Dykes don’t want you.
Your ma don’t want you.
I still do, though, Marge.
Mustang’s here for you.
Look at you, getting fatter every day. Keep eating like that and you’ll never leave this house.
But that’s okay, Marge.
I don’t mind.
You’re still pretty to me.
You think I only go for the skinny ones but that’s not true.
I like to hold on to them, Marge.
I like something to squeeze.
And you got a lot of you to squeeze.
You got a lot to hold on to.

64. MARJORIE

The day is not day and the night is not night. The light is warm, is slow to leave, is the blue light left behind after the sun goes down behind the hills.
Marjorie stands still in her self outside the Club. Resting. At rest. Listening to the whoosh sounds of the cars whooshing by on this side, the People-soup sound of the People laughing and yelling inside the walls of the Club on this side, the beat, beat, beat sound of pounding down deep in her under.
The sign.
The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks.
The brick walls of the Club, protecting, holding.
Keeping the People in, keeping Marjorie away.
Marjorie does not try to open the door of the Club. She stands in the middle of the sidewalk and she steps two steps to the grass on the side to let the People pass by. Resting, here, in her place, halfway between the Store and home, not inside, but here. The air is deep into spring air, warm wind leftovers from a wet-parking-lot-steaming-in-sunlight day. Marjorie moves slow inside with the come and go of her wind. She will not go into the Club. Marjorie knows that Mac and Suzanne are set in their angry. Marjorie knows that Mac and Suzanne are not going to open the door. But here Marjorie is, at the Club, outside the Club, sorry, in the center of her circle, because this is her place.
And where else is there to go?
The soft round backs of the hills all around her sometimes surprise Marjorie
because they are always here. Green to orange to yellow to brown to snow to brown to green. People get so used to looking down into their own selves that they forget to look up and around and away. Marjorie turns her head up and the whole world looks bigger. More sky, more space, more hills, the mountain. She turns in a slow circle so that she can see the whole huge blue-to-brown-to-green place all around her.

Lucy, everywhere.

Marjorie, from the pocket of her too-warm purple puffy coat, takes just a little bit of Lucy and lets her out into the air around the Club. Lucy here inside Marjorie and let go. Let out. A little bit of Lucy gone to the top of the Club, to the sidewalk, to the trees. Lucy up on the tops of the hills and into the open windows of the Club and in the grass and in the gray streaks of cloud and in her hair and nose and mouth and in her skin and in her inside. Lucy, all over. Marjorie opens her lips up wide to take the biggest breaths she can take. The air warm and cleaning. Marjorie moves her wind through her in waves that roll out long like the sea, tall like the hills. Taking in and pushing out. More and more Lucy in and in and in.

And Ma under the bed. Ma in that box. Ma will come next.

Marjorie spins slowly inside this big circle of blue-light-lit world inside the hills and feels so much Lucy and not much at all of Ma or Him or before. There is the bad inside, the kick, the little bent body of Tony, the Bible torn to chewed-up bits, but time is time and those times have passed by. Marjorie turns slow to see all the things she can see, moves slow and safe through the departments inside. Alone in her self, quiet, free to be and look down her aisles, stacking up high what is too much to feel.

A man’s voice.

Excuse me. Hello. Can I ask you a question? Can I ask you what you’re doing?

Marjorie stops her circle and turns her head to look at the man. He is short and fat and wearing a shiny red jacket and barely haired and wearing glasses and not very old and not at all young.

Some departments inside close and Marjorie catches hold of her wind before she speaks.


The man smiles and Marjorie cannot see any angry at all in his small round face. His lips stick out a little farther than his nose and there are small sharp brown hairs all over his rolling chin.
Oh, good. Good. Today is a beautiful day. Me, I am an outside guy too. I just walk and walk.

Marjorie presses her lip tight to her lip. She puts her hands deep and careful into her pockets and nods.

