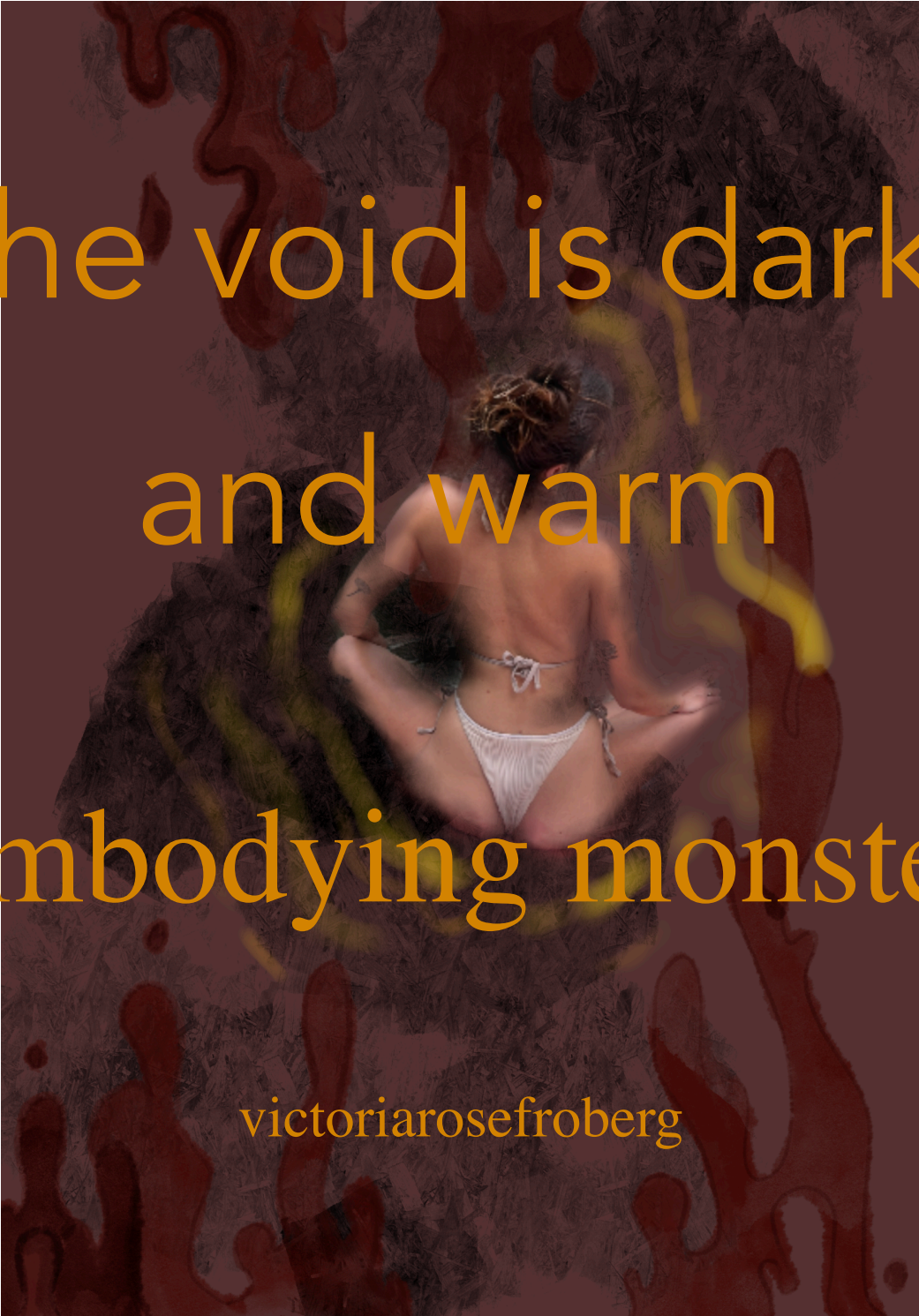




the void is dark,
and warm
embodying monster

victoriarosefroberg

“everyone who is born holds dual citizenship, in the kingdom of
the well and in the kingdom of the sick”

susan sontag, *illness as metaphor and AIDS and its metaphors*

monster (noun) ::

—from the oxford english dictionary

1. originally: a mythical creature which is part animal and part human, or combines elements of two or more animals forms, and is frequently of great size and ferocious appearance. Later, more generally: any imaginary creature that is large, ugly, and frightening.
2. something extraordinary or unnatural; an amazing event or occurrence; a prodigy, a marvel. obsolete.
3. a malformed animal or plant; a fetus, neonate, or individual with a gross congenital malformation, usually of a degree incompatible with life.
4. a creature of huge size
5. a person of repulsively unnatural character, or exhibiting such extreme cruelty or wickedness as to appear inhuman
6. **an extraordinarily good or remarkably successful person or thing**

the void is dark, and
warm: embodying
monster

cover

3. *monster*

4. *index*

5. *where i went*

17. *where i go*

24. *where i am*

36. *lessons of bleeding*

42. *becoming something more (dreamworld)*

where i went

lists and spells:

lavender, basil, calendula/marigold, echinacea, yarrow

passionflower

nettle, bee balm, elecampane

jasmine

rose

olive, fennel, bergamot

anger—>grief—>relief—>creative empowerment:: prompt from therapy

i think a lot of my creative empowerment comes from a place of pleasure. or wanting to experience every kind of pleasure possible.

imagining my wildest futures and multitudes of selves that spent years dormant due to the impossibility of their existence.

the anger comes from a place inside me where i feel deep restrictions, grief, pain, injustice. unheard, unseen.

when i look at my art—when i feel it—i see a path to my body, a release.

anger is a useful tool in exposing something that may be wrong or dangerous. anger becomes volatile for me when given no choice but to sit in it—when no action can be taken. when the need to have proximity to safety overrides emotional vulnerability. some anger stays inside the body forever, like a scab. i'm told, this is normal, this is ok.

anger can be incredibly helpful in birthing the next work. what happens when rage doesn't shift after that? a useful tool for production and creative fuel. do we stop going deeper into the layers of our emotional depths? is this a luxury?

