart;

see, nothing

I am an injured handyman now

I work with words all day

Shut up, I know the irony!

When I was young, I was taught that the trick to dominating language

was breaking it down

Convincing it that it was worthless

I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you;

See, nothing

Soon after my parents’ divorce, I developed a stutter

Fate is a cruel and efficient tutor

There is no escape in stutter

You feel the meaning of every word drag itself up your throat

S-s-s-separation

Stutter is a cage made of mirrors

Every “Are you ok?”

Every “What’d you say?”

Every “Come on kid, spit it out”

Is a glaring reflection you cannot escape

Every terrible moment skips upon its own announcement

Over and over until it just hangs there,

floating in the middle of the room

Mom, Dad,

I am not wasteful with my words anymore.

Even now after hundreds of hours of practicing away my stutter,

I still feel the claw of meaning in the bottom of my throat.

I have heard that even in space;

You can hear the scratching of a

I-I-I-I love you.