



Rabbit (“Bell{s} for All the Rabbits I’ve Killed or Watched Die”)

I am twenty-two and driving through Indiana fields, bright sun, bright grass, bright bright water flooding across the horizon like oceans. The farmers are waiting. Rain churns up their land into muddy messes, delaying the corn and delaying the livelihood and delaying the living. We plan to take the car, little bed in the back, across the flat flat land; flat flat land like I’ve never seen before, take our little bed and kitchen and bathroom rolling down dirt roads across this state. Thirty feels like fast across dust.

Still, we add two hours looking for a way to cross this expanse, and with each road that dips down into river we stop and take a photo. Grace is in her white dress, I am in my overalls, we both worry about ticks and shouting strangers. Heading back to the highway I am staring up at the blue and when I look back down your tiny body is darting across the road and the tires are bumping over your spine and I am feeling the smallest impact and we keep driving. I look behind me in the rearview mirror but I think maybe you were just so small that I can’t quite make out the mound receding into the past. Sometimes, I am sick from thinking about how I didn’t go back to thank you, didn’t ask you if you understood it had been an accident. Sometimes, I am sick from thinking about how I didn’t feel the weight of your little body, didn’t feel the heat still radiating from your core. I wish I could have picked you up and brought you with us, placed you on my lap or maybe Grace’s lap, and brought you to sleep with us in the Grasslands. Or maybe I wish I could have dug you a tiny hole and put you to sleep there. Or maybe I wish I could have skinned you, carried you with me for the rest of my life as apology. I don’t know.

I am twelve, or maybe thirteen or eleven, I don't remember. Estelle knows a rabbit farmer up near Syracuse who tube skins and freezes all her hides, and as Estelle explains the steps of tanning to us, there is a big black garbage bag full of them laying beneath the pole barn. We're all listening. Knives in hand. Feet in sawdust. Smoke in hair. Now I can't remember who all else was there, but I know it is kids I only ever see during the summer. Liam and I are partners as always, and we might still be young enough that he's lighting matches for me because I'm scared of the flame.

That was the first day I feel the slip of skin moving between my fingers.

Under the pole barn the skins have thawed out, and we all wash them under the hose, gently like shampooing your child's hair. Softer than most things.

That was the first day I turned an animal inside out.

The skins are rolled slowly onto the ends of logs, pink side up and glistening in the sun, little face and ears hanging towards the ground, clumsy taxidermy for children's hands. I hold the skin taut and Liam scrapes, and then Liam holds the skin taut and I scrape, and then I hold the skin taut and Liam scrapes and I think about the cadaver dissection videos I have watched with my Mama and Liam and I keep going and going until the whole animal is fleshed and our palms are slick with strange oil. This day smells like a new smell to me. Later, I will recognize it, and I will recognize how it burrows underneath my fingernails and toenails and sinks into the fabric of my pants and shirt and underwear and gets as close to my skin as it ever can.

The rabbit Liam and I skin has the whitest fur I have ever seen. We wash the blood from it once more when we have scraped away all remnants of body. Estelle shows us all how to stretch our hides out on a board and we all take our tiny child fingers and rub egg yolk in circles. This is "tanning the hide." It's chemical. I don't really understand it, and when I think back on this day for the next few years the details are hazy. I remember how white my rabbit was. I remember the smell. I remember the feeling of scraping a knife down the length of an animal's insides, blade bumping against the hard log underneath. I remember Liam and I being so so giddy and also so so careful and also, a feeling of something so so important or religious, or something. I remember the little bag I made out of my half of the hide. I remember my dog Benny eating it later.