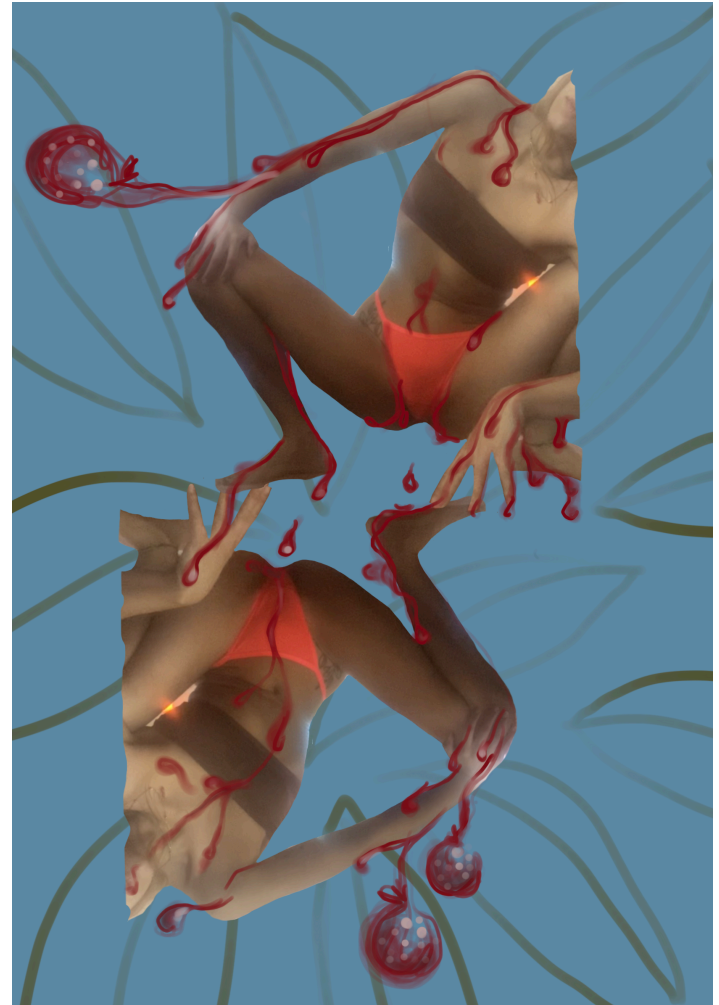
the piece of the smashed head was a reflection of experiencing abuse, how it warped my sense of self and power. but its also a shedding of my own mask(s), my own pain, my own harm. i admit, i felt a great deal of power becoming venomous, a source of brutality. having a rigid sense of control, halting the past from bubbling up, but it negated deeper emotions, it prevented me from getting too close. numb.

mostly, this is a plea. more and more my memories fracture. while my body holds tightly to reflexes i wish it would release. i ask myself to believe me. sometimes the anger wells from not holding all of the memories of the past, from what lays beneath, from what goes unspoken. from the years of rebuilding. i once saw this as something i had to prove to others, prove that i was not broken. a voice i still battle.

this is a deep imprint within my soul. now, after over a decade of choosing myself, the marks are almost invisible.



digital illustration by victoria froberg



digital illustration by victoria froberg

the meditation room::

in 2020 i made myself a meditation room
this one was only in my mind
i knew it had to be a safe place, no one else could enter
one room and in the center, a conversation pit
dim lights, warm colors (mostly reds)
no windows, no doors
this was not a room that was claustrophobic
ogni version of me rested here safely
under lock and key
only present me may enter
and we all hold each other
sometimes, i helped my 18 year old self with her many bracelets,
her makeup
other times, i lay in the middle of the room, sobbing
while they all held me, because they feel it too
the 5 year old usually brushes my hair
gradually, i added one window, a plant
then, a garden, more rooms—a kitchen
eventually, it was a home, and we went outside

taglio::

i cut them all from my hair
from my life *snip*
in the name of boundaries and self care
one by one i watch as the blonde bits grow back brown
a new texture, a new body
this is 30
so sure and so terrified
i'm alone
i'm alone!
i open my eyes—i have become my wildest fantasy
is that all?
is that all...

taking breaks (pausa)

the art stops at times
there is nothing to pour (poor) from
the well goes dry
the medium has to shift
and there is no say, no telling
in what shape, in what time line she returns
sometimes
turning completely inside out
another death of sorts
long walks, traveling somewhere new
discovering the layers that have now become skin
teeth, claws and new eyes
cutting hair off
becoming solid again
or flowing like water

the city

i've lost count of how many train rides there have been this year
when i go to take deep breaths
they are filled with shudders
i am now like the harp
when i try to breathe, my body reverberates
i used to think there was no other way to live
i see how my body is shutting down
and i have stopped feeling beautiful
my face for the first time ever
looks old
swollen
layers peeling back, amalgamations of
marble, plaster, graffiti
small vines creeping up any available crevice
"i must look like this"
i often wonder what we would all look like
if the markings from our wounds never left
i feel trapped between two worlds
and left with little choice but to survive
only 5 minutes by train until the country
mountains, green, grass blowing in the wind

on being birthed::

understanding that no matter what i do, no matter
the variation of my form
there is no being pleasurable within the family unit
i cannot be the winner
and
i will always belong to someone
my rebellion from domesticity is actual absurdity
patiently waiting for the heartbreaks, the failures, the doors
the men bark fact, they are realist and the news
“anyone in a relationship during covid was happy”
and i crumble as i remember the breaking of my own heart
they live in a disconnected truth, i was never invited
to participate
but i may linger on the outskirts
my mother serves another meal,
forgoing bathing today, hair still tied back and sweaty

turning them into better lovers::

never better people,
i could “change” them
the service i provide silently shaping them for someone more
desirable
still—i will add to yet another unsaved playlist i curated specifically
for you
hastily, in a moment when we *needed* background noise
of course it was perfect, i was perfect
i cry reading an old poem
siphoning as much from me as possible
blinding me, coiling around me
they say my walls are too rigid
but if they drop...
you have a new girlfriend
“you two would really get along”
an honor to have pointed you in a better direction
“you are so similar..”

the regrets of limerence

the self punishment disguised as love
continuous dreams of the past and present
climbing a drain pipe in the rain
short shorts and combat boots
dressed in my former flesh
in a crumbling parking lot, dark
levels printed on the walls as i emerge
you're there and then you're not
that's how it always is— a great divide
this time, i screamed, cried
why her?
how can you say you miss me
she is right here
it rips at me how you still appear
how desperately i cling to a memory
how easily love comes to some
we walk away to talk but you vanish as quickly as you appear
i'm alone again
in a dank, wet garage, scraping my exposed knee caps
frantically climbing these slippery walls
hoping to reach you before i wake



text from "teaching my mother to give birth" by warsan shire, 2011
digital illustration & collage by victoria froberg

kumquats::

buying kumquats from whole foods in december
not the same as as strolling through east LA with you in february
hot, sticky, lost
giggling as we pluck them from trees
little offerings from strangers yards
right before the world came crashing down on us
everyday became a fight but there were memories of joy in walks
it was a common ground
fruit was always how i found my way back to you
from the very beginning
i know it was your way
you tried, i tried
i stopped seeing clementine peels for a long time
i refused to buy orange citrus
today i saw the kumquats and there was no hesitation
i'm leaving again and you have no idea

blame

i've been thinking about blame
about action
or rather, inaction
what fear has driven me to do,
to hide away from
how i have shown up in fear
for many years
it has felt easier to point a finger
at those who have introduced harm
but now that feels old
they have all become ghosts
and i cannot blame shadows
for my voices, my movements
it only leads to blocking the light out
i wish, to open the windows

resentment and creation (monster)::

there is undoubtedly power in creating from the center of
resentment

the place of no turning back

the block inside me, left me confused, blinded

i have reveled in the pleasure of proving people wrong

(even if its only for my benefit)

i envision myself a monster, thick with rage, veins, growing larger
and larger. eyes bulge.

