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UNTITLED

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts
at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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M.F.A. Virginia Commonwealth University, 2018
B.F.A University of Minnesota, 2011

Thesis Advisor: Cara Benedetto
Assistant Professor, Painting and Printmaking

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Abstract

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By Daliya Anthony Jokondo, MFA

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My practice is concerned with the activation of fragmentation, concealment and evasiveness as practical tools for surviving (the danger of visibility when positioned in the margins) while moving or engaging with oppressive power structures. The aforementioned appear in my practice as complete forms of erasure, adornment and costuming, in addition to language play. My thesis' concern is the desire to speak the autobiographical in relation to generational trauma. Herein lives the voices of three generations of survivors.

Preface

The autobiographical details of my birth are simple. I was born in South Sudan, my dad was an English and History teacher. When I was about two years old, he moved my family and I to the Sultanate of Oman. There we lived until his teaching contract was no longer renewed, and under circumstances that I was too young to concern myself with, we had to leave the country.

At the time, South Sudan was going through its second civil war, my family and I could not return and conceivably survive. So, when I was almost 8 years old, we declared our statuses as refugees and were able to successfully enter Uganda. There we awaited passage to the United States, Canada, or Australia. We were refused aid because of political reasons associated with my father's status in South Sudan. We miraculously managed, and because we persevered, just after my tenth birthday, we were granted asylum to the United States. Minneapolis, Minnesota became my new home.

That is the shortened version of events. It barely fills a page.

My father was a politician. He raised us with a full grasp of the history of our people and our resistance movement known as the Southern People Liberation Army (SPLA) or the Southern People Liberation Movement (SPLM). John Garang was our Father and savior; South Sudan, our homeland.

My parent's house, while in the Sultanate, was always full of bodies huddled together behind closed doors. I grew up with secrecy being monumental to survival.

I would accidentally repeat names and be reprimanded. When the names of our dead came, I always felt responsible. I developed a paranoia attached to anything that is related to my national and political identity. Eventually this paranoia spilled beyond blood lines and came to associate itself with my perceived gender and sexuality.

My father taught me how to play along and so did my mother. I was to be strong, masked and always a step ahead. Our silence was always paramount to our collective survival. I could only speak if I was able to be evasive. If I could not, then I shouldn't at all.

Yet, the desire to speak is one that has plagued me. So, I compulsively speak and then redact in fear of being captured by a threat that seems to be, beyond the world of my own making, to have been long been neutralized.

South Sudan gained independence July 9th 2011. For the first time, both of my parents went home. My father would go back home soon after and for good, giving up his residency in the US, to lend his services to a newly minted nation rife with uncertainty and instability.

I was in my early twenties at this point and my practice at the time was obsessed with being uprooted, dislocated, displaced, disoriented. I had acquired a small undergraduate grant where I attempted to capture living oral traditions of survivors of my immediate family in South Sudan. The project came short, because to my surprise at the time, when my mother attempted to speak and question friends regarding seemingly benign subject matters pertaining to our own folktales (hares, rabbits, spiders), they would refuse to speak. It wasn't because of my mother precisely, their worries was that my recording of anything at all in any official manner would result in danger. The war was over, but safety and trust was something that at the time remained irreparably shattered.

I have a vague record of how many cousins, aunts and uncles I have left alive, but I can count on my mother for names and timid identification of faces in old worn out photos, yet it is best that I forget them. There are many that are rumored as living and likewise with the dead, because no one has forgotten, and very few have spoken, and they, I, we are still in a state of survival, the war has never ended.

My creative practice is concerned with fragmentation, concealment and evasiveness as practical tools for surviving (the danger of visibility when positioned in the margins) while moving or engaging with oppressive and silencing power structures; identified here as racialized and gendered pain that is a product of a war on blackness by white colonialism and the attempted erasure of my people by the regime that was in power in Sudan (pre South Sudan gaining independence). The aforementioned appear in my work at times as complete forms of erasure, adornment and costuming, and language play.

Furthermore, transference of experiences through oral tradition and memorialization of the dead are direct points of interest for me. I have come to associate those two as tools in the transference of trauma and the creation of the psychology behind my own survivor's guilt. This is not to denounce the two activities, but I am invested in the ways that they have imprinted my psyche. So, much so that my pain unfolds and extends three, generations wide---and within me we all come and go---all in timid horror because I am still not sure that this privilege of being alive is not also as redactable as what follows.

