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Write the Body Bloody

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A selection of poetry
submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
of
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in English
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Write the Body Bloody
Write the Body Bloody

At the back of the body is a label that says "This body belongs to..."

There is no name in the gap.

I would write my own name

but no matter how I stretch I cannot reach

the neck grows strained and pinched with trying

and I trust no one to write it for me.

No one will know who owns the body if it is lost

it will exchange its tag for a Jane Doe labelled toe

and be explored by med students.

The body has a secret name which not even I can know

How does one look at a tiny child and see their name blooming from them?

Men who glimpse letters from the body's name make its world spin

but none has scooped it with his tongue and poured it in my ear

Some have not even looked for the name

but named the body themselves

(which the body does not care for)

Names which the body cannot forget

Names tattooed through the body's skin onto bone
'gorgeous', 'bitch', 'honey', 'slut'

It is hard for the body to move with these names cracking in its joints.

Perhaps its true name is so long that no one will ever read it or it is tattooed near its spine curving black brushstrokes beneath its skin pulsing in the red blood of its pages perhaps that is how the man with the fists saw part of the body's name and used it to keep me locked to him, longing.

By spilling the blood of the body with his hard centre wiping it from his body with such care I couldn't help but think he knew its name and would not share.

The body has a currency of touching and a market for parts lips go for a kiss legs for a stroking vagina for the voice that cracks the body open and grunting, sews it together with purple thread but what costs the body the most are the things left behind
The body is not a rubbish bin
but a receptacle for needles
marked 'Hazard' and painted the colour of warning
people want to take the needles away
clean the plastic bottom of the body
with sour disinfectant
but they are afraid of where the body has been
so it grows larger with sharpness
and no one will touch it for the brokenness within.

The body is afraid of pain, but craves it
if I do not provide
the body will create its own pain
so for years I cut the body
with the blade of a blue pencil sharpener
and while I passed out the body danced
flicking blood into the shadows
and we were friends.
Then I could not slice the body anymore
but I knew it needed hurt
so I scratched the body with a pin
but it scowled at me and punished
my lack of commitment to the body's pain.
I forced the body to lash out
so I bled after three months of not bleeding
and its gift to me was washed away in the tide
I did not give the body the opportunity again.

The body practices its relationship with violence
but weakens in the final moments
crumpling to the dirt
shaking, clammy
it leaves me to clean up its messes
and makes choices before I can think
the body puts me places I shouldn’t be
like amidst a bar brawl
arms up, swinging
before I realise I’ve crossed the room
and my friend saves me from the body
and I am left spent as though the body has run a great
distance
wishing she had let the body go
so I would not have to hurt the body myself
only search through the blood for its name

The body will love no one until they learn its name
but it's not telling
so I lie cold in bed with it
in dread with it
clean sheets shushing over shaved legs
lavender pillow against its head
and wait for the body to kill me
as I am nothing to it.
The body knows no sorry
knows no fear
the body exists with animal blood
running from between its teeth and hands
and gasping wet
dies without permission
Head on Side
Head on Side

Woman in pink:

Woman looking upwards

Woman in a short skirt

waxed

legs sprayed orange

Woman playing with the dishwater

yellow gloves

nostrils, pinched

Woman throwing away letters

holey knickers

dead flowers.

Woman, head on side, contemplating art
Woman in red:

Woman sitting

Woman holding a police hat

a white daffodil

six highlighters,

three yellow, one purple

Woman reading

Woman listening to Eminem

Woman dancing naked,

smelling her fingers

staring at her shadow writhing on the wall

Woman in green:

Woman staring at a dead cockroach.

Woman upside down,

drying her hair
crying

Woman on her knees
scrubbing blood
from the shower

Woman in yellow:

Woman making the bed.

Woman waving to her enemy

Woman retracting a statement
  no sir
  I was mistaken

Woman shuffling

Woman treating herself
  wallet open
  white cream

Woman’s face drawn in,
  without a mouth,
  eyes closed.
Enamel

enclosed in pink

I slice my way through

squash down on hard baked rusks

tear free

test my edge on nipples,

cucumber and sweet peas

months later

I am growing a better me

far inside

but fever burns a hole in my replacement

not to be seen for seven years

my defect caves inward

brown stained reminder

of sweat and fears

years later

I break at this seam

on the handlebars

of a blue and black mountain bike

I snap and bury a piece of myself in a lip

paint myself red

fly into the dirt

under a tiny kauri tree
leech into the soil
pull up through the roots
splay out on a branch

My emergency repairman is late for golf
he fashions me a yellow brick hat
to cover my sharp edge
sends me to heal under a fleshy blanket
days later
my regular guy
trims my hat back
rasps sharp edges
puts me in a firing line
buffs me clean

years later
I tremble over a glass of water
split in half the other way
not short, but thin
behind the shine
a flake of myself floats away
and no one
notices
The Listening Thing

I am that girl from uni with the long hair and the bare feet

the wrapping paper

I am the smallest pig dog that bleeds but won’t let go

I am the stepladder

the encore to that band you used to like

the strawberry daiquiri bleeding condensation

I am fluent.

am i?

I am the thing you can’t admit to loving

the compacted fur in your brush

your old spider webs

I am the thing breathing under the bed

the used
horse shoe nails

the foal trying to get amniotic fluid from its ears

am i the last words you said to me

your disapproving looks

the barnacles on the bottom of your boat, slick with slime

I am

the endangered species.

am i the language you tell your kids off for using

I am

the thing you left behind once

I am your anal retentively arranged bookshelf;

smallest to smallest

the royal

blue rat bait

the convolvulus choking your grapevine
the fistful of ribbons: paced and mannered,

maiden,

best presented

I am the clean fish tank

I am your accidentally intentional slit wrists.

am i the willows bending
to lick the earth?

I am the vertigo of a broken pot plant tipped

over child’s ripped artwork

I am

listening to you

am i
Junk Store Girl

The back room smells of
Pledge and regret.

Cabinets hang without their
glass
finishes marred
by 2cent stickers
covered in black ink
to mark their worth

The shop has clothes
from 94 different houses
bringing 94 different dusts
and the skin from
countless others
hiding in the seams.

Each garment
is a story that no one will hear
but you can smell them if you
lean close and breathe quietly.

They waft in, bags
tied with knots
bags split
bags flow over
clothes drip from the bins
try to slip their secrets
but people stuff
shove
smash them in.

I bought a denim jacket once
with a stitched on label
and artful rippings.
There was $20 and an empty
plastic baggie in the
inside pocket.

No one asked her story.

I loaded my car with Grandma’s
white woollen jacket
and her basket of silk scarves.
I wanted her stories for myself
but they would not tell.

My lover wears
chatty clothes with
neck stained collars
He makes their stories his own.
He quit me

to live there with them

in the past.

The only heartbeat I hear

is the one that slips beneath

the music

from the shadow box.

My toes are on the edge.

Today I bought

a handmade purple dress

tailored to my form.

I wondered if a mother loved

her daughter

and made it herself

I wondered if it had commission.

I wondered if the girl who gave it up

was quit too.

The only thing you ever brought me

was a necklace from the rubbish pit

where you scavenge people’s pasts.

It quit someone to find me

swing from my neck

tangle in my hair
My clothes wear someone else
and hide their stories in me until I am
filled with black lettered clicking.
Nailed

I bend backward
break
below the quick
and blood becomes my hair

I clip myself
on your doors
bags
and broken locks

I paint myself
to blend
a coloured mask
to hide beneath

I file myself
down
in the bottom drawer
under k

I hoard
pieces of my day
around me
to pack the hollow I hide
I want to sink into your skin
pool blood there
stain myself red
ready
re-do
start over
with ice water
to make me set
concrete
so you can't chip
at what I have left
My body is a Christmas toy: batteries not included

My body is not your empty Chinese takeout

your lollypop stick

your bitter gladwrap

chipped mug

It’s not the hair tangled in your brush

dragged out, flung

through the window

bird stolen for a

bed

My body is

not your

disease.

My body is not your foot soldier,

your panting dog,

your drunk arrestee

your sullen student

It’s not your lipstick stained

cigarette butt,

pink glow fading

rolling along the

gutter
My body is not your part time job.

My body is not my mother
or my father
or your mother
or your ex

It's not your rolled ankle
your knitting bones
your skinned elbow

My body is not your gravel rash.

My body is not your canvas
your wet clay
your puzzle pieces
or your kit set model

It's not your exam paper
your driving test
your politics essay

My body is not your final mark.
My body is not yours.

My body is a sweat stained sheet

amniotic foal

bonfire smoke

wave bolting down a beach

It’s a black stained rock

road paint

liquid absolution

hot wax

But

your body is not my priest.

It’s not my author

my boss

my doctor

or my garbage truck.

Your body is my batteries
A Murder Every Month
(after Childless Woman)

I pull hair
build my nest
strand red by red strand
but no egg
not even a cuckoo
strokes through
the birds murder me
every month
with their singing
my head smooths itself
beneath the fallen leaves
they place a rock
and my name
on my chest
I can’t breathe
Each rejected acorn
rattles down
leaves a stain that sprains
fray your nail
with your teeth
gnaw it until it
bleeds, water me dilute
with your bloodied saliva

I can’t breathe

when the blades come
unprepared

I’ll slip my skull
your boxed breath
lie naked, chipped
spread wide
for chickens to pick over
to harden their eggshells
and their legs

My nest was warm once
then the tree shook
ripped out its branches
flicked it free

I learnt

a nest blown down
continues to cheep

for days
Milking

Hole in gumboot leaks
chills toes one by one
apple moon hangs overhead
for picking
her silver palm cups
your head
as I never did
taste ozone
calves cry
shiver in their shed
your heartbeat
echoes in my gut
I freeze, head up
in the paddock.