i'm a fairy, i sparkle, i smile— full teeth

i transform and surpass the harm because now i have absorbed it, i
spit it out as fire.

no one can tell me what to do anymore. is this the liberation we
speak of?

but then these walls. and when i approach there are no words for
them, only tears. begging for release.

release this dam.

does the monster within me stubbornly cling to them because if i
let go, nothing remains

watching children taken from rubble of hospitals, museums,
homes, schools. bodies breaking.

fighting to keep my own heart in tact. my grief is safe beneath the
rage.

today i found myself curious about my walls, finally in tears. for
the girl with softness who has been locked away.

occasionally stepping out into the sun, running back if a threat
approaches

i don't judge it, i understand, i wish it were not so.

resentment and shame live amongst each other.

i hold and hold

if i expose the softness, i die. i lose what i have built. the tower
crumbles.

worlds inside me left untapped, just barely visible

they beg for liberation, they are not bad

i have become my own keeper

there is no center or definitive inside me

the monster and i are one



digital illustration & collage by victoria froberg

being disabled is...

isolating and lonely

wells and depths of endless grief

masked my own anger

no one ever making space for you but always expecting an explanation

please, one more time

they can't wait to tell you about this one thing

that haunts you

keeps you awake at night

sometimes leaving you wrecked

all you want is a hug

someone to hold you through it

but the idea of rejection yet again, is unbearable

absorber and reflector

“strong, resilient, brave”

a society that hates the home i make

always in between

love without the restraint

dolore..

i don't remember a time i wasn't in pain

but i have forgotten how to locate

i don't want sympathy

i stopped seeking understanding

only answers that seldom come

hard forms to meet my own

u ok::

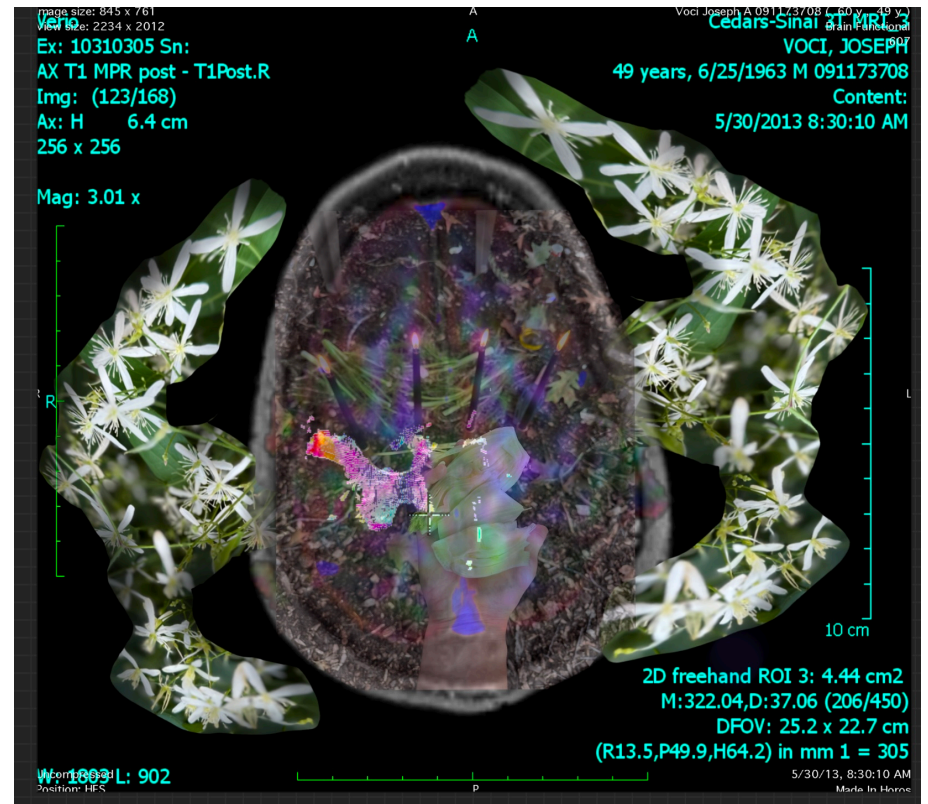
are u ok?
how are you feeling?
i almost wish people wouldn't ask me anymore
there will always be a part of me
digesting, swollen, tired
no, i am not ok
don't use your discomfort to pull me from the present
like, please—if you rub my knee one more time..
infantilized when i ask for a friend
i enjoy the silence, taking deep breathes
the way my toes spread and clench with each step
greeting each flower, the tall wheat, finding the sun and facing her
laying on the rocks so the earth and i can be in unison
i'm grateful for these powerful gifts
i am no project or puzzle to be solved
don't mistake my silence for discontent

the expert::

the self appointed expert
is someone who arises to that position
from fear and pain
confusion
wealth
they do not need conversation anymore
data comes from podcasts
the internet, memes
there is validity in sharing information
amongst ourselves this way
this is our world
the expert mocks community
while silent amongst it
closing out new experiences
of even the ones loved most
the capacity for anything new shrinks
we are all the expert at times



digital photo rendering by victoria froberg



digital collage by victoria froberg

where i go

i don't always have to go that deep
reminding myself that yes, it has always been real
i have always been real
and when tears come
they are not always a symbol of
destruction
water me like the ground
i pat myself like soil
no one else can see this, affirm this
enter these voids
what a gift

children::

i will never forget the first time i really, truly grieved my decision to not birth. not birth from my body.

i was 23.

i was going through the process of birthing a new self. there are many versions of me, now floating around—she pulses and shifts, swallowing what needs removal or growing to the size of galaxies.

i never wanted a child and i felt i was too young to even consider. i had many partners, it was a miracle i had somehow not become pregnant. there were a few times my period came late, extra heavy, clots larger than normal. i always dodged pregnancy. i always knew deep within me, my body rejected.

the doctor told me, writing my prescription for the first time with a smile, as if she hadn't just changed my entire means of living with 5 sentences and a co-pay.