I am eighteen and in bliss. Rayna and Alta are with me and every morning we wake in the freezing cold to walk down a dirt road. The mountains are to our left, the freshly plowed and prepped fields are to our right, sometimes we stop and talk to the old man who invites us to drink the coffee that we never accept. And at the end of our walk there is beautiful Iago, Noah, Innea, Monia, and Carlo. For some time they are our family. I fall in love with Carlo when he parks his truck on a laundromat sidewalk and when I look at him looking at his family. I fall in love with Monia when she cooks me the same food my Mama cooks for me, and when her thick mountain accent comes out talking to her friends. I fall in love with Iago as he practices saying “Good morning” to us when we arrive at the house each day. I fall in love with Noah as he mopes and cries and climbs over stone walls to escape Iago’s teasing. I fall in love with Innea the moment I see him, and when he runs after escaped pigs, and when he shows us the new baby goat, and when he exclaims in wonder at the tiny miniature chicks, and when he runs through the front yard with an axe and a bat and a stick on fire, and when he walks me through the supermarket and disdainfully points out everything on the shelves that I can’t read because it’s in Italian, which is everything. He talks and talks and talks and is not dissuaded by the fact that we don’t understand most of what he says, and he probably teaches me more than anyone I meet that year.

Down that dirt road there are new litters of rabbits swarming in the hutch, so young that their feet get caught in the wire mesh floor, and twist, and lacerate. I think that during the nights they are trampled by their families.

Some of them live through this and we take them out and put them in their own little pens to heal, but in my memory all of them die too. In some time the rabbits are ready to be harvested, they are big enough, they are extra big. We pick some out and starve them for a day to empty them of waste, and then we follow Carlo into the slaughter room, and then Carlo hits one on the head, and then Carlo cuts its neck and Carlo lets all the blood fall through the air to a bucket below. And then Carlo slices so smoothly from anus to neck. And then we see that this rabbit was so extra big because it is pregnant still. What a vision, unborn babies moving beneath a tight transparent film. Belly stretched. Carlo is devastated, and I love him even more. The same happens with the next rabbit. Again Carlo is devastated, and again I love him even more. The rest of the rabbits hold no surprises, and we set one aside for Monia to cook tonight. While she works in the kitchen, I work in the yard fleshing the skins. Monia calls to everyone and we eat rabbit stewed into red sauce, poured over creamy polenta. Sabayon for dessert. In the morning, I tan the hides and then stretch them as we drive up winding mountain roads, and Rayna gets so sick from the smell and motion that she throws up on the lawn. Leftovers, rabbit again, for dinner.







Luc. (“Bell for Finding Luciano Martin Servetto”)

Luciano Martin Servetto, I still don't know how to talk about you without getting nauseous and shaky, without feeling like it's freshman year again and Matt is standing in front of me in the dark telling me that you're dead and I'm standing in front of him and I don't know what to do, I guess I've never gotten this kind of news before. Luci, when I last saw you, you and hot-Justice-with-the-face-tattoos and some-other-friend-I-didn't-know were in the park by my Aunt Olga's house, and I didn't say hello to you because I was with my little brother and cousin and I didn't want them meeting your friends. Or maybe I didn't want to have to meet your friends. I should have gone and said hello. I miss hugging you at 3am when we ran into each other downtown, I miss feeling like your arms could wrap around me four times. I miss you and Matt fighting in the hallways, slamming each other against lockers and laughing and laughing and laughing. I miss Kenzey curled up on your lap when you were still together. I miss you loping down the halls, like Big Bird in your yellow diving bead. I miss your seventh grade floppy hair. I miss eating lunch with you and everyone in the hallway every day, I miss you eating ice-cream sandwiches smashed between two cookies and never gaining a pound.

I miss you and sometimes I don't even remember if I was ever really that close to you.



Luc.

I saw your brother the other day, Alejandro, Ale, working at Viva, and he gave me my order for free. I can't see him without seeing you. I miss going to shows and running into him, flying across beer-stick floors with him and feeling his body crash into mine. I miss being sixteen. I miss all those kids. I miss you getting on stage with Awkwafina before she got real real famous, beaming out at us and dancing and laughing laughing laughing for her whole set. This summer I was hanging out with Kenzey again and we talked about you and got real drunk, but it was happy talking and it was happy drunk. She misses you too.

