



Blue Lace  
by Karolina Lavergne

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**Karolina Lavergne**  
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I.

I was taken by surprise. I did not expect to feel anything other than relief. Being around her was an opportunity to be reminded of a person that I want to forget. A person who still fills me with confusion, rage, and pain. A person who showed me that love does not make sense. Who showed me that those you love and trust the most are the ones who have the power to harm you irreparably. I did not expect to feel sadness. I did not expect to feel remorse. I did not expect to miss her because when she was alive, I did not enjoy being around her.

She died five days ago at 7 am.



Her last breath was the morning of July 19, 2019.

With her passing we have a whole house of things that must be sorted through. Every surface, every storage space, is filled with her belongings. None of it appears to be especially valuable, but all was important enough for her to accumulate. What happens when fifty years of a life are spent in one habitation? What happens when the inhabitant loves to go shopping but does not regularly sort through that which is no longer used? She bought things and forgot what she bought, she forgot what she already had and purchased them again.

There are four dressers in her bedroom, two more in the guest rooms, another in the tv room, all full of clothes. In each bedroom, the closets are also filled with her clothes. Assembled on many of the hangers are entire outfits: pants, a matching sweater, a tank top to wear underneath, and a

necklace to match. She purchased clothing in outfits and stored them in the same way, ready to be taken out and put on. On these hangers I see a representation of her worldview. Things were coordinated, matched to the very shade of any given color.

She believed in a world of harmony and purpose, a world that did not need to be altered. She never colored her hair and did not believe in coloring it. She always told me that we are made with natural beauty and rather than try and change it, we ought to compliment our appearances through the choices we make in clothing and subtle colors of lipstick. I disagreed with her in this regard and rebelled against her ideology when I was eighteen and nineteen, by dying my hair in every color possible. She never failed to share with me her remorse over these choices.

There are several sets of dishes in the kitchen. Family members discuss who will take which set. I do not care for

any of them, nor do I want them, because I already have dishes. What is the use of another set of dishes? On the counter and in one of the kitchen cabinets are all the supplements and pills from the pharmacy and the health food store. She believed in the potential of the natural supplements, but not in pharmaceuticals. She would pick up her prescriptions, but did not take them, and so they piled up in her cabinets.

There is an outdoor storage full of things, and the ceramics studio where my Grandpa did his life's work. One day I go look at it. I see the kiln, the two potters wheels, and boxes of carefully stored pots, fired once but never glazed, now never to be completed. I see the space I was never allowed to be, the space where all the grandkids were barred from.

The fact of Grandma's death overwhelms us in one way, but the house overwhelms us in a parallel, yet

different way. It was her house but  
now, in a way, it belongs to no one,  
and is the responsibility of the ones left  
behind to deal with.



In the days following her death I begin to think about how the number of years between the present and any given past event are ever increasing. I graduated from high school over eleven years ago. I graduated from grad school almost two years ago. My daughter will be four years old in less than a month. Grandpa died six years ago. I am nearing age thirty. My years of youth are quickly diminishing. It is not that this makes me sad so much as it keeps taking me by surprise. I cannot keep up.

We come upon thousands of printed photos. There is a photo of me, age fifteen, with a video camera. The photo was taken at Grandpa's surprise birthday party. I remember that haircut, and the camera, and though it is not pictured, I remember wearing light blue, bell bottom jeans. The memories flood back, and I am continually surprised by how none of this seems like long ago.

In the photos I see Grandma, the way that I have always remembered her, alive, part of family gatherings. There is an image of her on New Year's Eve, 2019. It is a small polaroid photo, about two by three inches, taken in my room at the Holiday Inn, in Prescott Valley, Arizona. In the photo she is seated in a chair and I am standing behind her along with my dad, brother, mom, and Dane. She stayed in the same hotel as I was staying in, since she could no longer drive, and it was more convenient for everyone if she remained in close proximity. Despite the fact that we were in the same hotel for five days, I avoided being around her any more than necessary, as had been my mode of being around her for a number of years. This is a fact that, since her death, I have begun to look back on with a complicated sense of regret. She was always there and now she is just gone.

We drank champagne and sparkling grape juice, but none of us made it

until midnight. My baby was five weeks old and was (and still is) a horrible sleeper. That night after they all left the hotel room, I spent hours trying to get him to fall asleep and stay asleep. I brought a baby swing with me from California because sometimes he slept better in that. It would only swing for a three hour cycle, and then would stop, which would always wake him up. To get him to sleep on his own, I would try swaddling him in a muslin blanket that was black with dark red poppies on it. I have never been good at swaddling though, so it would inevitably come undone. He was born three weeks early at barely five pounds, so at the beginning the midwives told me to feed him every two hours, all day and all night. Being used to this as his form of life earthside, his favorite place has always been in my arms, on my boobs. Even now he is a tender and sensitive child, who will cry at sudden noises, and looks at me with such longing and adoration whenever I am in sight.

Grandma was less thin then, and dressed, as she always was until the end, with a sense of poise and intentionality. Her health declined and she was gone so quickly. I did not have time to face it, or time for any exchange of last words. I never believed that it was actually happening, until she was on her deathbed, unable to speak.





We had a thirty minute graveside service at the National Memorial Cemetery of Arizona. They did not give us one minute more than thirty before they interrupted us to take the coffin away in a van, to set it in its burial place. The men lifted the coffin--the son, grandsons, and sons-in-law-- and put it in the white van. It was not a hearse but a utility van. The van drove away about one hundred yards away to the burial plot. The cemetery employees lifted her coffin out of the van and into the hole in the ground. We watched from afar under a shaded veranda, while a bobcat poured dirt over her coffin. We were not allowed to come any nearer to watch in person because of the machinery, a liability issue. We could have driven closer to the grave site to watch from inside of our cars but none of us wanted to. Rather we stayed together in the one hundred degree weather. To get in our respective cars and get closer would have required that we split sooner. After the abrupt interruption and carrying away

of my Grandma's body on the thirty minute mark, it seemed the least we could do is stay together for a few more minutes.

I never got the closure of the image I had imagined seeing of her coffin, lying in a rectangular hole, with the dirt slowly being shoveled over it. A \$6,000 coffin, light blue, shiny, silken inside, to be covered in dirt. I don't know why I thought they'd do it that way, when today there are things like bobcats, but it was the image I had in my mind from every movie of every burial scene. She was placed next to my Grandpa, so I expected to see the hole next to his site. I had never seen his gravesite and still never have, since we did not walk or drive closer.

After a bit we all just got in our cars and went our separate ways; my aunt and her daughter to Hollister at a nearby mall to buy pants for school; my uncle and two of the boy cousins back home to Page, AZ, because one of the

cousins had some sort of sport practice at four pm; my other cousin and his wife and son back home to Tuscon because he had to get back in time for his shift at the Air Force base; my family to go out for a meal at a gluten free and vegan friendly restaurant that my dad had found online.



One day I sit on my deceased Grandma's couch eating a dark-chocolate flavored yogurt-alternative made of almond milk, because it is the only sweet thing in the fridge and I have a sweet tooth. I imagine her alone in this house, with that yogurt alternative in the fridge, contemplating whether to take it out and eat it. I wonder why it is a yogurt alternative and not just normal yogurt since as far as I know, she was never on a lactose free diet. There is little else to eat in the house. There are some tortilla chips made of blue corn that are unsalted, because in her last months she was on a sodium free diet, recommended by her doctor. There is also a shaker full of a salt-alternative made of potassium chloride. There are some canned goods--soup, beans, corn, all sodium free. One of the last things she ate in the hospice home was mashed potatoes, presumably unsalted. I love salt on everything so I am saddened by the idea of her last months of life being filled with unsalted foods. The day after she ate the

mashed potatoes, she stopped eating or drinking, and she went on that way for the last remaining six days of her life.







While sorting through my Grandma's house, my Aunt found a little zip lock bag full of a dozen or so blue eyeshadows. She showed me and said, "Do you want one of these? Would your sisters want some? It was Grandma's favorite color." On the day of Grandma's burial, I wore blue eyeshadow, which I never do, to honor her. My sisters, aunt, and cousin went to get their nails done in various shades of blue, for Grandma. I wasn't able to go because I had to take my kids to the ER since neither doctors' offices nor urgent care accept Medi-Cal in Arizona, and they both had coughs and fevers. When my aunt asked me if I wanted the eyeshadow, I said sure I'd take one for me and two for my sisters and she said, "Just take the whole bag." So, I have a zip lock bag full of a color of eyeshadow that I would never choose for myself, but now I could probably wear every day for the rest of my life and still have some left. It is the color of the carpet, or the recliner chair in the living room at Grandma's house. The color is called

"Blue Lace." They are distributed by Mary Kay, which my aunt sells. She tells me that Grandma had her order her \$400 worth of Mary Kay last year then refused to pay for it because she had no memory of doing so. We did not realize it at the time, but it was an indication of her decline. She gave four thousand dollars to her church and refused to pay for the hotel room that she had agreed to get for me during New Year's. We thought she was being a jerk, not realizing that her kidney and liver were failing, resulting in confusion, lack of memory, and delirium.



During the last week of Grandma's life Edie was three, nearly four. She tried to wrap her mind around death. One morning it rained, and she wanted me to go outside with her to step in the puddles. I put on my new rain boots that I had ordered online, when I thought we would be staying at the farm in South Dakota for longer than we did. In South Dakota it rained regularly, and every morning the grass was covered in dew. Walking to and from the barn to the house to the garden, all my shoes would get soaked through, so I finally ordered some rain boots. But then we cut our trip short, and the boots arrived three days before we drove away, down to Arizona to stay with my family. I thought about returning them since they cost more than I should have ever spent on a pair of rainboots, especially considering that I live in a desert climate where it does not rain, where for most of the year the natural foliage is dead. However, I was hesitant to return them because our bank account wasn't out of money

yet, and I really love them. Since it rained that morning I put them on and stepped in the puddles with Edie, so now they are unreturnable, and I have my excuse to keep my too-expensive rain boots.

There were five or so June bugs on the back patio, flipped onto their backs with legs flailing about. Edie asked me to turn them right side up again so they would live. But they just flip right back over again, no longer able to stay on their feet but destined to die feet up in the air. Edie is saddened by the number of June bugs, dead, lying all over the concrete every morning. Nanita explains to her that they have a short life span, but it still makes Edie sad.

That night I gave Clemency, who had just turned eight months old, but still hated eating solids, a little baby snack composed of freeze-dried, puréed veggies and coconut milk, and he choked. According to the packaging, they melt

in a baby's mouth, but the packaging also claimed they are for babies who know how to crawl, which I did not see until afterward. Apparently, they only melt in baby's mouths if those babies know how to crawl.

Clemency had only recently learned to sit, and he still fell over a lot. He gagged and choked and was turning red. It was the second time he had choked on something. The first time I gave him the hard end of a loaf of bread to play with, thinking it was too hard for him to break a piece off. That time it was worse. Dane had to stick his finger down his throat and scoop some bread out of his throat. My arms and legs turned to jelly, and I had forgotten everything I'd learned from CPR class, but instead tried to nurse him thinking perhaps drinking milk could soften the bread and help it go down. Dane, seeing my maternal instinct had gone all wrong, grabbed him from me and saved him. This time with the baby snack it wasn't so

bad, after a few seconds he was fine, it must have finally melted in his throat and went down. I sat on the couch nursing him after he recovered, feeling like a horrible mother for letting him choke twice now. My mom came over to me and told me that this is something that happens to everyone and it was not a big deal. She told me that my sister Janie turned blue and limp from a piece of popcorn that got stuck in her throat that my dad finally scooped out of her throat while my mom was on the phone with 911. My other sister, Marissa, choked on her vomit in Japan and ended up going to the hospital in an ambulance, because in Japan, no one takes risks. Edie, hearing the story asked, "Did she die?" My mom said, "No, it's your auntie Marissa, she's alive!" But Edie does not understand death.

As Grandma lay dying, silent, Edie kept saying, "She's being a sleepy head!" and waited for her to wake up. As I sat in a chair at her deathbed,

Edie kept telling me to tell Grandma about the farm in South Dakota. The rooster named Jaba who attacked her, the boar who ate his own piglets as they were being birthed from the sow, the single piglet who survived, the same pig who was slaughtered by Dane and Uncle Colin, the chicks that hatched from their eggs, the cow Agnes, the cat Hobbes, and dog Olie. Grandma would have enjoyed these stories because she grew up on a farm.

The last time she was able to speak with me in person was when we stopped in Arizona for one night on our way to South Dakota in late May. We served her salmon and broccoli and she asked for some green tea. When she first sat down in her chair, at the corner of the table next to Edie's seat, she could not get comfortable. She kept saying something about how she felt too far forward, or needed to be scooted in. We all were busy trying to get the food served, so we weren't paying attention, but Edie was. She

said several times to my dad that Grandma needed help, but he was distracted. Then she said something to Dane who also was not paying attention, then she finally said something to me and kept insisting until I could no longer ignore her. So, then I got my dad to help me, and we finally got Grandma comfortable by putting a pillow behind her back. Edie was the only one paying any real attention to what mattered, who had awareness enough to help Grandma get comfortable.

It was a meal that Grandma really enjoyed, and perhaps her last home cooked meal. As always though, I was unwilling to engage with her beyond a polite surface level, although I did notice her smile seemed more sincere. There was a particular look in her eyes, a gaze that I had never seen before. In her last months she began to smile and speak with a quality of transparency and lack of agenda, the way that small children do.

The other day when we went to Grandma's house to sort through some more stuff, Edie asked me why Grandma doesn't wake up and come back home. Death does not make sense to my three year-old daughter, but it also does not make sense to me.





C0002.MP4



C0002.MP4







In the last conversation I remember having with Grandma it was sometime in June, and I was on the phone, trying to talk with my dad. For a period of three months I was having panic attacks regularly, and whenever it would happen, I would call my dad, because he could calm me down. My dad was a person who made me feel safe because he rarely appears anxious about anything. On this particular occasion I was at the farm in South Dakota.