You picked me, ripe
red as water
teeth grind in the shadows
as cows gnaw their cud

I feel you again
slow diving star to star
liver to lung
slow somersaults
the darkness shifts
into one tail swishing mass
under my skin
the herd heats me
as they stumble through
the pitted gateway
tears form
a milky smear
across the black blue sky
The ruru sings to you
my lullaby
as the gate is latched
She is the Cat’s Mother

Queen’s whiskers draw salt
from the moon
leaves it black
she sleeps
claiming everything with her fur
eats from my plate
kneads my armpit
with her claws
She is growing herself inside
waiting for her mirrors
to begin breathing
she tears the sac
hiss
salt spits across the glass
she sands it clean
stares at herself in triplicate
one white
one black
one stunted red
white kitten cannot hear
ears snipped
with blue tattoos
she climbs inside
poinsettia flower boxes
to line herself in pollen
and the smell of wet potting mix
bees flock to
make her sweeter
but her honey is hidden inside
blind black kitten
shut in the closet
curled under a scarf
waits
He feels air suck past
as the door pulls open
bolts
feet sliding,
headfirst into the wall
he cannot see
anything but light
bursting behind his eyes
the smallest has a lisp
long fur
Kali paws
red
the mother licks

licks

cannot take her colour

she takes her by the nape
drags her from the nest
leaves her under a
blackberry bush

She stalks from her red daughter
turns from the black kit
shaking his head
to raise only the palest
with her licking
Today I did not bake

Today I did not bake a cake; I tried.

sifted flour a puff of lies, dusting hands and bench
sugar shards cajoled underfoot, escapee sweetness
broken defences and scrambled eggs, confused, obliterated.
against instruction, vanilla essence, a cloying splash of
rebellion
mixed and mixed and changed into something more than the
sum of its parts
one lick of the spoon
one glorious tongue stinging swipe
forbidden syrup
cocoa’s bitter face seeks broken teeth penalty
tendrils poking at the tender spots
Baking powder tingles up your tongue
synapses burst in a rush of saliva
temptation lingers
corner of mouth glued together
lick the bowl: painted nose.

Today I did not bake a cake.

Tomorrow I won’t make the icing.
No Flowers for Old Men

Slaves

bedded where you want them
inconsiderate flowers
still open
in their own time

Have you ever tried to close
an orchid
without a rope?

Tie me
to the stake
Sir
rearrange me
for minimum effect
fold
my speaking petals
over my speaking mouth
trim my ankles
cross my knees
close me
so I am wordless
Lock me silent
in the dark
so the rays of my lover
cannot stroke
or help me spread
I’ll wait
patient
breathing
eyes closed
for my moment
I am a weed
I grow, forbidden
I flower, inconvenient
independent
under the shade
of gorse
that scratches faces

a weed
is like a
woman

beautiful
but doesn’t know its place
The Point

(after Mark Strand)

I give up my hair which soaks up the dew.
I give up my forehead, fresh wet sand.

I give up my eyes, a slipknot noose.
I give up my nose, a chunk of pumice.
I give up my lips, helium balloons.
I give up my teeth, the cage of my voice

I give up my tongue.

I give up my throat, a wall for graffiti.
I give up my heart, a greaseless gear box
I give up my lungs to your pipe.
I give up my smell which is of bread rising

I give up my shoulders.

I give up my hands that flutter with words.
I give up my stomach, where the possum lives.
I give up my navel to your knife.

I give up my thighs which refuse to look at each other.
I give up my buttocks, wet smears of paint.
I give up my vulva and the voice that is quietened there.
I give up the bra that holds my chest together.

I give up my skin, leaves crackling underfoot.

I give up.

There is no one left inside my clothes

You can have none of it
Inappropriate Gifts

Silver seams
wax blue string tied
burst with helium words
they cannot say
slip, bunt the ceiling

‘get well
soon’
you shine, swell
in the light
that flicks through the window
the way you could

I want to bury you
in my closet
behind my little black dress
behind the thick white coat
I couldn’t bury Grandma in
(even though she was cold)
so your seams won’t fade
shrink
or wrinkle
but even if
I hide you
behind all of my skins
you will still
die
but slowly
you will shrink
until you are a silver puddle
deflated
as a tear
Disposable Barbie

I am Disposable Barbie.

my hair is haystack blonde

No matter how long you hold

me underwater

I just can’t drown

my hair stays dry

and waveless.

I am Sink-hole Barbie.

you leave me on the steps

and the Labrador

decides to see how I taste

(the oreo you tried to feed me)

my body sinks beneath

the black dog’s teeth

I break the way I was intended.

I am Matinee Barbie.

A fly lands

on my painted lips.

I can’t blow it away

only feel its feet

stroke me as it hunts
through my lipstick
for food.

I am Mannequin Barbie.
Your mother finds me
and, triumphant
removes the scars I fought for
by unsnapping my head with a pop
and chasing a less loved doll
to steal a flawless body from.

I am Restless Barbie
and I see everything.
My veins are extruded plastic
the same as everyone else
I cannot sleep.
You dressed me again and again
then left me face down
naked
on another androgynous plastic belly.
You painted my face.
You cut my hair.

I am Disposable Barbie
my legs are bent
locked open wide
to serve you
But the pose I was given
makes me
useless
except for the thing you’re tired of.
I’m not Housewife Barbie.
I’m not Career Barbie.
I’m not Proposal Barbie.
I’m not even Autonomy Barbie.
I am Disposable Barbie.

And the thing that ended me was hope.
I dream

I dream of pigs
digging up the roots of me
pink snouts hunger, quest
demanding
I fall under the chestnut tree
see them loom
they block the filtered sunlight.

I dream of pigs
huge and lolling
fit to burst
bodies stressed beyond endurance
fixed in place by greed
mouths brim
they die stuffed and sad

I dream of pigs
their wet dead smell
and sweet putrid shit
they barge past me
knock me down
eat my hands to the elbow
leave me empty
I dream of pigs
twee and spry
kittens slurp from the bottle
fit my tea cup, snooze my pocket pigs
asleep in a cradle
fill my heart
a lie

I dream of pigs
devouring slush
gobble, fart
smash it down
hunger, need, desire
they never stop
eat all of me

I dream my Nana looks after the pigs
I dream my Father kills them with sucking blows of his hammer
I dream my Mother collects all of the pigs and puts them on her mantel
I dream my Brother eats them with apple sauce

I dream of pigs
they never dream of me.
Masks

I carry a golden shield
and a sword pointing downward
two birds tell me secrets
while three touch the moon
the ochre tipped horn
of the oxen cradles

I hold the feather of justice
and never look happy about it
knelt upon my pedestal
in a grey tunic
I stare through you

I am the lady of the beasts
I hold pregnant court
the bear nuzzles
the wolf’s head sinks to my knee
as all the phases of the moon lick me
the lioness stands guard

I fold my wings over an infant and a corpse
the infant is latched to my gold nipple
the corpse sleeps covered in the tide
Horus hanging in the sky
brings his lady words
but my eyes are closed

I am creased in the centre of my lotus
with children in my hair

my eyes glare from
palms
feet
forehead
and dangle from my ears

I of the red palms
red soles
all woman
rise

infant skulls click my rhythm
the grabbing hands of the men
who tried to touch me
flicker about my hips

my red tongue pours from my mouth

I dance my refusal

hair a volcano of flowers

shackled to the sky
Lashed

I’m the laced gatekeeper
of the salt
water woven fast
but, I drip
I fail again and again

I bend
the black stains my leaks
for all to see
the darkened tracks
soak into my cream fields
killing all the buttercups

she clamps me
between her metal teeth
grinds me
into better curves
corset fastened
I am rearranged
in silhouette
She’ll never see
the pieces of me
set adrift
on the lake of herself
forcing swollen waves to leak
her curse

She scratches me with nails
swipes at me with coloured cotton
trying to paint herself bigger
over the bruise
I’ve become
but I’m beyond repair
hinges broken
swung wide open
I groan in the wind
propped on a stone
rusting
Packages

(after The Couriers)

The wind howling
through the chimes
and the lock hole?
It is not mine.
Do not capture it
to power
any other
vinyl netted
singing.

A copper vulva in a blue
and yellow box?
Do not accept it.
It is a poor copy
of a genuine woman
who knits.

Two rings of silver with nipples in them?
Masks. Masks and a love
lurking beneath
a skin shirt.
A silicone cup for furtive bleeding?

Lies. Lies and an avowal

against creeping scents

and holistic cheering.

A second skin to cover me?

Refuge and a shelter

for mud to stick to

and warming stomachs.

The wind opens my book

sounding out letters to steal.

The mother cuts her baby’s hair

to turn him into a frog.

The mercury flows back together.

The waves breathe.