When Matt came and told me you'd been killed on the road, I went back inside and finished my work for school. A dumb collage still life. The next day I took an art history final. I think I told my friend Hannah what had happened, and Liam. I didn't want to say anything to anyone else, because how do you bring that up to people you've just met? How do you tell strangers something so personal and how do you stop yourself from crying in the dining hall when you think about it? Well, Luc, you don't actually need an answer to any of these questions because you're dead. At your funeral Ale was stoned out of his mind and told a joke about someone farting at your dad's funeral, and Bronwen sang a song I can't listen to anymore, and I saw everyone we had gone to school with, and everything was perfect. And I was so, so sad. When I went swimming in the freezing November water, my knees went numb and I thought about what it would feel like to just fill my lungs. But I didn't. It was so easy, and so delicious to keep breathing air.

Where are you now? If I make a lasso, if I learn how to whip it around my head and toss it, would it be able to find you? I like to think that sometimes you visit all of us, sometimes a lasso would loop itself right around a little ball of your energy. Not tight enough to trap you, just enough to tell me where you are. I don't actually think there's a geography to it though. I know you're not here anymore. I don't think I actually believe you're anywhere but in the ground, but it's nice to pretend sometimes. I pretend you're with Leyla, and you're both laughing and talking shit about everyone we all went to school with.





Luc., but also Ley.

I guess this is sort of about Leyla too, and how I can't think about her without thinking about you, and can't think about you without thinking about her, and I guess about couldn't stop thinking about her when I was fucking J. Our town is so so small. I wonder where Leyla is, I wonder if her hair is back, I wonder if she laughed when I made jokes in poor taste about her dying and Rayna yelled at me. I still think it was funny. Fucking J was funny too, but also weird, and sad, and I kind of wish I hadn't done it because now I can't think about Ley without thinking about him and how weird it was, and then also sometimes thinking about you, Luc. Because J and I talked about you too, you and Leyla too. Our town is so so small.

Last night, *really* last night, not the night before I wrote most of this, J texted and apologized out of the blue for being such a coked-out jackass, then asked me to send him a picture, then apologized again, then asked if I liked it when he fucked me, then asked if he could call me, if we could hang out again when I go home. It doesn't feel so romantic now. Maybe because the day before, I was writing about Luc and Ley and thinking about how everyone deserves something really, really good.

I still said yes, I had a good time, yes, it would be nice to see him next time I'm in Ithaca. Maybe sometime in October.

Maybe it would almost be fun if it didn't make me think of Ley so much, of Luc so much.





## Lotus/Home. (“Bell for Locating Home”)

When I was younger my upset would turn into pleading for “Home,” the only way I could articulate why I was crying. I don’t know where I was trying to go, my mama repeating over and over, “But you *are* home,” and me repeating back to her, over and over, “I want to go *home*.”

Melodrama.

Home is the pink cushion on Aunt Olga’s rocking chair, echoing years and years of Saccucci bodies, now sitting in my brother’s dark room. Home is a flat pillow. Home is the smell of my backyard.

Melodrama.

How nice, to be self-contained, to have that wholeness, to lay in the pull between beauty and alien repulsion, to nestle in a pregnant belly, skin stretched tight across a bulging abdomen, radiating love and terror.

When trypophobic panic floods your body, looking at a lotus pod, is it the same chemical that flood your brain when you think too hard about the reality of the womb?

Home is my bed. Home is the couch on Zofia’s third floor. Home is walking downstairs naked and not caring who sees. Home is knowing that no one ever wants to go to Taco Bell. Home is family meal. Home is being squeezed until your ribs feel like they’re going to pop. Home is stinking like armpits and crotch and muddy rotting boots on a train, in a hostel, dancing in a club.