The first three weeks there I saw everything through rose colored glasses. Then one night I really needed some alcohol and cigarettes, but the nearest grocery store was forty-five minutes away because the farm is so isolated. There was a gas station in the small town five miles away but they didn't sell the right brand of cigarettes, and they had unreliable hours, closing up whenever the shopkeepers felt like going home for the day. On top of that, my phone had broken earlier that day and the nearest town with an Apple

store was two and a half hours away. I was already feeling very separated from all civilization, and the flatness of the landscape had the affect of exaggerating the feeling of isolation because every dirt road, every green field, every tree, looked the same. There were no mountains in sight, no variation in the landscape. Just green flatness for miles and miles. I felt like I was in the doldrums in *The Phantom Tollbooth*. The color green started to make me sick; bright green contrasted with the bright blue sky was making me want to puke. There were no measures of distance, and when we drove I could never tell where we were or how far we'd gone. But no longer being able to contact the outside world with my phone was the last straw. I panicked.

A cycle began of panic attacks that lasted for the last three weeks that we were at the farm. I was constantly anxious because I was afraid of panicking. I was having panic attacks due to panicking about panicking. I used

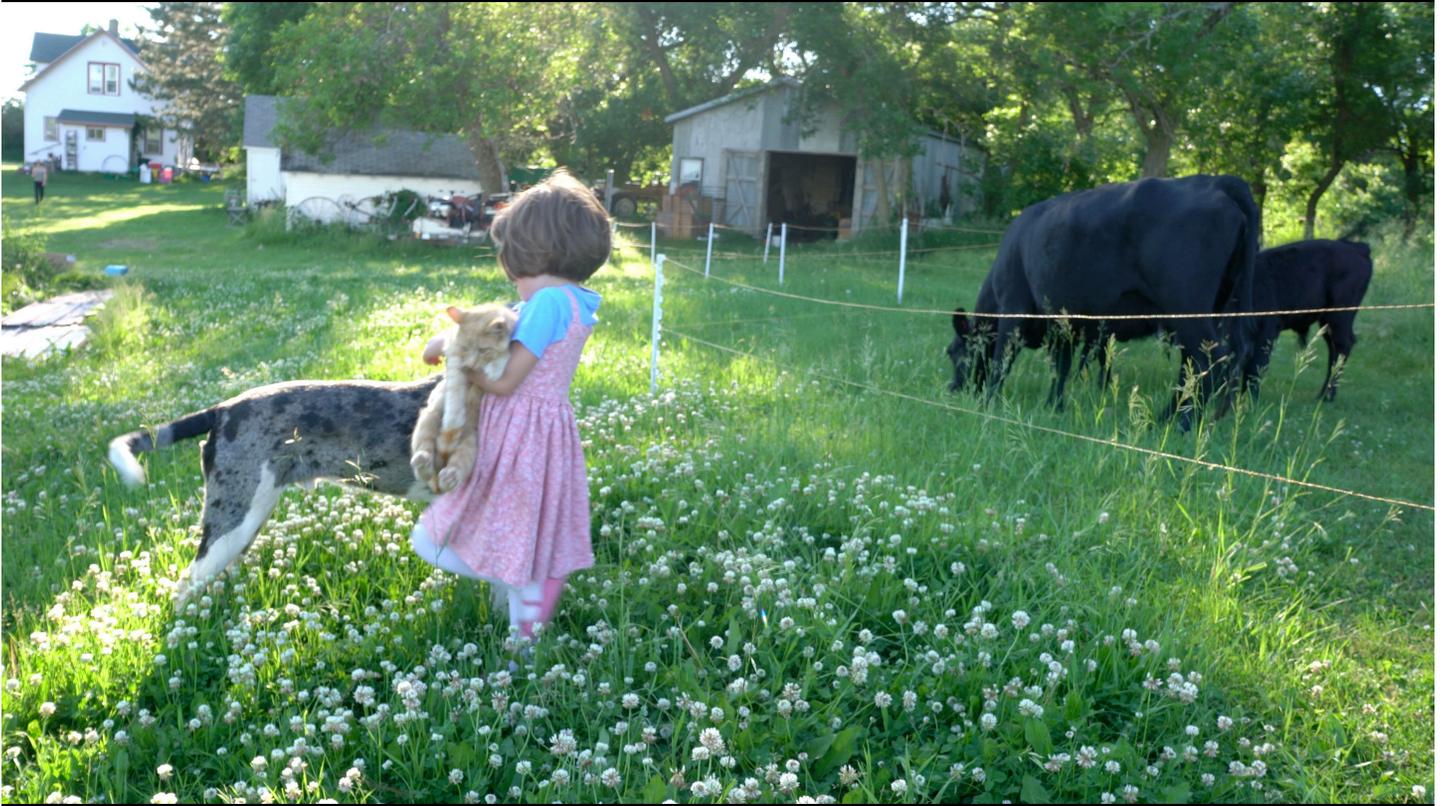
to call my dad in tears nearly every day because I felt like such shit. A psychiatrist I'd seen before we left for South Dakota had said that taking xanax makes it worse. She suggested benadryl and going to therapy instead. Additionally, she switched me from escitalopram to sertraline, since being on the same SSRI can stop being effective after several years. I was always exhausted from taking benadryl to calm my nervous system, and from not drinking coffee to avoid any excess energy. What finally helped me was a phone call from a therapist who specializes in anxiety and panic disorders, who I was going to see once I got back to Southern California. My in-laws had serendipitously met her in Montana when they were vacationing at their lakehouse and had told her about me. In an hour long phone call, while I paced on the farm grounds, she taught me how to break the panic cycle. Since that phone call, I have not had another panic attack.

While I was panicking, my Grandma was steadily declining, so my dad was spending more and more of his spare time with her. He said he could sense that her days of life on earth were steadily coming to a close. I called him one day, feeling like shit, and he asked if I wanted to say hi to Grandma. I said, sure, though really, I just wanted to talk to him. During the conversation, she sounded happy to be talking to me, as she always did when she was around her family. All I remember from the conversation was that she asked me how many kids I had now, was it four? I told her no, I have two, maybe you are thinking of Katie who is pregnant with her second, but your fourth great-grandchild. The fourth great-grandchild Grandma will now never meet.









In August I reflect upon how almost exactly a year ago we moved to Dane's parent's house in San Clemente. They have a large, two story house amidst the affluent neighborhoods of Southern Orange County. We had a section of the house to ourselves, two of the upstairs bedrooms. We set up one room to be our sitting room, and the other room was the bedroom where the four of us slept. Though we do not live there now, all our stuff is still there. Since the beginning of this summer we have been meandering from one place to another, trying to figure out our lives.

Before this we had lived in Monterey Park, LA in a three bedroom house with my sister. Aside from the fact that we could no longer afford our portion of rent, we left because of my instability. I did not feel I could be left alone with my daughter to care for. When we explained it to my parents, we told them I was having suicidal ideation. They were upset because this involved

us dropping out of a lease that we had signed with my sister and putting her in the situation of having to find new housemates in order to be able to make rent herself. I kept trying to explain why I could not live there anymore. Finally I ended up telling my parents, for the first time, what Grandpa did to me. I told them this was something I could not get out of my mind lately.

My dad sat there saying nothing. My mom cried, was angry with Grandpa, and implored me to explain why I'd never shared this with them before. A few days later my dad sent me an email asking what had happened in more detail. I replied to his email, and he never replied back. Later I found out he went to therapy to deal with this news of his father, but he didn't want anyone in the small town he lives to know, so he traveled two hours away to see a therapist.





By mid-August we are back in California for a few weeks. Lying on the floor side-by-side with Dane on the rug in our sitting room, on the phone with John and Juliette, John says, did you know today would have been Elliott Smith's fiftieth birthday? We all say wow that is crazy, it's weird to think of Elliott Smith as old. Yeah, John says, that's what happens when people die young.

In moments I find death unbearable to think about. I cannot read my book on Sophie Podolski anymore because I know she killed herself due to never being able to overcome her mental struggles. In April we bought *Ariel* by Plath at the Last Bookstore in LA because we were going to read and discuss it with Maddie. The day we bought it, I had a panic attack inside of the bookstore when Dane left me to go upstairs to look for a different book. We had planned to go to the Hammer to see the show "Dirty Protest" which was closing that week, but I was so

shaken up by the panic attack that we just went to the place where we were staying, and I took a xanax and went to sleep for hours. Now I do not dare to crack that book open either. It is less death, but suicide which I find unbearable. I cannot think of it; it is an abyss that I want to keep my distance from.

And then there is Paula. "Paula is eternally young."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Darriussecq, M.. *Being here is everything: the life of Paula Modersohn-Becker*. (Semio-text(e), 2017). p. 14





I sit, feeling unwell. Decide to write, make a document of this weight on my chest.

A feeling I cannot shake, all day, an ever-present awareness of my being in relation to the abyss that I am tethered to. I am treading water in the ocean and when I look down, all I see are my feet floating above an endless expanse. That which is below is unknown to me, but likely aware of my presence. I try to keep my head above water, and my eyes on the sun. On daylight. On the reflections on the surface of the water.

I take on a variety of new practices in hopes of feeling more O.K.—I am on a dry spell—no coffee, no alcohol, no cigarettes, daily exercise, daily sunlight, eating well, sleeping enough. Like Grandma, I have all these natural supplements that I have hope in and take daily: a probiotic, omega 3's and 6, a multi-vitamin, vitamin D3, and Vitamin C. But unlike Grandma, I also take my prescribed 100 mg of

sertraline every night before bed. I make sure to eat well and eat enough. I no longer guilt trip myself for allowing myself to sleep in or take naps.

Most days I am able to stay afloat. Stepping outside in the warm sun manages to melt the icy coldness when I feel it tightening its grip on me. I have learned to use grounding techniques—I make mental notes of my surroundings, going through all my senses. I focus on the ground I stand on or the chair I am seated in. I smell the cup of tea in my hand, or the sweetness of the coastal air. I jump into the pool and feel the cool water envelop me, like a wet cloth on a feverish forehead. I feel the sweat running down my face when I go on runs, and taste it when it drips into my mouth, and the sting when it drips into my eyes. I look at the faces of my babes, kiss them, smell them, feel their silky, smooth skin. I hear their laughter and look into the light of their eyes. They are untouched by the darkness of the

world. They are bursting at the seams with life. I seek to take their light and turn it into my food, like a photosynthesizing plant.

All my adult life I have been trying to leave home, make a different life for myself in LA. Be an artist. In the face of Grandma's death and my own mental struggles, all that starts to seem less important. I long for my home. I long for my mother who takes care of my babes so I can take care of me. I long for my father and his lack of anxiety. I long for the dry, desert heat. For the hills of tall, dry, yellow grass that turns green and lush during the late summer monsoon season. It is that season there now. It was just beginning when my Grandma died. In all my life I have never seen anything like the desert monsoon storms in Arizona.





There is a disconnect between what I know to be true, and that which my mind has always been accustomed to thinking. At family gatherings she is there until what I know to be true catches up with the habitual thinking of what has always been. She is dead. I imagine us all at her graveside service, after the employees of the cemetery drove her body away, and in my head, we are all there, including her. Together we all stand there like we did in every other obligatory family gathering, and she is chattering away, as she always did, no one really listening to her, just nodding now and then. She is undoubtedly dressed in some ensemble of blue in various prints but matching shades. She is wearing her blue glasses that she loved, that she was buried wearing. She is there and we are all watching the men driving away with the coffin in the van. She is the thread that holds us together, these two families of her two children. Without her we would not be there because her two children did not get along as

youngsters, and only now tolerate each other with a sort of groggy malaise. I find that I am not adjusting to this new reality, that she's no longer here.



I sit at my desk in San Clemente. I check my email to see that my dad forwarded an email to us, containing the proofs of the obituary that he wrote to go in *The Daily Courier*. The photo he chose to accompany the obituary is the last professional photo that was taken of my Grandma. It was from about a year or so before her death. He found a copy of it in her church directory.

Apparently, she had several copies of the photo printed and framed and had intended to give it to us all for Christmas last year. But then she lost them all and they are still yet to be found in her house. It is strange, the case of these missing photos. We have dug around in all the well-used areas of her house. Where could she have lost all these framed photos of herself? It is a truly nice portrait of her. She looks healthy and strong, her hair is well styled, and she is well dressed. It captures something of her essence in a way that many professional photos fail to do. It is the kind of image that I would like to have

a copy of, if we could find them.

Yet, I also know, had she given it to me at the time, I probably would have just stored it away somewhere, not wanting to have it out. An image of my Grandma was always a reminder of my Grandpa, a man I do not care to remember. It is only in her death, in her absence, that I am able to see that she was not him and was a person apart from him. A person, who I missed out on spending a lot of time with, because of the association I was unable to unmake, between her and him.

I have a strange feeling of calm inside of me. An acceptance of the brevity of life and the changes that occur slowly, but when you look back it seems as though twenty years was only a breath. An acceptance that one day it will be over for me here, and that life will go on for my children and the new generations. They will find their own ways of surviving, of thriving even. I want to stay in this moment to slow the time. I used to dread the idea of growing old. Sometimes though, I can allow myself to dare to think that it will be okay. My Grandma was okay. She seemed happy. I do not often see that quality in people. It is a quality I would like to claim for myself.

In my own life, I am trying to decide if I should keep trying to be an artist in LA or move to my hometown where I can have a life of quiet and stillness, and be near my parents, and have them to help me in the task of raising my babes. At this stage in life, the latter entices me. Nothing excites me more

than being in LA, in the city where everything is happening. But lately I seek less excitement, and more security, stillness, peace. In LA, I would have to work so much to afford rent in the most measly little apartment, and have little to no time for my art. What is better? To be able to work on art in a place where there is no art, or to be surrounded by some of the most incredible art and artists in the world but be unable to carve out the space and time to make my own? I have all this amazing footage that I have gathered for the past couple of years, with no time and no space to edit it. It would be nice to have the time. But what is the point of making art if there is no one there to see it? In the digital world of today though, do I need to be near a location in person? Or can I just travel there once in a while, and share work through email correspondences rather than studio visits? It is a decision that I find is impossible to make. I want it all. I have always wanted it all. But when I tried to have it all, I nearly destroyed

a lot of it. I was never around for my immediate family, never sleeping, not eating, always drinking, unable to maintain friendships. It felt wonderful and it was thrilling, it was really, the highlight of my life. But then it all came crashing down.