A kiss, a kiss, you won’t let me

fall down.
Two Narcissists Walk into

a Bar
Co-dependence

(After Kate Braverman)

The women are graceful with quills and fear
They dance to keep their feet planted
one in a puddle
one in the cupboard
The women buy each other pink musk bubble bath
cap the bottle with a diamond
They lace themselves behind the wheel of utilities
lick abandonment
kill cockroaches with blue vapour
laugh with winking teeth

The women are vibrant with stockings and downcast eyes
reaching for the cookie jar
getting handfuls of Persil the last card instead

They dress as a mannequin missing a hand
in camouflage
leopard print, striped zip
lucky mother forgot that day

once is enough

for hairless weeping

They are coping

They are coping

The men are spiced with cologne and throw away compliments
dark denim empty shelf single jandal
last night’s glitter in their beds
They too, wear their father’s ashes in silver around their necks
They too, hear the tide washing out and try to fill it with beer

They are coping

They are coping

The men, stained with orange street lights buy women to weep in
to cover in pearls and black stretch satin with arms to wrap their teeth around
shrug off shun
The men burn the night against the steel doorframe
with cricket eyes

smoke rising from their fingers

This woman is first aid saline
dripping
she removes her hands
to prevent accidental touching
She is spectacular in last night’s make up
black rings cover the bruise to follow
The woman waits behind an orange pillow
cradled to her chest
to prevent coughing
and tries to forestall leakage

The woman is frivolous with silence
and baking
she downloads rejection
one card at a time
her ipod is smashed
the night paints itself over her eye
The woman breathes nerve electrics
she is memorable in feathers
She takes her lips and nails to bed

pinkblue
She is coping

She is coping

The woman does not murmur lullabies
or accept cut flowers
Her selves fight each other
in a paddling pool mirror
The woman knows what it is to cross last
she knows what it is to bleed, blue shadows
She expects it

She is coping

She is coping

The woman belongs to no one
unmarked by gold
she creaks backward on the swing seat
nauseas
The woman sighs pinecones
and a man burns them for kindling
She sings knitted melodies
he gathers kindling
splits nails
The woman inserts garlic into a lamb’s leg
the man picks the meat from the bone.
She’s alone.

The man sweats through last night’s sheets
    The woman pushes scrambled eggs around a plate
she pours vodka and glitter into her mouth
    and pants

He’s alone.

The woman sweats through last night’s sheets
    he brings her warm towels
drives home
breathing addresses out the window
    she re-reads old letters
he salts her dinner
    limes her glass
he kisses her beneath her eye
her forehead
her ear
he kisses her hair
billowing through his fingers
she kisses his mouth
his thumb
    his fear.

They are burning.

They are burning.
Cleanout

The first box smells sweeter than wet newspaper
drag it under the light
earwigs crouch
top layer of cardboard peels off
like skin
ridges soften underneath
old magazines eaten
by acidic snails
frame a self in pink
sealed sections
how to keep a man happy
the word ‘breathe’
looks wrong
I don’t remember how
to stare at a mirror in a dark room
trying not to pick pimples

The second box flies
into my hands
I cannot see over its lightness
friends for every year, louder
lie over each other
brown the shade of 16

teeth soft, still felt

white of 4 worn into grey freckles of 9

but vivid eyebrows are permanent

small Dalmatians

corners missing

I remember the price of everything

close the lid

write “to go”

The third box opens

on a field of fleece

unpeel its membrane

for a frog, cool in my hand

as I crouch in the pool

fish flicking my calves

porcelain chips fall and click each other

at the bottom of the box

stroke presents from women

I cannot name

but every time I cry

I smell their lavender shoulders

I set aside my first yellow fence

two locked diaries to break into
handmade denim pencil case
red zip for keeping
I leave the snakeskin behind
he can’t find his tail
for eating
feed the boxes left behind
into the fire
of the rusted barrel
only one translucent container
to fill
magazines melt from my eyes
the ash of my childhood
covers everything
I am grey

but shoots of green
peep through
No Daddy

do you remember the day I called you a stranger?
in the autumn sun outside the Mobil station
Would you like a ride in the white van little girl?
I said I didn’t accept rides from strangers
People were watching
Maybe I shouldn’t have uncovered my father’s nakedness
perhaps someone had to because
I didn’t recognise you then
through the black.

But today you’re my Dad

and you’re an old man now
the 12 years since hang heavy in your face
they shake in your hands
you’re just as scared as me
I’m not harmless
but I use words not fists
maybe they hurt just as bad.

I have a million questions
but I am afraid
You say I haven’t missed much
things with you are just the same
but how can you not know that

You
missed
everything.

You threw me away Daddy,
I fell down jib stairs with my rain stained bag
legs lay heavy in the agapanthus bed
smashed brains pattered out my ear
painted pain in pink lines
now I can’t think anything real
I am nothing to you

I fell out Daddy
from a Glasgow kiss
by the bleach spattered skull
of the horse who follows me
black holes danced in my eye
as rain kissed my face
the earth roared up to meet me
to drag me further down
I spun out Daddy
I fell flat on the stage
the nailed heels of the dancers
stabbed through my pretence
my liver ran laps
as lights swirled in my lungs
I blinked and blinked
but nothing moved
in the heaving mass of oblivion
I went east Daddy
the wheel slid from my grip
blurred green and black smear
whirled past my face
I saw my eyes narrow
I forced the pin drop
slammed to a stop
with my heart and my hands
I made it Daddy
I streaked through the sky
smoke blurred from the wheel
when I hit the concrete river
I stepped into the other
read grey but said silver
belonged in non belonging

I cut my hair Daddy
I slit my plaits
with the green carving knife
from ear to waist
the past drifted to cover my breasts and thighs
but was blown away with the tide
and the molten caramel breath
of the man who won’t love me.

I sang sugar Daddy
my pinkie nail splintered
on the club that you left me with
my red hips swung sideways
I dropped lollies from my left hand pocket
I dropped hope from my right

I turned 21 Dad
I ripped my wrist
with a pair of orange handled scissors
the same colour as the spoon
that broke me when I was 10
I bled my childhood
over the limestone driveway
it fell like the leaves from the willows you cut down
skirling like knives in the wind again, again.

I graduated Daddy

I was laid out on a winter’s lawn in the streetlight
by a man who would own my body but not my soul
would I had gained a wild animal’s trust

I drowned myself in vodka

I leapt out of my mouth

onto the bark of a persimmon tree

but had to go back again, again.

I grew up Daddy

I fell off the swing

my hands are bloody

my heart is cracked

you weren’t watching me

and now you want this to never have happened

but it did

a pink skirted girl child never again, again.

Look at my scars, they’re real

I see them shining in the mirror every morning
dew dipped spider webs
across my everything
they glitter, but they aren’t pretty
they gleam like the knife
splitting my skin again, again.

I did the hard part myself
Did you miss it?
Reunion

In the driveway Poppa stoops
three hairs placed over head
hands stretched with arthritis
a cracked painting
banging in the wind
he doesn’t touch me
his regimental rose garden
now blanketed in weeds
cat shit in the corner
dead shrubbery
where am I?

Nana’s habitual grimace
made larger by lost weight
drags the corners of her mouth down
jowls of evil
a creaking umbrella
she sees everything
covers everyone
but me
next generation squats on her knee
drooling the unsayable
crams it in with a fist
blue blank baby eyes

focus on dusty light fittings

What do they see?

ewalls have slithered inward

I remember this room as bigger

y they seem to pulse

shove us together

unlikely ninepins

shuffling closer

if one tips

we all fall

there is no one to catch me

I’ll land beneath them

suffocate

no one will notice.

elderly uncles have lost their sight, their hearing and their tact

black walking stick clenched

brown ortho shoes

One stranger says that he can see

whose daughter I am

my treacherous face
should I wish
I wasn’t stamped with my maternity?
how can I feel so guilty
for something that was given to me?

Your wife hangs back
then knifes in determined
awkwardly hugs me
says my hair smells nice
she caresses its length

I will it to snakes
to strike her presumption
but it shushes past my ears

I rear back
eyes shut tight
safe for the moment.

We try to bond over
fluffy yellow ducks
smiley spotty horses
caught inside our cell phones
but I see the kids Dad raised instead of me

and his ex wife looks back at her
we sit on the velvet sofa
worn to threads over the stuffing
looking at anything
but each other’s faces.

I thought it would be easier
the shadow sheep
I peep out from behind two babies
born out of wedlock
one a shock to everyone
slithered out on the bathroom floor
stained the tiles, the lives red
while my legs stay stubbornly shut
but even a child conceived in wreaths of meth
has a cherub face
Oh how well behaved they are
so quiet
Granny lust burns the unpleasant parts away
all that is left is the baby
no one cares how it got here
Am I the only one wondering why it is so quiet?
P baby pees, does it think?

And you
Stub the driveway with one foot
naughty boy, caught
sullen teen sinking car wheels
into the mask of front lawn

clueless man

looking for keys in kitchen cupboards

finding only broken glass

spread on the floor like honey

oblivious

you charge through

crunching me underfoot

then offer me a cup of tea

in a chipped white mug

I take mine

the same way as you

so maybe I’m your daughter

after all.
Hedge

(After *Elm*)

my grandfather winks and loses an eye
no one notices.

it rolls between my legs into the gutter
he reaches from his coffin with wet paper hands
begs me to take his death picture
no smiling

he flaps around my ankles
as I

    lean,

    lean

    lean

    lean

    away

a sweater lies, panting
in my shadow
coloured ladies flit to my shoulder
to dig their pincers in
pull my hair out
one strand at a time
to lacquer the ground
I stretch my fingers
stroke hot concrete
my limits burn, bleach yellow
you want me to keep them out
shriek when I keep them in
you cut me
down to a stump
and roots
a feathered whiteness shelters beneath me
they plant their futile children
in my softness
to rot
beneath their shells
for boys to fling
for cats to crack
inside me, an itch has made its home
it pecked itself
a splintered place to hide at night
I feel its fur turn
brush against me
the rhythmic thump
of its leg
scrabbles
keeps me awake

I feel it gnaw at its edges

scuttle my skin

I bloom

the itch eats me

the whiteness steals my colour

joins the other painted ladies

draped in my hair

children pick me

lick their hands

reach between my legs

for my Grandfather’s eye

spit

shine

eat it whole
Two Narcissists Walk into a Bar: One Child Walks Away

1. *When I was born*

10 days late

I’m an overcooked egg

boiled white flesh

should have been perfectly smooth

but one scratch

tears it apart

you told her you loved me more

so I am white and red and flaking.