S.he



We always come back

See my mother got her sight like so and I am sitting on the floor when she first told me this, she grew larger and larger until I didn't know where to look but directly into her left eye until I got lost in it

She said: it was swift the way it scooped me in my sleep, I had been sick for a while and I couldn't talk about it without the fear of passing it on. I had to keep it tight to my own body this *sickness*, so I washed myself clean with water boiling so hot I still have some tender spots when night comes. I just knew it was almost time when I covered myself up in all white. I was 16. I passed for 4 days

I am saying, she said: the whole time your grandmother held my hand. My eyes never closed and that's exactly how my mother knew I was coming back and on the 5th day, I did. But when I came back, it was with three guardians because I had looked when I shouldn't have, spoke when I shouldn't have

The Space in Between

I mean I like “black” mint “tea”, “sugar” cookies and dried “dates”. When it’s summer, I like my “tea” “hot” with a lot of cinnamon. When “I am” “feeling” “down” it’s ginger. Because “I” like “elevators” and “escalators”, and the last time “I” “rode” a “roller/coaster.” It was and is sweet. When it hurts, it’s just hot lemon water. because I swear on seeing my own “birth”, I like “rose” water and looking at “gaps” that I can “seal” shut. I “can’t” look-to-the-edge of “mine” “eye” too long because I might fall backward. When I “drop” “something”, my “back” “shoots up” because if I look between “my” legs and “just” to the edge, I will “fall” forward. We really don’t care when it happens because it gives “us” something to talk about. It’s always because and “be” ‘cause and because and “so” and “so”. As when it’s when it’s always when. So I don’t look at the back of people’s “heads” too Long and if it’s too dark we don’t try to draw it out. Sometimes when we are “off”, it “cuffs/cups” “our” “ears” and so for that I take my drink “straight” and my “meat” blood red. When it’s “being” “funny” it strings my “nerves” but because I have “mastered” this “twist” i just “grin” back and “bare”. I don’t like to smile because my “teeth” “were” pulled which “means” I don’t have the “bite” to “come” back, but “she” likes to “play” along and to hell with what they “want” because it’s “got” what it “wants” and now we are all going to get what we want

First Love

I am not one to chase away those that stumble their way in. So we lived like this from the summer of that year to right this minute and pretty soon I started noting things like how he's always looking for a way back in, how his knuckles were made out of chicken bone and rubber bands so he always had to drag them just to make a point how despite all this his body was cut to break you in half

He holds me in a death grip that leaves grooves for me to fill in with tea and milk, honey and wax, bread and meat and when I am really nice he lets me sip some wine to take off the edge

During the day he mostly locked me in, he never said why but we both knew it was for my own good, so I never tried to get out. Soon enough he didn't even pull the door shut but I stayed put and passed time trying not to think about why he had to go out so often

I wondered if there were other locked doors

I wonder if there are some open doors

I wondered who's behind them

And we wondered if they are as far behind as I am

I know you never asked why I didn't just go out the window but I will tell you anyway

the real problem is going out the window would be bad and untidy in a way that will show no one anything that I set out to show and to be clear I have fallen before and I know the point of impact below will betray me

besides, between the door and the windows, I have the ceiling and I am mentioning this because sometimes I did get lonesome

because the walls never talked like people said they could there was a lot of

quiet

When the ceiling started having something to say, it always got real close to do it and I didn't care much for the way it insisted to always flatten the mood out of me

and I certainly got tired of my limbs going numb and besides all it ever said was shit I didn't want to hear

such as what's passing me by

what's passing me over

and what's passing me down.

it went on for a long time like this with that damn ceiling so that there was always so little time to piss and shit or even have a bite

just to push the ceiling off of me was always a beating I saw coming, but i made sure it didn't leave any marks that I could feel

I was never a good enough liar so I will say that sometimes I am almost glad just for having something to do.

so I did all that in the evening just before he came back and that kept the shame and guilt of it all at bay. I make my bed and make up my face but pretend it was all done like that hours before and really for some other reason. I didn't like him to think he was here to stay I lay down and push the covers all the way down and I wait for the sun to go down. The ceiling just looks down on me on top of it all but knows best that now is not it's time and just like that I hear his knuckles dragging up the stairs leading to my apt and i know he's here. I close my eyes tight but I can still see through them. He pulls the covers back up to my waist because I was raised Catholic and he never liked to see the full picture.