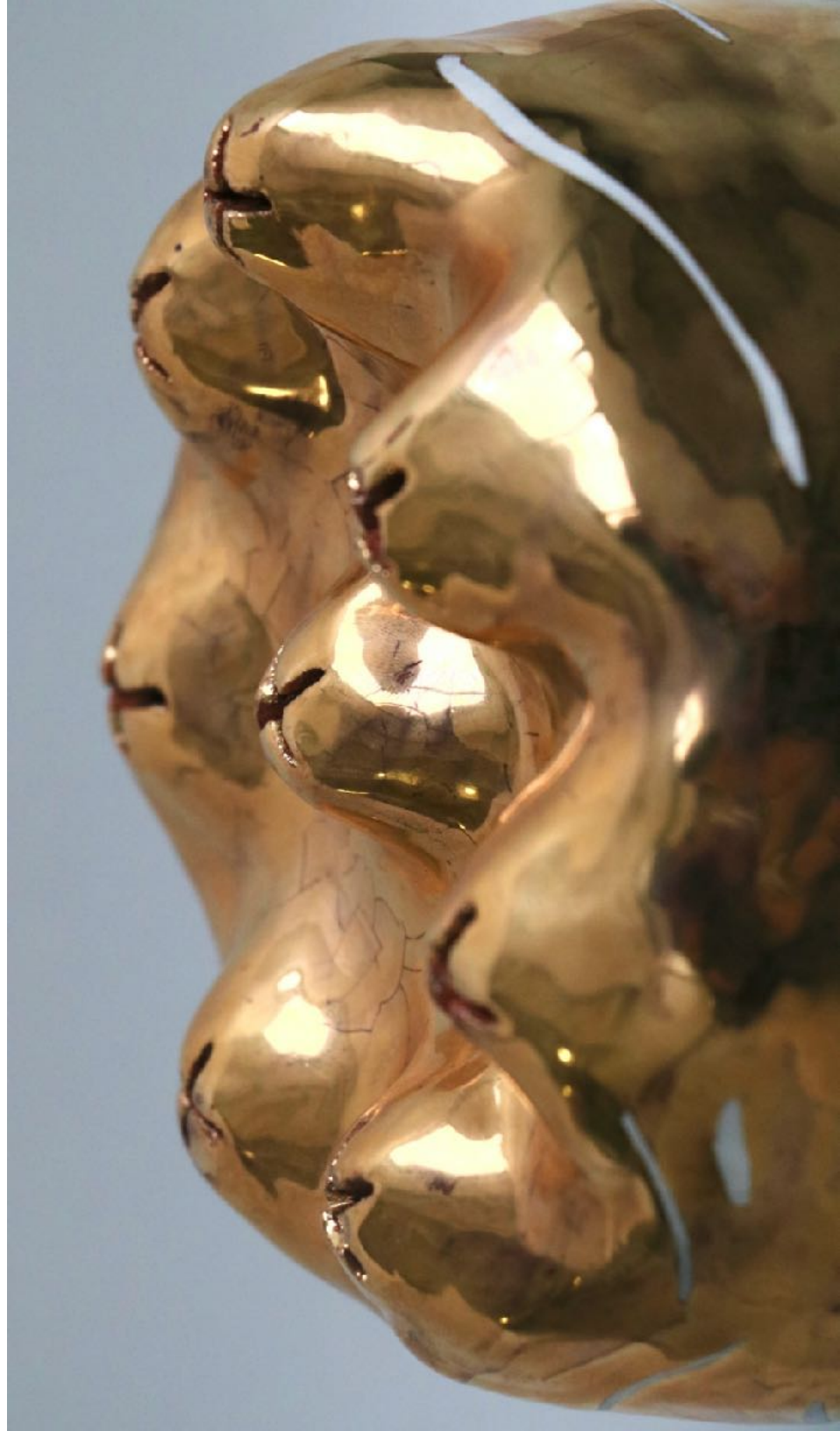
Home is making gnocchi with Fabri even though you don't understand what he's telling you. Home is laughing with Rayna at bloodstained mattresses, at walls filled with pockets of moldy water, is shouting to each other over the sound of hail on a tin roof. Home is the alarm clock of dogs running through the house and out the door, greeting the sun. Home is Gracie playing the banjo on the porch. Home is listening to Mak and Jordan making pancakes and slapping each other and cackling about the future and things you shouldn't say in polite company.