She never forgave me

and you forgot.

While the apple peel

stretched from her red fingers

you taught me to be silent

and beautiful.

She often placed her hand

over my chest

pressed down

then ran to

nebulise my breathing
The mother of the sickness
collected meat dishes
to smother in glad wrap
freeze for later
feet
up thawing

2. *Prescriptions*

This syrup
for better breathing
eats teeth
but this jab
for painless pulling
fixes that
and you have another
white wall
to grow
anyway.

This powder
for better breathing
breeds tongues
but this pill
for green killing
fixes that
either way
you have another
sixteen years
to practice
the art
of closing
your mouth.

3. Birthday presents

4. Visiting

She speaks for an hour
about melted candles
shitty nappies
homosexual flings
then demands my pages

He builds a fence
to keep the sheep in
reconciles his bank statements
chops wood for
a daughter less bloody than me
then waves me away
with his teeth
in place

5. **Advices**

Take a deep breath

6. **Education**

You congratulate me on my
Masters degree in
husband hunting
because you say I need a man
to take care of me.
You say true love is
admitting your place in the world
but I say
it’s up all night fucking
to Nine Inch Nails
filling the bed with
the blood of our biting.

7. **Sorry**

I wear my skin
the wrong way out.

Everything itches.
Clothes stick
in all the wrong places
and my voice is only heard
inside my lungs
where it bounces around
looking for somewhere to hide.

It is only once I shed my skin
in sleep
that my lips open
the murmuring
becomes a roar
that cascades down my face

8. *Not Sorry*

Last night I woke up coughing
with my man’s hand
between my thighs
as though it belonged there.

His mother raised him
to never speak ill
of another’s parents.
So he just looks me in the eye
takes my keys
and drives us home
Mouse

I am the itch that lives in the wall
my tail flicks
inside the helmet box
I am here, counting seconds
while she becomes
fragmented

her bed lies empty
for hours
food wilts on the shelf
and I cannot eat it all

she lays
blue polar fleece sheets
to catch the skin
cracking from her nipples
for later
hangs her wet caked skins
from a white rail
leaves them long after they’re dry

the vulva she wears
is held together with glue
and copper wire
laced over where he’s been

she admits to nothing.

I eat uncooked rice
it swells in me
blue
I scratch with my right foot
that tangles
in the hair behind my ear

She calls me Rustle
for the noise I make
opening the packages
in her cupboards
to save her from her craving

I call her nothing
we brush against each other
chasing baby crickets
that somehow land on their feet
every time they fall

she wants me dead
she sets poison
traps around her hallway
but licks them herself

when she thinks no one is looking

I eat the rat bait for her.

It makes everything

too bright

every sound is a car

redlining as it spins

my ears grow cold

listening to the air leave my body

I leave my tail behind.

It is hard to move my fingers

my stomach

is a block of dry ice

that cracks

streams

and pops its lid

I tuck my legs

inside my body

slip

behind the fridge

make conversation with

the dust bunny that hides there

and begin to dry
Pins
in the dark
colours blench
try three keys
jingle
scratch
before you find
one that fits
hear it click.
wind chimes
brush and drip
hot rust
The lock is greased
welcome home
beneath your feet
let yourself through
groan to drown
the floorboard's pant
and sing
in the shadow of the door
a single daffodil
bends, weary
no flowers

in the dark

in the rain

I am dirt

beneath your hands

this door

is never locked

porch unswept

paint

chipped

and hidden beneath your stone

in duplicate

are keys

that make me useless

call the locksmith

turn inside me

grind

until all my pins fall out
Bareback

Dirt moves faster
than hooves
comes to you
demands kisses
the blood’s your fault
you climbed on
after all

You’ll never understand
true love
unless you knot the rope
no spurs
no whip
saddle
bridle
bit
no blurred
bareback

He must accept his girth
the galls chafe
his job is to carry your
paper thin dream
your crossed legs
your carcass

You must accept your helmet
your sweat spills
your job is to feed him
your height
your hair
your hide

Climb on ex-jockey
walk around the orchard
climb down
watch him admiring apples
find them hidden
in his pocket later
smell their juice on him
do not cry

only at Christmas
will he wear your bells
without complaint
smile until your face breaks
for this small mercy
forget
you ever rode so fast
the world blurred
bareback
hearts beating
across the dirt
This Bruise has Teeth
This Bruise has Teeth

Lover, when did you last
let go your fist?

tread softly
I am underfoot
I want to be selfish

let me
take your finger between
my teeth, wrap
my tongue around it
suck

keep your mouth shut.
It won't mean a thing
The internet says
a selfish partner
is the best kind
close your eyes
I can't concentrate
with the pulse in your wrist
wrapped in my hair

It will just be a moment
in the album
of moments
glued down
touch me in anger
it takes two to tell
and this bruise has teeth
Man standing, holding a balloon

Under your hand

everything is red

your lips poised above me

words waiting

to blow me down

your breath stale, humid

peanuts, candyfloss, beer

steals mine

In the hands of your child I rattle

bounce

there is no floor for me

At first

I leap and twist

in your inflated castle

I am grown young

but now

my hands pucker

I lack the

short memory of a child

and soon my stomach rolls and heaves
Darling,

I am tired of smiling

I press against the sides
they slide and squeak
beneath my fingers
I cannot pinch
or pry my way out

I wonder
will I burst?

Your breathing swallows me
until, stretched to breaking
I pop and am free
gasping, cold in the light

or will you place me
in the bottom of your dark closet
for keeping
forgotten
except for flashes
and your words will shrink around me
until there is nothing left but my wrinkled skin
& the photograph of you

holding me by a string
Home Truths

She can't have it both
so she writes the ways herself
head bent to the page
smiles
capsicum red
hummus red
milk red
smiles
she can't have it both
so she writes the list instead

She can't have it both
so she buys the ways herself
head bent to the rack
smiles
shorter skirts
smaller bikinis
cost more
shield less
she can't have it both
so she charges it instead

She can't have it both
so she ties the ways herself
head bent to the hessian
over
under
through
slip
handed her hood
she
smiles
tilts her head
back
presses gristle
deep into her mouth
soaks it on her tongue
tastes dust and sweat
she can’t have it both
so she ties the knot instead
Drunken Villanelle

Slip in the door and start your drinking
hands stretched reaching, feeling blinded
burn away the pain and thinking

Feel the fire deep, still sinking
pretend your lover never minded
Slip in the door and start your drinking

Taste the tears you fear she’s faking
search for nothing and you’ll find it
burn away the pain and thinking

Gift the thirst that you are slaking
take her eyes so she is blinded
Slip in the door and start your drinking

Stroke the flesh that you keep breaking
kiss her face and be reminded
burn away the pain and thinking

Match the noises that she’s making
louder so she’ll know you tried it
Slip in the door and start your drinking
burn away the pain and thinking
Shell

It is the third day since I quit you.
I open the carton
like a cat checking for feathers
there is one egg left
condensation glues it
between thumb and fingertip
and the sound of my belly
belies wholeness.
I lift, feel the bottom unhinge itself
and the mucous flutter
from my stomach into the groove
where the shell was
an echo
now light in my hand
I am a moon with no ocean
Disjointed

The young woman
eyes wet
thighs thick
hips swinging
carries a sword
and ponamu
neither is permitted
so he removes them
her legs are popped off
seed pods
left to lie
under a blue moon skirt
until the day she takes the
sheep’s jaw bone
and ties it to her waist
then
her hair becomes a feathered plume
to hide her breasts
as he suckles
her hands become a bowl
that will never hold enough water
her face becomes an anemone
unsure
stagnant
sucked in when stroked

she dries
and dries

children nest
in her head twigs

her nose
grown long from lies
hardens to a beak

her face is a map
of bargaining

she’s bought herself a chalice
and filled it with wine
bleeding time

he gives back her sword
her ponamu
but she cannot lift them

she is beneath the peach tree
not in it
hands running
with juices
Welt

I boil an egg
to hear it rattle
inside the pot.
It wants to escape
but I know I can swallow
it in two bites
if I think about something else.
It’s a good boil.
Loud, solid.

I take a long handled teaspoon from
the white drawer
and dip out some water.

I stand with it balanced over the sink.
and look at my naked body.
to decide where to put it.

I place my wrist over the sink
and splash the water down.
It feels cool
as it bracelets me
I press the spoon to my skin
but feel nothing.
So I reach for more

The second spoonful
steams from the pot

I turn my hand pulse up
and dash it down.

My breath becomes a soft ha.

That’s where I should stop.
Let’s Makeup

My face is poised

to run over your lip

at your urging

the red pencil

of your tongue

paints its itch

in lines down my spine

you suck

pink blush sponges

beneath my ear

my eye leaks

to your fist

in indigo

you brush it against my ribs

the colour settles in my hollows

deep red

But I apply the mascara myself

black ink strokes

I write everything on the lines of my lashes

but no one can see
you colour me in
one moment at a time
hands fumbling
through my palate

I’m running out of skin
I’ll wait for the sale
exchange my empty flesh
for a new tanned crust
Flipbook

I try to take a picture of you
but you are a
smear
in my eye
that won’t come out

I see you, vague
you, blurred
You with your half bottle of sour sav
You with your sleeves rolled up
You with your fear
    of being sentimental
with your grey tinted glasses
    fingerprinted
with your creased shirt
You with your car park covered salsa
You with your loose eyelash
with your eyes covered as the light flicks on
with your pillow to shut
    shut
    shut me out.

