

The Life Cycle of Cruelty

The other night, I dreamt I was maimed by him, again. This time, stabbed in the stomach. How hard it has been to not love him. He said: *Don't eat meat in front of me. I hate to see your teeth.*

Crack open my sternum. Witness the clenching and unclenching of my heart. Rabid and quick as a dog off the leash.

In high school, I was reprimanded for “my womanly wile” by a woman with short hair. I swear to God. I looked at her hands decorated with fake gold rings and fingers fragile as carrots. I looked at my huge paws, the strong edge of my jaw, the smooth curve of my hips, and I knew I'd grow up to be a mean fucking bitch.

I always thought *Silence of the Lambs* was a love story. Had I been served a human kidney I would have said *thank you* and devoured it like a plum. If bothered by the screaming of the lambs, I would have sculpted a silence from their dead limbs. Piles of red and white pushed into the open, blue mouth of sky.

Meat on ice. Nights of oysters and talks of money and dick. Feeling too old to be wrong anymore. I recall the first man I fucked after my ex. I walked into his kitchen, naked, cold, dark blue, humming like a rising wave in a storm. I returned with a blizzard in my mouth and my filthy sock in my hand. *Eat it, eat it, eat it*, I said.

As a child, I chased boys on the playground, shoving them down face first in front of me when I caught them with their backs turned. Then, I would flip them over to see their faces, my little oysters of tears and sand, making a pearl for me.

There has never been anything to outgrow. I do not think it could have been given to me, crumpled up and hidden in his fist. Violence is my bone, my hair, my father, the very shape of me.

The other night a man brought his gun to my apartment. Black metal sinking into my pink couch. Night blended the colors together and I could not tell the metal from the cushion until my back was pressed against the cold.