The man raises his arm and waves at Marjorie and keeps his smile up high on his face. His hand is the dark of dirty and his skin looks smoothed over hard in places.

Excuse me for not introducing myself sooner. My name is Mister Norman. Mister Norman for most people because Mister is how you get respect in this world, you know? But you look different to me. You look nice. You can call me Norman, just Norman. What’s your name?

Marjorie. My name is Marjorie.

Good name! Mar-jor-ie. Mar-jor-ie. Strong. Three syllables. I used to be an English teacher. College. No, little ones. Third graders, maybe. We’d clap like this. Mar-jor-ie. You can clap to know the syllables. What do you do, Marjorie? Me, I used to be a doctor too but before, you know. Long time ago. And now I walk. I’m a walker. I’m good at walking.

All these words. This man is a little like Benjamin. Marjorie looks close at his eyes, his big chin, his smile. Like Benjamin but not good-looking like Benjamin. A fatter, faster-talking Benjamin. But smiling, and kind, and stopped here to talk with her.

I work in the Store. I work with the People. Say Hello, help People if they need help.

Oh, I love stores. I walk all around in stores. Hey, Marjorie, do you want to walk? We are just standing here talking and this sidewalk is starting to hurt my feet. I need to walk. I need to move, you know? I don’t walk fast. I walk slow. I walk so I can know what is happening, you know? So I can figure out where I am. You can walk with me. Let’s go.

Marjorie looks at the Club and wants to be inside with Mac and Suzanne and the People, with her Shirley Temple, in her usual place. She looks at Norman and he is moving from foot to foot, side to side, slow, still smiling.

Well, Norman. I am sorry. This is where I go.

Where? Here? This? This sidewalk? Okay, that’s okay. We can walk here. I just need to walk some. Here, this is good. We can walk up this sidewalk and then back down it. How does that sound?

Marjorie feels around inside her self and her departments seem fine, quiet, still. No hot waves or heart banging around or blown-up parts.
Okay, that sounds good. But just here. Just in front of the Club. This part of the sidewalk here.

Great, sure. You can walk miles just in one small spot, just putting your feet in place, forward and back and forward again. You can take a whole long trip just in that little part you’re walking on. I took a trip to Egypt and England and China. The whole world, I’ve been to. In Egypt they ride camels and if you want to walk, everywhere you walk you walk on sand. And in Japan I ate a giant live fish and I was walking next to the sea and I jumped into it and just swam and swam.

Marjorie is gentle with her hands in her pockets. She walks slow and looks down at her feet while Norman talks. His sneakers are white and wide and have holes in places where she can see his red socks underneath. Marjorie steps her right foot down and then her left foot down and she sees that Norman is watching their feet too and she sees that Norman’s feet are moving the same as her feet.

What do you think about that, Marjorie? About all those places I go and the fish? Where did you take a trip to?

Marjorie is not sure what Norman is saying. She is watching their feet meet the sidewalk together and together.

She says, Oh, yes. Good.

Good, yeah. Yeah. Where did you take a trip to?


I know, I know what you mean. Cash, right? Need a lot of cash to take trips. Better to just be where you are and be happy there, right? I am really happy here. Really happy walking here up and down this sidewalk. Feels like we’re going somewhere special. Going somewhere and here.

Marjorie tries taking her steps a little faster and when she does Norman also steps a little faster. She slows way down and Norman does the same. Together, the same, they turn and walk back and forth on the sidewalk in front of the Club. So much time of her life spent inside the Club sitting on her stool and not even one time did Marjorie ever think that she would walk so far and for so long outside of it. Something new. Something different.

I am happy here. I am happy just walking and talking. Very good to meet you, Marjorie. Are you happy, too? Are you happy here too, Marjorie?

What? Sorry.

Are you happy?