Home smells like smoke, and pond water, and garlic and onions, and feet soaked in PBR and tequila mud, and burnt sage, and melting butter, and maybe sometimes like the inside of a rabbit's skin. I am grounded and I am filling my lungs to their full capacity.





Red clover like Pines. (“Bell for Instigating a Scale Shift”)







Red clover like Pines.

It is sunrise and I wake up on Zofia's couch. The pines loom over me through the window, and beyond them the lake is new nickel. The pink sky and the bright water and the smallness of my body next to the bigness of the trees hits me all in a split second and then I go back to sleep.

It is sunrise and I wake up on Zofia's couch. The pines loom over me through the window, and I can hear soft breathing from the rooms around me. I am in love. Condensation runs down the glass and I think about how good white fish in red sauce tastes and then I go back to sleep.

It is sunrise and I wake up on Zofia's couch. The pines loom over me through the window, and three dogs are running their noses over my body like minnows. Jon is in the shower and Maja is two floors down, yelling at Andrew and Jesse to rush out the door. I go downstairs and make myself tea.

The sun is far past the western horizon and I am covered in mud and chasing pigs at Alta's. Smoking a bowl we all realize our hands and knees are covered in manure and the stars are far too far above us, and the sky goes on forever, around and above and beyond in every direction, and we laugh and laugh about how little we've made ourselves feel, and then we go inside.

The sun is far past the western horizon and I am laying rib to rib with my little brother in a house of our making, tiny triangle piled high with leaves and maybe ticks and filling with smoke every time we let the fire go too low.

We sleep face down, arms crowning our heads, to avoid suffocation. The trees loom over me through the dark, and when I wake to put more wood in the flames I see Enzo peeking through lashes and pretending he doesn't know the fire is dying. I can hear the world echoing all around us. We leave the little house at first light, and then we nap for a bit, and then I drive him to school.

The sun is far past the western horizon, and I am floating in Six Mile Creek. Spinning with the current, your glowing bodies move around me. I am so in love with each of you, and with the heat radiating out through the water from each of your tiny tiny veins. I sink down and practice holding my eyes right at the surface of the water, wet and air meeting at the center of my pupil. It's so nice to be surrounded by the dark and laughing with you all. We get out of the water and dry off by running to the car, and then drive to go get midnight donuts.

It is sunrise and I am waking up in Zofia's grandma's bed. Your body is sprawled out next to me, and I feel like my eyes didn't close once during the night. I want to kill you, and I want to make you tea and raise you like my own baby. Later, I will write about last night. This is what I will write, and what I will write again, and what I will write again because I can't stop thinking about how big the world felt:

You there, you are sitting on the couch in the dark with Zofia's father's good whiskey in your left hand. You will never pay him back for it. Behind you is the picture window I used to watch the sunrise out of, Cayuga Lake a sliver of a horizon-line and the towering spruces reminders of the first time I realized trees are plants, same as red clover.

The TV is sitting fallow, blaring the light of a screensaver across the coffee table to your face, screwed up and echoing the bluntness of the blows you aimed at the wall earlier.

I am there too, that is how I know this scene occurred. I am laying in between the coffee table and the television, pool of humming light around me. Child's pose, not laying. Hands holding each other close, fingers woven. Holding my forehead up, holding my eyes down. Earlier, when you stopped screaming and walked out of the bedroom we are sharing, you laughed at me for crying in front of you for the first time. Scoffed. It was very very hurtful, and made me very very afraid that you were going to do something to hurt yourself too.

Knees beneath my chest, holding still in this humming light, I am imagining you getting in your car and trying to drive home right now. An hour and a half. A handle. Which you will never pay Zofia's father for.

I am imagining you hitting me instead of the wall. I am imagining how that would feel, if it would feel different from you snorting at my wet face. I don't know. I am curious. I am thinking about watching us. I am thinking about what this would like like as a painting. I am thinking about if Zofia has heard you from the floor below. I am thinking about how I am going to wake up for work tomorrow. I am thinking about this humming light. I am thinking about how it looks on my back. I am thinking about if you can see me here. You there. I am thinking about us in the TV. You there. Me here. I am thinking about what this would look like as a painting.

