and touch but they never roll or rub because they are the commercial People, are workers, there to sell things.

Marjorie understands. Marjorie does not mind. She watches the People in love with their things inside the television and she watches the colors of the light burning bright around the People and she watches the light on the walls rise and fall and rise. Ma is here but held in by her box under the bed. In this deep middle of the night Marjorie’s departments are closed down. She does not need to think or remember or try. Marjorie just watches, just feels. She is warm and soft and surrounded.

Marjorie stays very still in the soft bed where Ma used to sleep. The only sound let out into the room is hers, is the slow, big, warm beating of her heart. And inside, sometimes Marjorie hears the People laughing. Marjorie watches the light of the lines of the lips and if the People on the television have their heads thrown back, hair swinging, mouths wide open and no-sound screaming, this is something that Marjorie can feel, a sound she can hear loud inside the uncontained love of her self.

31. MARGIE

And then the day Margie came looking for Lucy, and Lucy was not there.

He was there, now, always. There in Apartment #2, sitting in Gram’s chair with Ma beside him. Chest bared, chewing. Gram, down, always, gone off to somewhere else to be with her stories. Him making his sounds and Ma making her sounds and Margie getting out of Apartment #2 as quiet as Margie knew how.

We do not know where Lucy was.

We did not hear Margie or see Margie or smell her.

Margie, gone down deep inside herself, did not think to knock or call or say, Hello, I’m here. Margie wanted only to get out and away. Margie ran quiet as she could down the stairs to Apartment #1, to where Lucy should have been. Margie turned the doorknob and let herself in.

Margie walked through the doorway into Apartment #1, walked down the hall and into the living room. She might have called Lucy’s name like a question, like, Lucy? But Margie stayed quiet because she was listening, because she heard sounds like running, like lost breath, like snoring or crying or whispers. Fighting sounds, pain sounds, waves of sound creaking through the wooden floorboards. Margie heard these sounds, and Margie saw.

Lucy’s ma, her skin, all of her skin, her whole body laid out naked and rising
and rolling on the sofa. Lucy’s sofa, where Margie sometimes sat. The green of Lucy’s sofa beneath the slow-moving freckled skin of Lucy’s ma. Her breasts, big, held up high and hard. Not by her hands, other hands. Lucy’s ma’s hands lost in the white-dusted hair of a head there against her skin. Two bodies, moving, making these sounds soft and serious like secrets. Margie watched and did not know that she should not be watching. The two big bodies pushing together, rising and widening and falling and flattening. A new smell in the air, something like the wet mud below the stones in the brook, like Margie’s licked skin. Margie watched and wanted to understand, to know what she was seeing. Margie, wanting. To see skin and breasts and hands moving, to see the shapes of bodies like freckled mountains against the dark green of the sofa. To see Lucy’s ma, her short body spread out long and open. Margie watched to see the face that was turned down, away from her, to see the other body pressing there against Lucy’s ma’s body. To smell, to know, to see what was happening.

Margie watched.

Margie held her breath, held the new smell long as she could inside her, held her arms against her breasts, against her hard heart beating.

Margie, keeper of so many secrets.

Margie watched until Lucy’s ma heard or turned her head or opened her eyes. Until Lucy’s ma screamed. A high scream, surprised, a louder scream than any seen on Gram’s stories. Margie did not hear what she screamed, or if there were words being said. But Margie saw Lucy’s ma’s skin turn red. Her freckles burned up all over. Margie heard her name, the only sound in that screaming sound that Margie could understand. She saw the two bodies on the sofa pull apart. Margie stood and stared at Lucy’s ma and her big breasts hanging, shaking, as she reached for clothes, for coverings. And Margie saw the other body, the breasts, the face that had been hidden from Margie. The kind, calm face of LD. LD smiling at her, LD sitting back bare and open and quiet.

Lucy’s ma moved fast, screamed, hid what she could hide. Made some words in between and out of her screaming sounds.

Get her out of here, Fuck, Margie get out, Go away, Margie, God, Fuck, What is she doing here?

Margie heard. Margie knew she needed to get out. She understood that what she saw should not have been seen. Why, Margie did not know. Wrong, Margie could see, Margie could feel. That she had done something wrong, that something wrong was being done. That bodies are not meant to be seen. That we must hide most of what we are from the world. Margie could not speak or move but she understood, almost, this.
Come on, Margie, LD said, big body rising slowly from the sofa.

LD did not try to hide herself the way Lucy’s ma did, behind shirts and pillows and the F-word and Margie’s name. She walked slowly to Margie and put her hands on her shoulders and moved her halfway through a circle and softly pushed her away from the living room. LD’s hands, gentle on Margie’s shoulders, helped her walk back down the dark hallway to the still-open front door.

It’s okay, Margie, she said.

Don’t worry.

Margie, her heart beating her up, her wind coming fast, the sounds of Lucy’s ma’s screaming still loud inside, could not speak.

Don’t be scared, Margie.

It’s just us, just playing around.

LD used her hands to turn Margie toward her. In the dark of the hallway Margie could see LD only in pieces, only the outline of bare there before her. LD’s hands touched Margie’s shoulders and even though the rest of her body did not touch Margie’s body, Margie could feel her. The heat of her, the hills of her breasts in the dark air between them. The big smell of LD’s body there in the hallway.

And behind them, Lucy’s ma was still saying it.

God, Margie, get out.

LD squeezed Margie’s shoulders. Not hard, not soft. Just to show that she was there, touching, talking to Margie.

What did you want, anyway, Margie?

Margie?

What do you want?

Just, Margie said.

Lucy.

Lucy’s not here. She’s out.

I’ll tell her you were looking for her.

Okay?

Okay, Margie said.

LD helped Margie turn back halfway around in her circle. She pulled the door the rest of the way open and pushed softly against Margie’s back. Margie, feeling hot, feeling things she could not name. Feeling, for once, the unfamiliar feel of feeling. Margie let herself be let out.

Better keep this to yourself, Margie.

Pretend you didn’t see.
LD closed the door and Margie was left alone in the flashing-bulb-lit hallway outside Apartment #1.

Margie heard LD lock the door. She stood there in the hallway, beside the creaking wooden stairs, in that place between her home and Lucy’s, that dark downstairs space they shared, for a long time. Margie put her arms inside her t-shirt and held her breasts in her hands. She touched them, squeezed them, pretended. That her hands were not her hands. That she had not seen.

But this touch, this grab, this needing to feel, this was Margie. Margie, alone, left behind by Lucy, let out by LD, feeling the soft heat of herself, of her body. Margie on the outside, feeling. Finding out what was there, what was hers. This was Margie shut out, alone, with nowhere she was wanted, nowhere safe from the sounds of other people living lives that had nothing to do with her. Margie, heavy in her own hands, keeping this to herself, giving herself over to the soft, safe care of Margie.

32. MARGE

What’s this, Marge?
I see you.
Playing with your big titties down there in the hallway.
Trying to hide.
Your ma is going to crack up.
Marge the Barge caught red-handed.
Titty-handed.
Squeezing her big balloons.
Those dykes get you all worked up, Marge?
How do they feel?
Good, right?
Maybe I won’t tell your ma.
Maybe this will be between me and you, Marge.
Me and you and your big bags you’ve got.
Our secret.

33. MARJORIE

Spring Is Here.
Marjorie stands in the center of it, in the People-pushing-carts heart of the Store, next to a big yellow cardboard display with huge orange letters that say