I wonder why he never mentions my sense of humor

The whites of his eyes always turned bright and right at night and I figured it was for him to be able to see exactly what I am up to especially when I slip off to god knows where. We never really talked but all I really needed to know is that there's always an itch that he needed to scratch. So he doesn't take much time to pull himself together and without much of a fight or even a consideration he cracks open my chest.

I have grown accustomed to the thud that my skin, bones and flesh when my breasts fall to the side. My blood dried up years ago so my chest is more rusty than anything. My arms and legs don't do a single thing but be what they are. I think about cavities and how they are made and I think of this hole that's now spread and opened up to the whole room to see.

For your information he is always courteous just right to the point that it's good enough by w a r m i n g his hands with b a b y o i l because it's really that simple.

Once inside he would knead the flesh with his feet, moving about things that I thought I needed to stay put where they are

but now they all just seem really off center so that I am always leaning on something to keep the peace

Its because of this peace-keeping that I settle for him knowing best, and just then he'd curl into a ball and settles where my heart is or was supposed to be

My chest closes back up and I get an hour or so to figure out exactly how I am going to get out of this mess

Fraying at the edges

I have learned early on to suppress childish things, like the rage that made me fight tooth and nail to stay put on this earth. My mom loved telling me all the ways that I shouldn't have survived, almost like she's testing the limits of my imagination. She told me about my aunt pushing her down a flight of stairs while she was still pregnant with me, at the time she was telling me this, she was holding me by the ankles upside down and swinging me up in the air and at the time I believed it was to mimic my entry into this world. Or something like that.

My mother went through phases and whenever she had to go on one of her trips, she took a piece of me with her. The top of my right foot, a handful of my teeth, pieces of my soul was like an ever expanding real estate, and when she ran out of parts she started on my love and the void there is as wide as what I could have been. I can still smell the way my bedroom breathed right through me and right at the heels of that I still get a sensation that can only be felt if you've ever heard an ant scratch at something real close, except this is my mother's eyes pressing up and down all through the walls searching for the daughter she had put her all into.

Situated just like that, she tells me and the story shoots right through me, about the time she was high up on a tree. In this version she's dead and crossed over waiting for my great grandmother to bring her home on the other side. When out in the distance, she sees the beginnings of a figure approaching. It's a man and it's also a woman, they are sharing only one torso and one leg, they somehow managed to hobble in this fashion. The closer they came the more frightened my mother grew. The story ends with her fear giving her away and to survive she had to make a sacrifice. I would tell you what it was if it wasn't so abundantly clear.

When I was born, I came out wrong, this was sure. I came out feet first and made a break for it, and rumor had it that I was heading for the ocean because I couldn't breathe, and that's as far as the dirt I was made of was concerned. My eyes never fully closed when I went to sleep and followed my mother around the room and she swore on her favorite rosary that I growled and smirked when I smelled her fear. So much so that she couldn't breast feed me and I started to wither away and she hoped that I would just make it all easy and hurry up. But I hung on even tighter. So, when they had to decide it was already too late, so they just put down boy and later on put down girl. And later on remembered to add a date of birth. When you aren't supposed to live, everyday starts to feel like a sell by and expiration date rolled in one. So i started throwing punches to counter the kind of soft inside that made me feel like everything was out to get me because and again I emphasis, I am on borrowed time. And when you are in between everything is as clear to you, and that is that it only comes in black and white. In Life and in death. And so far I have done more death than I have touched life.

So far I haven't mentioned my father † but that's not for lacking of trying. He was someone who worked his heroics and that's exactly how I am and when I am out of here, I will see him again and that's that.

Parted at Seven

My death comes whenever I try to fill this void that's only meant for my mother to fill since she put it there and all. To make you stronger, she had said once and never repeated and we have been in a state of silence since.

The first time stuck with me the most, I don't think I was split all the way open then because when I came to, I wasn't as emptied out as I felt. Some things were still where they were supposed to be and some where it wasn't.

I simply made do. I put my age at this point at 7 because I like the way it looks to have made it that far. It's also the age where things start to make some type of sense, in terms of how language comes to us and what memories take root and which one take off running.

