

MYOSITIS

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Suddenly the floor. Your hip slamming into your hip. You are on your hallway. No, you are in your hallway. With the fleshy ringlets of rug against your back. You should gather yourself and tend to your arm where that tufty graze of pinked skin now runs the length, call your wife. People renew themselves after an injury. Some people say, *Before the injury I was not the total of person I am now.*

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There is nothing lovelier than this angle of this wall against this wall, than the wood gleam of the chest with its creamed windows and frost leaves etched in tendrils, you rented a U-Haul for it bullying your way through the skinny streets.

She has wrung out all of her problems. She's worked on it, she's earned it. One of the chest drawers is filled with assorted buttons and safety pins and light, non-industrial house tools. Another one is stuffed with flat rectangles of green and green and white linen napkins.

What have you earned?

Melanie is the one who was coming every day. She was coming every day until the one day you waited three hours past the end of office hours and then she didn't come anymore after that. She was the first one to lose interest first.

An arc of dish, sun-blazed, and a matching vase housing a languishing spray of goldenrods. The fat bottom drawer has restaurant menus and magazine subscription pull-outs and old catalogs for city recreational services. All the paper is salmon pink, sky blue, cornmeal yellow. The knobs are smooth perfect ovals of wood.

Is your mind going easy on you?

There was a string of others. Then a last one, finally. What is the light doing outside?

During the winter classes the rain jumpy against the window you determined on your book pages because that was just like how you imagined it. Scholarly, with the rain. At the crook of the wall the thin relief of sagging paint. So you unstacked your books that you'd stacked to make room on the desk and you tucked the soiled bands of elastic back in the back of the top drawer and called it a day. Did you repeat yourself this morning at breakfast when you asked about the car? Your wife didn't say anything. That's a small gesture of softness you hope to remember. Press up with your hand and lean against the wall.

A far cry from the rainy spring when you and Melanie drank vending machine coffees on the library cement and watched freshmen and sophomores with their groggy designs on life. The seniors you joked seemed disoriented with purpose. Professors, some of them were in their thirties.

Out of the window a narrow gray slip of the Hudson. If you knew how to keep the interest of women you'd be a millionaire.

Old people fall. Old people fall and then parts that were once reparable are irreparable. Are you prepared? Do you know how to make coins disappear? Just out of sight the woman in the painting above the couch places her hand it melts into the blur of her lover's blouse.

The elbow is functioning, shoring your head, the bow of wrist tendons into a

curve. The doctor has referred you to government care. Her wrists smell bronzy when the bracelets come off, your fingers are working, too.

Toulouse-Lautrec had an adult-sized body on child-sized legs. How did he do it? He never fucked a woman. At least you've fucked a lot of women. You've told women to crawl across the floor on their hands and knees and they've done it and they've liked it. There is a small trough of bent pansies by the window propped up in neat little mounds of dirt that your wife packs with her miniature shovel each morning before she goes to work and the dog runs around in confused circles.

But then there was that day she didn't come. Not with her mini-skirt. Not with her extra pounds. Some man has got it better than you are.

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Toulouse-Lautrec had the balls to paint lesbian scenes but so often one of them looked like a man. The rain cracks against your study window and your study desk is fusty with papers and books but it isn't the same: those rooms in a row humming with other thinkers. Your brain calls on your ankle to crank, pivot, collapse, and then somewhere a missed step. Press on both elbows and come to your ass. The flare of the yellow and brown sweet gum out of the window. So, your ankle is the first one to lose interest.

Their invitations their tongues against the corners of their mouths. Bark like a dog. That's right.

Will you know when you're breathing your last breath? You reach into your chest and find your lungs still and unliving. Find mist not matter. Find the energy to come to a stand.

Your ankle could crunch to an angle like the sheath of a leaf but it seems to do just fine.

You seem to be doing just fine.