

On Binzuru's festival day, also Becky's birthday, three months after she died, my Mom and I walk through a field to visit the Trappist monastery in Massachusetts. Though the monks' church services are private, visitors are allowed to sit in a side chamber of a dark stone chapel with cobalt windows, a sign reads SILENCE PLEASE. My mom chatters, and I smile and whisper, do you not know what silence means? She goes on with her story, explaining that whispering is OK. She feels she has a sort of in in a church, because she was a nun, a Sister of the Presentation, a small order in Eastern Massachusetts, for fifteen years before she left because of a mental breakdown. When she recovered she got married and had me and my sister. The monks are chanting that their God is a devouring fire, I secretly take my shoes off and place my feet on the cold stone floor.

During my father's funeral, his niece, a sixty year old woman, sat behind my sister and I, and talked through the service. My sister began rifling through her purse and when I asked what she needed she said dryly "My gun."

You think, oh, that looks like a bird, but when you get closer you see it's a paper bag.

When Becky comes back from the underworld, she is very hungry. Alongside Jerry Springer on the TV, she opens her eyes and looks at me across the room and says in a rough whisper, “Sar, go get me something to eat.” The room becomes busy with doctors asking questions, to which she either says nothing or “I’m fucking hungry.” We have to hide the phone in a drawer so she won’t call the cafeteria. Eventually, a doctor says it’s ok to order a small meal from the cafeteria, she opens the drawer, dials the cafeteria, and orders two cheeseburgers. While she waits for the food, I bring in Saltines packets, all there is in the kitchenette. I hand her one and she says “Sar, not crackers!” as if I just don’t understand what she needs, “I need REAL food,” she says, crumpling the Saltine into her mouth. She gestures with her hands like she’s holding a large plate of food.” I know.

When asked to draw a head with a face most people put the eyes too high leaving just a few inches for a tiny forehead, not acknowledging the head's true roundness. In fact, the eyes are generally just below the true middle of the head.

When Lee was around three she was with me in the bathroom when I had my period. She asked why there was blood so I told her that some blood comes out of me for a few days each month. It's not because I'm hurt, it's just the way my body works, it doesn't need this blood so it sends it out, this happens to most women. Today she's with me again, Mama, how does the blood get out? How does the blood get out?! she insists. My body gives it a signal and then it flows out. I say. NO! NO! Not HOW does it get out. HOW does it get OUT? she is screaming now. I keep my cool. You mean is there a hole for it to come out of? I ask. YES! she yells collapsing on the floor with relief that I have understood her question. Oh. Yes there is a hole. She is listening now. You know how you have a vulva? Well in the middle of your vulva there is a hole, it's called a vagina, it's more like a tunnel that leads inside your body. She runs away and hides. I go after her, backpedaling on telling her that her body has a hole. It is a tunnel not a hole, like a very special tunnel. I say.

Knowing a way of making something, making something, knowing how. Not knowing, never knowing, not knowing how. Fake something, make something, you know you know how. Know a way of making something, make something, know how.

I watch a podcast that demonstrates the burning of a serving of raisin bran. After burning it, nothing is left but some tiny iron filings. I don't believe it, so I try it, and it's true, in the plate are some iron filings, like bits of fine pencil lead. A miracle.



While she is unconscious her brain waves look more like a sleeping person's. Doctor Ruiz says she thinks it's only a matter of time, that she just needs to remember how to wake up. She seems awake, she keeps scratching and pulling at the hairnet of electrodes monitoring her mind, her hand moves mechanically to her head. Though she moves this way you cannot wake her. I try to move her hand away from her head, and it is impossible. Her fist and arm, though skin and bone, are very strong, her arm cannot be lowered. Dr. Ruiz, a fat woman, warm and soft, gets very close to Becky, leans on the bed and holds her arm and says "Rebecca, now, we are all waiting for you right here. We are taking very good care of you and we're ready for you to come back to us. Everything is ok Rebecca, we're ready for you to wake up. Wake up Rebecca. There's nothing to be afraid of.

Jason, Becky's husband went out of control when Becky got sick, his alcoholism returned and he became an Opioid addict, he turned into a hapless demon. He broke into my mom's house in the night to steal money, but he locked himself out of his car. He tried to throw a chair in the emergency waiting room, and he dropped it on his own foot and broke it.

The doll has painted-on eyelids you are supposed to wash off to reveal the baby's eyes. Leonide, four years old, puts the doll's head under the cold tap and rubs the eyes; it seems like a baptism. Later she puts bits of light grey poster putty over an owl doll's big glass eyes. With this, it gains the ability to close its eyes. I never thought of this owl as unable to close its eyes. After she goes to bed, I look around at the many animal forms in our home; their inability to close their eyes stands out like a strange joke.

