

## *This is young intuition*

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The morning's sleep learned to stay longer and deeper in Olivia's eyes. It felt safe there in the corners, tucked behind dry lids and clumped lashes. Shirt corners and the soft knuckles of clenched fists could not rub it out.

Either Olivia did not know how to ask her sleep to leave in the morning, or she was polite, or she liked to keep the boundaries between her dreams and the day blurry. When living in a basement made of notebooks, there is no sun; the morning does not come until electricity does. Olivia's mother controlled the sunrise.

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It was early and Olivia's mother had been awake long enough to brew, pour, and finish her first cup of coffee. The closed door and long stairway kept the smell of coffee far, so it would not wake Olivia until her mother thought it was time. Olivia's mother finished her coffee, which meant taking a photograph, which meant opening the heavy door to the basement, which meant walking down the stairs, steep with old architecture, which meant turning on the light.

"Morning, Livie." The faint chemical of the day's first Polaroid intruded as violently as the light from the lamp. Olivia squinted her nostrils and shaded her eyes in an attempt to keep the day from starting, and breathed in the last bit of the night.

Olivia mmm-ed a "morning" in a language only mothers of tired daughters understand. Her mother sat on Olivia's bed, like she did every morning; and pasted the photograph in her notebook, careful to break the binding to baptize the day's new pages, like she did every morning; but then she did not get up and go upstairs, like she did every other morning. Instead, Olivia's mother just sat there, keeping the covers tight on Olivia's thin legs, the caps of her knees almost threatening to cut the blanket. The pressure of her mother and smell and breathing pushed the words out of Olivia, to ask her to move, to let her legs free.

"Can I see?"

Her mother turned the notebook to Olivia, keeping the angle so that Olivia needed to prop herself on her elbows to see, a hinge almost as strict as the one on her knees. A movement that forced her mother to readjust.

The Polaroid caught the coffee's lacing chased up the side of the porcelain, a

coffee that was inhaled or poured down the sink, a draining of the cup that could not have come from patient sipping. A black and white that said the morning was off.

Olivia knew better than to ask, but the haste of her mother's coffee was something that couldn't be avoided.

"What's wrong?"

To get out of bed meant asking this question. Mornings are never easy.

Olivia blinked, and Olivia blinked harder, and her mother began.

"Do you remember that dream with the train and the lake and the bodies?"

"I thought it stopped."

"It did. But I think it is trying to tell me something. By coming back. I wish I could keep the dream close, like in my photos. My notebooks."

"You cannot photograph your dreams."

Olivia could not help but notice the tone she was using, the same one she heard on television and public radio, the kind of voice that mostly listens to itself. It felt older than her lips, out of place, but she was experienced and her mother didn't notice when she used it. Like most things, Olivia was practiced in her performances.

Her mother touched the notebooks that held the walls of Olivia's room.

The dream had plagued Olivia's mother as a child. The kind that comes back most nights but disappears the moment you wake. The kind that feels like grasping fog. Olivia's mother knew it was the same dream from the sweat on her pillow, the sheets knotted tight around her feet. When she would try and pin down the dream, the specifics slipped from her hold. A memory heavy enough to know it is there, but malleable enough to skirt any attempt to name it.

## *This is not containing a dream*

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The dream always begins with a train, buried at the bottom of a lake. Bodies dot the icy surface. Their likeness to cereal was always particularly unnerving to Olivia's mother. In the dream, Olivia's mother never sees the train crash into the water, but can always feel it, somehow behind her eyes, the way you feel a glass break before it hits the ground. The dream begins after the train has crashed, enough time for it to settle at the bottom and release its contents to float to the surface.

When the dream begins, Olivia's mother sees the bodies and the train and the track all at once, like her eyes are able to scan the scene instantly and completely. She knows the entirety of her place without pause, an overwhelming rush of detail. Inevitably though, she is always drawn to the track, past the bodies and the dark waters and the train haunting below the surface. The train track is broken or unfinished or lost, something jagged and incomplete. The rails reach out into the air like a child ready to jump. It is the look of the arms of the track that she is unable to let go of. Even when she tries to rescue the passengers from the dark of the lake, she sees the mangled steel like a plea.

When Olivia's mother jumps into the water, she is not overcome by the cold or the shock. She stays warm, almost uncomfortably warm. She can only focus on the feeling of the bodies, the stiff give of the passenger's skin, when she tries to pull them out of the water. It is the bloat of drowning and the thickness of freezing limbs that alienates the sensation of skin on skin. This is not the feeling of holding another body. Their fingers are fat round, choked by their rings. Olivia's mother rescues each passenger even though it is apparent, halfway through, that no one is alive. The effort takes hours or seconds or days.

When the bodies are emptied from the lake, stacked haphazardly along the shore, Olivia's mother hears the force of another train running toward the tracks. She screams, but the air in her lungs races through her lips without sound. Olivia's mother cannot discern between the fear of more dead and the work required to exhume new bodies from the lake, but is, nonetheless, overcome by a need to stop the train. The train will start everything over. The train will kill people. The train will break her.

The dream always ends the same, in the sudden death-torn-wakeup of a

nightmare. Her mother's eyes break open, gasping. Each time she remembers the feeling of contorting her body in an attempt to call for help, but can never remember exactly what she was trying to say. Maybe it is the feeling of such loud silence, or the inability to change the inevitable, maybe it was the unwelcomed connection between bodies and cereal. Maybe it wasn't any of these things.

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When Olivia's mother's dream came back, it brought back those links in her mind with the unbalance of déjà vu.

Olivia's mother rearranged herself on the bed and fingered the frayed corner of Olivia's blanket. The yellow wrapped itself around the plump of Olivia's mother's fingers, bulging the same pale of the bodies in the lake.

Olivia pulled her mother onto her chest. Her mother's heaves dampening the soft thunderbird t-shirt ten sizes bigger than Olivia's body. The shirt that her mother said belonged to Olivia's father. The fullness of their family wrapped in Olivia's arms on her twin bed. Olivia and her mother held each other until their bodies ached with the angle of unplanned hugs. Until the gray of the shirt was darker and her mother's emotions were forgotten and the moment passed and Olivia's mother collected her notebook and went back upstairs, like she did every morning.