“you must be on birth control. this medication causes birth *defects*. you are still young. at reproductive age. we want you to be able to have a healthy pregnancy.”

smiles.

i was completely numb. i handed over my body to everyone like a foreign object. scans, blood, stuck with electrodes. no difference than the exchange of bodily fluids. what a relief—still no expectation to conceive. it was an incredibly undesirable outcome for all parties. i am holes.

one afternoon, 5-6 months later, pounds shed from my body, the reality much heavier, i sat in byrd park alone on a bench. i started reading more poetry that year and i stopped being honest. i held a sandwich between what were now narrowing thighs. everyone told me i was so beautiful, but it was as if someone turned off the lights inside of my chest, replacing them with concrete. i was just trying to survive. no matter how hard i tried, i could not get close to anyone. my body frozen.

i finally cried. an ugly, public cry. a release. part of me still hopes it came across as something out of a movie.

it finally set in: every conditioned thing i was supposed to be, was being stripped back, was being rejected. my body refused it. no hiding or denial.

was it being told i could not “birth” or when i did, there would be defects? i rattled my brain trying to grasp what that even meant. my fury in how i was being handled like a vessel that failed its one duty. it was not just men but everyone around me was concerned about my ability to function in any capacity.

i was a liability, a safety hazard. and if by some miracle i found myself impregnated, the prospect of my spawn took immediate priority over my desired care practices in the eyes of my neurologists.

the next day at work, there was a small child who followed me around. i worked the front desk at a planned parenthood and the staff often kept an eye on patients children.

they stared at me through the glass shield. no interest in legos or crayons. everyone’s new favorite toy.

years later, this is a grief that still emerges, even now as i feel more grounded in my desires.

i learned to birth myself over and over again. i have brought many things into this world, had many mothers.

the energy required to birth changes you. every decision a small birth.

grief is a birth after a death, if allowed. the kind of grief i have experienced within my own body has been like multiple small births.

look at what i have held, look at what i now have the capacity to bare.

sometimes, i close my eyes and i see that girl crying in the park, i still wear the same blue dress.

there is a cord that keeps me tied to her, to all of my past selves.

i see her opening her eyes and looking for me.

because throughout it all, i have always been on the other side, pushing through, begging, demanding, asking, to search a little further.

i became a mother long ago.

grief::

grief lives deep inside, becoming a part of the bones

organs, blood

ripping away all of my masks

a part of me for so long that i no longer recognize it

popping up when i try to move my body,

late at night

on walks

some weeks are joyful

some days it falls on the chest, tickles the throat

eyes hot

confounded—where did you come from?

i thought i pulled the root

the cysts

at first i hated you

i didn't even know i had you

encasing my organs

adding so much weight

i had no way to identify pain

were you protecting me?

as the world continues to spiral

my body and i somehow still here

i can't help but think that

in some twisted way, as i rationalize disease

i built my own barriers

until it was safe to excavate



digital illustration by victoria froberg

trust::

there are often no happy endings
no promise of safety
a deep guttural drop, the knowing
some holes are your own making
and i have many times been wrong
fucked up, vanished
become villain to preserve what was left
hurt will twist reality
life is cruel without reason
the comfort found in another person a source of relief
good—great, even wonderful—people
appear fuzzy
the ones with talons and fangs are easier to identify
sharpness is safety
so much shame bundled into desire
there is a delayed sorrow in wishing
you could have been better for someone
who truly deserved it
there is a tangle of distrust inside me
determined to feel anything at all
fill my body with pleasure, become the antithesis of the
gaping wound, this giant hole i carried for too long
unaware i had begun spitting up what consumed me

rage

now that it's out
i wonder when it will stop
like a fire i cannot extinguish
pines crackling, burning, collapse to the forest floor
soil turns over
i hiss—i can't stop fighting
screaming
a never ending singe

pickles

my therapist has me look up words
in the dictionary that i say often
aggressive, monster, trigger
my dad hates the taste of vinegar
my mom says he doesn't like acid

home

friends and family come and go
tell me of what awaits when they return home
my heart clenches because
i have no sense of that
children as young as 4 dying for their land
under bombs and in their living rooms
still—i wander

the hirshorn

i'm used to standing in dark corners surrounded by men
forming opinions about art
but to see a woman move

the return in change

somehow the body returns
though never exactly the same
fragments of who i once was always there
traveling through timelines
new realms opening
lifting my shirt to find new rings like a tree
what i can no longer remember inscribed

everyone dies

everyone dies
and yet
we fight our one guarantee
clawing our way
thru the membrane of this life
bringing all we can down with us
the seasons change
the flowers open their faces to sun
while i walk by
atoms shedding
carrying this sludge
am i romanticizing? does everyone think like this?
it's not that i am rushing the end of this life
but the fear in ending continues to
dissipate
and i feel gorier than ever

am i alive?

i know that i am alive, and live
because i feel the winter wind on my face
and its a relief
i am alive because my body is the home to voids and chasms
rallying between joy and grief
one year alone i never knew i could walk through
i live not despite the world believing my body failed its many
assignments
i live because i have transformed into something more,
something unknown
i am alive even as i know there is no besting this reality
and while my mortality is dangled in front of me
i am alive because i wake, hands on my pulsing abdomen, eyes
closed, repeating
“this is my body, this is my body”
i am alive because i am my home

where i am

witch::

they say i'm a bitch
unmarried, uninterested
living alone
in the dark room
at peace, most of the time
crafting sounds and spells
pouring salt in the jar on the altar
i just cut my hair
another offering
“everything becomes an altar”
weaving, weaving
red, black, gold
rosemary, ash
mugwort
they say when you lay with the earth
you're no longer beautiful
after a life of torture, to be an artist

is to submit to another world

another word

a man invented

a suit i never want to fill

the iron maiden, an endless rage pit

a new name for the ritual of creation

ghosts::

leaving traces in my body

the bag in the cupboard by the door is no longer the same

because i know my hands move to make the same violent urges

my body follows

only the bag

and the sketchbook

sometimes the tablet

breathe, breathe, breathing

i cannot lose sense of myself for one moment

down my legs, through to the ground
one step forward
how much further must i go
show me your favorite artists
what is the body but a vessel
a journey of being trapped to the flesh
a game of chance

