

I AM HERE

I have been irritated
since the minute I was torn
from the comfort of my first living room,
the womb,
and my mouth became my belly button.
I could scream and cry from my new mouth,
but my mother tells me,
“You were a quiet baby.”

The heat of restrained fury
made a home in my chest
containing my voice
so that no one would hear it.

Because girls should be small and cute
and fit neatly in pink snap shut cases. Dirty thoughts and aggression are for boys

I can picture my father,
and the exact moment
he stopped looking at me
as his little girl
and saw me as
the damaged young adult
I was degrading into.

It hurt to disappoint someone I worshipped.
He was the smartest man I knew.

I remember how I cried
the first time someone hit me
because I was frightened
of anger being realized on the outside
and how I cried even more
the first time I hit someone
because the release felt good,
and I didn't understand it.

(continued)

DIGGING IN TO DIG OUT EXCERPTS P1

(I AM HERE, continued)

I have fought my whole life

to be seen
while taking up less space,
presenting as “pleasant.”

I wake up every day and think
“I am still here,”
wondering where “here” is
when I often feel so lost.

DIGGING IN TO DIG OUT EXCERPTS P2

THE WALK HOME

A man I half recognized
saw me tumble out the door
and offered to walk me home.
He knew my name, so it seemed safe.
It was snowy and cold
and home was up a long hill.
I leaned in most of the way up,
because I had achieved my usual goal
of being drunk beyond basic motor skills.
Halfway up, something felt off,
but I didn't know how to get out of it.
At my house,
he told me he was coming in.
I said "No" very clearly.
He grabbed my head to kiss me.
I pushed him back,
dizzy and scared.
My habit of coaxing danger
was passing the precipice.
He was tall and strong.
He flanked me with both arms
against my house.
I ducked under to open the screen door.
He slammed it closed
and came in for another attempt at a kiss.
I became angry.
Somehow, I outsmarted him.
I was inside the door,
locking it,
panting.
I sat on the floor to cry,
shaking it off
like a dog after a fight.

DIGGING IN TO DIG OUT EXCERPTS P3

YOU DIDN'T HATE ME YET

Breaking into the public pool
on a hot summer night,
I didn't dive.
I've never liked heights.
But I climbed the tower
as high as I could handle
and jumped, curled up in a ball.
I wanted you to believe
I had adventure in my heart.
As my feet hit the water,
I tilted back,
eyes scrunched tight,
nose held.
My ears felt the SWISH
of plunging downward
in fetal position.
Like being born,
except backwards where no one could see
and I could see no one
in deliciously clean chlorine water.
I took my time to resurface
so you could wonder if I would.

DIGGING IN TO DIG OUT EXCERPTS P4

UNTIL DEATH DO US PART

In the first weeks
alone in our bed,
I didn't sleep
as much as I laid still,
catatonic.
When I did sleep,
I woke in the hours
when it was still dark.
The pain would start like a snake,
writhing in my lower guts.
Then a heat would rumble,
radiating in my chest
until it exploded
through my throat
in a loud wail.
The noises that came
were some I didn't know
I was capable of
Disturbing,
Inhuman.
Singing myself into
a slow death.

DIGGING IN TO DIG OUT EXCERPTS P5

SHE

She spins pretty paper cup fantasies
on the tips of her fingers in a swirl,
circling the drain inside her.
Even as she feels the brightness burning out,
she winks at you, and you both smile.

I see myself in her,
but not the one I like.
She's the me I've worked hard to stifle
so that I could feel real feelings,
have real relationships,
not discount store type encounters
that end in a strange bed
and a cold walk home in the morning,
eye liner crusted in the corners of both eyes.

I hate watching it all unfold.
I know the steps to this dance by heart.
The flirtatious foot
shimmying up a pant leg under the table.
The louder than normal laugh
at a dumb joke.
The shirt falling off the shoulder
at the exact right moment.
The attention that I am not getting.

Watching the high
as it changes their bodies
makes me wonder if it's all bad.
And I hate them both
for being under that spell
and for making it look so enticing

DIGGING IN TO DIG OUT EXCERPT

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