You with your old tyre
    ringed coffee cup
beard falling in the sink

shoulder warm jacket

mouldy bread

second wear socks

your denim off the floor

You with your snapping turtle fingers

with your laughter

You with your pen that fits your hand

writing itself blank

You with your dry garden

your heated home brew

half remembered massage

You with your finger tip

your tongue

drying my face

your egg stuck to the cardboard

pulled up

lost insides

demand for coffee

You with your feral cat

hatred of contracts

you with your hands in my hair

sandy feet
six surfboards
chilly bin
arm around me
beach dancing
fake leather jacket
fake cigarette
fake smile
flowing through your fingers

You with your tears.

You with your hands around my throat.

You with your bitten fingernail.

You.

The stain of you.
I have got to stop loving you

(After Ai)

so I take my landlord’s axe
march across the lawn
and swing it at the oak tree
that watches me.
My shoulders shake
and acid sweat pours
into my eyes
as I hack
but when I look up
there is only a small mouth
in the bark
running with screaming
and sap
words I don’t hear

Mother always said
don’t pick at scabs
you’ll make them bleed
and leave a scar
Pisces

There is no empty space

in the bed we shared

because you spent your nights

wrapped around me in a vine

the only hollow is in your shoulder

where my head used to lie.

I would crouch beside you

and listen to you breathe,

counting the gaps between

my chest beats against

itself, a rhythmic sting

as you spin my ribs like blinds

to shield you from the light

your hand, metallic

fits so well between my teeth

but you slipped it out when I was sleeping

in folds around my voice

you stole to put in your tackle box

with the feathers and the oil.

You’ll use it to snare

your next Piscean dream.
Missing

I disappear underneath your pencil
the paper dents below
fisted purple and red.

You press with the intent of fingers
digging ditches in my skin
I smudge you
at the limits of myself.

and everything you run your
palm across
in orange is closed.
You shine me in your colour.

When your tears fall
they can’t soak in
through the layer of wax
you’ve smothered over me.

when you left
flakes of you
collected beneath my fingernails.

You colour me outside the lines.
Drip

We walk the bank of the river
to drain the water
that lies between us
we walk because we can’t touch
even the outside edges of our
hands
without you laying a sheet of sweat
on me and covering it with your body
but as you ask me about my day
one letter at a time
slips between your lips
and drips into me
I feel it run
down my body
pool in my feet
and it makes it hard
to walk next to you
in the dark
without taking your hand
so we head for the swings
but the gravity
swings the liquid
and the breeze strokes my hair
and when we go to leave
you cloak yourself around me
my head fits just there
and your fingers
cradle my skull
and you drink from it
kissing at my face
we carry each other up the hill
to bed
Webs

Lover,

I’ve missed you

where have you been?

the words he said

lie heavy in me

solid

I am crusted in mirrors

face to face with myself

frozen

no touching

my mouth aches

for fingertips

soft, insistent lips

and wet wanting
Lover,

sharpen your teeth

suck at me

until my lips

warm

and you can kiss me

so deep

I feel known

pour breath

alcohol warm

into my mouth

until I am drunk on your saliva

booze thinned blood

hot within

but leave my hands trapped

in the ice.
Lover,

my body’s heating

but I cannot writhe

I’m caught

in the frozen web

of words I still believe

slide your coping saw

between my legs

rough cut

then turn them on your lathe

snap them free

to wrap around you

massage them

beneath your tongue

turn my blue

to cream and pink

before I can hold you off

with my doubtful arms
let me lie trapped

in my icy bed

at your mercy

and Lover,

be merciless

lick the ice from me

lick me clean

while I can’t escape

leave my hands trapped

so I have to let you.

Lover,

your gasping

makes water run

from my ribs

I have room

to breathe vowels

but not your name
reach under the ice

splay your hands on my ribs

I want you
to crush the air from me

so that when you relax

I breathe so deep

I crack the ice over my breasts

myself

warm them

with your mouth ungentle

demand me

and I will rise to you

but leave my hands

held fast

and cold.
Lover,

Lift me from the ice

onto the kitchen table

sweep it clear

with the back of your arm

but Lover,

hold my hands fast

so I can listen to my body

and not his voice.
Hunting

My hands covered you like the dark
stuck fast along the length
of our fingers.
Your feathers fell to one side,
stirred with my breathing.
I felt the map of your wrist
touch mine
lines sinking into each other
like dust into crevices

why can’t I look at you?

I followed your folded future hand
along the dunes
dodging gorse, thistles, brown glass shards
I laid myself down
with them and your kisses
as a covering.

Your eyes reflected the moon.

I couldn’t touch you
as you filled me with the gush of sky
as if it was shot
and laid its head
beside yours
on my shoulder

But I licked the rain from your face.

I was a shell
buried in your foot
and you needed me there
as we staggered
though water that fell and hissed in the sand.

Why don’t you need me now?

As the thunder buries itself in the sky
the rain becomes your hands
but the ground does not move beneath me.

You are gone.

You do not light
the room
with your messages.

You do not call.

You do not spread
a layer of yourself
along the back of the seat
to slide into my hair.
I find flecks of you on my clothing
and in the creases of my mouth
you taste of active yeast
burnt THC
and disappointment
But you are not here.
My body is alone
unpeeled from itself
flapping like a wounded bird.
Shoot me until I am still.
Breathing the memory of you
undoes me like
a shoe
slipped on and off
one time
too many.
Sex is Best When You Want to Kill the Other Person

Sex is best when you want to kill the other person
Tender.
You know how it ends.
You’ve read this book before
pages soft and frayed
but the flawed characters compel you
to read again
hoping
someone will change
blow dust from the torn cover
roll off the pink hair tie
holding the pages in
try again.

Sex is best when you’re angry
Sparks.
Static shocks off the page
lovers come together, vice
twisted closer
teeth gripped on
they hide in the pages
words inked to cover
their shame
and the gut rock knowledge
of the trial to come
is not enough
to stop reading.

Sex is best when there are only two lovers in the bed
Silence.
no pages screaming past promises
no pages fallen
lying featherless between.
If the book is well bound
the lovers exist only for each other
for the cave under the covers
where they hide

Sex is best when you have a connection
Synergy.
so deep
the colour of the lover’s eyes
pour into each other
and they see only the same thing
salted water
so smooth, so thin
it lays on them clear
and they shine
wet teeth
embedded in each other.

But which book are you reading?
Or did you again, fall asleep
with it open
face down
rising and falling on your chest
as you dream,
create the ending yourself?

The lovers are flawed.
Close the cover over their writhing bodies
Pick up the fallen pages
stuff them inside
wrap it in a pink hair tie
put the book
softened with the grease of your fingers
and your breathing
back
until next time
Because you know how it ends
You don’t need to read it
again.
Foundation

the rabbits dig in the paddock

looking for a piece of me.

Every morning I take my spade

blunted on cores

of dock and gorse

and try to fill them in

No matter how much dirt

they spread

in their search

there is never enough to fill the hole completely

when you try to tamp it tight

I place the water trough over the biggest hole

and overnight three more appear

and the beginnings of four more

where they’ve been looking

for the roots of me

I fill the hole with manure

taken from the patch

where it lies with the others

tamp it hard

take the hose and water it in
trying to plant something new
from nothing but mud.

The fence wires sag from the storms
the lawn growing through them
the only apple tree left
standing since they tore the orchard down
is a new cavern

I’m scared if I look
I’ll discover this ground
I run on
isn’t solid
instead
an intersecting web of
tunnels
they’ve dug into my weakening
the thing
that lets me stand.

My skin is cold
where you lifted your hands from me.
The Hoax

At the back of the body is a label
that says ‘this body belongs to’
There is no name in the gap
I would write my own name
but no matter how I stretch
I cannot reach

The body thought
maybe
it had found someone trusted to write it
for me

folded itself
in front of a mirror
wondering
how it grew a second
pair
of arms
just the size
to wrap
once round the shoulder
once around the waist
to bear the body up
against the struggle
and how they could
lift the body
behind the knees
and carry the body
as if it weighed nothing
from the screaming
from the plastic cups
trampled under feet
of an army of music.

The body looked and looked into the mirror
wondering how it grew a second
pair of eyes
the colour of the lanyard
that held its silver gymnastics medal
when it was twelve
the body trusted him
to write its name
for he knows it

not the name written
on my face
by the narcissist
and bully

but my secret name
he knows it
hides it behind his teeth
which mark the body
where it is seized

but his body is eleven
empty
beer cans
in the foot well
of a car
rolling

his body is seven
used
acupuncture needles

his body is a six letter
space in a crossword
four across
and the clue is
fear

his body is three
paddock covered limes

two cups of coffee
his body is one
shattered
bottle
of cologne
and he is
evaporating

he won’t let the body
touch him
for fear
I’ll cut my palm on
a shard of himself
or that his scent
might bloom
on my wrists

But the fingers bleed
already
and the skin
smells of his skin
already
where his chest
meets the chest
where his thighs
meet the thighs
where his mouth
where his
mouth
meets the body.

The body is
broken
held together
with saliva
from his silver sliver
of a tongue
with howlite beads
with a slipknot skipped
around its cut logs

but he is afraid

so the body remains nameless
pained
with its breathing
Breaking and Entering

Once, your hands knit the pieces of me together
in threads of spring
to make yourself a covering.

Quick, unpick.
The future is coming.

Once, uninvited, you cut yourself a key to me.
The day in the parking lot you played locksmith,
tongue tip touching the corner of your mouth
one finger behind my teeth
as you manipulated me and my pink dress
away from a silver front bumper.

It was not until the key you left in my lock opened its eyes that
I was afraid.