You and me on the third floor.

I remember how vast everything felt around me, and wow wow wow how beautiful it was and wow wow wow how scary it was. There are parts of it, parts of all of it, that I wish I could feel always.

Red clover like Pines. That's how it is.







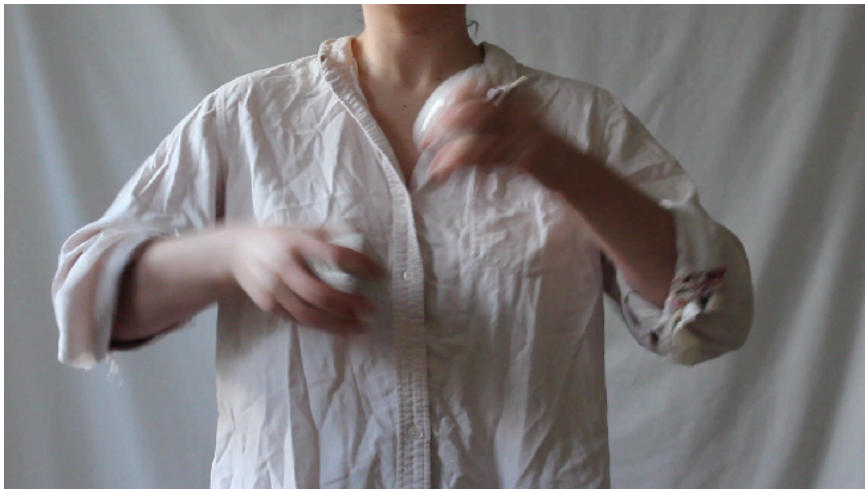
Juniper & Bloodroot. (“Bells for Resisting the Urge for Dramatic Reaction”)

Both sharp, both astringent, both protective in their ability to slice clean through.

Sometimes I want to punch you right in the face, or fill your pillowcase with razor blades, or push you down and stomp on your tender belly until all your intestines pop.

A good story is the one about my granny nailing boards across a doorway so that her second husband, Joe, couldn’t reach her. Ah, how fun to lay on my vacation bed, skin hot from the Long Island sand, and think about barricades. When I lay in that bed now—imagining the past—my granny sits at her dining room table and eats Wasa crackers with salmon-fish salad and cucumber slices, slowly, slowly, pausing to cough up clouds of bronchitis.

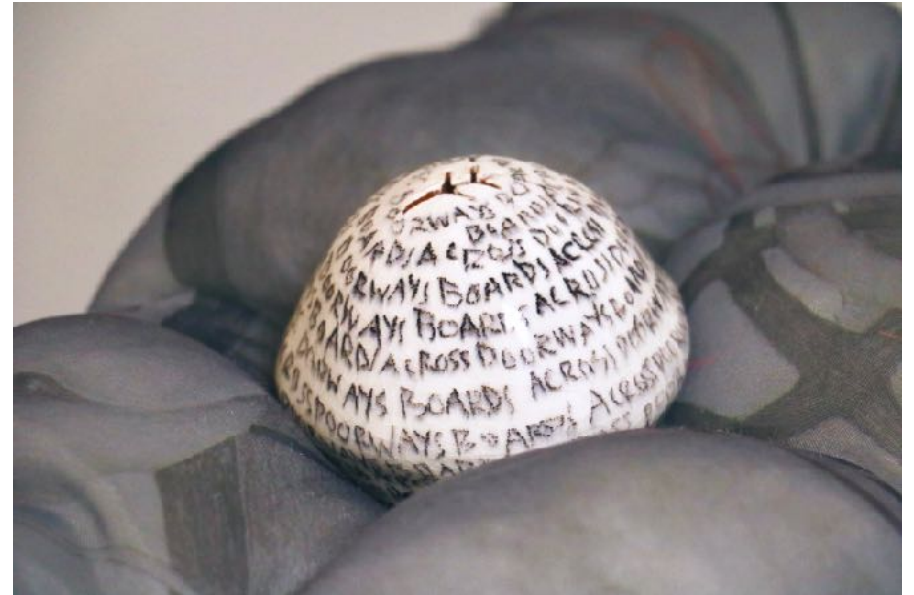
Sometimes I want to smash your big beautiful hands between two bricks, or grab the wheel of your car and send us careening into a guardrail, or bash your head in with a bowling ball and laugh and laugh and laugh.



