

how it felt to learn it would rain where you were.

by deborah brandon

and that you once had / still sometimes sold savory pies out the side of a truck at renaissance fairs alongside your mum with her fake braid in a wrong color wrapped round her head.

& you called the sky 'corrugated' or 'promising as a line of chorus girls' depending on the clouds.

you felt most control when playing pinball. you cursed the gobble holes when something went wrong, even miles from the machine.

you held a black statue at gunpoint then an arc of pigeons lifted around you all at once & it looked like you were falling.

you wanted to buy clothes for my baby and i said, 'ok a couple.' you filled your arms three times over with things that were soft and you handed them to me and my arms were smaller so it took me five armfuls to cradle what you just had in two and you laughed. just like that. later we found beetles where beetles should not be. i suspended disbelief to kiss you and then the baby puked so that was the end of that.

a longer later still, i found out how i would feel to learn you lived above a literal meat market, in the summertime you said it smelled like somebody's period once the sun struck the spattered pavement. you said it smelled like period for months. i asked why you didn't move, you could stay with us while you got settled. you held up two fingers to the phone, said 'peace out dude' and hung up to smoke a joint and jimmy the lock down the hall that led into a place some lady had died in. that place smelled like powder and bones, like the

inside

of a treasure chest from avon that had had soap with a scent to make the latherer feel wealthy which was the opposite of how you'd felt when you were the sad, desperate latherer. you knew all these things and you still sat on the dead lady's rug. it got the smell of period out of your nose at least. there was a lot to be said. you didn't, you combed your dark hair with her white-fuzzed brush. it was the wrong type of brush for your hair type and i said as much, which meant i

wanted to kiss you again without what had happened before happening again. wouldn't say so, wouldn't show you the photograph i'd taken for you and left in a box for in case i died so you would know how i had felt. there was another box for the baby but it was a bigger box with more feelings underscored because a baby would know less than you, or more than you but with fewer understandings.

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i learned about patchworks fireworks waterworks and still returned to the same page in the encyclopedia about jellyfish. if i were so lucky i thought as to see a jellyfish in its natural habitat!

could i drown the baby if i had to, like if some enemy were coming like in that chinese movie--? no, i would not be able to drown the baby unless i had time to hang myself afterwards and for sure die, die like i deserved it, before the father . before the father found me .

your hands had been so big and i i i, i found out how far over a hole i could lean and still

not fall in. i found out how dirt sounds dropped grave-far down. couldn't believe it at first, couldn't believe it a second

later & didn't know how to feel about any rain from then on out.