People say you start seeing things when you are dying and I am about to tell you exactly what I saw and nothing more. I have to start out with the white of his eyes and the whites of his teeth, all wrapped in white and perched up on top of the stairs. I couldn't tell where his darkness began and where the light failed to touch what would have given him form. For this I am somewhat thankful.

When I think of sight, on top of the white I think of black smoke and fire red where the black of the eyes should've been. I think of the cigarette stains up close, I think of what stays up with me when my demons come pressing in on from the ceiling mostly.

I remember the taste and the way I can best talk about this is the way I can't look at cat fish for too long, because of the way their bodies implied what I didn't want to comprehend or come clean with.

I can only come close if I am to think of snakes that are too knowing when they rub up against you.

It Follows

It's 3 am and sure enough he's standing right where he always is. I know they are a he because of the way the sharp ends of his fedora stood up and out to the edge. And if you want more proof, he also had wide, square shoulders that were equally sharp and also stood up and out to the edge. I call him the hangman because I like how the sound of it made the roof of my mouth hum when my tongue makes contact.

It makes me think of bees, especially when they are falling asleep and they turn their nagging down a notch. You have to say it to believe it. I don't know when he showed up exactly but it was around the time everything was going to shit and it was right on time at that too. Making sure he is actually there is a ritual I practice just to be certain those marbles up in here aren't as loose as I am starting to suspect them to be.

First I make sure I blink a couple of times cuz usually this can work like an etch-a-sketch, so that if what you think you are seeing is still there after you've done the shaking, then it's probably closer to some kind of reality.... at least for that time being.

Sometime I think about how as a child I played hide and seek with my father, in one of those odd occasions where our presence was cemented in a way that he couldn't escape, I also remember my dislike of this game because it was abrupt, indefinite and always left me feeling just a little bit more off Center with every go. My dad would go around the corner and I'd follow behind after counting to ten but he was never there and never came back, and I never went to look because the terms of the game were never clear and in this unclarity the roots of my distrust of what I am seeing or not seeing, can and cannot see were born.

And just like that we never discussed how the game ended or if it ever did. So In what feels like a leap of faith, I step away, and keep stepping and soon I am out of the room all together. I never know how long I have to wait before we, he and I, can resume this routine. I somehow figure the terms for him are as clear as they are to me. So I just count to ten and sneak my way back to the window.

He's still there.

I get the notion that he's crying, weeping even or maybe screaming, but I can't hear any of it not that I am sure I want to. He barely ever moves but I feel him in my chest in a way that's too familiar and for some effect on perspective. So we both just stand there and watch each other and suddenly I am crying too and have to lay down before this screaming inside of me starts alerting the neighbors, as in people who always seem to be around, pointing at me with eyes that are in contempt of something they can't figure out so they've picked me to point at. I slip into bed feeling kind of exposed and deserving of something but not sure what, but I trust this fully anyway, and you could say this mirrors something off centered in me and to that I will agree without doubt.

I roll towards the middle, face down, my arm tucked into my sides but I can still see him out there trying to figure out a way to make it in. I know he sees the front door of my apartment building and I hope no one chooses to come home right this minute, I know for a fact that all he needs is the space of a few seconds to slip right in. I don't question what has kept him off for so long but I do question the security of this very moment.

I try to find comfort that even if he slipped right in, he won't be able to come in through my front door, at least not tonight, cuz I had made sure it was locked and I know this because I checked at least 7 times.

It's written right here in my notes in case the misremembering starts on its loop. And as a last suggestion, maybe I could barricade my bedroom door with my bed. I check my water supply and guess that I can stay in here for at least a few more days, no one will notice until I figure this whole thing out.

Untitled (S.he)

Up to this point, I have lived a life where being able to see without being seen was monumental to continued survival. In my case surviving meant that I had to fragment, and again, not at all in the way you would think. I just don't have the time.

You see, she's always there right at the edge, I can only see her from the very corner of my right eye. You can't move the eye itself you see, you have to look ahead and expand beyond what you can see and push that energy to the right, because that's where she always sat (to the right), and as far I could push my sight without her seeing me turning on her, I could see her doing just the same. Her only give away being her head tilt.

It's that tilt that still reaches right to me and it sparks something that feels like fear as tied to reverence. She doesn't want me to say as much as I have been saying and to bypass that I tried to keep writing in circles and sometimes zigzags but only if I make sure I tie all the loose ends, and maybe someday I will get closer to the truth.