You threaded your needle with wire
beckoned me closer with the tilt of your eye
and stitched me into your nipple
alongside a ring of polished steel
That I could not reach to pull myself out.

You took my fingers.
One night
when you were kissing my ankles
you imagined a cricket inside of me.
Now I hear it singing
and feel its legs
fiercely kissing each other
violent metal-soaked mouths
not coming up for air
long into the night.
I crawl on the floor of myself
glass in hand to cover it.
but it is vicious
in its leaping.
You’re never here.

Now, you walk into my dinner date for one and I go
for a fingerprint on a glass that you take from my hand.
I dream of you, tongue buried behind my ear under a street
lamp
begging me for just a little bit more.

Now, you crouch inside me, thirsty
licking the inside of my skin
with your cat’s tongue.
You are my drought.

You follow anything that flows
to scorch it bare.

My wrist fits snug into the curve of my teeth

And your laugh stares back at me

while your hands pick the pieces of me apart
Kali is Told to Write

Something Beautiful for a Change
Menses

You recognise it immediately: the smell of soaking. It’s heavy, wet, fecund. The smell of life. It reminds you of your purpose. The purpose of all women. To breed. To bleed. Both preclude the other. Walk the line between them, tinfoil in your hand.

You move into a stall and lift your skirt. Your underwear slips to your knees and you perch, breathing the damp. Blood has a flavour that isn’t iron. It’s seed and mud. It is the breathing mangroves and the placenta steaming in the paddock. It is life. It is death. You cannot escape this as a woman. You die a little every month. Your potential dies, over and over until you breed or dry up. Once you are waterless you avoid public bathrooms and teenage nieces. The smell is something every woman understands. Every woman craves. Every woman curses. It will not let you forget. Not for a moment. Put several women in a house together and they will bleed in sync. Their bodies move together with the moon. Perhaps this is why your friends are fat together while you are frail. Perhaps this is why every summer, pregnant women follow you, taunting. And in the winter, crutches tap and people look at you from behind plaster.
When a man comes to you while you’re bleeding, you’re open.
Feet apart, knees bent, cervix wide. The succubus wants to
swallow him whole. There is no restraint. Put down a towel,
place him between your legs and cleave to him. He will smear
himself with you, paint himself in lies. He will come closer and
deeper. He will pour himself into your secret depth. But when
he stops twitching, he will be dead too. He will slip from you a
thief. He will stare at himself in the mirror, dabbing at his
painting until it does not exist. He will wash his face, clean his
teeth and pick under each of his nails. He will leave you bloody
on the bed. And the scent will rise from you with the salt.

But what happens if all of this happens the first time?
He takes you to a covered wagon. You step back in time. The moon pours through the rip in the canvas. Outside, the sea roars behind the dunes. Inside the candle lights his face. He spends an age kissing you. He tastes you everywhere. He covers you in saliva, which dries in runic patterns. If you swam, it would liquefy, run down your legs to the sand. His tongue is a spell. Your mind wanders along the mattress to the wooden floor. It picks up splinters as it slithers across and out the rip. It picks up sand. The first wave hits it, knocking it back up the beach. The second wave sucks it out until it floats. The waves build and it rocks on them until it is barrelling back up the beach and slamming itself back into your skull. Black spots dance with the candle flame. He says he wants to lick you clean. His tongue is jelly, warm against your skin.
When you wake his tongue is back between your legs. Or did it never leave? Dawn heats the wagon. The canvas hangs heavy with dew. You see drops travelling down it, the words you’ve chanted slipping back to you. Did you sleep? Is that him, or a burning fiend between your legs, sucking and biting, writing spells? The fiend slides up your body and settles. You are beyond words. He smiles and takes some from your mouth. You taste salt, musk and iron. He bites your lip and you bite him back. You are a puddle of words and spit. Have you ever placed a hand deep inside a cow as she strains? Have you ever pulled a calf by its ankle bones into the light and air? In the final moments, when you take your first breath, the sun streams through the rip. You realise he is bleeding. And he realises it is you.
I think that’s how he caught me. He planted something in me, deeper than was safe. It slipped up inside and went so far it caught my bloodstream. It poisoned me. My river ran red and he licked it from me until I was dry. I do not remember being open. I do not remember being wet. I am no longer a marsh.

The paddock is burnt to dust and the calves are ash. The mangroves do not breathe. But I remember the smell. And sometimes I half-wake shaking, breathing heavy. I slip my hand over my dune ribs and down my stomach. It runs flat, footprints descending. And my fingers find the sea. This must mean I am not dead. But when my eyes are open, unclouded, the tide runs out and I am left parched. I struggle through the muddy sand, trying to find it. The mud claws me back and I exhaust myself fighting. I cannot ever see the water. I don’t know that it’s there.
Clusterfuck

If I had a cock I would fuck you right back,
you think yours is for fear?
Mine would scare the balls off a ram.
Maybe then I could jerk off on your face,
force your cunt to take my lies.

My cock wants to fuck you
so you can see how it feels
to be trapped in a room with a match box size window
trying not to exist, in case you hear
Maybe then I could be the arrogant piece of shit
and you could be dead inside.

but I’m not like you

Because my cock would be for pounding things until they are
gasping alive
For reined teasing, warm gulping and lan-guo-rous stroking
pleasure mounting, blood pulsing, head bursting joy.

But I don’t have a cock, or a cunt.
I have a softness that you’ll never have
For hot licking, cold blowing, light tickling, I am
for filling, and filling and filling and then
for holding so softly in the palm of his hand.
A Perfect Circle

One night

earphones vibrating in my ears
trying to cover the squeaks and groans
of my mother fucking a bald man upstairs
(again)

I pluck out all of my pubic hairs
one by one
except for a
5 hair
wide
stripe
in the
middle
with her silver eyebrow tweezers.

Some come up easy and don’t hurt
some make a branch scratching window noise
the ones at the back are hard to reach
some bleed like when you squeeze a sponge really, really
slowly
red pearling into view then overflowing
I stick the ones that have white wobbly tips
to the blue concrete block wall

I make a Celtic circle pattern.

Press play again.

I take the pink headed pin
from the wheel I stole from school
and on the left side of the 5 stripe
(that pointed the way)
I etch the triquetra from the wall
into my translucent skin
it’s hard to make a perfect circle
but once I have it I press
deeper and deeper into the scratches

I keep engraving until the reek from upstairs stops.

The red digital clock reads 3.17.
I have red fingers to the second knuckle.
I still don’t sleep.
Cancelled

The head is the stain
of blood run from my nose
to the sheet beneath

The neck is the whip
that lashes the back
to shreds of paper that blow

the shoulders are the shelves
that hold the knowledge

the breasts are the bags
for the rocks and the fear

the ribs are the chains
that hold me close
so I can wriggle and writhe

but never escape

the stomach is the site of the struggle
where, with your wolf grin

and your red hands
you took me

the hips are the rails
that hold back the crowd
the thighs are the headstones
in the broken graveyard

The knees and ankles
hinges to the door
the lock you broke open

the feet are the paws
of the rabbit
ripped off for luck

but the stomach
is the site
of the struggle
where,
with your wolf teeth
you split me
from my mother

you clamped our cord
clipped me free
and I didn’t
breathe

just spread the stain
from the neck
my stomach now
the site of the struggle
so you wrapped me
in blue plastic
and I died
and you smiled
lifted the lid
and threw
me
away
Sensitive Crimes

(a poem found in headlines)

Women should not go out at night

or wear clothes that might be seen as provocative

this will enhance the safety and security of women

prevent

the sensitive crime

of being beaten unconscious

beaten bloody

was it sensitive when he

inserted an iron rod into my body?

when he did not stop?

very grave

I switched off the lights

police refuse to accept complaints

because the movie finished in the dark.
I was *bound with ropes and chains*

*he helped pass out fliers*

after *knocking out my teeth*

*he comforted my mother.*

He used a *sick game to train me*

so I would not run

*I kicked through a screen door*

But in my *euphoria*

I question my *suspicious activity*

*This guy is sick*

*intending to steal*

*he drank*

*stumbled*

*to join a gang*

He *broke into a five year old*
My mother screamed

there was a man inside lying on top of her daughter

overwhelmed

he grabbed me around the neck

beat me about the face and body

I just disappeared

he could remember nothing

Everything will depend on whether she tells someone else

I walk from the library

after dark

with my hair down

in a skirt

of terror
Reoccurrences

I am at the bottom of
the brightest well
I am the thing you feel
with your
foot, soft,
soft
when no one is looking
everything is white stone
lines show where the tide comes to
well over my head
I hear the sea breathing beyond the wall
it is coming
I cannot touch
or I will burn
I rat run
round the walls
wake up sliding on the wooden floor
where the carpet used to be
was dreaming
am dreaming
waking sleep
Headmistress sits in the bath
water would reach my mother’s navel
my brain photo-shops her
so I see the creases and paps swinging
but no nipples

I beg “is there something in this house”
her bat face stares through me
grinning
she flaps around my head
like wind beaten hair

there’s no one there

a friend and I
take both cordless phones
there is a trap door in the basement
I am given a lamb to carry
it sleeps in my arms
children go down the ladder
and don’t come up

we are outside
a truck pulls up
full of calves
I hear them cry for my mother
but won’t share

I taste the dust from the driveway
when he steps from the cab
his face tells me he will make a pie of us both
he goes looking for his axe
to paint the mirror
with small yellow tendrils
I’m a Woman Now

I stand under florescent lights
that shatter over my skin
make me off white
the doctor hums at his clipboard
staring at me over the top of his glasses

No he says to the nurse
that won't do
and begins to draw a map on me in black sharpie

the map is the route of removal:
marks me where I am wrong

he starts with my breasts
swelling full and pink tipped
I remember him sucking them
and he takes his scalpel
and cuts them off
slowly at first
so slowly
that my skin opens for him
spreading to show my soft pink insides
hoping it will be different.
My left breast slaps into the silver pail
splattering his pants.

