

CONFESSIONS

Today I held your heart. I put my fingers
around your vessels. I washed until
they glowed and your blood shook out
in so many shades of rust. And, yes, it's true,
only the other morning I broke
your spine. I shivered at your bony ridges,
the color of so many whitened trees
in winter. Afterwards, I carved into
your wrinkles until I found
that startled dark pink, and I uncurled
your stiff fingers to lay my thumb
on your palm, your tendons drawn
under the weak October light.

I want you to know that this is beautiful—
your barrel chest and wasted thighs,
your singing neck and painted nails,
even the crusts on your skin and the hair
on your upper lip. I want you to know
that of those who have held you close,
I have held you closer, my hands
cradled around your brain or pressed
warm against your ribs. In the end,
I want you to know how we smell you
on our skins as we walk to the locker room,
how we undress, our backs turned
in modesty, covering our secrets—
what we are naked and on the inside—
your body reflected in all of ours,
no perfect mirror but enough to make us
nervous, so awed and almost fearful
at the quiet pulse within us.

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