In the book *Lee Lozano: Drop Out Piece*<sup>1</sup> Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer writes, “Tracking the thinking that produced Dropout Piece, this is a story about what art can do to a life and the extremes it can lead to that are not necessarily agreeable or benevolent.” I have been drawn, especially in my past, to a life that rises and falls from one extreme to the next. But there is a cost when there are others involved, particularly children. As a mother, the option is not so readily available to me to live in an unbenevolent way. It attracts me always, the way that loss of time which happens in moments of intense and focused art making can

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<sup>1</sup>Lehrer-Graiwer, Sarah. *Lee Lozano: Dropout Piece*, (Afterall Books, 2014), 11.

lead to a heightened state of being. At this point in my life though, the cost is too high. I am forcing myself into a time of living without the highs. I no longer allow myself to get high, at least for the time being. I took too many strong doses. I do not want to end up like Madame Bovary. I am seeking ways of being and working that are sustainable for the sake of myself and for my children.





We return to Arizona. We go to my Grandma's funeral. We are calling it a celebration of life. My mom asks my dad, is that the same thing as a memorial? He says, yes, it basically is. These things are not so readily apparent to my mom, whose third language is English. At the funeral, my sisters and cousins sing a beautiful song. I am taken aback by their voices. I have not heard either of my sisters sing solo parts in years, and I am completely stunned by the way their voices fill the church hall. It is a church where my Grandma attended for forty-one years. There are people everywhere who knew her for far longer than I did, in an entirely different capacity.

My father reads the eulogy and begins to cry. My daughter leans against my mother and takes it all in with an uncharacteristic stillness. My sister Marissa shares a memory of how my Grandma told her that she went to college in a time before women were expected to do so. It is the kind

of memorial service that my Grandma would have loved. Her absence does not register to me, on an occasion that is all for her.

After the funeral we go to her house to have a birthday party for Edie and Marissa. My sisters and mom walk in and fill the house with decorations from Walmart and transform the setting in a matter of minutes. We try to make a pizza delivery order for a family that has an absurd amount of food allergies--some must be gluten free, dairy free, vegan, egg free, soy free--all the restrictions we must have in order to feel and be O.K.

The pizza man calls back again to make sure that he got it all correct, after the initial twenty minute phone conversation with Marissa, the only one calm and organized enough to handle it. My mom gets stressed by all the commotion and leaves to go check on her dogs who have been left alone all day. She comes back an hour later clearly

having been crying, tells me she took a xanax, and we finally eat at 9 p.m.

Then we have cake. The cake that I spent too much energy baking the night before and this morning, for a bunch of people who don't really care about eating good food. But I love to cook and I love good food, so I spent money I did not have on the ingredients and stayed up till midnight the night before and woke up early to make it. It is made with almond flour, coconut flour, coconut milk and lots of eggs and honey. It is dairy free and gluten free but not vegan and nut free so my brother and cousin can't eat it. The ones without food allergies joke about how it tastes O.K. despite all the replacements.

Edie is happy to be having a birthday party. She runs around the house in a pretty dress that my mom bought on sale at Target then hemmed it so it would fit her, and the younger cousins run after her, to her glee. Edie

loves nothing more than to run and be chased. But by the end of the evening, being up way past her bedtime, she starts to lose her temper over the smallest thing.

We arrive home around 11 pm. Dane and I give in and buy cigarettes on the way home, get the kids to bed finally, and smoke on the patio for a moment of stillness to ourselves.



On July 24, five days after Grandma's death, my brother and I weed-whacked the overgrown grass and gathered a bunch of leaves into trash bags. I left Arizona for California on July 29th and returned again to Arizona on August 22. The grass at Grandma's house had all become overgrown again and little progress had been made in sorting through the house.

On August 28 I brought a huge bag of Grandma's unopened/unused prescription drugs to Walgreens and one by one, dumped them into a large receptacle. The people in the pharmacy waiting room watched me as one after another, they fell with a clamor into the metal bin.

After being unable to watch movies or work on my own films for a number of months, I finally begin to feel a certain weight lifting enough to be able to do so once again. First I watch *Grizzly Man* by Werner Herzog. As I watch it, I do not care for a line by Herzog, his own commentary on the footage in which he says:

“Perfection belonged to the bears but once in a while Treadwell came face to face with the harsh reality of wild nature. This did not fit into his sentimentalized view that everything out there was good and the universe in balance and in harmony. Here I differ with Treadwell. He seemed to ignore the fact that in nature there are predators. I believe the common denominator in nature is not harmony, but chaos, hostility, and murder.”

I think that the footage speaks for itself, and find no need for this crushing perspective regardless of whether or not it might be true. I find the

unchecked passion of Timothy Treadwell to be subject matter enough. He is consumed with his work and life with the bears. His feverish working practice reminds me of an artist. He had this obsession for which he lived, and without that obsession he could not live. In the winter seasons, he had to leave and go back to human society, the world that he hated.

At the end of his last summer there, after having a fight with security at the airport on the way home, he decided to fuck going back to society and instead went back to the bears with his girlfriend. It was that fateful choice made in passion that killed them both. He crossed too far into the extremes that a life can lead and they were neither agreeable nor benevolent.

The shot that haunts me is the one in which his camera faces a bear sitting on an incline in some bushes, and his girlfriend sits below, crouching down, avoiding his gaze--the gaze of

the camera--trying to hide. I cannot imagine the terror she felt. She wrote in her journals that she did not feel safe among the bears. And yet she was drawn to the man who wanted to be a bear. The shot is one of the last taken, presumably just hours before she was eaten. For the final shot, the one that would have been of their death, the lens cap was never taken off of the camera so only sound was recorded.

A few days later I watch *Hemlock Forest* by Moyra Davey. For some reason the need to re-watch this film had been in my head for a number of months. Watching it, I realize this is also a film about death, it is a way of coping with Chantal Akerman's suicide, and with Davey's son who had grown up and moved out of the house. I try to watch it while taking care of the children. Edie is satiated, watching the *Incredibles II*, so I have a break from her incessant demands and chatter. Clemency was first in his pack-n-play, in my dad's room, crying because I am trying

to teach him to fall asleep on his own. First, I nurse him, then put him down, and let him cry for fifteen minutes while watching *Hemlock Forest* with my headphones on so I won't hear him cry. Then I pause the film, come back to the room to sing and pat his back, then leave again. I resolve to let him cry for another ten minutes while continuing to watch the film. Then I give up after seven minutes, since I am able to hear him over my headphones. I go in, pat him for a while, try to sing again, but my voice hurts because I have a cold, and his head keeps popping up as he tries to look at me. So finally, I give up.

I take him out of the room and put him in his chair. I sit at the table next to him feeding him a puréed mix of sweet potato, banana, peanut butter, and plain yogurt, while continuing to watch the film. He keeps crying so eventually I pick him up and nurse him while standing and watching.

Moyra Davey reads something that was told to Mary Wollstonecraft by her lover, "A disappointed woman should try to construct happiness out of a set of materials within her reach." The first time I watched this film I was in grad school, and I wrote down this quote and hung it on my studio wall. As I gathered the materials that were to become the film for my final show, this became a guideline for what made the cut and what didn't. I am drawn to the passage once again and type it on a word doc. I copy and paste it here. I send it in an email to some friends.

Another part of the film states:

"She wrote, 'I am gradually approaching the period in life when work comes first. No longer diverted by other emotions I work the way a cow grazes. And yet formerly in my so wretchedly limited working time, I was more productive because I was more sensual.' I started to cry at the word sensual."

I am in a period of life where work does not come first. I am diverted by other emotions. I work, not like a cow, but more like a bear in a cage who has been tossed a piece of raw meat. I vary from listless, tired, hunger to a ravenous need to consume and produce. I am given hope by this quote because I hope that my work reflects a kind of sensuality that comes out of this particular mode of production.





Six days after the memorial service Dane and I go downtown to work on our respective projects together, while my mom watches the kids. He works on writing poems, and I work on this book. First, we eat at “The Raven”, a restaurant that we always go to because they serve gluten free food. I have celiac disease so going to new places always gives me anxiety because I will have to figure out if I can eat anything they serve. There is a sense of security that “The Raven” provides in that respect. In the past I also always went there because they serve good alcohol, but now I am on a dry spell and drink merely water, since they are out of kombucha.

Sitting there at a tall table I realize I hate this place. It is a place I loved in my youth, when I was a teen who needed a cool place to be in a small town where nothing happens. I'd go with my friends to open mic nights that they used to host before the place became too hip and cool to entertain

youth culture. We'd smoke cigarettes on the rooftop and laugh ourselves into oblivion, with the smoke and steam mingling in the winter air. I'd dye my hair blue, imagine working there, bringing my resume in multiple times and always being told they weren't hiring, imagine my art hanging on the walls there instead of whatever weird local art decorates the walls now. Over a decade later, I still go there. Because figuring out a new place to eat is too hard.

Afterward we walk to “Wild Iris”, a coffee shop that is quiet, has a wide spread of seating options, and where people seem to go to work on things. It also happens to be a gathering place for people who are in the many drug and alcohol rehabs in this small town. They usually congregate on the patio, together with sponsors or mentors, where there are tables sprawled far enough from the door to allow for smoking cigarettes. Inside, everyone has a laptop, book, or notebook. A few

pairs of people talk in hushed tones. It is a peaceful place, lacking the hype and hipness of “The Raven.”

While walking there we pass frozen the frozen yogurt place on the courthouse square. It flashes in my mind, a memory of going there with Grandma. I don't remember what the occasion was or why we were there, but we went. Another place she will never again be. Then I widen my gaze, to the whole downtown area, this place that she lived for the past fifty years, where she will never again now be. It occurs to me that this was the town where she wanted to live her life. All my life, I've been just wanting to get out of here, but this was a place she chose for her home. In light of that it seems strange that her body doesn't even rest here, it is in Phoenix, one-hundred miles away where it is always twenty degrees hotter.

In the evening I sit with Dane on the front patio with outdoor rocking chairs

that we brought over from Grandma's.  
We smoke and drink tea. I sit cross  
legged on the chair because there are  
so many strange bugs that crawl and  
fly and chatter around on the lit patio. I  
do not want them crawling up my legs.  
Yet I do not mind the company of the  
bugs, because at least this small out-  
door space is one where we can keep  
to ourselves, and the rest of the family  
does not join us. We keep working on  
our separate writing. It has become  
a ritual, a sacred time every evening,  
the highlight of every day. When the  
children are asleep, and we are at last  
able to do what we want to be doing all  
day long.



The past year and a half can be tracked as a gradual dropping out and then a cautious dropping back in. It went from going to less and less art openings, to none at all. Whereas I used to attend every art event that any of my peers were involved in, I now attend none at all.

In October of last year I moved out of LA, south to the coast. In November of last year, I quit social media entirely, and stopped listening to, or reading, or in any way consuming the news. I still cannot bare to be aware of all the current events anymore. The only time I find out about anything is when someone tells me. Due to this, I know there were protests in Hong Kong, that Bernie and Trump are both running for president again, there was the Climate Strike, etc. It is enough to just know a little.

Earlier this year I slowly started to drop back in by means of a secret instagram account. It began as a way to

communicate with my sisters via images, and to keep up with their lives. I was also finding myself wanting to make posts on instagram, but not on my old account. Maybe it is because of when I was born, but I find it hard not to process things by means of little images and their corresponding captions, on a social media platform. It feels tangible somehow, in a way that scrolling through the six-thousand photos on my phone does not.

I now follow about thirty people. I reactivated my old instagram account in June. I tried posting things three times but deleted all but one post. It was a post regarding a group show I was in; it shared that I had indeed accomplished something tangible--I had filmed and edited a new video. I still do not spend a lot of time on that account because to do so makes me depressed. I cannot measure my life against those of my peers or the successful artists I once followed with the goal of being like. Because I can't

be like them. I am finding new ways of working. Of finding the necessary parameters in which I can most productively exist, in all aspects of my life. I am closing in. Perhaps I am nesting. I am rebuilding my army.



The last time I had a breakdown about my Grandpa was in San Clemente. I was sitting in a chair in the backyard by the pool drinking and smoking. My in-laws were out of town so I bought a pack of cigarettes and a bottle of Casamigos Resposado tequila.

My in-laws are not aware that I have been a smoker the entire time they've known me, because nearly eight years ago, the first time I ever stayed over at their house with Dane, he told me we cannot let them know I smoke because they hate smoking. In those days I'd sneak out to the street corner a block away after they went to bed to get my fix. When we lived with them I quit entirely, but that night since they were gone and I was sad, I bought a pack of Celadon American Spirits.

My in-laws also did not know the extent to which I drank. While I would occasionally have a glass of wine with them at dinner, I also would buy bottles of liquor and hide them upstairs in

the sitting room. After going to the store I'd stuff them in my diaper bag in the car, then carry them straight up to the sitting room and hide them in the closet behind some books. Every night after the kids went to bed I'd drink. I would try and cover the smell on my breath if I went downstairs. I had been into trying all the different kinds of fancy tequila I could find. I'd throw out the empty bottles by burying them beneath other bags in the recycling bin when they weren't home.

Earlier that evening I'd taken myself to a wine bar on Del Mar in San Clemente and drank the most delicious and most dry white wine I'd ever tasted. The description said it tasted like wet stone and dry bones. I tried to read *Middlemarch* by George Eliot at the bar, but felt paranoid and self-conscious that I was drinking there alone, and everyone else was in couples and on their phones, but all I had was myself and a book. I could not focus. Finally I left and went back home,

stopping at Albertsons and a gas station on the way home for the Casamigos and cigarettes.

That night was also the same night as Open Studios at ArtCenter. I had intended for months to go since the final shows of the last class of people I went to school with would be exhibited. I did not end up going because I was depressed, it was a two hour drive, and because I still weighed twenty pounds more than my pre-pregnancy weight and I was embarrassed about both having had another child, and having stayed so fat. I did not know (and still do not know) how to maintain continuity between the image I had constructed for myself before, and the person who I am left with now. Part of the goal of the Casamigos and cigarettes was to find a way to maintain that continuity--as an artist who smoked and drank a lot late at night, working and fucking around, rather than sleeping. It was also a way of trying to still have fun, even if I wasn't going to make

it to Open Studios. To prove something to myself. It was a way of trying to figure out how things were supposed to work now, in the present, away from grad school, alone.