But for now, I will talk about how every time I undress I can feel her eyes fill up the walls and ceilings of my bedroom an act that's only made possible because my breath catches whenever she's near. My salvation comes in the fact that I never went ahead and chopped off my tits. Instead I cut off my hair and sometimes I wonder if that's what finally did it.

My brush with a very well constructed and nurtured reality have taught me that such thinking is ill sided, and I would raise it to “crazy” or even “insane,” just to keep it real and in addition, both of us agree that in the official timeline, I had cut my hair after his death. I cringe when I think it was done in “mourning” and its not at all what you think, I just don’t have the time to address this further. It is important to make it clear here that there’s two of us in this mess. She is the one that everyone sees and I do a lot for her because she’s what keeps us safe. This is something we have both agreed on years ago when the split happened.

My we does not include you, and when I speak of us, I am speaking strictly of me, and when I speak of me, I am speaking of those within me. It’s not often that I am looking outward enough to make universal statements and whenever I do, I am just playing along.

Playing along is what I do best because I was born feet first, eyes wide open, and took off running towards the ocean. In my dreams, the sea is always somewhere ahead, the dirt road I am on is blood red and soft and I compare it to flour, I know that because I can taste the copper and clay, I don’t have to try hard to smell it right this second, on the left and on the right I am blocked in with brick houses painted white, the windows are pitch black and vacant, I can hear the ocean in my ears roar and soon it tickles and now there are bees trying to make their way out. I don’t mind any of this, I just need to make it to the ocean. The faster I ran the wider my leaps and soon I am flying and just like that someone grabs me by the ankles and pulls me back.

My mother said my eyes were wide open and looked right through her and towards someone she could never see, so I had to learn to be more specific and stick with just the one “I.” But that’s a kind of lying that I am tired of even if it’s the truth that’s accepted.

I know they are not talking to me when people say she but I respond anyway because that’s just the way things are and I can’t be selfish and correct people when there are two lives at stake. Sometimes she asks me if I feel like a fraud (as she is convinced that she’s mastered authenticity) but I tell her that I really don’t mind being a mouth piece and that the correct word she should have use is “imposter.” Closer to a truth is sometimes we both get confused as who’s saying what but we both resist this flattening.

Unlike me, she’s able to go around town, her play along looks much different than the type I would allow if I could come out. She knew her perceived gender was her greatest strength and she weaponized it. So, whenever I retreated she put on the best she could and went out fists first. She made sure I didn’t spill over and ruin what we have carefully cultivated over the years. We were to remember that we were always in flight and that any resting grounds were to be approached with immediate instability. We were to abandon any sense of self that is not of immediate recognition by those who stitched us together from their weakest parts and that alone for me was a test in endurance. We couldn’t directly name our tyranny but found survival in adopting their tactics and in this we achieved a conquering that started to look like an arithmetic in aging.

Fight or be fought, fight or be fought fight or be fought was her anthem and I didn't blame her, she took some of the worst hits for me and I wasn't ready to see what my coming out will look like because really I have yet to take an actual punch to my face. I don't know who set the precedence but she always took the impact and I always took the scars when she had to retreat.

I am a sucker for second chances and that has always been my weakness, until finally she had to grab me by the shoulders and get real close in a way that I worried was going to end me and said "second chances are hand ts you can not afford." And I have internalized this ever since because I blame myself for what finally broke her in half.

Two rules I have been real good at, in a "look at me go" kind of way, has always been a mindful keeping of a grave state of mind which was the closest you could get to what I perceive as the weakness in this union (but she insists its a strength). While I waxed my shame, she turned all her fantasies into strategies. I always stayed a step ahead but it was she who had a complete exit plan. I fell in love once and that sent us to the edge and she brought us back by adding that from here on all our relational transactions will be monetized.

The rules grew and grew and I always felt it was because of something I fucked up especially in regards to memory. Between the two of us eventually the lines get blurred and I forget who's turn it is and in those moments things just comes tumbling out because I have always been the trusting one and then she has to come along and start unraveling just to get us through the mess I put us in.

I talk about memory, but I want to talk about memory as hauntings, yet I also think of memory as shared information and this is where the gaps happen. Here, I am talking about when she starts withholding information from me and we have to fight our way into a truce because this body is all we have.

