

**LOVE**

When you drive you don't talk  
so I pretend your mind is the Polly Pocket  
I longed for all of 1993—those T.V. girls  
so cool with their pink pocket dollhouses.  
I would snap your brain open to investigate  
each room aerially. Maybe find tiny  
bob-haired girls you never mentioned,  
a deleted text, your slyest lie, other plastic clues.  
But you insist the silence is due to men's  
inability to multi-task. It's true,  
my mind moves like passing grooves  
on a guardrail at highway speeds. Forgive me,  
but the uncertainties are endless. Like,  
is multitasking a skill written into DNA?  
Are those T.V. girls married with children  
now, or was child acting too much pressure  
and they cracked? Do you wish I were more  
like them—blonder, smaller? Will I ever  
erase Polly from my psyche? And how  
close are we to crashing? Is silent driving  
a sign of romantic doom? And if we all  
stopped on the off-ramps to have a BBQ,  
would that be what world peace feels like?  
And is love just a replacement  
for having the answers to all of the questions?

## IN OUR BED, ALONE

Outside our apartment two owls coo from separate trees, reaching.  
I'm up from a dream where you left me strapped to a surgery table,  
you had pressing shit to do, couldn't be troubled to stay. This is to say,  
you've been filling me with such nothing, parts of me are falling off.

In this dream where you left me, I'm strapped to a surgery table  
and strange men discuss how best to remove my left breast, infected  
by what you've been giving me— such nothing. Part of me falls off  
on the floor. The men don't notice and I don't scream, I only plead

with the strangers—deciding how best to remove my infected breast—  
to stop, to wait, *it'll heal on its own, I won't let it spread*  
*to the core*. But the men don't notice and I don't scream. Please  
roll over in bed and look straight through my eyes to inside my head

and don't stop. If we wait, it won't heal on its own, it will spread between  
us like cracks on a frozen lake, swelling our mouths shut like old windows.  
Roll over in bed. Look straight through my eyes to inside my head  
and you'll see I am here lying open, waiting for you to come back

unfrozen. But the window between us swells shut like an old mouth.  
Outside our apartment two owls reach from separate trees, cooing.  
Do you see? I am open. Lying here waiting for us to come back  
from this shit. We could press through the trouble. We could stay. Say it.

## A PANDEMIC OF BOATS

Some time ago a boat started to grow around me—wooden beam here, curved slat there—without my notice, so I sat & floated farther, farther out to sea. Water knocks on the slick wood, salty & calm. I can't say how long I've been here, but I see other small boats around, ebbing, people counting on their fingers. We're a strange fleet. We are here, & there is the land. Light glints off the water with the sick-pretty tint of a late-night computer screen. Somedays I cast a line down to see what I might find: aluminum cans, mucky reports, a faded *to-do* I wrote from before. We have lost our knack for estimating how much ocean there is between us & land. A boat near to mine has a child learning violin, I hear him practicing—minor triad, perfect triad—so I know I'm still alive. Sometimes there's yelling from a few boats down, parents I guess & a baby crying, I can't pray so I sing, hoping they might hear. It's easier to watch the people decorate their masts—strings of beads & colored fabrics—than to watch the shore. We are all watching the shore. Even the flock of seabirds that has formed near me (I read somewhere they're called a rookery, a rookery of albatross), they're wading & waiting. It's easier when someone chuckles, from far off, just a chuckle that swims from boat to boat, the people silent smiling then grinning then giggling, then we're all laughing, even the rookery, all laughing & watching for the land to laugh back.

## INTERVENTION

There is a field of briars,  
& in the field        there is a well  
& in the well        there is a voice.  
*What if I squint,        & see nothing?*  
I reply.                *No echo,*  
                                 *no water,*  
                                 *no self.*

I could run    screaming,  
but it's after noon,        & my sister's  
been conferring        with her demons  
all morning        -blue-lipped,  
muttering        their slick  
litigation.

*Deny to the death*  
they tell her.

She pulls  
at her freckles,        her thinning  
hair, she paces        her kitchen  
linoleum,        she tries again.  
*I'm not high,*        she says.  
I squeeze        my red eyes,  
I press        my hot face,  
I don't cry. *Then tell me*  
*again, I reply.*

My big sis,        who used to fight  
bad-guys for me—        ghosts & warlocks  
knew her name.        Big sis, who I called mama  
more than once.        If Meth was the bad-guy,  
I'd push a blade        to his throat til he broke,  
I'd draw a bath        and watch him drown  
in a foot of water.        But, the bad-guys  
are in her now.

*Tell me again!*

I yell at the well,        but it's no  
exorcism, no saints        or rosaries, just me  
versus my sister's        slick new team. Outside  
her kids echo the sound        of sirens in the distance,  
throw their voices        like lassos at the sky.

& the well        in the field  
is a liar.    & the well in the field  
should mind its damn  
business. And the well  
rises now, hard to our eyes  
with a thousand stones  
we had been drowning  
with & in & though drowning  
now our hands are on the spring.

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