I AM NOT MYSELF::

i don't know this new body
i don't want to look at her
it feels a betrayal
i search for her longingly in the mirror
but she has vanished into my memories, existing only in photos
i beg her to come back for me, rid me of this reality
i tug and pull at my flesh
the grief and exhaustion moves with me—i cannot put it down
in my organs, my breath, i hear it when i speak
“is that you?”

i look for her in videos
moving sensually, free—she knows something i don't
my entire life, my existence revolves around “*the body*”
i can't grasp for it
if only i could just...move again
i see my reflection and cry—an ever changing distortion
baggy clothes now tight
breasts large and lumpy, swollen and painful
hair brittle and broken
i am a shell of my former self
i thought it possible to un-become sickness
i thought, the goal was sex appeal
30 has not been as glamorous as predicted
i only see everything i try to hide
sleep—all i want is sleep
instead my body makes more and more room
for the blood children



digital collage & photo rendering by victoria froberg



digital collage & photo rendering by victoria froberg

ana mendieta & iconism

what does it mean when your icons are
rendered invisible
i know you are here
she lived in rome too
aggressive
this justifies a short life.
when you don't see yourself in exhibitions
the streets can only be a place of desperation
the people who have the privilege to greet age
would rather stay inside.
we hate the complexity of humanity
on certain bodies, in particular places
it is much easier to watch them burn from our phones.
she poured herself onto paper
reborn in her own fire
in partnership with the earth
slammed her body into walls
buried her narrative everywhere
the blood the body hair

she could not be erased from memory or land
at 17 it was like the door to my void unlocked
only to hear she was actually dead
not only dead, murdered
by her lover, her partner
the xerox man
he lived a long, long life
the man in galleries, among the rapists
who thrive on the false immortality of destruction
sickness coiled in me
those closest to me could, and may be
harming me
my dreams, my desires
could kill me
master and muse
wife, minstrel, object
stay small
the universe in me too vast to be confined to mere woman
my work can only be food and inspiration
prove myself worthy of protection by inaction
be the vessel
allow these messengers of death to come for everyone i love in the
process
not human enough to "want"
not woman enough to deserve "nice"
my icons
screaming through space
meanwhile, they throw us out windows
grinning as they collect bodies like trophies



text from "the will to change" by bell hooks, 2004
digital collage & photo rendering by victoria froberg

night owl/roma::

i'm not supposed to smoke anymore
i'm spotting again
but sitting outside at 10pm in august
finally a breeze
i can hear my neighbors opera blasting
over their balcony
a car alarm is going off somewhere
i love that i'm alone, but not
it's a new moon, one of my favorite times
an initiation
i stay up late since moving to rome
sometimes, to catch my friends far away
i'm finding myself distracted more
writing, watching, pacing, dancing
stewing—like something big shifted
i don't know if this place is home
but it's something

mortality::

my lifespan is dangled in front of me like an unachievable goal
my organs screaming
pressing against my abdominal wall
begging for some kind of release
i continue to fear the outcomes of more discoveries
the unwrapping of co morbidity after another
i don't possess shame or regret for crafting my life how i want
for prioritizing being exactly what i fantasize
lost reading books of realms
extending to new worlds, new time lines, new creatures
i have become “monster”
i have an acute understanding that my physical form
will only contain so much
there is no potion no magic no savior

in ruins/piante

we all become
the same thing
what i think of most
is what kind of love existed
what kind of touch
is this what we will do when the wars are over
when the bombing finally stops
set up more museums
of people casted
from the fire and lava
dying in their homes
protecting their stomachs
holding each other
how did they touch?
what was spoken?
awing — another piece of preserved bread
surprise and pride that a people harvested
worshiped, enslaved, ran water
an arm
a leisurely activity
no life among the living

death of hot girl

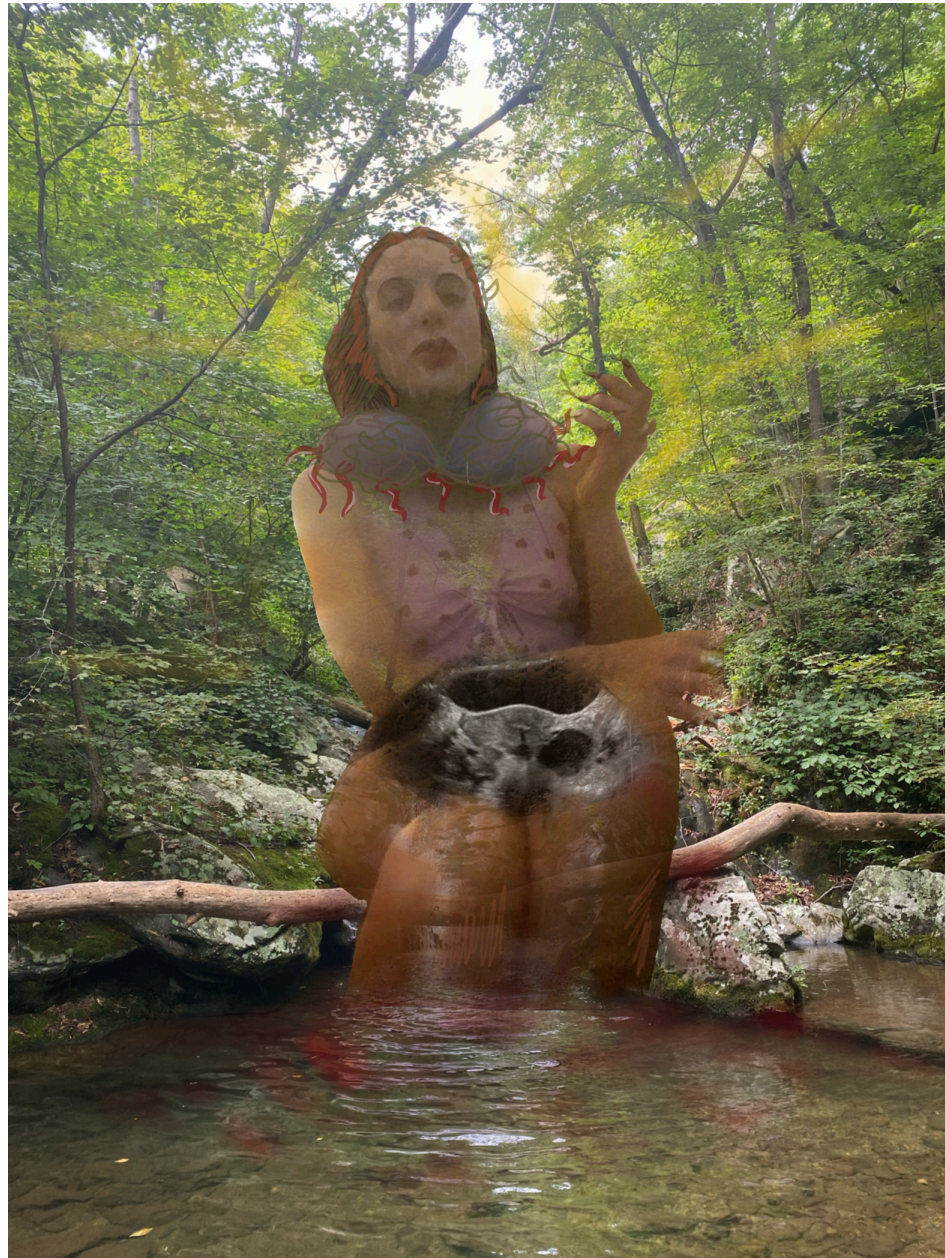
there was a brief period of time when i was
hot girl
it felt (almost) effortless
once i arrived
i don't remember the last time
someone told me i was beautiful
or their gaze snagged on mine
i emerged from my swamp
cold
unable to thaw