The night before the Casamigos night, I'd had a very traumatic experience smoking weed with a person I barely knew. I went to her house, in a suburban neighborhood of Santa Ana, just off the 5 freeway, with my two kids. We were trying to become friends because we are both young moms. She has three kids and I have two. Her oldest is four years old, as is mine. It was the second time I'd gone to her house. I liked her because she is beautiful and seemed slightly unstable and mysterious which enticed me. The first time I came over we sat on her bed and she told me all about her traumatic childhood and her sex life.

In the midst of it all she said to me: you have an autoimmune disease and so do I. We both have chronic pain. I

smoke weed to take away the pain, and it helps me to be a better mother. I bet it would help you too. She seemed so capable and seemed to be thriving in ways that I was not. And she was telling me that we were alike, with our trauma, our food issues, and our autoimmune disorders and that weed could fix everything. I was completely convinced--I decided to try it.

I should have known better. Aside from one other time, incidentally at the last Open Studios I had attended, smoking weed has always made me completely paranoid. It has not been pleasurable in any way. Yet I forgot everything I knew about my body's response to weed because this person was selling it to me with such promise. She took me to the back patio after setting all five kids in front of the TV. She closed the door and made sure they weren't following us. She had with her a small box that she'd taken down from a hidden place in her closet. She took out two different vapes containing a

downer and an upper. She took a long puff of one, closing her eyes with the sun shining on her blond, waist length hair. I took it after her, taking a very small short puff and not holding it in. I wanted to start things slow. Then we both took puffs of the next one. I felt almost nothing.

We went back inside and she started trying to make us all food. She seemed somewhat erratic, getting continually distracted, but I thought maybe it was just her personality. I am all over the place as well, when it comes to doing everyday tasks, getting distracted and starting a million things at once. It took her a half hour or more to make us a salad. While I was waiting I came upon a huge armoire filled with a vast collection of whiskey bottles. I was feeling tired, hungry, antisocial and somewhat bored, but I'd committed to staying at her house till 2 pm, and it was only noon. So I decided to ask her if we could smoke more weed, though what I really wanted was some whis-

key. In retrospect I should have just asked for whiskey. That time I was not careful and the weed hit me hard.

We walked inside and suddenly I felt completely weak, sedated, and terrified. My limbs all felt like they were being pulled to the ground by gravity to the point where I could not hold my baby. She grabbed my baby out of my falling arms, sat me in a chair in her room and started trying to feed me food, fill me with liquids--all these tactics to make me less high. Nothing worked. I felt stuffed to the brim and my mouth hardly seemed to be working. It was the most scared I'd ever been to that point, with complete lack of control over my body. I felt heavy, sinking, unable to move. I felt like a horrible mother for the way this made me incapable of caring for my children.

I asked her to call Dane, and then my sister, since I could not figure out how to use my phone myself. She begged

me not to call them because she wanted to keep her weed habit a secret. I insisted saying that neither Dane nor my sister would care. Eventually they both came over. My sister sat with me for hours talking me down, keeping me calm, rubbing my arm and giving me water, while Dane took care of the kids and helped with stuff around the house. Finally we went home and for the first time in months I did not drink before going to bed.

The next night was tequila night and I drank with a vengeance. I got drunk and cried about my Grandpa. I wept because to this day I cannot reconcile "I love you" with "let me abuse you."

The day after my breakdown about my Grandpa, I tried to reset and get back to normal again. I went to the grocery store but during the drive there I started to feel faint so I turned around, went home, stuffed tasteless food in my mouth, and headed back again, this time with my daughter.

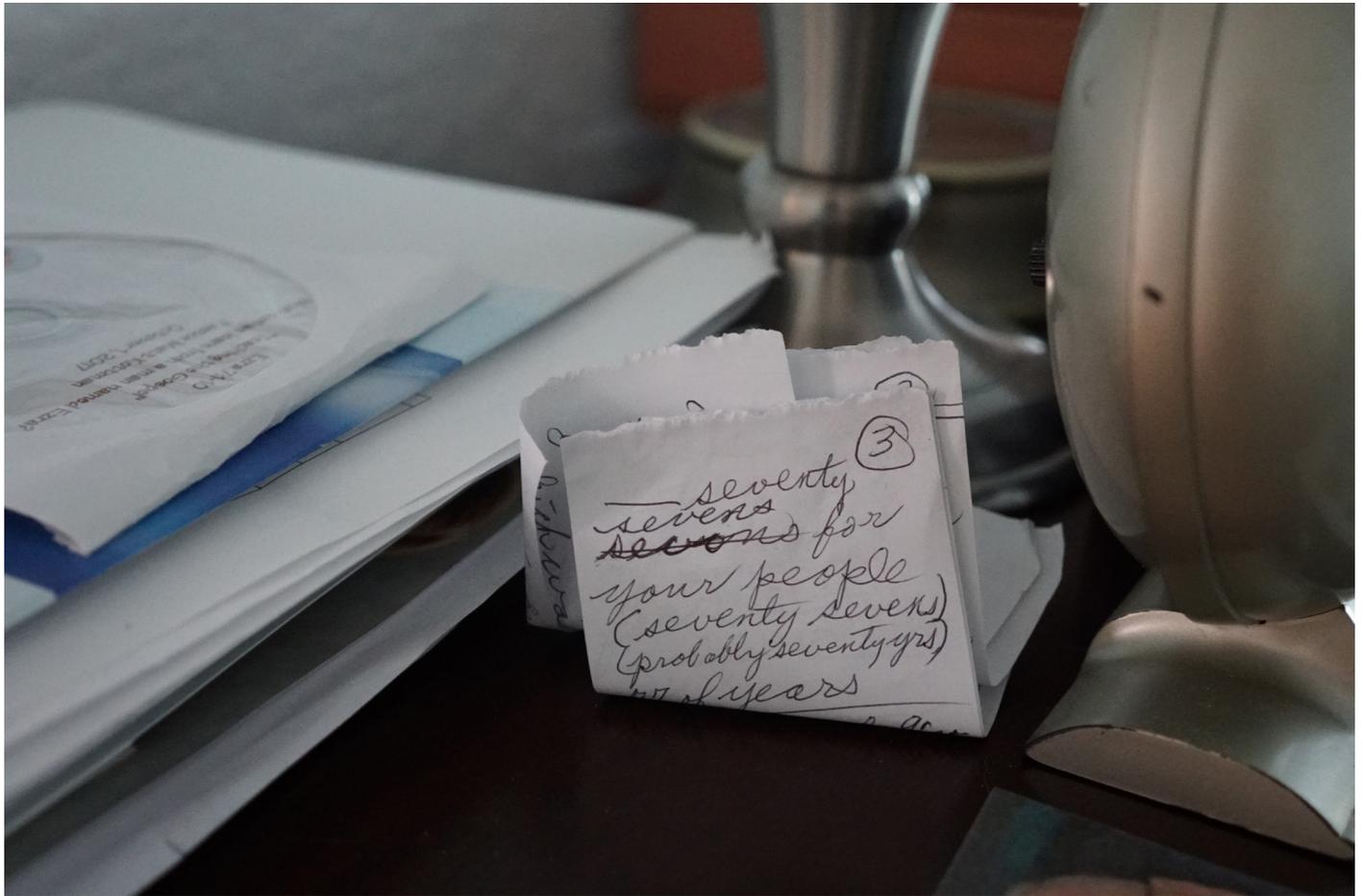
I filled the cart with things from a list I'd written up. I still felt weak so I grabbed a bag of cashews and started stuffing them in my mouth. I opened a bottle of kombucha and poured that into my mouth also. When I tried to put the cap back onto the kombucha bottle my fingers were numb. I freaked out. I started to feel like I was blacking out. I started panicking which scared my daughter, sitting in the cart. I put her on the phone with my mom so she would be comforted while I felt incapable of being a mother for her. I did not know what was happening to me. My vision was tunneling, colors were excessively bright, my hands were numb and clamping up, and my face was seizing. I had an employee call 911. I was taken to the hospital where they did lots of tests. Though I was convinced I was dying, nothing was wrong with me.

A doctor sent me home with a prescription of xanax telling me that all I'd

had was a severe panic attack. He told me to rest and start therapy soon. For two weeks after that I was unable to leave the house at all, and spent most of my days in bed watching an Australian show called *Offspring* on netflix, Dane bringing me the baby when he needed to nurse. Watching *Offspring* is also another reason I feel such a pull toward my siblings and parents lately, whereas in the past, I had rejected sentimental notions of family as the constructs of of capitalist, nuclear family idealism. The show absorbed me completely, in a time when I was unable to watch any art films or read any art books.







I am sick of this piece of writing. I am sick of thinking about my Grandma. I am sick of trying to understand why I felt so sad when she died, but did not even like her when she was alive. I am also sick of looking backwards at all the old photographs and the memories. But the photos pull me and I cannot throw them away. I look at them, I sort through them, try to organize them chronologically. I sort through them in my Grandma's house and in my parent's garage. These two generations of people who do not know how to get rid of stuff, but love to make or buy more stuff. There is something about the process of making memories via photographs that is repulsive and seems futile, but I myself cannot prevent myself from doing so continually.

Yet there is a topic I have been avoiding all this time: her viewing ceremony. A couple days before she died my dad asked my siblings, mother, and me, if we thought we should have a viewing ceremony. We all decided that it

was probably what Grandma would like, what she would have expected, since she arranged the same thing for Grandpa. So my dad and his sister started calling around, trying to find the best place to have a viewing ceremony. She died on a Friday and the viewing ceremony was the following Sunday at 2 pm. It was the first time I saw her casket. It was large, blue, new, and shiny. When we arrived my aunt and her family were viewing my Grandmother's body so my family stayed in the foyer to give them space. There were two floral couches, and the whole building smelled like glade plug-ins. In an adjacent room there was a large fish-tank that Edie was immediately drawn to. Holding my son, I looked into the other rooms. As I wandered the building I found a small gallery of coffin options with their respective prices. It is strange that we live in a world where the making of coffins is an entire industry for profit. There were also little containers for ashes to be stored in, and even an option to

turn the ashes of a loved one into a diamond to be worn on a necklace or ring. In the fishtank room were notes on the wall from the loved ones of the dead, to the funeral home, thanking them for their services.

My dad walked up to the coffin before the rest of our family did. Then he came and warned us, in hushed tones, that Grandma looked very different, perhaps like a younger version of herself. I did not know what to expect from what he said, having only seen one other dead body--that of my aunt Judy when I was in my early teens. From what I remember, she looked very much like herself, just a more made-up version, the way she looked before she ever found out she had breast cancer. When we walked up to my Grandma's body I immediately felt my chest tighten and I wanted to cry but couldn't. Her face looked entirely unlike the person I'd known all these years. Her lips were botoxed and Grandma never had big lips. They had

put mascara on her, which she didn't ever wear, in my memory. Somehow they had covered her bruise that she'd had on her eye, from falling two weeks before her death. I kept trying to imagine what she would look like if she opened her eyes, if she would somehow look more like herself. But it was hard to remember because although I know she had blue eyes, the last time I saw her with her eyes open was at the salmon dinner in May. The last week of her life when we were all there with her, she never opened her eyes.

Her body smelled of formaldehyde, and her body beneath her clothes was wrapped in weird white plastic that was elastic at the edges beneath her sleeves, like a shower cap. I thought the funeral home could have been a bit more tactful and hid the plastic beneath her clothes a little better. Her hands were the only part of her that looked recognizable. Her veins, the wrinkles and the way they were positioned looked very much like the way

they always had been, and it gave me a sense of relief and comfort to me to see at least that part of her still remained. Yet even her hands were strange because when she died they had been very swollen. When she fell before her death, she broke her right arm so for the last two weeks of her life that whole arm was really swollen and two days before she died the other hand became really swollen too. I wondered how they made her hands look unswollen. It was so clear she was no longer there.

Even in the hours after her death when I first saw her the morning my dad told us she had died, her body was just a body and no longer hers. But now it was that dead body, transformed into something else. It was a simulacrum, a version of a version of her living self. My little sister took a hair that had fallen out onto the collar of Grandma's shirt, and twirled it around her finger and put it away into a part of her phone case. The whole time we were there a woman who worked in the

funeral home stood in the back looking apologetic. I wondered how many times she's done this, if it gets easier or less awkward, and if all mourners act more or less the same. We all stood together hugging each other, handing each other kleenex for the tears. Finally after an hour or so we started to gather ourselves to leave. How do you leave a situation like that? My aunt said she did not know how to say goodbye to Grandma's body for the last time.

Afterward we all stood outside together for a long time in some grass. Clemency fell asleep on my chest in the baby carrier. My nephew and Edie sort of played together while the family stood around talking. I don't really remember what we did afterwards. I don't remember anything else from the rest of the day.



Grandma left her house and all her belongings to her two children, everything to be split in half between them. They decided they would sell the house and split the profits, since neither one wanted to buy the other one out of the inheritance.

In order to sell Grandma's house the family must go through it, but to do so brings to the surface issues of greed, resentment, and desire. In order to split everything in half, my dad and his sister place monetary value on the things they want. My Aunt says: this washer/dryer is worth three hundred dollars, so if you take that, I have the right to three hundred dollars worth of other things in the house, and so on.

In the days immediately following Grandma's death, all of us were at her house a lot to claim what we wanted. There is so much stuff and all of us already have so much stuff. I am disgusted by the need we all seem to have to take some for ourselves. I myself am

the same. I want the stoneware cooking dishes manufactured by Pampered Chef because I have always wanted stoneware but have never been able to afford it. I want the rocker chair with an ottoman because I've never had a rocker and I have always imagined that if I could rock my baby rather than hold him while standing or walking, it would make my back hurt a lot less. But my aunt wants it too because it would give her a place to hold her grandchildren. I give in, let her have it, because I don't care enough to fight her and I am annoyed that she even wants it to begin with. Besides that, I am torn. A part of me wants nothing to do with any of this stuff because stuff can function as a reminder of the past. Every object in this house is inseparable from its history, because I have grown up my whole life associating each thing with this house, and the house, with my Grandpa.