Happy. I don’t know about that.
Norman stops his steps and Marjorie keeps walking alone. Maybe Norman needs a rest but Marjorie is not tired yet. Marjorie likes feeling her legs strong and alive under her. Seeing the same squares of gray, the same hills rising around again and again. Marjorie wants to keep walking, so she does, up the sidewalk, and back down. Norman stands in the place where he stopped, big-lipped mouth open, staring at her. When Marjorie’s steps take her close to him again, he reaches his hand out and taps her shoulder.

Hey! Hey, Hey, Marjorie, hey. I feel sad right now. I was happy and now I’m sad. I feel sad that you said you aren’t happy here. Why aren’t you happy?

Marjorie stops and looks at Norman. She moves her shoulder down and away, closer to her self, because she does not know yet if Norman is People She Minds or People She Does Not Mind. But his face is what he says. The fallen-down low of sorry, the opened-up of sad.

I’m sorry you’re sad, Norman. I just said that I don’t know about happy. That’s just me. My self. Too many things. You know, life.

Oh, life. Life. I don’t mean life, Marjorie? Are you listening? I want to know if you are happy here on the sidewalk walking. You know, right now. If you are happy out in the air here taking this walk with me. Life is too long to be happy, you know? But in small parts you can be happy. Like now, on the walk. Are you happy here on the sidewalk?

Marjorie hears what Norman is saying. Not happy about the whole big whole of life. Happy in just one little piece. A good department, an aisle easy to walk down. The hills around Marjorie are much darker now. The light is deep underwater blue and the day is almost sunk down into night. Marjorie feels her body warm and living and even as she stands here, still, she can feel her self inside move with the beat of their walking. She breathes the air clean and deep into her. Lets Lucy in, and out, and in, out. Marjorie bounces on the fronts of her feet, wants to keep walking. Feels empty, light. Feels good.

Okay, Norman. I see. Yes, I am happy. Here walking on the sidewalk, I am happy too.

Good. Good, good. I feel better now. Not so sad. Happy. Hap-py. See, you can clap for any word. Two syllables. Hap-py. Like stepping. One foot, the other foot. Hap-py. Okay, good. Let’s keep going. On our trip. Let’s walk some more. I walk all day and I can walk all night too. I can go forever. Until I get tired. Until I need to sleep and then I sleep and then I walk some more. Want to keep going, Marjorie?

Sure, Norman. I will keep walking with you. For a while.

Marjorie moves one foot in front of the other, not too fast, not too slow. Feel-
ing her inside soft and strong and painted over white and clean by the warm almost-night air. The lights of the Club glow brighter and brighter as the air darkens and Marjorie looks there and then does not look there. Marjorie keeps her eyes down on the sidewalk, on her feet, on Norman’s feet here next to hers, on the to and from of the trip.

Above them, a streetlight buzzes alive, so that even in the dark, the walk can keep going. Marjorie might understand Norman’s idea of happy. She does not know if what she feels right now is happy or not, but Marjorie knows that here on the sidewalk, in the warm-air end of the light, she feels close to good.


Going somewhere and coming back and going again. Moving. Keeping with the going, the coming.

The man named Norman is talking and Marjorie is not listening. Marjorie feels good enough here, walking, in her self and out in the air. She wants Lucy to feel it too, the sidewalk beneath, the hills around. Marjorie lets Lucy a little more out into the world. She looks up while she walks and in the light of the streetlights Marjorie sees the chain of the backs of the hills holding all around her. Marjorie turns and feels and looks and where it is dark out there Marjorie sees the forever of all the empty, the open, and the stars, the far-away bulbs of the stars slowly switching on into life.

65. MARGE

I’m so lonely, Marge.
You don’t know what it’s like.
People need people.
Your ma leaves me. All alone.
And what does she expect me to do?
I got needs, Marge.
It’s normal.
You don’t know because you’re a big dyke.
Or maybe you do.
I just can’t be alone all the time.
You and me, Marge.
Do me a favor.
My mouth hurts. My mouth needs something. My tongue gets antsy.
You know, Marge? I know you know.
Go get me that old bag’s book.