A good story is the one about my granny filling up a water gun with vodka, putting on a wig, and marching down to an AA meeting to shoot Joe in the face—that's what happens when you pay too much attention to your sponsees and not enough to your wife, I guess. Now when my granny scowls as I order wine at dinner, or calls my mama a tart for drinking a beer, I wonder where in the world she got that vodka, Granny-who-never-drinks-a-drop.

Sometimes I want to call you all the nasty names I know until you're sobbing in bed, or kick you so hard you fly fifty yards through the air and then off a cliff, or go into your studio and throw everything you're proud of out the window, or wrap my hands around your neck and shake you back and forth and back and forth until all the vertebrae in your neck have separated and you're limp.

A good story is the one about my grandpa, the one we didn't know, picking up a dining room table and throwing it across the room as my grandma and baby Papa watched on. If I ever find myself in Oakland, if I ever find myself knowing the address of this apartment, and if I ever find myself walking down a California street past the building, I suppose I'll be thinking about the strength it would take to throw a table. Jefferey Walch, I think, is how you spelled that grandpa's name.









“Bell for the weight of a baby (a pregnancy) carried between two people.”

Recently:

I’m bursting into tears in the middle of the Argos Warehouse, hearing that Lindsey is full of life, and I can’t even believe that I am reacting so viscerally to this. Lindsey spends the last month of her pregnancy bathing her body in the cold light of a midnight fridge, gnawing on chicken bones and breaking a lifetime of vegetarianism, and then a tiny, beautiful, owl of a boy is born. I wonder what that little owl smells like, soft baby scalp, pink fingers, alien eyes, coming into being half way across the country. I wonder how old this little one will be when I finally meet him, how big his fingernails will be.

Ellen is carrying again, after years of bodily rejection and toilets filled with blood and news shared too soon. When she turns to the side, her silhouette draws a perfect s-curve. I can’t stop staring, and we all keep turning to each other and whispering under our breath, “God, she looks *so good*.” The first pregnancy, Constantine-running-through-the-house-and-radiating-brilliance-and-empathy-and-excitement-and-love, pushed Ellen into swollen anguish, ankles too taught to bend, seemingly endless. Hand on her belly this time, I feel a little girl moving in a tight cocoon, and I am caught trying not to weep in the midst of all my family. There is some jealousy. There is some fear. There is some vomitous exhilaration. It is Thanksgiving, and I am so in awe.



Recently:

I'm wondering,

What would it have been like to raise a baby with you? This is not a sad, *what if*. It's speculation, it's hypothetical science. I'm thinking of tenth-grade Me, knowing even then that my mush brain wouldn't be able to choose abortion if we made a mistake. The first time we get a bed to ourselves, breaking into Zofia's house as her family takes vacation, I am so happy and warm that I almost-almost forget the broken condom. You leave me stranded at the Wegmans pharmacy the next day, and I am vibrating with rage and confusion from the want to kill you for the first time, because you are so fucking *young*.

You, the next really significant you. Somehow, some days I wondered, "Is this what the rest of my life is going to be like? Is this who I am going to raise children with?" Sometimes, so, so in love.

Sometimes, still moving inside me, you'd tell me you wished I didn't have birth control. (What in the world made you say that? What did you see when you looked at me? How did you look at me?) Sometimes, cleaning up after you or rubbing your back as you sobbed in bed, I'd feel like I *didn't* have birth control, that I had birthed you, massive horrible baby, and was stuck raising you. For most of that time, I convinced myself that the love one feels for a partner is the same love one feels for a child. Sometimes I'd cry sitting in the sun, thinking about how your life might end too soon, thinking about how I wanted to protect you and take care of you and give all of my energy to you until I turned into a dry, rattling body. Sometimes I'd cry sitting in the car, thinking about how I might end up living with you and sleeping next to you every night and cooking you every meal and starting a family with you. Thank God that's over with. I am so much calmer now. I don't feel like I'm raising anyone except myself, and that I can do.