But what does one do with all these things anyway? Do all the thrift stores

need more stuff? Should we just throw all of the excess stuff away? I imagine the landfills. I imagine the turtles with the straws in their nostrils. I imagine the island of plastic larger than the state of Texas floating in the Pacific. I imagine the factory workers around the world, underpaid and wasting away, producing more stuff for us to consume. I think of the article Dane told me about, in which children were found to be forced laborers in the production of amazon tablets. I imagine plastic in our salt. I imagine more plastic than fish in the sea. I imagine, with dread, the world of the future-the world my children will inhabit after I am gone. As I take load after load of stuff in my car to a thrift store I wonder, how do they sort through all their donations? Do they end up throwing a lot of it away? I take things to thrift stores instead of throwing them away out of some skewed sense of benevolence, feeling like I am doing the world some good by keeping things out of landfills and giving other people

a chance to reuse and purchase second hand. But what is this doing really? Most people don't shop second hand. I myself rarely do, because I don't have time. If I need something I buy it immediately, either on amazon, or at a store that I know will carry that item. I have children, I do not have time for meandering through thrift stores the way I did in my youth. And in my youth it was never for need, but out of a bored, small-town sense of recreation.



Recently my youngest sister sent me some things she'd written in the days following Grandma's death:

Jane

I woke up this morning to my brother telling me that my dad had just told him my grandma passed away. 7 am. July 19th. I didn't want to wake up. I wanted to fall back asleep and pretend that I didn't just hear those words. I closed my eyes, but I couldn't find the energy to fall back asleep. I just kept hearing the echos of those words in my head.

July 19th. Today hurts. Next year is going to feel heavy. The next few years are probably going to be uncounciously horrible days & then remembering what day it is at some point. That's just how it's been. March 7th, April 20th. October 17th. November 11th. December 23rd.

Today it's hard to focus on anything positive. It's hard to smile. It's hard to hold back tears. It's hard to be anywhere or do anything. It's hard to see people. It's hard to be there for anyone else.

My grandma spent the last couple weeks of her life at a nice little hospice home. My entire family has spent all day everyday there for the past week. If my grandma had been concious, she would have liked it a lot. The big trees with the vines growing up the trunks. The garden. The rocking chair. The chairs & tables in the shade. They cooked yummy home made food for every meal. The nurses were sweet and cared on a personal level. They allowed all our crazy dogs to spend time with us in the yard. In a way it became a place of comfort, amidst all the hurt and pain of knowing we were going to lose her. We shared a lot of laughs there. We sang her songs. We prayed for her. We talked to her. We cried with her. We were silent with her. We napped with her. We were present with her. I took this video there.

It's sad we won't ever go back there. It was sad kissing her forehead for the last time and not feeling absolutely any life in her anymore. It was sad seeing them take her away. Returning to her room and seeing her bed, empty. Seeing the imprint of where her body used to be.

I don't understand death. I don't understand how to morn. I don't know how to go back to normal right now.



Dear grandma,

I wish I called you more. I wish I really listened to everything you ever had to say. I wish I didn't have the mindset of dreading how long I would have to be on the phone every time you called. I wish I called you to wish you a happy birthday more, or to just simply talk.

Now that you're gone I just miss you voice so much. I miss your laugh. What I would do be go over to your house to bake with you. Or go Christmas shopping with you. To rake the leaves up in your yard or clean your house. To watch old black and white movies with you. To do homework at your house. To read with you. To pick you up for dinner at my parents house. To reading the long letters you would write on birthday cards. Singing hymns on holidays. To looking through pictures. To always helping you try and figure out your little flip phone. To listening to you tell us way too much information about doctors visits at the dinner table.

I never thought I would miss you as much as I do. I never thought of how it would feel to go over to your house without you in it. I never thought of how it would feel to go to Prescott and not see you. I never thought that someday I would go to your house and it would be the very last time I would be entering your home. I never thought I would live a life without you in it.

I denied your declining health for months. I could tell people you were dying without ever admitting it to myself. Without acknowledging how painful that would be. How painful it would be to see you during your last week of life on this earth motionless and unconscious. How painful it would be to look back on pictures of your entire life 2 days after your death, wishing I had ever cared to be in more of them.

Fuck.

You were always there. Always, always, there. Why wasn't I just there with you too.

I love you, wherever you are now that you're not here, I hope that you know that.

Goodbye.



I have this overwhelming feeling like everytime something is going on with my life that I have to pin point the exact time, reason, or action that "x" went wrong to cause me to feel whatever way I feel. Why am I like that?

Maybe it's just how I process things. But the thing is, I feel this overwhelming need to be able to talk to someone(s) about it, but no one is going to give a shit about this random ass incident that happened ages ago or any of the shit surrounding that or explaining that.

Maybe I should just make bullet points of broad feelings I have. I feel alone.

I feel hurt.

I feel scared.

Tired. Emotionless. Doomed.

I have realized that I only know how to write when I am mad. Right now I am sad, heartbroken. And I have no idea what to say.

Dad sent us a recording of a voice message grandma left for Christie. In it she said talked about Levi and I's house and said we did a really good job. I just listened to it sitting in the break room at work and started crying. There wasn't anyone else here, thankfully.

It's hard to hear sweet things she said about me. I regret not being sweeter to her and not showing her that I love her. She was full of love. She may have been stubborn, but in a loving committed way.

At the end of the message she said she was going to go because she was already out of breath. That's sad to hear, she loved talking on the phone so much.





We have been in Arizona for over a month. Dane is working with the Vocational Rehabilitation through the Veterans Affairs. They are setting him up to do volunteer work at the local V.A. hospital, and will pay him for it through the Vocational Rehabilitation program. He thought he would get an additional housing income, but because of his discharge status, he is not eligible for the G.I. Bill, so he is not eligible for the housing allowance. The social worker at the V.A. Hospital suggests he seek out housing for the homeless. Alex from some Catholic service calls Dane and tells him he needs to spend a night somewhere other than a house for a night--a car or a tent or a shelter. When Dane tells me this I feel overwhelmed and sad and somewhat angry. We have to fake being homeless in order to get assistance?

Dane receives a disability pension from the V.A. every month. He has a disability rating of seventy percent. He has PTSD from being in a submarine and

the hypermasculine, physically and sexually abusive culture that entails, and is diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder. I have been with him for nearly eight years and have nearly left him many times. For the past two years however, Dane has not had any episodes. Things are looking up. We are seeking a way to become financially stable. We have hopes that the Vocational Rehabilitation program can help him work through some of the trauma that comes up for him when he is in a workplace environment, and enable him to keep a job, build a career.

The process crawls. There is paperwork, people to meet with, bureaucratic bullshit. But the process here is much faster than it would have been in Southern California. The wait time for an intake appointment into the Vocational Rehabilitation program in LA is six months minimum, whereas here in Arizona it was six weeks maximum. Yet I get impatient.

As we wait, we stay at my parents' house. While we are there it slowly becomes clear that my parents might be getting a divorce, and my dad is having an affair.

They live in a three bedroom house. My brother has one room, my mother has the master bedroom, and usually my dad has the "guest room." Dane, Clemency, and I were staying in my dad's room. Edie, my dad, and mom were sleeping in my mom's room. Then Clemency was becoming an increasingly horrible sleeper, because when I am in the room he refuses to sleep anywhere other than next to me, my boob in his mouth. So Dane and I moved the mattress into the living room and now we sleep there and Clemency sleeps alone. We all sleep better.

During the day we lounge all over the bed that takes up nearly all the space in the living room, sandwiched by two couches that don't match. I mostly stay home with the kids. I have start-

ed teaching Edie how to recognize numbers. We call it school time. We do that, then she watches a movie, then we paint, then she bathes. It is our daily routine. I take care of the baby simultaneously. I research continually, how to make him sleep better. I follow a lady called TakingCaraBabies on instagram who has sleep classes that I can buy for nearly two hundred dollars to train babies from ages five to twenty-four months to sleep in fourteen days. She also has a class for newborns, and for the three to four month sleep regression. I consider justifying the expense, but instead just piece together what I can of a sleep class from her instagram posts.

At her suggestion, I buy a sleep sack called the Nested Bean Zen Sack. It has a weighted portion to make him feel like someone's hand is resting on him. I order it with skepticism, not expecting it to work. Dane calls it gimmicky and scoffs when I buy it. It doesn't work at first and I become enraged, feeling tar-

geted by the market for being a sleep deprived, desperate mother. But on the third day it works. He sleeps through the night only waking once. The next day he takes a two hour long nap for the first time in his life. I hardly dare to believe this thing might be working. Later that day he takes a second, two hour nap. Up to this point he has been an infuriating napper, only taking twenty to thirty minute naps. The next day he does the the same. I feel a sense of hope that perhaps the sleeplessness is coming to an end, for the first time since his birth.

My dad has asked me to sort through the stuff in the garage. It is an overwhelming mess. My parents do not get rid of stuff. The garage is where stuff goes to be forgotten about. I sort through it, while Grandma's house sits twenty miles away, unsorted. I have not been to her house in a while. As I go through my parents' stuff in the garage I take six car loads of stuff that is not worth selling, and that I think

they won't notice is missing, to the thrift store. As I do this, I can't help but think that someday I will do this again, with my sisters, when my parents die. We live a life, we accumulate, and then someday we die, and it becomes the task of someone else to deal with all the stuff. This seems to say something about the current state of things.



I'm really sick of trying to do and not do a set of things in order to feel ok. For two years before I decided to start living healthy, I lived a life in pursuit of pleasure and disregard to good health. I was depressed as fuck then too, but at least it alternated with moments of utter elation. Now it is all just calm and slow and the only strong emotion is an occasional feeling of subdued enrage-ment. My dad who is a therapist and primarily works with people in recovery told me that one of the struggles of a former addict is getting used to a life without the highs. It is a different pace, a way of living on a different register. I can relate.

I wanted to quit smoking yesterday but tonight I just want some form of relief. I had sips of wine today and ended up not liking the feeling. Is it because I now have anxiety connected to feeling affected by alcohol? It used to be my favorite feeling in the world. It's midnight and I am exhausted. My baby has woken up three times since I put

him to bed.

After soothing him I lie in bed reading--in the bed that is in the living room--and my mom and brother decided to sit on the couch right next to me and have the most banal conversation. They talked about the weather, which app gives the best weather report, they talked about the three chihuahuas. I became increasingly stressed out by this conversation--the pointlessness of it. And the fact that I have nowhere to be alone. No space of my own. Smoking cigarettes on the patio was my own space. I want my own place. I want a bed I can lie in alone at night without being bothered by my brother and mother. I'm so sick of being in limbo. We've been like this for months. I'm sick of never knowing what is going to happen next. This was all fine and cool when I was a teenager but I've lost all sense of adventure.

But writing does something, I feel better after saying all this.



When I was pregnant with Clemency, at the first ultrasound, there were two babies in my belly. The second one had no heartbeat. It was about the size of a poppy flower. At the next ultrasound, they saw that the second baby had been absorbed into the placenta. When I first saw the second baby in the ultrasound and the ultrasound technician gasped, I felt an overwhelming sense of horror. I had not intended to get pregnant in the first place, and was still coping with the idea that I was pregnant at all. To find out I was pregnant with two was too much to handle. My first thought was, I can never be an artist again. I will not be able to show my face. I do not want to have to explain how this ever happened. In the following days I continued to consider an abortion.

When I told a family member about the twins, the second one without a detectable heartbeat, she said to me, oh what a relief, how could you have ever handled twins. This callousness hurt

me primarily because I was aware of her inconsistency in saying this. I knew that if I had told her I'd gotten an abortion she would have considered me to be a horrible person. But a twin dying on it's own was a relief. This way of thinking seemed contradictory to me.

One night I sat on the patio with Dane sobbing about this comment by the family member and this dilemma of babies in my belly. I was smoking and drinking tequila. I did not care. I had been like this ever since finding out about the pregnancy, so the thought has crossed my mind that perhaps my recklessness in the early pregnancy had caused the other baby to die.

But that night I decided to call the other baby Poppy, and to keep the pregnancy. Later I bought poppy seeds at Home Depot and planted hundreds of them in my sister's yard where we lived with her at the time. They all grew into little seedlings but then they all died. It

was scorching hot that summer, and one weekend when the temperatures reached a high of one hundred and fourteen degrees, they withered away in a day. But this spring my sister said that a few of the poppies came back in her yard, and were blooming.



The night I went into labor with Clemency it was exactly three weeks before the due date. I was unable to sleep so I got out of bed around 11 pm while everyone else in the house was asleep, went downstairs, and poured myself some vodka so that I could chill out and fall asleep. Then I sat at my computer and tried to work on editing video footage. After a half hour or so I felt a pop somewhere near the base of my uterus and water started streaming out. I thought maybe I had sort of peed myself and I ran to the bathroom and sat on the toilet but the stream wouldn't stop, and it was coming out of my vagina. I panicked and ran to the bedroom and told Dane that my water had broken, then I ran back to the toilet where I sat shaking uncontrollably.

Dane got his mom up and she came and sat in front of me on the toilet. She told me to take deep breaths and calm down, and said this is so exciting. I did not feel excitement, but complete and total dread. I was not mentally

prepared to give birth or be in labor. It was too early. I was exhausted, I just wanted to go to sleep. I talked on the phone with my midwife who said shaking uncontrollably is from hormonal shifts as the body prepares for the work of birth. She told me to come to the birth center so that she could examine me and make sure everything was proceeding as normal.

Dane and I got in the car and drove up the 5, completely empty for once, at this hour. The midwife confirmed that my water had broken and the mucus plug at my cervix was released. We asked her why this was happening so early. She said it's impossible to tell these things, babies come at their own time, but she said, it was probably because of the full moon. Babies often are born on the nights of a full moon. I was two centimeters dilated. I felt nothing other than some mild cramping. She said we could either stay there at the birth center to see how things proceed, or I could go home and try

to sleep. I decided on the latter and we got home around 2 am.