The doctor smiles

I shrink from him
as knowledge drips from
my breast socket
trickling red over my ribs
but the nurse holds me
for my own good

He begins on the second breast
and I scream, thrashing
but the woman
wrestles me to the ground
places an androgynous foot on my throat
my second breast hits the bucket

sets it ringing

sorrow

and the doctor stands tall

behind his mask

He tears my uterus from me

ovaries chiming bells

and sends it to the pail

he kneels beside me

as if praying

begins to sew

soft lips between my legs

shut tight

he fills my curves with collagen

cuts my hair to my chin

he cracks my feet

between his palms

the bones break through the skin
I cannot dance, I have no hips
my feet will not hold me

the doctor takes a spray bottle
shades my wounds yellow
with iodine

only when I'm half a man
am I acceptable to him

he hands me an oversized jersey
and combat boots
and tells me I'm a woman
now.
Slap me again
the split lip makes my mouth even bigger
and the blood helps the words stick
go on
slap me
feel like the big man
If you had control of me
you wouldn’t need your fist
slap me
help me scream
so the ringing in your ears
reminds you of the woman
you couldn’t beat down
and everything red
makes you taste my iron
Slap me fucker
slap me hard
make my teeth close together through my tongue
and know that even then it will
foam with the words
you want

buried

your fist knew it

wrote it on my temple

see here in blue?

Fuck you
Uprising

when you grab at me I will take your hand between my fingers
and bend it until it clicks

you’ll cry a little now

which I’ll like

I’ll do it harder to feel your knuckles pop apart in my hand

they look odd in the light that bleeds through the leaves

you will fall to your knees and I will release my foot to slide
you in jerks across the pavement
your ribs sigh and split

my foot will catch you between the legs as you writhe

it’s nice to watch the slow motion wriggle of your dignity
across the concrete
you stain it plum

you beg me now

it’s cute

I like it
I like the way the blood makes your mouth redder and wider
like the lipstick you forced onto me
like the teeth marks you left on my breast
it makes me want to cut you more mouths to beg me from
so I do
no precision
just gaping slashes begging me to stop
begging me for more
you want me now baby
that’s how we got here
you want to fuck me now
I bet you do
I bet the blood hanging from my fingers makes you hard
I can fix that for you
relieve your tension
it’s what you wanted
you wanted violence
you wanted me hogtied on the dew of this car park crying
yes baby
yes

don’t stop

I won’t stop now darling

I’ll ride you hard like you wanted

not quite like you wanted

and you’ll sag against me like a lover

energy running from you

and the red lips I’ve carved on your neck

predator

hunter

jock
I said nothing

My mother said

Feeling a bit sad isn’t the same as being suicidal

this attention seeking scratching

has to stop

do I need to lock you away

because cutting is worse than crazy

it’s pathetic

if you really wanted to hurt yourself

you’d do it properly

I mean it

go home

and take all of those pills

since living

is obviously not what you want to do

the best thing for everyone

would be if you weren’t here

or you weren’t you

maybe if you altered yourself

you would have more friends

your father would be interested in knowing you

then again

who needs another disappointment
My boyfriend said
what are you trying to do
you never stick at anything
no commitment
fucking useless
may as well give up now
you got pregnant on purpose didn’t you?
well you can’t trap me
I’m not staying in this train wreck
you’d have to be crazy to want
to touch you
it’s a good thing you lost it
your body
obviously knows
you are not fit
to take care of it
You are so dirty
slut
The idea of touching you
makes me sick
I don’t love you
never did
will never
could never love
a girl like you

I mean how could anyone love

a girl whose own father

couldn’t

why should I bother

when you’re obviously

not worth it

fucking you could leave a lifetime reminder

who would make that kind of commitment

there’s only one thing a girl like you is good for

I’m telling you

it’s not marriage

so lie the fuck down
In which people try to protect Kali from a ‘bad’ man

They think I’m not
‘that kind of girl’
they think
my heart’s
split for eating
like a peach
until I am a stone

but

I am Kali
naked
with dishevelled hair
I ride you
the falcon of fear
indifferent to your wellbeing
I am the hero of this story
and I don’t need rescuing

I am Kali
flushed
drunk on the blood
lapped from my legs
I fizz with incarnations
of what you might be

I have ten heads
ten arms
ten legs
*that* kind of woman
the one you call
spectacular

lift me in your arms
tell me I am
words
falling from your lips
to paint the page

Who are you?
burnt breeze,
ruffling the feathers
of so many mother hens
you touch me like you own me

I like it
because you know
I will not scream
facedown on the lawn
arms stretched to breaking
chlorine freezing on my skin
again

any violence
will be mine to rouse
and mine to douse
with a word

I don’t need to tell you
You run from the back of the room
to sit at my feet as I dance

I am Kali
I’ll scratch my anger until you yelp
pop you
like a bottle of champagne
pour you
down my body until you’re warm
until you breathe
your last bubbling breath

I’ll smash the bottle on the driveway
to slice my feet so
the blood and the wine
will soak into the earth
and into the feet
that will walk away
because I am Kali
I am rage
I am the touched
four years without touching
No longer denied
the earthly pleasure
he took from me
with a hickey and a sore
I am Kali
consort to the dead
I am the broken
ready to do some breaking
standing with my foot
on the chest of you, lover
you smile
bite it
rise through me
like the bubbles of the sea
Kali is told to write something beautiful for a change

They built me wrong
not enough glue
under all this acrylic
holding me back
they painted me breasts
and no mouth

So all I’m good for
is soapy hands
spread legs
and sweet nothing poems
about flowers

So.

Sweet flowers breeze bobbing
nodding
Freesias rotting
over the corpses
of all the lambs
spilt from the womb

no
I’m wrong
Try poems about kittens
fluffy, hugged kittens
skipping
hung from their collars
by wire beneath the sofa
paws
unscrambling

no
I’m wrong

Try poems about shoes
bedazzled stilettos
carrying hookers
to shining pieces
in the boots of cars
no I’m wrong

Always so wrong

They shouldn’t have painted me eyes
I’ve seen too much
imagery ripping me
a set of teeth
with which to
threaten
all the boys with painted lips

I’ve said too much
with this red tongue
licking all the things
a lady shouldn’t

Next time
forget the glue
just make me a door
for you
to walk right through
Kali Looks at Facebook Photos of Her Friend’s New Baby

One month on
the worm has no name
they call her baby
tiny perfect fingernails
carve into her tiny
perfect face
Kali licks her finger
covers it
imagines it clicking
against the rest
around her
long
red
neck
They should call her Kali
akachan
the red one
wrap her in a red dress
full of pins
to draw up her
white
pudgy
arm
she’ll like it sharp
and bloody
baby lives in a letter
sealed with spit
pink booties remove her hands
slap her bottom
smooth as a dog’s headstone
pink
strain her through muslin
pink
double dose of baby ibuprofen
down for the night
pink
cosmopolitan for Kali
baby smiles
spits at you
farts on your arm
You never sleep
Your breasts
empty and cracked
learn to peel apples in one
spinning
swathe
of skin
for eating
and Kali lights her durrie
toasts the bags under your eyes
here’s to your success
Bruce watches Kali dancing

(After Lady Lazarus)

Smart girls don’t strip.
Slutty ones do.

You perch on the stool
your drink drools
on the table
licks your hand
when you pour it down
your hollow throat

The MC said
when the sluts do something
you like, let them know
You’re surprised how many
bitches are here
howling at the moon
shaped ass
on stage
baying at the
glove that peels off
like skin.

empty hands don’t interest you.
you wait for something
from your
walking, talking textbooks
your reference porn.
Burlesque means strippers
you don’t need to tip
bitches where they belong
naked, onstage
submissive

I breathe behind the curtain
see you
knees split
wide as they’ll go
as if the burden of your balls
fills the space with their blueness

I know you’re waiting for me
because I’m young
I’m skinny
my mouth is red like a sign
and a sigh
it will not smile.
I know you expect
the girl you grope in the bar
eyes wide
hissing tacks
falling to the floor

but I also know
there is nothing between your legs
worth having.

I slide my mask,
my wig on
the music starts

At first, I’ll let you think you’ve won

I ripple
your cheers a stone
that breaks my surface
take the fingers of my glove in my teeth
pull it off
stroke it like a cock
so you know what I’m for
flick it to a puddle
on the floor
I read the word
you marked black
on my skin
dirty

The second glove used sticky condom rolls off

slut

The crowd cheers You think you made me.

The more clothing that falls the more words appear black etched on my skin nasty bitch skank tight ass cunt

when the song finishes I fall to the floor and your cheers.
I let down my hair.

my red air
flames
I rise, call it to me
leaving you winded.

The women in the crowd scream.

You look up at the thing
you thought was under your foot
for good.

