People always bring up math. A million fish in the sea. One million sperm, flushed. One million people starving somewhere near my backyard but not in it. One in a million possibilities—a green bird with a yellow beak. Call it pumpkin. Call it a nascent jack-o’-lantern with already a face. A girl playing basketball as the sun splashes into the sea. And then they take it down a notch. One in a 1,000. One in a 100. One in ten chances and nobody will cover the odds. At twenty weeks they saw something. At twenty weeks the bend in the spine, the crook of the neck, the shape of the nose, too many signs to add up to human. This imprint of a child who had not yet twisted her head toward breast, who knew only the stuff of fish—water, bob, gases, flip—came pre-broken. The world wouldn’t have its chance to do its best to her. The only thing now was to wait—wait for the twenty more weeks, wait for the gasp or air, wait for the ventilator, wait for the mask, wait for the paralytics that kept her fins from flapping against herself, bruising her forehead, bluing her cheeks. The mother had always loved fish. She would spend her life regretting the ocean.
<Microbortion 2>

It attached to her uterus like a wad of gum under a table. It ballooned inside of her until her insides were more peppermint than blood. When she finally made it to the doctor, it was too late to remove the growth. Twenty weeks was the limit and even God could see she was pregnant now. At week forty, she tried to dislodge that wad with the force of a chisel. As the doctors tugged on the head, they pulled the woman inside out. Now, at the playground, she’s stuck to the bench, stuck on her ass, stuck drinking Tab, smacking gum against gum against gum.

<Microbortion 3>

She loved the baby already just like she loved otters. She loved the baby already just like she loved the swell of her breasts, the frog of her belly, the clanking of her widening hips. But this baby couldn’t be hers. Twelve-years-old. She loved otters. That’s why she let them swim in the sea.

<Microbortion 4>

She would pay for it. That’s what they always told her. She would pay. And, since he wouldn’t pay, she did pay, or tried to. She worked for tips. She sold her books. She gave someone a blow job for twenty-five dollars. She’d given them for more, for less, in the past. She added up the cash. She took it to the clinic. The clinic told her to keep her money. She’d
need it for diapers. She took the money. She handed it to the he. Then, she reached up inside her vagina and gave the he the uterus, the fallopian tubes, the amniotic sac. She'd given more for less, before. As she lay on the floor, her sweater absorbing the blood, she remembered one good thing. But then it slipped away before she could grab hold of it. It didn’t matter, anymore, anyway. Not like the handful of blood. That meant something. It meant all the world to the he as he held the throbbing it in his inexpensive hands.

<Microbortion 5>

Enough should be enough. The children were like barnacles. Multiplying. Sticky. She got pregnant every time she sneezed. As if she was in charge of dust in her nose. As if she were in charge of the sun in her eyes. As if she was in charge of the putting it in. No. She was just in charge of the taking it out. So she took them out. Sometimes full term. Sometimes preterm. But the boat. It was getting heavy. It was starting to sink. The men saw her. Instead of sticking their hands out to help her up, they stuck their dicks in her. They sat on her. They pushed her down, holding onto her shoulders. And then she went under. As the last air from her lungs (no one else’s) pushed bubbles into their world, she wished she’d been fitted with a man guard, a chastity belt, a vagina that was part piranha. But instead, she’d been fitted with a working uterus, luscious lips, and a bad habit of forgetting to vote.