At home I tried to sleep but was unable. I felt anxious and also stupid for having gotten myself tipsy with vodka. Around four am the contractions were intense and coming just under five minutes apart so we drove back to the Around 4 am the contractions were intense and coming just under five minutes apart so we drove back to the birth center. I was soon unable to stand.

They filled a bathtub and I stepped inside. I still did not feel ready for this to happen. I did not feel up to it. I wanted it to stop. I started panicking and the midwife put a dropper of an herbal tincture in my mouth. It smelled like flowers and I started to accept that I had to do this. I withdrew deep into myself. I started to feel the rhythm of the water in the tub rocking with the waves of contractions. It seemed they would not end. They were in a contin-

ual stream, no end, no beginning. It was the most intense bodily sensation I'd ever had, and I could do nothing but concentrate on getting through it. Then I felt a sudden urge inside of me to bare down because the pain was eased a bit when I did this. I felt all of the muscles of my entire core pressing downward. My body was working and my mind was no longer relevant. I felt animal, instinctual, primitive. All boundaries began to dissolve between self and surrounding. There was no difference between all of my being and the water I was in. The water extended outward, limitless. The other people did not exist around me. And then in three heavy rushes, he was born.

I did not feel the gushing sense of awe and relief that I felt when Edie was born. Instead I just felt exhausted and empty. I was unaware of what was happening, unable to catch up. It was exactly 6 am. It had all happened far too fast and was far too intense. It felt like my body had just tumulted me

through an avalanche. The midwife was holding the baby who looked so tiny to me, much tinier than Edie had been, and was telling me to stand up because the umbilical cord was wrapped taut, three times around his neck and he was not breathing. I was unresponsive so she yanked me up and loosened the cord. The midwife gave the baby to me and told me to rub him while she tickled his feet and patted him roughly. Dane yelled, "Clemency, come on!" Standing naked in a pool of the bath water, birth fluids, and my blood, I did not feel anxious at all. I knew that the baby was going to be okay. I knew he would breathe. He just needed a minute to catch up to what had just happened, as did I. It was irrational; there is nothing rational about birth. He was turning blue. Then finally, he started to breathe. We named him Clemency because that is what Dane yelled to him to call him from death, back into life.

When I think about death, I am afraid and every inch of my being does not want it. I am afraid of the deterioration of my body, of losing control, and of being dependent on others who I likely do not know well, like doctors or hospice workers. Yet when I think about death I think about birth and it gives me courage. Giving birth was something I was terrified of both times, before it happened. When I was pregnant with Edie I researched obsessively about birth and did everything I could to prepare for it. I did not want to be controlled by male doctors or the cycle of medical interventions. In this sense I can understand my Grandma's refusal to take the prescribed pharmaceutical drugs. I did yoga and went on three mile walks around the Rose Bowl in Pasadena where we lived at the time, every day. I drank red raspberry leaf tea and took evening primrose oil which is supposed to soften the cervix and make birth quicker and easier. I rubbed Clary Sage essential oil on my belly starting the thirty-eighth week in

order to try and induce labor so that I wouldn't go over term.

Five days before her due date, labor began early on a Friday morning. I labored at home and went to the hospital at 2 pm. She was born at 5 pm on the dot and it felt like the single most important thing I had ever done. I felt invincible. She was the most completely perfect and beautiful being I had ever laid eyes on.

Because I have faced the fear of birth and overcome it I try to reassure myself that I will be able to face death too. Similarly to birth, I will have no choice. It will be a bodily and messy experience in which any desires for privacy or personal boundaries will no longer apply. Yet there is a particular freedom to giving birth. I have no shame or sense of modesty over my naked body. Lying on a bed sweating and bloody with a fresh, equally naked baby covered in vernix and amniotic fluid on my chest, while a doctor sews

together together my torn vagina, I am free of all constraints. People walk in and out and I lay bare for all to see like Courbet's *L'Origine du Monde*, but the version of the world of women. Because nothing matters after birthing a baby. I have fought a war and have come out victorious. I have shit and peed and birthed a baby out of the depths of my being. My body is in perfect harmony with my being. All the inherited shame of past generations and an entire life of being told how to be a girl and then how to be a woman are erased. I am like Eve in the Garden of Eden.



II.

II.

Paula B.

with photos by Jessica Dillon

“Paula had long struggled with her desire for motherhood, and just as long had she chosen not to act upon that desire.”<sup>1</sup>

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Diane Radycki, in her stunning book on artist Paula Becker, closes with a section describing Paula’s return to Worpswede from Paris in the last months of her life. Paula was pregnant, and in this section Radycki traces a chronology of what Paula did during her first, second, and third trimesters. In her first, she was nauseated and ambivalent to her family’s joy over her return from Paris—the return to things as normal. In her second trimester she painted flowers, old women, and young girls, and lamented that, from her perspective, she had worked so little. In her third trimester she got upset with Rilke over an issue of her

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1Diane Radycki, *Paula Modersohn-Becker: the first modern woman artist* (Yale University Press, 2013), 221

furniture left behind in Paris, and later asked him for the catalogue for the Salon d’Automne which had a Cézanne her furniture left behind in Paris, and later asked him for the catalogue for the Salon d’Automne which had a Cézanne retrospective that year. Less than two weeks before her labor began, she wrote her mother telling her how much she wanted to go see the Cezanne exhibition, even though it was closing on the day she wrote the letter. She wrote to Clara, five days before she went into labor saying, “If it were not absolutely necessary for me to be here, I would have to be in Paris.”<sup>2</sup>

After the difficult labor and birth, in which Mathilde was pulled into the world with forceps, Clara came to see Paula and described her as being illuminated ““with the happiest most tranquil smile that I have ever seen on her.” The smiling artist kept saying

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2 Radycki 222

of her healthy newborn, “You should see her in the nude!” Mother and child=artist and nude model.”<sup>3</sup>

Days later, after two weeks of bedrest, she was gone.

*Paula had received permission to get up and was preparing happily to do so. She had a large mirror placed at the foot of the bed, and she combed her beautiful hair, braided it, and wound it into a crown atop her head. She pinned roses on that someone had given her and then proceeded easily, ahead of her husband and brother who wanted to support her, into the other room where the candles were lit in celebration—the chandelier, the Baroque angel with its belly encircled by a wreath of candles—so many candles everywhere.*

*She asked someone to bring her her child, and when she had her she said, “Now it is almost as beautiful as*

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3 Radycki 224

*Christmas.” Suddenly she had to raise her foot--and as someone came to help her, she said only, ‘Pity.’*

*The artist died 20 November, 1907. A quarter of a century later Clara reflected on her friend who wanted it all: “Paula’s task was not just painting, as as she herself said, but the work of living, to which we gave our all in order to take part in its fullness.”<sup>4</sup>*

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We see in the way that she proceeded easily from her bedrest of two weeks, that she was full of strength, a hunger for living. A thousand things ahead of her to see, to touch and paint. We see in the way she proceeded easily, that her body and spirit were on two divergent tracks. Her body was ending, and when it finally caught up with her mind, she could only speak a word: *pity*. I imagine, with the kind

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4 *ibid*.

of regret that only a premature death can produce, what art works would have followed from this relationship between mother and daughter, artist and her very own girl, her nude model. I imagine what works her spirit has continued to produce, all these years.

“You should see her in the nude!” Paula’s exclamation, so simple, and yet so full.

I think of my own daughter. From the first moment, her body arrested me. Its perfection of form, vitality, and color—bright pink lips from the start, thick olive-wood colored hair, bright white skin, and eyes that first were for the first two years, stormy grey, and eventually shape shifted into dark greenish gold. Her perfect little ass, fitting like an embrace in the palm of my hand. When she first was born, it was late summer and still always hot. I hardly ever put clothes on her. There is something remarkable about a body that has never been clothed,

and I wanted to preserve that as long as possible. “You should see her in the nude!” Paula’s exclamation brings this all back to me. I, the artist, my daughter, the model. For a while I tried to avoid making work about her. But once I gave in, I was unable to make work about anything else. I can’t take my eyes off her. There is something about her that I must try and express. Yet even when I come close, every day there is new information, she continues to emerge as her own being, and so there is new material to work with.

Sally Mann writes in her memoir *Hold Still*, regarding her children as the subject of her work, “In the pictures of my children, I celebrated the maternal passions their bodies inspired in me—how could I not? ...when I saw their bodies and photographed them... I thought of them as being simply, miraculously, and sensuously beautiful.”<sup>5</sup> Though I did not love everything

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<sup>5</sup> Sally Mann, *Hold Still: A Memoir With Photographs*, [Kindle]. Retrieved from Amazon.

about this book, this is a passage that I return to every once in a while. It is one of the few places where I've come across a description of the pull between an artist mother and her children's bodies. The miraculous body of that which comes from you.

Paula knew this, even before she ever birthed a baby. She was drawn to paint the bodies of the young girls, along with the older women. Otto praises her "naivety and simplicity" at times praising her for being the best woman painter in Worpswede, and other times complaining that her work was un-feminine, wounds for mouths, cretins for faces.<sup>6</sup> But Paula wasn't naïve, she was doing something unprecedented. Otto didn't recognize it. After centuries of women being painted from the male gaze, she was painting women from her own perspective —

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com (Little, Brown and Company, 2015), 185  
6 <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/nov/04/being-here-life-paula-modersohn-becker-marie-darrieussecq-review>

that of a woman. She painted girls who were saying, "Leave me alone."<sup>7</sup> She painted girls and women the way that they are when men aren't looking at them. She painted them with flatness, no perspective, and no shadows. She painted them as they were, with no sentimentality.<sup>8</sup>

She painted herself pregnant—the first person to do this in the history of painting—one hand holding two flowers, the other hand resting on her belly. "She is insisting on the creative woman's twin gifts: her genius and her biology. Not since Manet's Olympia has such a no-nonsense glance been leveled at the viewer. Deal with it, she challenges us: deal with the metaphor and the reality."<sup>9</sup> Paula painted the nursing women and the mothers. She

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7 Marie Darrieussecq, translated by Penny Hueston, *Being Here is Everything: The Life of Paula Modersohn-Becker*, (Semiotext(e) 2017), 79

8 Darrieussecq, 80-81  
9Radycki p 222

painted them in their every-day acts. The woman lying on her side, nursing a baby. It is the most comfortable way to nurse—offering relief to aching backs, necks, and arms. A chance to close one's eyes and rest from the weariness of childcare. Paula painted with realism, that which is before her.

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When I look at Paula, and I look at Clara, sometimes I see aspects of myself mirrored. I want to work the way Paula did. No filter, with a fervor. I don't want to do anything for the male gaze. Every-day acts within the domestic sphere as my subject. Yet, in a certain respect I know I am more like Clara—mother too young, swallowed up by house work and care work.

I see myself in the mirror of both of them, yet I also hope I can have a longer life, and that I won't be forgotten. I want to give my all in order to take part in life's fullness, for as long

as possible.

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Paula sold three paintings in her lifetime, but she knew she was going to become someone. Today, she is to me, one of the most important artists ever to have lived. I write these fragmentary thoughts, to try and grasp this. I try, in between all the drudgery of house work, to work with such fervor as she did.

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III.

III.  
with throwingsunstars

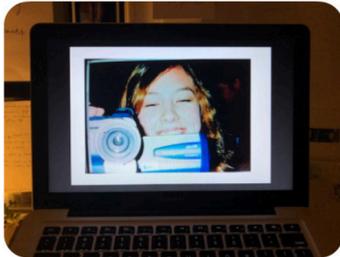


If you wanna still talk tonight I'm available :)

Just finishing packing for a flight tomm does it work in 15?!



Tue, Sep 3, 5:54 PM



Can I post this image or no because you want to wait for book?

Tue, Sep 3, 6:58 PM

Yes you can!



iMessage





Tue, Sep 24, 9:04 PM

Hey sweetie, my last day at my house is Sun, can you sister come fri or sat night or Sunday to get the monitor?

Wed, Sep 25, 12:06 AM

Hey, sorry for replying so late! I wrote my sister, and I'm going to give her your number so she can coordinate with you. How are you doing? Did you find somewhere else to move to?

Wed, Sep 25, 10:02 AM

Ok sounds good, I'm moving to my mom's for a bit in Orange County

Today 10:35 PM

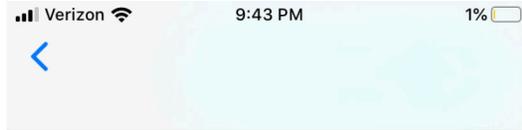
Hey, thinking of you. Did you delete your insta?

Delivered



iMessage





Sat, Oct 12, 3:49 PM

Hey 🌸

Yes I'm off for a bit

How are you sweetie? Are you back in San Clemente?

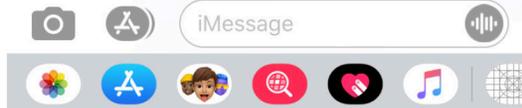
I just moved back to my mom's in Laguna Niguel

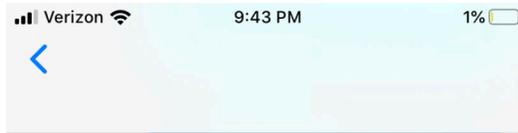
Would love to see you 😊

Mon, Oct 14, 1:16 PM

I'd love to see you too!

I'm in AZ because we can't live at my in-laws house in San Clemente anymore. But all our stuff is there so we'll be going back to get it at some point. Would love to see you when we do 🌸 maybe a beach walk or something ✨





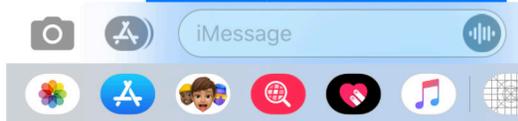
Hey :) how are you? Have you had time to look at the book yet?

Hey Karolina, I'm so sorry I have not, last week was rough but I'm coming back to life and plan to do tomm ♡ I'm really sorry for the delay and I hope to tell you more about what's going on later when I'm stronger. I had some bad anxiety attacks and had to go to the ER and then my body wouldn't stop freaking out. It was scary but I'm getting help and it gets better each day.