You, now, you're doing a really good job of being really good to me. You, you're doing a really good job of being really good to yourself. I don't play fantasy-baby games in my head anymore, not like in tenth grade. But you're making it easier for me, again, to see how holding the weight of a baby between two people can make it better for everyone. It's not a trap, it's not a sacrifice. It doesn't have to be so fraught.





“Bell for maintaining bodily integrity within someone else’s mind.”

(a synonym of “Bell for the weight of a baby (a pregnancy) carried between two people.”)



I find myself very afraid about how you see when you look at me. How you see. What you see.

I look at myself in the mirror, focus on the middle square inch. The top right two square inches. The dip between lip and chin. The inner tip of my left eyebrow. The distance between my eyes and ears.

Now I am a dog. Now I am a tuber. Now I am someone beautiful, I belong in the pages of Marie Claire. Vogue. 17. Now I am mundane, there is no way to describe me to someone who does not know my name, anything you say you could be true of another. Now I am ugly, you are focusing on the blackened sebum filling the pores of my nose like cysts. My, what a large nose. What a loose neck. What small eyes. What full lips. What strong eyebrows. What long eyelashes.

I am scared to sleep around you or let you look at me when I am not moving. Stillness of the body, closed eyes, allows you to give me your undivided attention, and I don't even know what you're paying attention to.

When you tell me I'm beautiful it's unclear what version of the word you're referring to. Which version is *your* version? Are you lying? Do you know what your version looks like? Do you know what *I* look like?

Next week, or yesterday, or the day before, or sometime else, I don't know, you tell me that you are out of my league, that I present myself as an idiot child. Is that what your version of beautiful is?

I am very afraid about how I see when I look at you. You, all others. Now you repulse me. Now I want to fuck you. Now you are my child, I want to hold you close. The flesh of your face pulsates like I have vertigo, you are playdough, you are a cartoon, my eyes are sinking into the meat of you and twisting when I am sitting bored in class.

When I love you, you are beautiful, gorgeous, I want to absorb every inch of you into me, I want to vomit, I adore you.

When I hate you, you are alien, disgusting, greasy and petulant like a stranger pulling at me in the street, a child wiping feces on the walls because they want to hurt someone. You scare me, you look like no-one I have ever seen before, I feel nothing at all when I stare at your face, I want to vomit, you are the most alarming monster to me.



I try on different ways of seeing you, I try on different ways of seeing me. I make us so so lovely. I make us someone I would pass on the street and never ever recall—I could run into us five times today and never realize. I turn us into a husband and wife, someone I would take home to bed and cook breakfast for everyday. I turn us into a quilt, a naked mole-rat, a Yankee Candle, we are both pure form, devoid of ourselves and exactly the same as everything/anything else.

I turn us into a one night stand, I have never been attracted to either one of us before but now I can't contain myself, we both look like fun in bed. I turn us into the kindergarten class next door, it is impossible not to forgive something that young. How can you despise something so obviously human, so obviously floundering? I can't, we are both so innocent and blameless in our physicality.

I find myself very afraid about how you see when you look at me. Do you play this same twisting, this same distortion, this same flipping back and forth of lenses, of perceptions? If I showed you thirty possible slides of how you see when you look at me, which one would you choose? Or ones? Do you push my face over borders, fulcrums, distinguishing lines—from one realm to another, do you move my identity like that? Do you move your identity like that? Do you move our identities like that? Am I fluid or fixed to you, is my fixed image the one that greets me in the morning mirror? When I fall asleep close to you, how are you seeing me?









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xoxo to Enzo Béla Saccuccimorano, my little brother,  
who I think about everyday.