The words begin to fall
leaving my skin silver

you close your mouth
you close your legs

I am red
I open mine wide

teeth red
from biting my tongue
cunt red
bleeding clean

smart girls don’t strip
sarcastic ones do
Kali goes to Christmas Dinner

Kali leaves her kitchen behind
wet newspaper becomes a kitten
scrabbling on the road
eyes shine from coke cans
she drives into the rain
and the pain uncurls behind her eyes

Her uterus is up for discussion
frayed female flatmate wanted
the orange spanking spoon left in the pan burns
can’t handle the heat bin it clamp
cut the cord

Exactly what sort of job will you do

176
after all this university study?
strawberry tops
fall
like snow
to cover the tissues in the bin
and how much will you make?
The turkey reminds Kali
she needs new moisturiser
none for Christmas
just a pink lipstick
lotus flower candle holder
‘Grow Your Own Boyfriend’
just add water.
scaled legs
wrap around her chest
squeeze
Kali clicks herself on the table
Isis and Demeter pull crackers
for foetuses and paper hats
Her mother gifts Kali
a 6 litre slow cooker
and a 5 piece platter set
in blue and yellow
to feed her unborn children
her unwed man
as Kali’s Master’s degree is for
husband hunting
but no crossbow
for Christmas

Her mother preaches the Christmas sermon:

Kali will never know love
she needs a husband
to look after her bills
equality comes later
wiping a man’s ass
when he is old
repays
the financial debt
of a swollen belly

She does not notice
men’s cheating hands
cut, spread over Kali’s waist
their lie spun heads
hung from her ears
She does not see
Kali’s lover kneel
beg her to put her feet on him
that he might kiss them
so he can sleep

Merry mother fucking Christmas.
Things Don’t go to Plan a.k.a Kali has Sex with her Ex-boyfriend

I stare up at the blue towel bath mat
hung from the white rail above the shower
and the one long strand of hair hanging
by its tip.
it moves as I breathe
rain strokes the window pane
as I wonder
whose hair it is

It’s been a month since you sent me from your bed
so it can’t be mine

then again, I am insidious
and I do not take no for an answer

we lie together
on the bed
and listen to the storm
kill itself on the roof.
We’re wrapped in protective layers
careful not to touch each other
the ways we know how
touching
platonic pieces of skin
to keep warm.

Liquid seeps
through the ceiling
and falls into the blue bowl
you’ve placed by the window.

but

I am Kali
and you, Shiva
will consort
and contort
with me
or we’ll both drown

we inch together
one fingertip at a time
until I’m pulling on your nipple ring
and you’re biting my neck
and then someone tugs a zip
and then
you’re skinnier than I remember
but just as warm
and then you kiss me
like I am the last mouth

taking handfuls of skin

from my ribs

and my throat and hips

and holding on

places

I used to have flesh

and I’m trying to climb inside your skin

where I can smell you

and then.

You bury your head in my chest

and say we shouldn’t

because you are an honourable man

I hear a drop hit the bowl.

You forget

Shiva,

you are a corpse without me,

Shiva you may be fire

but I am the power to burn

without me you are orange air

and ash
Do not forget

that I am the Mother of all language

I am the way things are

I am time and change

and rebirth

I am armed with a sword and noose

and a skull topped staff

I will write you

until you’re bloody

and you beg for more

I know where you live

I’ve tasted it.

I offer to give you

an itemised list

of logical reasons

why we should fuck

you press yourself against me

and I feel your pulse there

head, throat, belly and balls

beating against me

the groan

that admits you need me echoes
through my larynx

into my spine

you wrap your arm around my waist

and squeeze like I’m dying

and you don’t even notice the lengths

I went to

so this wouldn’t happen

as you’re tearing off

my oldest, flesh coloured

‘I-will-not-fuck-you’

underwear

with my track pants

like they’re burning.

I remember

this wasn’t part of the plan

as they sail overhead

and you brand my vulva with your mouth

and I don’t care

because this is the way things are.

I am awareness and bliss

I am matted hair

bloodshot eyes

wide open
tongue seeking blood
I am Kali
consort to the dead.
you unpick my roots from the earth
one by one
with your fingers
and your teeth
as though defleshing
a drumstick and I have never been anywhere
but this bed
and your mouth says nothing
and everything
against my skin
and the only things that will be blue
at the end of this night
are your eyes
and mine
and the sky
if it ever stops raining
I collect the pieces of you like shells
and place them in my mouth
to tongue with thought
like an aching tooth
once I leave:

your eyelid

your earlobe

your throat

the tendon bristling

from your shoulder blade

as you grip me

your thumb

my thumb

your lips

and tongue

and I am Kali

and your arm

and your Kali

and yours

And then we are chasing each other

footprints filling with water

as the rain streaks down our faces

your hands wrapped in my hands wrapped in my hair

flaming

reaching for your beard

and you kiss my third eye

and you press your head against mine
and spill
the things you won’t say to me
into my keeping.

You lie where you belong, Shiva
beneath my feet, enchanted.
I will not give what is expected
or apologise
for taking advantage of you
while you’re drunk

I wrap my skirt of wrists
around my hips
and step through the door
to steam
in the rain

Don’t forget what it is
you brought to your bed.
Kali gets a Snapchat Dick Pic

I like to fuck.

Last night I spent
two hours wrapped around
my favourite cock:
sub-conscious
screaming
and drunk.

I love
the smooth curve upward
fat steel ring that tightens
when it throbs
and a pearl of cum just for me.

I’m no stranger to this phallus
slim, curved in just the right place
and wielded with accuracy
over and over.

It does not fuck me
when I’m in the mood

I fuck it.

Hard.
And if it arrives in my inbox
cradled in the hands I love
I know it leads to the arms of my lover
that can press and hold
the pierced tongue
that knows my skin so well
and the generous man
who would rather
I come than he did.

I get wet because
it belongs to a man
who loves my brain
and my cunt
in that order.

But in my time
I’ve licked wrist-like thick dicks
that don’t try hard enough
and growers
and showers
because dicks are everywhere
and anyone who has one in his pants
wants to share so bad
he’ll lie ‘I love you’
hold you if you cry

I walked past a Korean girl
engaged in vigorous fellatio
with an ice block
She must have rubbed her tongue raw
lemonade burn
and didn’t seem to realise
how her male friends
watched
and watched.

I met a nice boy once.
He told me about how
his mother makes him roast chicken
on a Thursday
because it’s his favourite
and then he sent me
a picture of his penis
hard in his hand
held up against
the biggest bic lighter
I have ever seen.
His cock
was eclipsed
by an ego
so large
the lights dimmed
as he imagined
all the girls
panting for him
while his computer
sucked the last
ohm from the wall
with muffled moaning
and his sock sucked
his trickle of splodge

You forget yourself, dick pic douche bag,
Your uninvited,
disembodied cock
is so pitiful
it belongs in a Shakespearian
tragedy
(preferably the one
where everyone dies at the end)
I’m not just these tits
this flaming hair
and the ass you want me to give up
so bad it haunts you
I’m this clit I’m sure you’ll never find
as my brain would blind you

Gentlemen,
boys,
douche-copter dudes:
a cock without context
makes
the septuagenarian creepo
in the long grey jacket
who flops it out
at school girls
in the morning
look friendly.

You poor misguided
whelp of a child
your pride could hold a parade
that no one would attend
Remove a rib
go suck yourself
and don’t bother any woman with
your shrinking phallus
until you learn
it’s not the cock that makes the man
it’s how he uses it.
Broken Villanelle

Break me open in your bed
choose the pieces you will keep
Split your knuckle, paint me red

Write the words you leave unsaid
I will hold you while you sleep
Break me open in your bed

Bits of lonely, hot drip fed
Put your wall up, I will seep
Split your knuckle, paint me red

Dance and I will say you led
Through this wreckage, we can creep
Break me open in your bed

Of all the nights that I have bled
This one makes me writhe and leap
Split your knuckle, paint me red

Who am I now that you are dead?
you stole me, now you’re buried deep
Break me open in your bed
Split your knuckle, paint me red
Journeys Back

She wakes with a foot on her chest. It’s heavy. She’s cold. She has overheated in her sleep on the chest of a man, pushed the covers away. The sweat has dried on her shoulders, left her salt, sticky and shaking. She peels herself from him and he rolls towards her, lips in her hair. He murmurs, kisses her shoulder and subsides back into dreaming. The corner of his mouth slides upward and he tightens his hold on her. She wants to smile back at him. Her eyes hit the ceiling instead.

The thing about being belted is that in the moment, you enjoy it. In bed, wrists caught up in one muscled hand, spread up the pillows, wanting. She watches the hand rear back, knows it’s coming. Tense, waiting— for a split second that takes forever, unable to move, not wanting to. The sound of it hits worse than the hand. Open palm, it connects with her ribs and the edge of her breast. It doesn’t hurt. It feels good. She tells herself it feels good. She tells herself. She feels powerful. She yields to the power in the slap. She likes it. It matches the pull in her chest. It doesn’t hurt. It feels good like having a hand slide up your neck to pull you further into a mouth. It feels good, in the moment. It’s power. It’s men. It’s surrender. She wants to scratch him back. She wants to pull him deeper.
But she becomes a lake, and the ripples of the thrown stone calm. She gets compliant. It’s not like the last time, and she knows it. She likes the ripples. The body wants waves. The body wants to be a sea for him to stir. She sets the record spinning in her brain, places the needle for it to scream ‘it’s different!’ But her mind takes a step behind the music. It tilts its head, snaps its gloves on, assessing. It takes up its scalpel. It cuts her an escape route, over the bed, out the sliding door.

The body wants to tell him to hit her again. The mind wants to scream ‘don’t hit me!’ She says “Play nice.” Her voice is small, in a pinafore.

And he does play nice. It is different now. He paints kisses on her eyelids. He circles her with the tips of his fingers. He worships her with his mouth. He starts at her toes, moving northwards, and sucks her skin to singing. He breathes shining words on her ribcage. The body wants him to sink his hands into her skin. She wants to handle everything. She can’t handle anything.

And the mind still holds the scalpel in the corner, and the body misses violence. The mind wants the hand to slide back into its pocket. The body wants the hand to take it by the throat, push it against the wall with its knees and paint it with bruises.

No one gets what they want.