escape::

escape, escape, escape
everything has been about running
make it more fun, make it hurt less
make it hurt more
i need to feel something, anything
sit in the car, roll the window down, the wind
the smoke
now
i don't want to speak just sit here and
escape

void:

purples blues and stars
swirling galaxies
a crown on the top of my head
the largest star at my sacrum
i don't feel lost in the void anymore
it used to be so big
i had to build containers within myself
just to hold it all
morphing into new shapes
my womb
never sharp edges
now i step inside
welcoming the space to rest
i love that no one finds me here
sitting with the tender spots, holding them
until they are comets
the absence of light doesn't have to be fear



digital illustration & photo rendering by victoria froberg

chiesa/basilica/palace

dreamt of black skies and lightening
a rich man stole all my food
and i screamed for it back
then i dreamt of large fires
plotting my escape from an unknown face
is it even a surprise that the seagulls patiently wait on the
heads of the dead
shitting all over them
great halls and palaces
chandeliers like teeth ripping me
tragic, these great cities are dubbed
i see generations, dynasties with no meat left to pick
expand expand expand
griffin, dragon, fae, goddess
empty corridors where beds could be
everything must become a power walk
i try to be calm, not sweat so much,
control my face from getting so red
(it's just a hot flash?)
flies crawling over my corpse
the prey and predators of the religious zeal that entraps us all
webs keeping them stuck
spider food
unable to get out of their own maze

haunted altars

who stands and who falls
i never understood horror movies before
i never enjoyed the experience
until i began reading
until i understood the tellings
until i understood the depths of where grief journeys
so many small horrors
simultaneously more scared than ever
and more bold
broken teeth casting shadows from no light
city after city built over one another
i come from you, but am not you
i come from you, but am not you
(a spell)
loving and appreciating
don't come close to me
i no longer smile around you
it's autumn now
cats and ravens follow me
wind between my fingers
the smell of decay

survival

everything melts faster here
my body looks for the sun, knows the sun
the moon, the water, the mountain, and the trees
i do not come from soft people
i wonder tho—what it means to loudly embody
to never seek permission
to take the space
my grandmother tells me on a three-way call
only here do we share our pain
the jacquard loom, weaving our algorithm
our secrets
at 90, she diligently holds the helm
this is how we survive
this is who to trust
amongst the three of us
we may bare teeth, spit flies
 chests flare, rage
only here

mean

attitude
sharp, an edge
hard to read
unapproachable
calculated
the pendulum swings back
i settle within myself
stones in the sea, waves rushing over
i will never be the one to bare it all
everyone says i'm colder now
truth be told, i have never felt more
calm

prickly pears

voluptuous in the south
a mockery of the north
clouds split the sky
api
why are you doing this?
nothing tastes the same anymore



photo rendering by victoria froberg

blood/sanguine

like the time your period came so suddenly, so strong at 11pm the first week of college, filled with dark clots, seething pain you could not distinguish. you walked to the rite aid with your friend for tampons, watching your bio matter wash down the toilet, convinced you had miscarried.

like the time you were falling in love, and somehow always seemed to bleed when you saw him. afterwards, he seemed just as happy as you felt, ran out of the loft to his guitar, and played “your body is a wonderland” his hands covered in your blood.

like the time you picked up an old rusty sculpture off the side of the road while it was raining and cut your arm. walked to the clinic where you worked, got a tetanus shot and went back for it.

like the time you refused to cut your long nails, like the hair you are attached to, and they did not say a word while you were 3 fingers deep. not until you saw the blood on your hands.

like the time you had a seizure, alone on your yoga mat, waking up face first in a small pool of warm blood, because you bit through your lip. and instead of asking for help, or getting stitches, you sat shaking in the shower, a permanent lump to trace with your tongue.

like the time you went down on them while they were sick, they got their period, and you came back up with a bloody grin.

like the time you recovered from surgery, and your first real cycle arrived in almost a decade, and all you could do was cry.

like the times you pick at your cuticles until they bleed.

like the time you first realized you enjoyed leaving marks on the body of lovers, almost as much as the marks they left on you.

like the time you learned the blood flowing through the body can quickly turn to poison just as it can flow with life.

fibrosis

thick, resistant tissue, spreading
encasing, building pathways to organs
but not helpers
fibrosis is the calcification
inside dark hallows
leeching [out]
when it begins to be cut away
and you start to bring new air into those deep pockets
people disintegrate with each slice
its not intentional [in fact]
you've been hoping, begging they would stay
now there is room
but these people
built sticky homes within you
now, as you begin to enunciate the sensation
of newly wired nerves weaving from the sacrum
to the pelvis to the ground
there is freedom

the hardsoft of age

the sharp spaces, hallowed ribs
dark corners of my twenties departed in the night
and with sunrise
a softer belly, thicker curve to hips
the thigh
i still stare at myself in the mirror
confused
this new me is so different
calmer, i think
tracing all the new markings and scars
anointing myself with oils

dissolve

i resided to being ugly that year
to dissolving into myself
to tears that never ended
lips that blended into the flesh of my face
from purple to grey
nailing myself to eternity
working through wormholes
it came from within
from the home that never was
from darkness i did not understand