“What will you even look like if I let you out,” was a routine taunt that set me spiraling. Look, you have to understand that I love her dearly but there are moments where this love starts looking like the tyrant we are supposed to be fighting. She knows I don't have an answer for this and this is why she asks me this very thing and sometimes it feels like a slur but I know she's actually as concerned as I am and this is why I can't come out fully the way I want to be seen.

Instead I come out in tangles, in binds, and in circles because without her I have to be held together with ribbons, twine, yarn and duct tape. It's not about covering up but a drawing in, and it's not just about being held together but also a holding on and it's not just about keeping it all in but really about keeping out what's not supposed to be there.

Just Right

How she got out was in what he made her cook as many times as he wanted her to until he felt it was right

so that morning she got up and the thing you see about it is that
when she add that shine to it he didn't even know what hit him
until he finally freed up her body
from his binding and murdering
nonsense

Play it until it's just right

She cleaned his house and by that I mean she did his dishes, she scrubbed his underwear, she ironed his business shirt, and buffed his tidy shoes and rolled his *I mean it tie* and she cooked his meat just right especially when it was that scheduled night because he made her believe that's when her turn will finally come. She treated his cold and mopped up his vomit, she didn't ask about the blood stains and never asked why he was late. She just did what she was passed on to do but deep inside she felt wrong in the way her hips sometimes swung and wished her hands were bigger especially when he grabbed it wrong. And her breasts hung too low and spread in a way that felt her opened up for his eyes to see right through her in a way she felt taken for and besides this body felt all wrong but she knew this is what life is supposed to be, so she just took him all in and sounded just right because his ego was what centered her whole world, but the truth is she felt nothing.

Sight

Even though she told me not to, I found myself telling him about what I see when I let my guard down. She was worried about labels and certain truths being lost in translation. But I was feeling the thing she warned me about and that is a deep seated loneliness as the price to pay for a silence that is needed to survive. I ask her what does it mean to be alive if no one actually sees you? And is this invisibility not the certain death that we are purportedly in flight from?

I told him that I can't stare too long at anything because it will start trying to tell me what it shouldn't and then I will have to see what I can't explain beyond what it is

I told him about the face on the metal that makes up the tap in our bathroom sink and how it winks at me. Sometimes it's on the left and sometimes it's on the right, I call it he but I refuse to give him voice even though it's all he really wants. That's what that winking means. I just hurry up and brush my teeth and pretend that it's just the reflection of the towel hanging over the sink to the right side that's playing tricks on my eyes

I told him that sometimes when wires get crossed I don't recognize my own face. We used to lay out who's going out for the day the night before but lately we've been hangin by the skin of our teeth and sometimes she'd run out the door in my own clothes and sometimes I make appearances with her unwashed face, eyelids pressed in glitter as it makes my eyes look more awake, she always said but I thought it made her look a little cracked around the edges

I told him about the third voice that we haven't figured out yet and the things we made to keep it at bay. He just nodded along trying to understand but I could see he was

really trying to understand

I plowed ahead anyway because there's a man outside my window who hasn't let go since last July, a woman told me the other day how I was going to go and that is in flames and I was so busy being on fire that I didn't catch the part that she was on my tv screen and not next to me like I knew she was. And then there's the gunfire that hasn't stopped since before I was born that rattles around in my head like marbles in a tin can but what really keeps me up is the nightly visitations from my passed on father and all the ways I have let him down even though I know this is not true.

(I know this thing is really not my father)

Now I could be mistaken about this new will to let go because there was a week there where both of us were gone and “I” wasn’t sure who was in charge but the gaps have been filling in here because there are things I can’t name that sit right on top of my chest slowly pushing life out of me and lately I have been trying to help it along and this is all I am allowed to say on the matter of sight

A high tolerance

I have a high tolerance when it comes to pain and this came to me as a surprise because when you are being stretched constantly you just kind of start adjusting so when you say in a scale of 1-10 I really do think it's hilarious because I wanna ask COMPARED TO WHAT so instead I made a list and

it goes like

the time

My teeth were pulled when I was too young to pull away but too old to forget so I remember the way it felt like someone took a hammer to my face

so

I can't stand the sound of bones breaking but I love going to the dentist because it still feels like the kind of thing I deserve because when you have a monster in your hands what you do is you take out its teeth

(Because there's a hunger that keeps me up at night and it starts out like a tug that spreads into rolling waves of something trying to get out. It comes and it goes like it pleases because nothing I have tried like drinking or smoking or laying down and fucking or just waiting can make it stop)

