A Heart Beating Hard

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to talk or feel bad. You can really think. And no people around up there, either. Just quiet, and the trees, and those fireflies. It’s going to blow your mind.

Good, Benjamin.

All right, Marjorie. I know you want to get back to that door. And I have these asshole eggs to put out.

Benjamin lifts his hand from Marjorie’s shoulder and her skin under her vest under her shirt feels cold and tingling. All this time, Benjamin had been touching her. And Marjorie, so far gone inside her self, is only now noticing. Only now feeling these cold little fires, here, where Benjamin’s hand was. Marjorie, feeling what was there only after. This huge feeling of what has already gone.

47. MARGIE

Margie kept the secret under her side of the bed so that Gram would not see it.

Her secret, pushed just far enough under so that it could not be seen, but close enough for Margie’s fingers to find in the dark.

When Margie was alone, at night, or during the day when Gram was out, away, when Gram was gone off to wherever she went, Margie reached her arm down under the bed and felt for the secret. Margie felt for it and when the smooth fabric of the secret touched Margie’s skin, she put her hand tight around it, pulled it out from under the bed, and held it.

Margie held the soft secret Lucy’s ma had given her close to her nose and breathed it inside her. She rubbed her cheek to the soft-hard circles and twisted the springy straps around her fingers. Margie held the secret close and thought about Lucy and Lucy’s ma and LD down there, below her, moving or sleeping or eating or talking, living, slow, quiet and safe in the good of Apartment #1.

Alone, at night, when Margie could not sleep inside the rise and fall of Gram’s snores and the sounds of Ma’s bedroom, Margie held on soft to her secret and went down with her breath into the slow, steady beat of herself. And down in there, inside Margie’s inside parts, was Lucy. The smell of Lucy’s grape lip gloss spread out strong and warm inside Margie. Lucy’s colors, her pinks, the light blonde of her hair, the brown of her freckles, were painted up and down and all over the inside of Margie. Sometimes when she listened to her heart beating, Margie wondered about Lucy’s inside, about what she smelled like in there, about how her heart sounded. Margie wondered if they sounded the same, her and Lucy, if friends could beat their blood to the same beat.

Can any of us be expected to understand what Margie felt?
Are we all really as separate as we seem?
Yes, we think so.
We think it is easier this way.
We think this is the way things are meant to be.

48. MARGE

Show me, Marge.
You love this cute little bunny so much, you show me.
I see you and him.
How you sleep.
Fat arms wrapped around his bunny neck. Lips on his little bunny face.
Do you love him, Marge?
Tell me how much you love your little faggot bunny.
Why don’t you talk, Marge?
You tease.
Why don’t you move?
Are you scared of me?
Too stupid, is what I think.
Stupid like your ma. Ugly like your ma.
But don’t tell her I said so, Marge.
I don’t mean it.
I love your ma like you love your blue faggot bunny rabbit.
Hold her close and feel her mouth.
You won’t tell nobody, I know.
Maybe just that bunny. I bet you tell him all your secrets.
Well you know what, Marge?
You tell that bunny to watch out.
You tell him I’ll rip him up and swallow him whole.
Come on.
Can’t take a joke?
It’s just too easy with you, Marge.
You got to learn to put up more of a fight.

49. MARJORIE

Marjorie, again, always, again sitting back up against the hard headboard, feet, knees, thighs, belly, self sunk down into the soft, too-soft bed. The shape of Ma in the mattress becoming every night more and more the shape of Marjorie and