I hope you are well and miss you too 😭

Sun, Oct 20, 10:21 PM

Oh no I'm so sorry to hear that! That sounds terrible. I hope you feel stronger soon. Feel free to call me anytime. I know how



Phone conversation 10.22.19

Karolina Lavergne: Hey.

throwingsunstars: Hey, how are you?

KL: Doing well, how are you?

tss: I'm okay, I'm okay. I'm a little bit out of it but I'm okay.

KL: Are you starting to feel a little bit better?

tss: Um... some days I feel like I am, and then other days, like today and yesterday I just feel like shit, so....

KL: That's awful I'm sorry.

tss: Yeah... it's just like... um... I haven't talked about it with that many people but it was just like work stress that led up to... kind of just like really bad anxiety attacks and stuff and... so I'm off work and I'm not going back to work there which is good because it was just really too much, what was going on. And now my body is just kind of freaking out. I think I was just

holding it in for so long and once it kind of like broke it was just non-stop anxiety and... and some depression so I'm just really not feeling like myself. But I know... I know it's not permanent but it's really hard to be in it because.... Like... I... I know it's just part of the recovery, just processing all of this but... it's really rough, I just really feel like shit.

KL: That's terrible.

tss: Yeah. And I know you've been through your own stuff with anxiety so I know you understand some of it.

KL: Yeah definitely.

tss: Yeah... how are you feeling with yours and everything?

KL: I've been doing a lot better lately...

tss: That's great.

KL: Yeah, I feel like maybe a month and a half ago I finally started....waking up without this feeling of anxiety in my chest.

tss: Yeah! That's where I feel it too! It's terrible.

KL: Yeah... I feel like I spent all this energy every day just trying to talk myself through it. It's this mental battle...

tss: Yeah. For sure.

KL: ... every day.

tss: Yeah.

KL: But lately I've been feeling a lot better. So it does go away eventually, but I know it's awful when you're in it.

tss: Oh...that's good to hear. Yeah. Yeah it just feels like, um. It just feels... it doesn't feel good in your body and it doesn't feel good in your head because you feel like you can't control it and... I think mine was mostly environmental because of the hostile work situation but even being out of it I feel like it's still... it's not disappearing I think is what I'm trying to say.

KL: Well it was a long time, it was like two years right? That you worked there? So it

makes sense that it will take a while to process.

tss: Three years. Yeah for sure. And I've also been feeling just really tired, I think from not sleeping, like some nights it will take me like two hours to fall asleep then I'll wake up in the middle of the night and my mind is just racing with all these things that happened at work and just like.. it's just like... yeah. So.... Sometimes I... I read your thing that you're taking the xanax and and I was like, oh, yeah, that's what I'm taking to fall asleep! So... so... yeah...

KL: I've been taking benadryl every night to fall asleep and it really helps, so maybe eventually once things start to ease up you could try that.

tss: Yeah, yeah I probably will. I used to be able to just take... cuz when I was working I still had problems with sleeping but not nearly as bad as what I'm experiencing now and I would take melatonin, and that would work, but now it's like I can take two and it still does nothing so... I think it's just really severe... but um...

KL: Melatonin doesn't work for me for some reason.

tss: Yeah.... Yeah for some people it doesn't... for some people it doesn't.... So yeah but anyway that's what's been going on with me and that's like why.... Honestly, I don't even remember seeing your email whenever you sent it and I've just been so out of it like really... um.... I think maybe when I'm feeling better I'll tell you more about it but I think things just kind of ended in a bad way and like with going to the ER it just really threw me... for a loop so....and...

KL: Yeah, I know it's really hard to talk about it at first so...

tss: Yeah, so we can probably talk more about it later but um

KL: I'm so sorry that sounds awful.

tss: Yeah so I'm sorry I haven't... I have not... A: I haven't been myself and B: like mentally, I am just like fucking depleted and I just haven't been able to get back to you in a timely manner so I'm really sorry

about that.

KL: No worries at all

tss: Yeah and of course this is part of why my Instagram, like... I even took my website down because I just don't even know right now what's going to happen, like legally and stuff and so I just don't even wanna be tracked or seen online, just like nothing, so that's why I just, I even took... cuz I just um... yeah.... So, I'll tell you more about it once I'm just... feeling a little better.... But things that just shouldn't have been going on were going on and they just really treated me poorly in how things ended, and things just got spiraled in a bad way so.... But I feel like in a way it's good because I've learned a lot... from it... and... I'm out of it so it's... it's good. It'll be good eventually, it just doesn't feel that way right now. So... yeah.

KL: I'm glad you're out of it that's really good

tss: Yeah I am too, I am too. Um, yeah and the insurance...like, once I went to the ER they were like okay you're going to see a

therapist and a psychiatrist and we're going to put you in this intensive inpatient outpatient therapy... to get you to like... it's kind of like group therapy but also group workshop type things where you go for two weeks and it's people who are coming out of a really intense situation and it immediately puts them into intense skills and cognitive behavioral therapy and breathing and stuff to deal with the immediate stress of everything. So, I just started that yesterday, and they also put me in one that is specifically for work stress, so I started that one today. So that's really helped a lot and then working one on one with a therapist and then taking some medication to help... my body right now...um...

KL: That's good, that's good that you have a plan in place for what to do.

tss: Yeah, I don't know if I didn't I don't even know what... yeah... yeah...

KL: So the ER helped you with all that?

tss: They kind of like transitioned me... they were like okay this is.... Cuz I went in from really severe chest tightness but then

they were like this is from stress and blah blah blah, cuz I like whatever... told them things and so then they were like okay, we're scheduling you for these appointments then these people are going to take over from there and figure out how to help you. Yeah so it's been good and I'm really grateful for that, in that regard, otherwise I think I'd be a little bit lost...

KL: Yeah, that's really impressive for an ER...

tss: Yeah, yeah no totally, it really is!

KL: Cuz normally ER's are just... when it comes to mental health they're just... usually just completely useless.

tss: Yeah no they're like tomorrow you're going in to see a therapist and then we're scheduling you, you know, you're going to see a psychiatrist the next day and then those people took over from there.

KL: Wow. That's great.

tss: Yeah cuz you know... actually it it probably also comes down to your doctor

because I was in the ER almost a year before, also for chest tightness, but I didn't put it together that it was from stress from work. Like I was just home sick and I just really wasn't feel well and I started having what I now know was an anxiety attack, I didn't know at the time because I'd never had them before but the doctor at that hospital, and that was in LA, didn't even ask me like, you know, are you under stress, or stuff like that. He was just like, oh you know we like, we tested your heart, cuz that's like what they do when you say you have chest tightness even from anxiety, and he was like everything is fine, nothing's wrong with your heart, but I remember he didn't, he didn't even like create a conversation like, these are other, these are reasons why you could experience it and like you know... so... yeah, um. I don't know it's just... it's just interesting.

KL: Yeah it probably really does depend on the doctor. Because when I went to the ER because of the panic attacks they were just like... they tested everything and they were like well you're perfectly physically healthy, it's just anxiety, here's some xanax, go home. And so... it didn't really help me

that much because I was like... fuck now what do I do.

tss: Yeah! Yeah, yeah... what health insurance do you guys have?

KL: I just have Medi-Cal right now.

tss: Oh, okay. Okay. And at the time you just had that also?

KL: Yeah. So maybe... I mean, they did say you should go to therapy or something but it wasn't.... I had to like, figure it out, on my own.

tss: Yeah and that's so hard to do when you're already compromised, like when you're not fully functioning.

KL: Yeah, I felt like completely incapable of figuring everything out. So it was shitty, but.

tss: Aw. I'm sorry Karolina. I'm sorry you went through that.

KL: I'm sorry that you're going through ittoo, that's terrible. Anxiety is just the

worst, I hate it.

tss: Oh, gosh. Yeah. Yeah. It really is. It really is.

*Pause*

tss: Well... the book looks really good. And I... I can't believe you um... I was wondering when I saw the last version, I think before I read it... I can't remember if it was before I read it or while I read it, I was like, I wonder if she's gonna like, go into this other aspect of things, which now you open the book with?

KL: Right.

tss: So I'm curious about that, because that seems like a really brave step, and also talking about telling your parents and stuff.

KL: Uhuh.

tss: Yeah, how did you, how did you arrive at that? Being able to go there and everything?

KL: Well I have a friend who is a writer

and I asked her to read an earlier version which is the one that you saw, and she had read my thesis, which I don't know if you read that, but um... my thesis is all about my grandfather, and she was saying that this writing, in the state it was previously, she was saying that she felt as though I was really holding back. And that was kind of the feedback I got from a couple other people too so I just really dove into it and decided to... like for the sake of making it a good piece I just needed to... just like... fuck it and let go of all my inhibitions. So that's kind of what I did. And once I allowed myself to do that things just kind of started flowing better. And at certain points I was just not sure if it was even making any sense, but I just kept pushing through anyway, and so... that's how I got to where it is now... um... which, I think it is a lot better for that. I feel better for it.

tss: Oh good, did you feel like in the previous version that you were holding back?

KL: Yeah, and I think... I know it had a lot to do with my mental state that I was in, and the anxiety I was processing, and so I was just trying to avoid thinking about

certain things...

tss: Yeah, like what you could handle or what you were capable of at the time.

KL: Yeah. And then like... we've been in Arizona and staying at my parent's house, it's just like a much slower pace here cuz it's just a small town, so I think being in that environment, speaking of environments, sort of allowed for me to open up more.

tss: Wow.

KL: And feel safer going there.

tss: Oh, wow. That's amazing.

KL: Yeah. So I think it just had a lot to do with those sort of things. And I was just... I just started writing what I was thinking about instead of trying to, I guess, edit before writing or whatever... instead of trying to make sense of it before it was out there I decided to just put it out there and then deal with the aftermath later. And I think that mode of working was more freeing

tss: Yeah absolutely. Absolutely. Wow. That's really amazing. Like... I could definitely feel like it was a brave, and courageous thing to do for the book.

KL: Well, I am glad that it's... that you think it's working.

tss: Yeah... yeah...

*Pause*

tss: I'm sorry, my brain is like not fully operating at the level that it usually does... I'm sorry... but yeah, I really like it. And I really like what you did with the sections.... With the pieces in my section. It made me really sad actually, when I saw the last page...

KL: Oh really?

tss: Not like in a terrible way but in a like more... like I don't know how to say it... but like when you said, "Did you delete your insta?" and that was the last line... for me it was just like that's like... the beginning of a whole other chapter of my life. That moment is doing that. So even

though... it's just interesting because like... the threading between... the transition between when it flips over to the material that I've shared, it like threads like things between you and me, and you've talked about this very intense situation in your life and like... multiple things that you've gone through with your own history, and being a parent, and the loss of your grandmother is kind of like functioning as the central anchor of the plot so to speak of what, of the things... how you circulate around that thought, but with other components of your life... and then like, just on a personal level, then the things between you and me and you asking me that question... to me, it's like the story goes on, or the things keep going but then it's not in the book, if that makes sense. And probably other people won't understand that, or maybe they will because I think sometimes people know like when you delete your Instagram it's usually for a specific reason, or if you go off of it or whatever, you know there's like... it's very intentional but yeah... I don't know.

KL: Well I was thinking, I was kind of... I liked that particular screen shot because it

sort of referred back to earlier in the book where I was talking about the reasons that I deleted my Instagram and um... like stopped listening to the news or paying attention to my peers and so on, so in that way it's sort of like a subtle... like you could subtly read into why you have your deleted yours or something

tss: Yeah, no exactly. Definitely.

KL: Do you think you would want to make that connection more explicit in any way, or are you pretty happy with how your section is at this point?

tss: Um... I feel like it is kind of up to you because I kind of like the way that you've re-edited it, or added in things, so like... I almost wonder if the part that is my name is like... um... like somehow, relates to you... I don't think curated is the right word... or assembled, or maybe I can think about it and let you know, but the idea that you are kind of reconstructing the... it's not necessarily a narrative but it kind of is, cuz it's more like an ephemeral dialogue between you and me, but through social media which is sort of a tertiary space for

us connecting, but then... it's like never in person right? It's through email, then through text, through Instagram, and then you're kind of like reassembling my own personal ephemera, so you're compositing or composing... I gotta... I gotta figure out what the right word is... that... to kind of be.... Like it's like art, you're constructing it in a way that's relative to this piece that you're creating out of the book... like your own writing and your own photographs but then there's like this second section where you've invited me to respond... does this make sense what I'm telling you?

KL: Yeah.

tss: You just have to tell me...

KL: Yeah. I get what you're saying.

tss: So um.... Yeah, but you tell me, do you want more from me, or do you want... cuz I think it's really interesting what you're doing with the content.

KL: Mhmm...

tss: And...

KL: Well I was thinking of, continuing to insert bits of our dialogue, like more screenshots from our texts, and the new post from your new instagram, um... and...

tss: Yeah, whatever you wanna do, I think... do it. And um, then we can just talk about it and look at it together. Because it's also kind of interesting talking with you because you said, um... when you did the first version you weren't really in a good place to go to certain places and then time passed and you could write more, and now it's like... for me in some ways there's also this evolution happening in my own mental health and wellbeing and being able to think and articulate in my life and it's like... going down... it's sadly going down... I don't know how to explain it...

KL: Well, there's kind of like this mirroring going on...

tss: Yeah! That's what I'm trying to get at... you've gone up and I've gone down and it's all kind of there in our correspondence and our communication and stuff.

So maybe you're taking over, you're kind of like filling in the blanks that I'm ... I can't articulate, whether it's through the screenshots you want to put in from our texts or my Instagram, I think that works in an interesting way like on a conceptual level, in terms of all these psychological aspects in terms of what it means to... be... an artist, and how you make work but um... but I also can be more active if you want.. I think it's interesting what you're doing but tell me also what you want out of it because ultimately this is your book and I really want it to feel like something that feels right as a work and so I want to be able to participate and deliver in a way that feels really good for that.

KL: Well um.. one thing... I had this idea like... right before we got on the phone... I was thinking of somehow using this phone conversation so I started recording...

*Both laugh*

KL: Which I know is like.. I'm supposed to ask your permission...

tss: No, no. I don't care Karolina! It's fine...

at what point did you start recording me?

