Margie, red-faced, put her hands around her belly and looked down at herself.

We knew. We had seen.

Out in the dark of the hallway Lucy’s ma could not see, but once she had let Margie inside, once she had Margie in the warm yellow light of the living room, she saw.

You’re not hurt, Margie, Lucy’s ma said.

It’s normal. It’s just your time.

I don’t know, Margie said, and she held herself tight, closed her eyes because she was not sure where to look, what to do.

Your ma hasn’t talked to you about it, Margie?

Ma’s busy.

Busy, right. God, Margie. I keep hearing things up there.

But it’s not my business. Come on, Margie. Come into the bathroom, you’ve got to learn.

Margie listened to what Lucy’s ma said and did what Lucy’s ma told her to do. She learned, let Lucy’s ma tell her about her inside. Herself, her body, what was happening in there. How to watch it and listen and know it. What would happen. What could happen. What should not happen. Not to be afraid of it, the bright red of it, the heat of it, the touch of it. The blood-letting-loose of it. Margie sat with Lucy’s ma a long time in the bright white light of the bathroom and Margie understood.

Her time.

Margie, catching up to Lucy.

Releasing.

Margie, her body, leaking.

Margie, this is what we call growing up.

This is what we call becoming a woman.

This is the smell of it.

This is the look of it.

This is how to hide.

This is the danger.

This is the pain.

This is normal.

42. MARGE

Where’s Marge?
I know you’re here.
Where else are you going to go, Marge?
I know you’re in there.
I can hear you.
Smell you in there.

Let’s talk for a while. I’m sorry I called you fat. I mean fat is a good thing. You know we’re friends, Marge. Sometimes friends say things they don’t mean.

I’m sorry about that.
Will you open up the door and talk to me?

I miss you, Marge. Been spending a lot of time with your ma and shit can that woman talk.
I don’t want to talk to your ma right now. I want to talk to you, Marge. Why are you making all those sounds in there?

Getting your panties in a twist.
Is that old bag in there with you?
I bet she is. I bet the two of you are in there together.
I bet you’re rolling around in there. I hear you. I know what you’re up to.

Open this fucking door Marge.
This is your father out here, Marge.
Your friend.
Open this piece-of-shit door or I will break it down.

You want your ma to come home and see a broken door? Who do you think she’ll blame, Marge? Think she’ll blame me?

You get your pretty porker ass over to this door now and you open it and you let me in there.

One.
Two.

This is no joke, Marge. You hear this?
You hear my fist out here on this door?

Don’t be stupid.
Two-and-a-half.
That’s it, Marge.
Three.

Fuck.

Look at my fucking hand.

Look what you made me do.

Stupid.
Get over here and pick this door up.
Get over here and say you’re sorry.

43. MARJORIE

Marjorie sits alone in the afternoon dark of the almost-empty Club and eyes-down nods when Mac says, The usual, Marjorie?

The usual. So many days and days and weeks and months gone by and Marjorie is tired from so many things that have nothing to do with her usual. What Gram says Marjorie knows about Ma. Ma and what she did. Ma, sick, sick of being Ma, sick of the light of the no-sound television, of the quiet of Gram, of the bare-bulb apartment, of Marjorie, of the night sounds of the sofa springs, of before, and after, of all the things.

Lucy running free.

Departments leaking into departments, things falling from shelves faster than Marjorie can stack.

And does it matter?
About Ma?

If it is not your self who does it to you, who is going to do it?

Marjorie leans forward and crosses her arms on the bar and lays her head down on her arms. Hears the sound of her coat all around. She closes her eyes and waits for her drink and does not even feel thirsty, does not even want to talk to Mac today. Spring Is Here and Marjorie’s coat is not even off. No usual at all. This day, these days, Marjorie, so far away from the usual.

Marjorie, sent home early from the Store today. Two hours early, because Steve said so. Because Steve pinched her arm and punched her card for her and said that People want to feel Welcome, not scared.

You’re scaring them, Marjorie.

Get out of here.

Not her usual. So much time spent in her special place in the Store and Marjorie has never left before the end of her shift. Not when she was sick, not when it was her birthday or Gram’s birthday or on any of these days with that box of Ma at home waiting. Never gone on a vacation day. Even on every one of those days in the life of Marjorie that might not have gone as usual, she has held on hard, has made sure that the hours of the day happen where they should happen, that the day, the things, her self, stay usual.

And then today happens.

Today Marjorie sits in the Club with her arms hugging the bar, with her head