monster

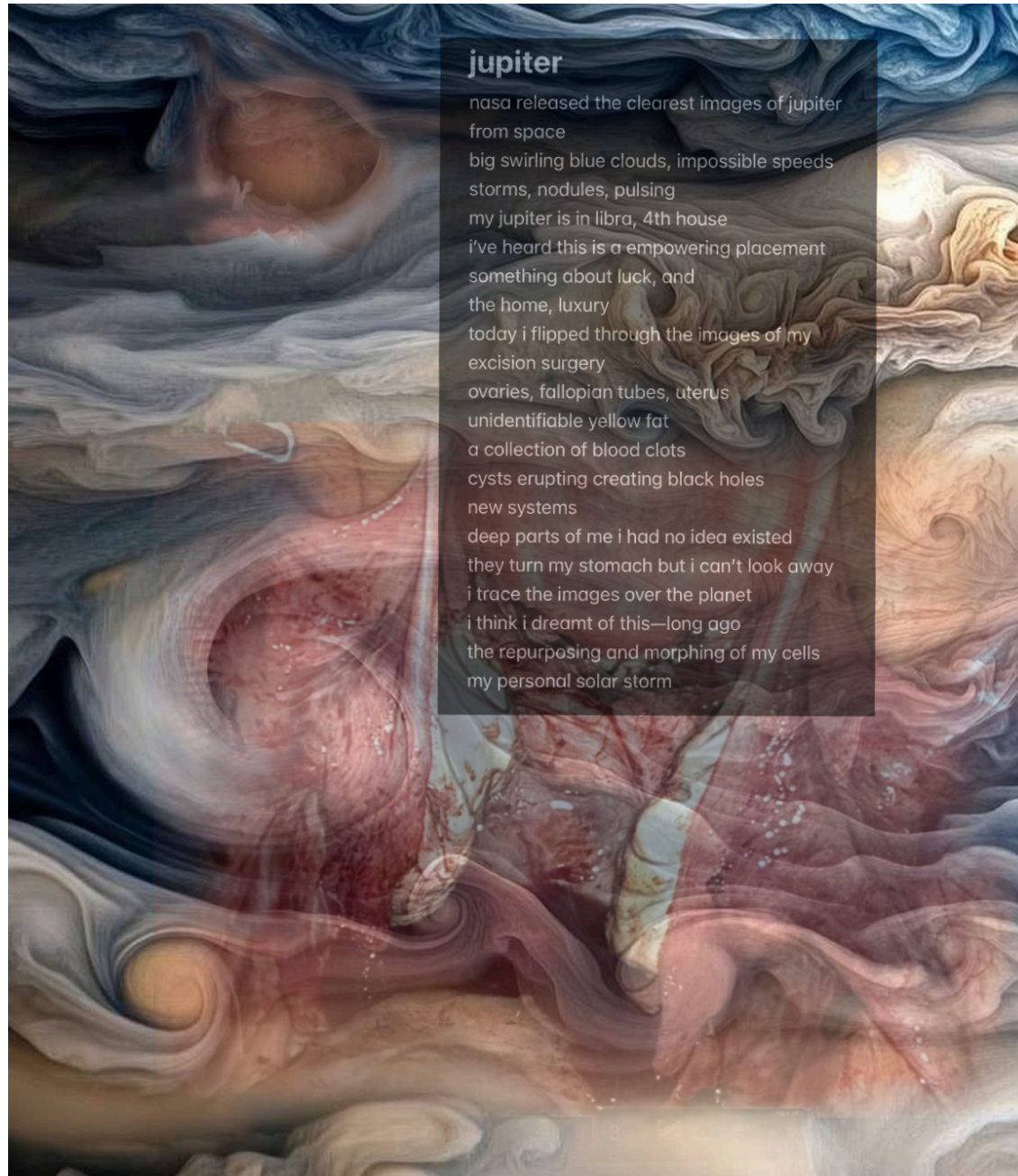
i am no longer afraid of being monster
and i am no longer afraid of the darkness
i know the narrators
the authors of the tales

things that happened on the full moon in libra

i got a hair cut
(it's softer, a bit shorter, and darker)
i got my period
i got into a writing workshop for the second time in 6
months
i passed a blood clot

go back to

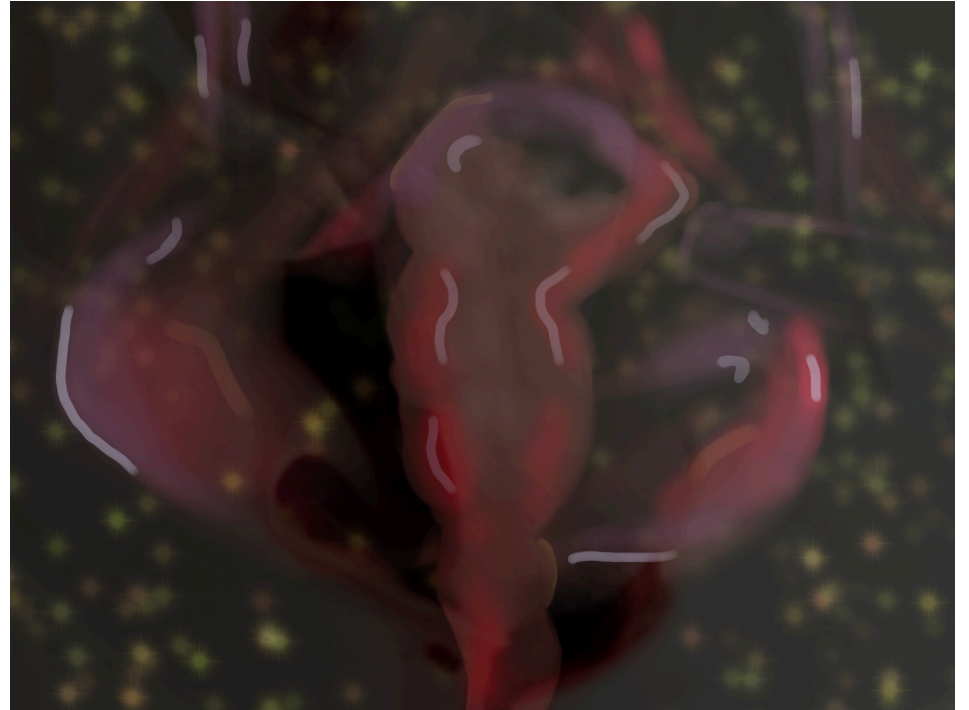
go back to what?
i wonder
spiraling around the drain as i spit out
the words that endlessly clog my throat



digital collage by victoria froberg, photograph of the planet jupiter courtesy of NASA

my cup runneth over

i stick my fingers inside the silicon cup
from crust to core
as the layers of blood shift from translucent
to bright red
like a membrane
i'm not sad about the blood anymore
but still — i cry when i see it
i never imagined i could bleed
without pain



becoming something more (dreamworld)

he says we're friends

last night i dreamt of a man
i cannot make out his face
but i know i saw it
in my dream, he had human eyes, a nose, brows, lips, chin,
ears
he sat next to me on a bed
in a place i had never been
i was afraid of him at first
i realized he was a ghost
i was skeptical
had he come to haunt me?
he asked if i was afraid
and suddenly i said
no

he smiles and tells me
we are friends
i find myself today wondering if i have befriended my own
hauntings
or started to, at least
this is the second time i have dreamt
of a masculine spirit in my bed
i can't say it's a welcomed presence
but the ease is
last week my PT worked tissue along my abdomen
inside my vaginal walls
used a device that sent some sort of frequency through me
i imagine
some small beast
batting eyelashes
perched at my sacrum
waking up
who else has been there too?