KL: At the very beginning actually... because I had this idea then I was going to text you because I was like, I should ask you for your permission, but then you called so ... I just hit record...

tss: No, it's fine, don't worry.

KL: So I was thinking, because we have these other forms of communication, through email, texting, and so on... none of which are in person, I was thinking a phone conversation could be something kind of interesting to tie it all together...

tss: Yeah

KL: Through either like transcribing the audio or using the audio directly somehow, I'm not really sure... I don't know what you think of that.

tss: Yeah, I think there are definitely pieces worth pulling out of this conversation that could be transcribed... I mean maybe the audio... I don't know how it would be able to exist outside of the book... like obvi-

ously it would have to be some kind of link to some location for people which I'm not opposed to either but maybe that's also like a... maybe that's also a separate work that you and I do together that is about these conversations or something.

KL: Yeah, it could be... it could be a url that people type in if they want to or... like this book will be on the DIS-PLAY website I think as a pdf, but then I was also going to make printed versions if people want them.

tss: Mhmm... so it would be easy for people to click through if they want to is what you're saying.

KL: Yeah for the online one, or there could even be like a little audio bar within the text, or it could be transcribed text... I'm just sort of thinking out loud here but I think it would be kind of interesting to add in more of the raw discussion that happens in conversation, and elevating conversation to a higher level.

tss: Oh, absolutely.

KL: And also, what uou were saying a minute ago about you're going down and I'm coming up reminded me of the meeting at your house for the Meridian exhibition, and how, like I arrived and I had to be driven there because I couldn't drive and I was like super shaky, and I was on xanax...

tss: Yeah... yeah I remember

KL: So it's... it's just really crazy how these mirroring things are happening

tss: I know it's like... it's... yeah. It is. It is.

KL: But it's really related because you asked me to be in that exhibition, so then I thought of you when it came to this project, when I was asked to bring in another artist.

tss: Yeah. Yeah, those are all really good points. Man, I just wanna be like... fuck life... it's crazy, it's crazy. Why can't we just get to be... fine...

KL: Yeah... I know what you mean.

tss: Well... I'm glad that I talked to you to-

night because I don't know if I would have said all the things that I said if I wasn't so out of it and tired and I'm like really tired right now, so maybe the conversation wouldn't have been as good, I don't know.

*Laughing*

KL: Well... it is super raw

tss: Like if I had been feeling more fresh, like oh, I got good sleep and I'm feeling really fine so I'm gonna be really articulate and not talk about my personal stuff like...

KL: Well, you're articulating your personal stuff really well...

tss: Yeah... just not the other stuff... that's not working

KL: Well maybe I will send over the recording over, and maybe you could listen to it, I don't know if you feel uncomfortable or anything or would you want to edit certain things out....

tss: Oh um... maybe don't send it to me now. I think that would not be good.

KL: Okay, yeah. Too soon.

tss: Yeah, for sure. But yeah, do whatever kind of like extracting or transcribing you think is good and if you find a part of the audio that you want to use as the url whether it's just as a strait cut or if you wanna edit some pieces together, cuz I know you said the deadline is at the end of this month which is coming up, so yeah if you have something and you're just like this is for sure what I wanna put on the website, then send me a link to audio, then I can for sure listen to it. I'm just saying I don't think I can sit through our whole conversation again in like the next two days but if you have it as a piece, or part of the work then I can definitely look at it through that lens. Does that make sense?

KL: Yeah definitely. So I will just keep working with the bits of information I have from you, from Instagram and from this recording, and I will send you a new draft and you can tell me what you think.

tss: Do you want me to do other parts? Just tell me what... cuz now I feel like I'm

having you do all the work and I'm getting kind of confused. What can I... what can I do?

KL: Well if you... I think if you um... like if there was any way that you wanted to respond directly to the content that you've seen from me, I think that would be really cool. Like a... cuz I think what DIS-PLAY is looking for, which wasn't really clear to me at first, was they want you to be saying something about my work. And personally, I am taking that kind of lightly, I think it can happen in kind of a really ambiguous way. Like, I don't really like the idea of... like one of the suggestions they had given me initially was that I could ask someone to write about my work, but that is not as interesting to me as trying to have two artists' ways of working sort of side by side, and presenting that, or even, rather than two artist's ways of working separately, having it show how two artists work together through things, which is kind of what I am trying to get at now.

tss: Yeah, that happens a lot already, that artists do that a lot in publications and such, the writing thing. No, I think your

point of view is probably more fruitful actually.

KL: Because we both have somewhat unconventional ways that we have to live as artists so I am trying to think of this book in more unconventional ways as well. Because we aren't the artists who went to Grad school with no baggage and who get to just be like... cool artists. And I think that's actually more interesting in some cases.

tss: Yeah. Ok I will get to work on that... and spend some time reflecting on how or what I would like to say in response to your work, all the writing and everything, the images.

KL: And I think the way that you curated the show at Meridian, even with the title of the show, you wanted to find artists who were making art about life, and not finding artists making work about art or whatever. So that's why I think you are really the perfect artist for this project, because that also describes some of my goals as an artist.

tss: I'm glad... I'm glad you think that be-

cause right now I feel like the worst person for this project, right now. I feel like... so handicapped by what is happening to me and it's really hard because I don't... I really don't feel like myself and that's probably the worst thing... in my opinion that can happen to a person, like...

KL: Yeah, definitely. When I was having panic attacks like every day, I was literally feeling like I was going crazy, like I was thinking, am I going to have to be locked up in a hospital for the rest of my life? And that's a super scary place to be in. But...

tss: Yeah, that's actually interesting that you say that because in this therapy appointment I went to today, she explained just what you said, she said when you experience things like really severe anxiety, it literally makes you feel like you're going crazy, like you're not going crazy but the anxiety makes you think that you are going crazy. I was like, yeah... I feel like I was starting to feel like, am I losing my mind? Like what is happening to me. And I made, I made an effort to like go out and be social because Delbar had this BBQ thing and I was like okay, like it was really hard for me

to decide to go because I felt like it was my first time really going out in public since everything happened, like since going to the emergency room and stuff and just not having the... like the feeling that the panic attack just never really stops... So I'm glad that I went but it definitely was a lot, but we ended up having this really interesting conversation. I don't even remember how we got on this but we were talking about freedom. And people were talking about you know like, oh you know, freedom is about like, you know, you live in a country that you have freedom in, or not, and then like... because of all the... and of course other things like your gender or your ethnicity things like that, how you get to... what levels of freedom you get to experience just because of where you are born and things like that. But I think... I think because of the things that I was going through I was like what about, well freedom is about where you get to be fully yourself and those moments when you're operating outside of any system or constructs or something else's idea of it, that's when you can really have freedom, so maybe it doesn't even really matter where you're living, or, or, what your skin color is,

freedom is maybe, it's possible that maybe freedom is actually a state of mind because I remember a lot of the more traumatic things I went through really didn't... they limited my ability to feel myself because I felt like I had been like... you know, things had been stripped away or whatnot so... even though people probably look at me and say like she's privileged or she looks this or she looks white, even though I'm not even fully white, I'm half Mexican, or this or that, people really have no idea what your personal story is or your history is and how that can really limit your ability to feel like yourself because certain things have been taken away from you. And that like... that's really when you feel like you're living, but you're dying at the same time. So yeah, it was interesting because what is freedom really? Like if the feeling of it is really being who you want to be and who you believe you are, then we should really take a closer look at what are the things that really take that away from someone. And it can be a psychological situation, it's not just a law or your skin color.

KL: Yeah like you were saying a particular environment can be really stifling and

cause you to lose even the ability to feel. And I think that has huge repercussions because feelings don't just go away, they just go into the crevices of your mind and then they come up in the most unlikely times, sometimes.

tss: Yeah, for sure. And it's like you're being held hostage or something.

KL: Yeah and I think that is one of the worst parts about mental struggles. When you lose the connection, like when you can't even trust in your own reality anymore, like that's... that's the most close close to home something can get, because it's your own self and your own body and usually you can work through things if you have that intact, you know? And that was what was so scary to me about feeling like I was losing it because it wouldn't matter where I was or who I had been previously if I can't even ground myself anymore or whatever, you know.

tss: Yeah definitely.

KL: Well I know, I really do think that what... that you're an important person

for this project even if you don't feel like it right now. Like even just this conversation is so important for the world to have.

tss: Yeah, it for sure is. Yeah. I'm sorry I can't be like more present.

KL: Don't worry about it. Talk about being present, I am like in the middle of nowhere right now.

tss: That's being somewhere!

KL: But not for anyone else.

tss: That sounds really amazing right now, like a road trip sounds so nice, just getting out of whatever world this is that I'm in right now. Like a road trip... I don't know if that would help. But I am so grateful to be a part of this, so I hope I can find a way to wrap it up, my participation, in a good way, so I will... I will definitely put some good thinking into what I can do.

KL: Okay cool.

tss: Yeah. Yeah for sure.

KL: Okay, well keep me posted and seriously feel free to call me anytime because I want to be there if I can for you.

tss: Bye.

tss: You are sweet. I definitely will. I for sure will. I will reach out when I have something and if you want to send me audio or whatever.

KL: Okay well I hope you can sleep well tonight.

tss: Thank you, are you sleeping fine?

KL: Yeah, I'm... I'm sleeping fine. It's definitely getting a lot better than it used to be.

tss: Cool. Alright sweetie well it's really good to just talk to you and hear your voice. Today is... Tuesday...? We can plan to just talk this weekend maybe? Do you wanna try to talk on Sunday, like a follow up call?

KL: Sure.

tss: Okay good to talk to you.

KL: Yeah, yeah. You too. Bye.



Dear Mom,

Happy Mothers day. Today we are going to celebrate some of the most special moms in the world, like you! Thank you for always being there, bring my frown to a smile, making me so happy. I am sorry sometimes I can't be a good daughter, well I'm a teenager what can you expect! I love you so much, I am forever grateful to be blessed with such a caring loving mom. I knew it was the right choice to make, when I picked you from the stars... You may not realize it, but you mean the world to me! Not a day goes by where I don't think about you. I love you with all my heart, forever and always

- A true Violet ♡

I tried to write you a letter in my head.  
I tried to create a map of all the ways of  
all the things I am feeling. I pulled out  
the paper and stared at the diagram. The  
things I feel don't exist in a format.  
The things I feel breathe inside me.  
It seems at times I fully realize the  
things I push out to keep moving forward  
each day, so I can be resilient for you  
and for Atilia. ~~I feel like it had felt~~  
~~like like~~ The things that I have affected  
me and that I really want to talk  
about in my art as a result, are  
the elements, injuries, wounds, suffering  
that exist as barriers, forces, concentrations  
on areas within parts of our whole that  
would function more articulately if they  
were bruises on our face, cuts on our  
arms, ~~hands~~ ~~around~~ ~~our~~ ~~necks~~.  
~~hands~~ ~~tightened~~ around our throats  
depriving us of air, making us white then  
blue then lifeless. Yes that's about  
right. Lifeless.

vj jf mlover Andrea lo  
02/04/2012 22:38

for Andrea:  
love is joy  
joy is laughte

laughte ris jokes  
jokes  
a

are books  
r 's letters ~~is~~ writing

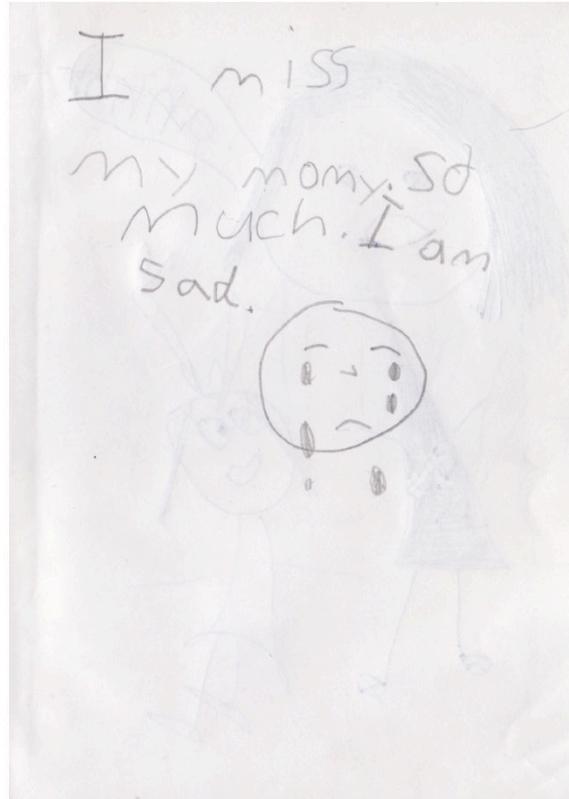
Process of deletion [subtractive; methods of reduction]

as in reverse of addition: The things we seek vs.  
the things we seek to remove, conscious, unconscious,  
present, past, now, one the verge, coming in

feeling that closeness of a moment and pushing  
it away, as far away as it can go [blank, void, null,  
unfelt, unintentional  
by + from

The act of pushing away the act  
of addition, the act of removing  
the act of pushing







The absence of time ~~is~~  
as a long passage or  
movement through as a  
response ~~to~~ long term  
responses vs. long term effects  
How are they different?  
How are they the same?

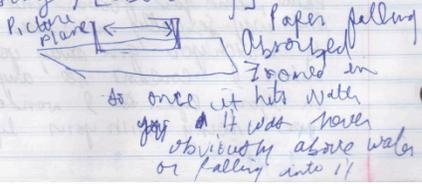


About time / passage [as stillness]  
→ movement  
at once

The things we would do differently  
that we wake up and think about  
each morning.  
The things that keep us up at night.

Replay / On repeat / Never sleeping

Erasing / [Absorbing]



The End.

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Karolina Lavergne is an video artist and writer. She received her MFA from ArtCenter College of Design in December 2017. She sources her life as material, blurring the line between fiction and autobiography. For this end, the camera provides a means of looking back at footage and photographs under the reexamination as a case study and realist portraiture. In her writing she works similarly, editing autobiographical, intuitive text, through cuts and arrangement. Both the camera and written word function as a means of providing distance and disconnectedness in order to become material for work.