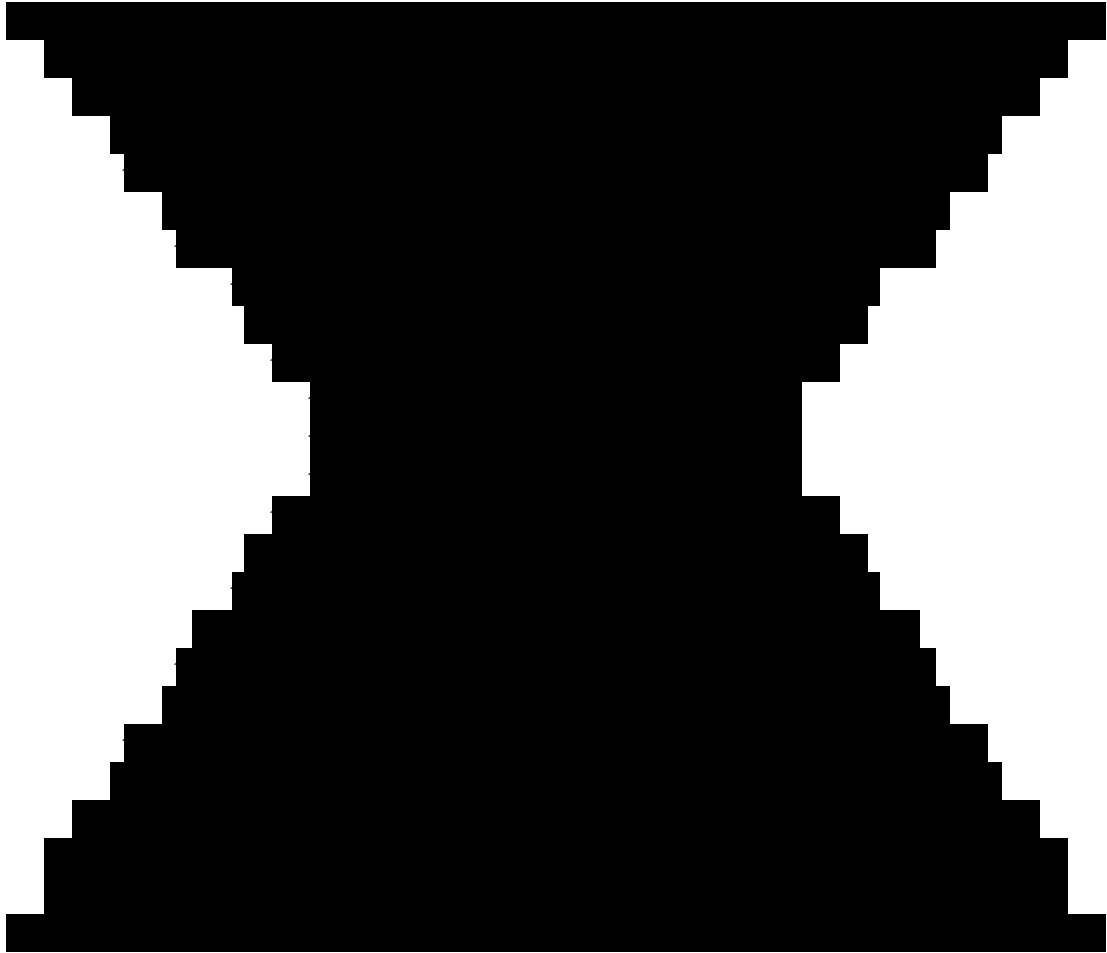
On the thing itself: so I just let it sit right up top like a ring a ring around like that thing around my neck

Or like the time he struck me right in the you know what and I didn't even flinch or leave because everything else has already been done

(Sometimes I can't breathe and I am starting to welcome it in the way that it makes me see my own birth and so maybe leaving isn't so bad after all if it means believing in second chances)

And in second chances I think of that time time he broke my will to be and how I felt thankful after

and Now look at me spread just right



Doing splits

The first time I bled

I thought I was being punished
for letting my split be opened-a-part

It came out thick like bits of flesh

It came out brown-bright-red,

black marooned-strung-out-of-her-I

tried to wipe this point clean by taking up post for just a little while so that we could live

Head on



(applied directly)