rooms (realms)

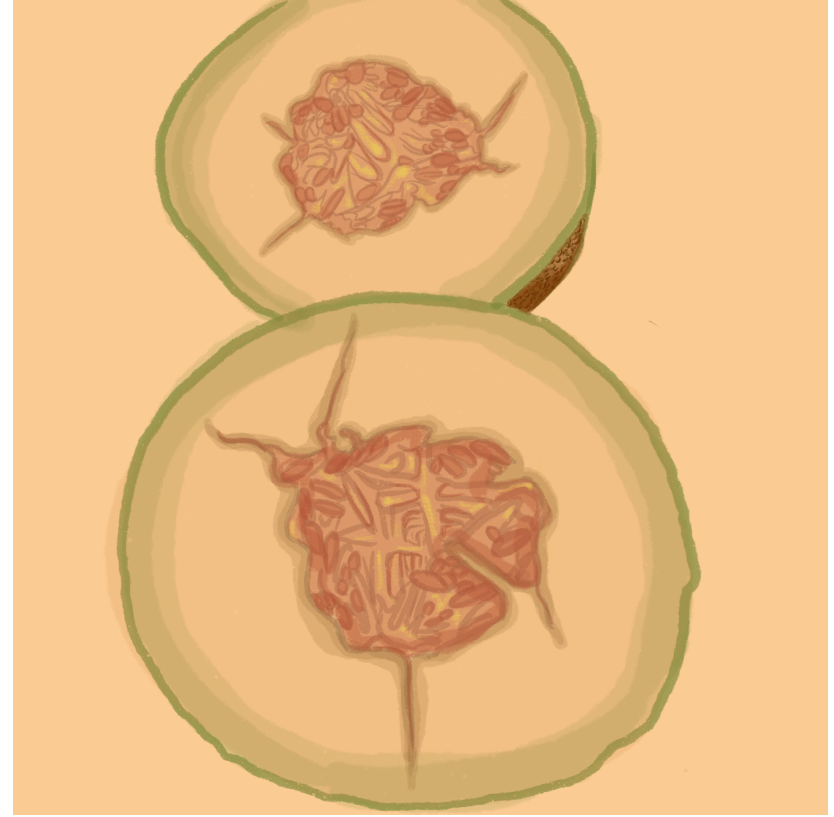
i'm in a house, huge
there are always many rooms
hidden corridors
this time, a bathroom
filled bathtub
behind a closet in a laundry room
as if i just left the bath
filled with products
my father was in the apartment cutting all the plant
clippings
so much water

filo

time has become a never ending thread
not frayed
smooth
i see how each piece wraps around
not linear either
winter sun in my eyes at 3:30pm
i believe i may be doing exactly what my grandmother
is doing
my mother
i think of how i have not called either of them
the thread knots inside my belly
drawing back thru them
i send back vibrations
humming down the filo like grass
there was a nonna today who looked like mine
i smiled because mine
never has let age stop her curiosity
time is non existent at these speeds
movement slowed to the point of disappearance

friendship::

friendship was a shield, a force to hide behind
protection
i surrounded myself with many harmful people
who in turn taught me how to gnash my teeth
i don't know that i have always been good,
good was something i sought, because i believed
(hoped) it existed
as a definitive
many things make us sick
it took me many, many years to understand
relationships as genuine companionship
waiting with open arms for me to join them
they are building, creating wonderful things,
and i am wanted there
asking—what are my wildest dreams?
not to be consumed
ripping those old ties out of my soul has been
like sucking venom from blood
long, tedious, lingering
i move slowly now
i love deeply, intentionally
the world leaves us all wounded in different ways
what a gift to continue to age
putting the pieces back



digital illustration by victoria froberg

harp

i'm practicing relaxing my hands
i never noticed how sharp
the angels of my wrists were
i am an expert at holding everything
she tells me to let go
shakes my hands again and again
she watches me breathe
let's me listen to the sounds
i need to feel the wood
i can still read the notes
it makes me want to cry
but it's all so good
much of this year has been softening
while hardening
letting my belly, my arms, my hips
now my hands
i've been gripping since i was 12
i watch myself as i hold a pencil
focus

if i hold tight, no one will see anything
i will stop the pain of my organs
i will stop the tremors, the spasms
people will stop looking at me
no wonder my body rejects the page
i can only hold out for so long
i am flooded with relief to find
joy
that is mine
at a moment when
i have almost entirely stopped speaking, stopped
sharing
at times when it feels easier to let the disease
consume me
learning to ease into movement
learning to build from water

the rain

i love when it rains
it feels like forgiveness
i leave all the windows open
designated playlists loud
gratitude—genuine pleasure in this time alone
and then fear—should i want to share this?
the wind sucks the linen curtains out the window
“sábanas snapping in the wind”
much like gloria, i remain in bed
bands of light connect me to women
bodies with shorter timelines
blood from our organs
prophetic
i keep dreaming of great floods
of almost being trapped beneath rubble
a mentor of mine once told me
dreams of water are my emotions
while dreams of men are my masculine energy
lately, i am seeing it all
a great release long overdue

coming back as a tree

i think i would return to this world as a tree
if, i chose to come back at all
born as an acorn
i would let the squirrels usher me
small solid steps pressing me into the soil
sheltered by elders
let me move as slowly as i have always
dreamed
unfathomable rest and growth
linking below the surface
murmurs too quiet for the human ears
reaching root to root, holding friend
sibling, lover
i hope to find you there
deep in the ground, where it's cool
and if the fires get me here too,
it will be another rebirth

letter to myself

do not hold onto the resentment
like a weapon to be wielded
it only burns through you
up your nerves, through your organs
the throat
we hold for safety
because not everyone can be trusted with the release
and that does not make you deserving of deeper scars
punishment inflicted for what you have witnessed, felt in your bones, is not something to lay the body out



digital illustration by victoria froberg