Outside the Buddhist temple in Nara, Japan, tame deer graze in the small field that once was the site of the temple complex's lecture hall. I think of the deer listening to a lecture. While I'm here Becky attempts suicide. The figure of Binzuru sits outside the temple, his dark wood face, skeletal and riddled with wear, is loving and frightening. His hands are in a mudra of fearlessness. He does have healing powers, but he led an irresponsible life, drinking, and manipulating people with his powers. He was forced to stay in the world forever. Sitting in the lotus position, on a throne, he looks like Becky sitting cross-legged on her hospital bed, his red scapula looks like her hospital gown.

While I was pregnant I developed nerve damage in both my hands. Anything with a slightly rough texture felt very rough, a cotton dish towel felt like burlap, burlap itself felt like the spines of a cactus. We used muslin wraps to swaddle Leonide, and I asked my husband again and again, don't these seem too rough?

In high school I thought, when you see an afterimage of the sun, it's a blob, but it's a picture of the sun. I wondered if my eyes could form a more elaborate afterimage, so I took a strong camera flash to my darkened room and tried it out. I saw my hands, my posters (the text on which I could read ) my lamp, the rug, the bed, all of it. The image was not in the eyes, but on the retina, inside my brain, so I could examine it with my eyes closed. I felt a secret was revealed.

I make a face on a pancake with slices of banana for eyes, a blueberry nose, and a bacon mouth. I have to finally clearly explain to Lee what meat is. She has been grasping at what it is for awhile. Turkeys make turkey. She has said, or, meat grows in the forest, it's a kind of mushroom. This morning she is sure bacon is a dried fruit. I have to come clean. Meat isn't fruit sweetie, it's the body of an animal that died. The bacon is part of a pig. At first she laughs, but I go on. The pig dies and then it's cut up into meat that we cook and eat. I say. She looks down for a long time. After a long time she looks up with an angry expression. She puts her finger a quarter inch from the bacon. A pig....died here?! she says. Yes. I say. Are you angry? I ask. SAD SAD SAD.

After Becky dies, me and Boris and our dog Essie are at my Mom's house. I'm pregnant, and I've developed a kind of insomnia where just as you fall asleep, you wake up, over and over again through the night, night after night. It feels cruel.



Undergoing hearing tests has been part of my life, you begin by going into a soundproof room, getting headphones put on, and then listening to a set of tones, raising your hand if you hear one. In this room I'm able to give my sharpest attention. At an incredibly high tone I raise my hand unsurely, I feel I might have imagined the sound. listen to a list of words and repeat them. A man says the words slowly and enthusiastically, like he's suggesting I do these things, cry!.....hide!.....die!.....sign!

I picture my sister's body burning during cremation. It fills me with love. In cremation, the skeleton collapses and breaks apart but the bones don't burn. A magnet is passed over them to remove the metals, then the bones are pulverized into the ash that's given to us. I wish one of her bones could have been left as a fragment, not pulverized, a part of her scapula.

At five in the morning, I've fallen asleep, and the dog, Essie, asks to go out. I quickly dress and go out in the quiet yard, it's peaceful for a moment, a breeze barely moves the air, Becky died, I think. Then Essie runs toward me whining in a panic, sprayed in the face by a skunk. It doesn't smell like skunk spray, instead it's a horrid chemical fume, like smoke from burning plastic. (If Beck could comment she would say, "It was me, the skunk was clearly me.")

After she is born the word abide comes to me, she seems to remain on the cusp of the world those first weeks, she practices moving her arms and hands, they wave and noodle about in mechanical jerks, she's like a tiny robot trying to learn to operate herself, her shoulders are still covered in lanugo, a furl-like hair she grew in the womb. Her breath comes in gasps and pauses, and her eyes are eyelashless, navy blue, and unblinking. I never knew that this is how we begin.

Becky tried to hasten her death several times, people kept pulling her back. She died from Addiction, partial blindness, Brittle Type 1 Diabetes, Bulimia, Charcot's Foot, partial deafness, Gastroparesis, Heart Disease, Kidney Disease, Major Depression with Suicidality, and Neuropathy.

In the night I remember the desert caravan on the doorknob in the house where I grew up, there was a place where the brass coating was worn off, camels, all loaded up and a lot of people walking in the sand, pushing on.

Zero doesn't mean nothing. Zero means energy is there, but it's in a static form. It's not doing anything, it's sitting. I want you to dismantle this and make your own work out of it. Dismantle it and make one work or many other formations, in their own way. This work is very old. A rigid structure should move into a process of transformation. You should see a dynamic transformation of things. I want you to intervene and break it and let it be transformed into many other things, they explode, like a big bang.

When Stop and Shop opens at six, me and my mom go and buy tomato juice and I throw my skunky clothes, my favorite clothes, in a dumpster.



What is nighttime? my daughter Leonide (pronounced Leo-need) asks. You know, nighttime, when it's dark, and we go to sleep. I say No, not what is nighttime. What is nighttime? she demands. Oh, what is nighttime. Well, you know how the earth rotates? Nighttime is when half of the earth is in shadow because it's facing away from the sun. I guess it's sort of like nighttime is a giant shadow. I say. Oh, a shadow! Nighttime is a shadow! she rejoices.