

songs for dead girls

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Zombie Girl takes a bath and wrings out her hair. Zombie Girl draws a heart on the mirror, imagines tiny pink candies melting on her tongue. Imagines lilies in a vase, but nothing appeases the tight knot in her throat where the words drain out. The surface of things as she touches them waver and shifts, but the stained porcelain dulls in the florescent glow, the flicker of her eyelids flipping open and shut. Zombie Girl inhabits the body, but the body inhabits her like ghost in a house, a host of sins gathering in the sink. Zombie Girl eats her heart out every night, but every night, the ghost clamors the body into the water. And every night, she drowns.

Zombie Girl writes down her name. Writes a letter to her congressman. A classified ad. *Dead Girl seeking. Dead Girl seeping through her days.* Zombie Girl makes a chalk drawing of her former lovers on the floor beside the bed. Decides sex is beside the point when you are all body, all hunger. All meat moving through the world. Zombie girl aligns herself with the dark hereafter, but only after a couple of drinks. Zombie girl sets out tiny plates on the table, tiny cakes. Zombie Girl takes notes on etiquette, her centerpiece a bouquet of cutlery. Her articulation, disarticulated.

Zombie Girl sometimes remembers a lake. Calls it in her head *mother* or *lake filled with longing*. It's exhausting, Zombie Girl thinks, how the trees never catch the breeze. How the sunlight complicates the landscape. Zombie Girl closes her eyes and smells apples, but the room is dark, her hope flat bottomed and reckless. Zombie Girl misplaces sensation, traces a radius in the yard of empty pots and pans and calls it *winter*. At night hovers over the coverlet, fear itching in her fingertips.

Zombie Girl can't remember the beginning, but recalls only snow and slowness. The slice of skates on the ice rink in the center of the mall. Her body perfectly placed in the center of a city in the center of a country in the center of a void. Her heart frozen and thawed, the raw tender of it. Her shoulders still holding the slope of neatly folded sweaters in store windows. The soft rumble of the ice machine in the food court. Zombie Girl sleeps and the world falls soft and grey as discount cashmere.

Zombie Girl won't go home. Won't come except with her fingers. Lingers under the burnt out streetlights near the edge of town and keeps dialing 911 but no one ever appears. It's weird, the sensation of falling over a cliff, falling off a building, feeling the body give way to gravity. She does it over and over again for practice. For the catch in her breath that comes after. Zombie Girl knows her way around the underpasses reeking of piss and heat. Zombie Girl won't go home until it's already way too late.

Zombie Girl hitchhikes three towns over, but it's a bitch how much she looks like her old self. Dime store lipstick in *ravish me red*. A tangle of honey hair. It's hardly fair how much death becomes her. Makes her gestures soft like water over rocks. How death hollows her out from inside, slides into the way her thighs spread against the car seat. Death like a moth in a box wings clamoring against the inside of her ribs. The body moving through breath and propulsion alone. Over and under and over again.

Zombie Girl dreams she is alive again, but instead of arms she has enormous feathers attached to her limbs. She's so heavy this way and keeps dropping to the ground without warning. Warming herself against her mother's oven and loving all the wrong the men. Even her bones feel heavy, unhollow, and useless for any sort of altitude. For any sort of purpose beyond singeing against the stovetop and dropping them to her sides. Zombie Girl excels in the stop, drop, and roll. The lull of footsteps in the hall. Someone, in the dream, is coming to carve her up into dinner. Clutching a fork and dying to stick it in the most tender parts of her, closest to the bone.

Despite what they say, Zombie Girl still has fingers that find their way into the darkest places. The slickest incidentals. There's no reward for this probing, no thrum of insect winds, but sometimes her feet tingle slightly, as if covered by bees. As if knees down, she's a live wire, her the synapses still flickering somewhere. Her body moving backwards in the water but never reaching the shore.

In the spring, Zombie Girl rages through seven tattered prom dresses and two pairs of good jeans. Rages through pink sunsets and abandoned swimming pools. Rages through Dairy Queens and bowling alleys, and then rages in the backseat with the garage band drummer. She rages through two songs and then makes out with her best friend's brother behind the abandoned car lot. It's intoxicating, rage is, the way it seeps through the body like dirty water. She rages through three school dances and her mother's Tupperware party. Her nail polish always reads *ruby rage*.

Zombie Girl understands the difference between love and sex, even though sometimes they slur into each other like drunk co-eds. The difference between meat and spirit, the pure fleshy tether of limbs and how they liquefy at the touch. The bright shining behind her eyes. Zombie Girl understands these things the way she understands the diffraction of her hand in water. The temperature at which snow melts on her tongue. Understands them in the way that animals understand danger and do not need to speak of it.

Zombie Girl can't cook. Can't look at the tv. Can't find the remote for all the singing in her head. The blankets singe against her skin. The thin membrane of her wearing away like a blister at her heel. The real beginning of the story not death, but disengagement. How the body leaves the body for something else. How she was always wandering down empty hallways, her hands thumbing every lock. Every cock in a pair of Levis idly. Zombie Girl puts out, falls over at the slightest nudge. The body leaving the body for something sliding against her in the dark,

Early on, Zombie Girl loses her appendix. Her tonsils. A handful of baby teeth rattling in her mother's dresser. Zombie Girl loses her pieces slowly, year by year, then faster. The hearing in her left ear, the feeling in her wrist when typing. The body is all about failing, about falling apart like an overripe fruit. A loosening of limbs from their sockets, even the earrings in her pocket fallen from her lobes. Zombie Girl collects her pieces nightly and places them in the bed. Rises in the morning, incomplete, but intact.

Sometimes the body sleeps and sometimes Zombie girl dreams about cake, endless miles of lemon chiffon and a knife covered in blood. Every once in a while, the cake becomes a desert and the dryness gathers in her throat, moves through her like wind fluttering the pages of a book, Sometimes the body moves without her, through strip malls and parking lots, the sound of heat moving in the space she leaves behind.

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