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Names

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Names

by Natalie Rickman

There are names I will not name my children.

I.

I'm twenty-three in two months.
I'm driving home at ten in the evening
from working a six hour shift.
The air is humid and cold
and I'm taking long drags
of well deserved nicotine.
I walk in the giant door
of my one bedroom apartment.
I live alone
but not by choice.
I have a French sounding name
but I'm from the bluegrass state--
Marguerite, like my mother.
My t-shirt is wet from washing dishes
for the last hour and my hands
are starting to dry out from sanitizer.
I throw the shirt on the rug
and sit in my bed naked.
The French are so casual about being naked.
Let's not talk about living alone.

There are names I will not name my children.

II.

There was a loud growl
of a Jeep Rubicon in our drive way
for eight months the year
I was fifteen.
For eight months my father
went more bald every time
I walked out of his door
with perfume under my shirt
and eyeliner in globs on my lids.
Chris, in the jeep,
he was a wrestler,
he had a wrestlers neck
and a wrestlers grip.
He took my virginity in a hot tub
and called me a trooper.
We had sex ten more times

and he moved to Virginia.
My father grew lines
on his expanding forehead
for six months
while he listened to me cry
on the other side of my bedroom door.
We never talked about it.

There are names I will not name my children.

III.

Its Halloween and I have globs
of eyeliner on my lids,
I am a 60's English super model.
I am the first person alive
or dead to ever have their heart broken.
I have red teeth from drinking dark wine
and lines on my mouth
from well deserved nicotine.
I'm standing in the doorway
watching you through your zebra
mask, watch Courtlin through your mask.
She stands shoulder to shoulder
with me while I try and talk to you.
I look up at her, six feet tall
in six inch heels.
I ask, but she wont excuse us.
Women are so territorial.
She is dressed like a cat
if cats wore lingerie,
with three sixes on her face.
You walk away together
and she holds your hand
on the sidewalk
and I cry about it
for the next ten days.
We haven't spoken since.

There are names I will not name my children.

IV.

My uncle Matthew was in prison
for eight years, his daughter
was ten when he got locked up.
Twenty years later and she still
can't brush her teeth.

Sexual trauma fucks people up.
Of course most of her teeth are gone now
from years of avoiding her hollow space.
She smiles a gummy grin,
her skin has always been pale
and covered in moles.
She pulls all her hair out,
I say *pulls* because it's constant.
She wears a blonde wig
but the wig is made to have dark roots.
Christmas is unbearable,
everyone hugs him
and keeps a close eye
on the babies running free
around whatever house we are in.
I want to scream and hit him.
I can almost feel him sliding in to my gut,
like the trauma is mine,
like I want to brush my teeth.
His gaze is enough to creep me.
My family never talks about it.

There are names I will not name my children.

V.
When I was eight I missed
the first two weeks of school.
My parents took me on vacation
to the south of Florida.
I was two weeks behind
the rest of the class
for the rest of the year,
My teacher, Kimberly,
I can't even remember her last name,
yelled at me while I was cleaning
my eraser head on the carpet
and I smashed my little noggin
on the corner of the table.
I started to cry eight-year-old tears,
the pain was real
but I was too old to gush.
She asked me what two times two
was and I couldn't answer.
She asked all the other children
in our class to come to her wedding.
We never talked much.

VI.

I will name my child Green; she will always be budding.

She will have the fierceness
of a giant forest
and stand tall,
her leaves reaching high
in to the wind.
She will be liquid,
a nature that can freeze
or flow or become mist;
she is fiercely changing.
I will carry her with me
on my hip long after she
is old enough to walk.
I will hold her close to me,
parts of her swimming in me
from the moment she is born
out of love or hate.
However she is born,
whatever season she sprouts in,
she will always be Green,
she will always be budding.
Our conversations
will be endless, we will talk
and swim in changing water,
we will bud and watch the trees bud
in every season.