

ali lanzetta

## wishbones

*eat the crust of your toast to make your hair curly.*

since my hair was already curly, and i didn't want it to be, because mom always got the comb stuck in it and it was always in my eyes, i carefully munched my peanut butter sandwiches right up to the edges of the bread and slipped the curls of crust under the table to the dogs, who were always waiting for me to drop some part of my lunch on accident. a lot of times i did it on purpose. two brothers and an orphan, they had those big globey auburn eyes, giant long-limbed mystics, they were dogs of the forest. the swishing cinnamon feathers on their chests, their very floppy ears, their long, shimmery hair that swirled in ringlets when it rained.

*if you sew anything on sunday, when you get to heaven you'll have to pick the stitches out with your nose.*

it's sunny, and i sit sewing. pants are too long in proportion to my bottom. this is a problem. i never get new pants because of it. i wear the faded navy postman-pants with knee socks hiding my ankles underneath, nomatter what the weather. in the sun i sew pants with pins in my mouth, little balls of pink and yellow and white poking out, a temporary decoration. i hope the neighbors in their upstairs windows can see me naked on the rug, bent over the sewing machine like it's a typewriter, a kitchen sink, a crystal ball. when i'm finished i'm never finished: i sew two of my fingers together on accident. crap. bending my eyebrows i go to careful work with the seam-puller, hoping i am allowed to be all the time naked and whole, flying my cloud through the stars, when i get there.

*an acorn at the window will keep lightening out.*

i removed all the acorns from my window, why don't you come over. i removed the candles, snake plants, tailfeathers, and tuning forks. in their place, i put three glass birds. one for me, one for you, and one for the peculiar hybrid animal that is both of us. the sun glints through their thick wings and into my face, just before all the clouds turn black and turn my eyes off with a snap.

*it's bad luck to open an umbrella inside the house—especially if you put it over your head.*

my alter-ego is a stick-girl with no mouth named daphne. her face is oval and empty. she wears either a triangle dress or nothing at all. she is most often seen with an umbrella. sometimes it's raining but sometimes it's not, but she's partial to galoshes. she's always prepared for the worst, the leaves on her trees filled with apples shaped like ripe, heavy hearts that fall. the other day i was walking by a park and i found a wet slab of concrete on a sunny sidewalk by a white short picket fence and a cherry tree. crouched like a cat with a fingertip pebble, i carved her. holding her umbrella open. permanently mouthless and etched in the ground, expecting rain.

*if you've been cursed, scatter chili-pepper around the house to break the spell.*

little red flecks in my glass of lemons, glass of milk, glass of the window stuck open and peppered, i read it wrong and broke the bannister, having something to hold on to was too confusing. the enchantment of contradiction. i live in a language of magic, that magical thinking of children, like if i say it, it will happen. if i close my eyes the windows all

crack open and schools of fish swim in, birds like bombers, like drawing pictures on the sky with a magic marker. all my best crayons melted on the windowsills, the best desk drawer stuck shut. i've run out of envelopes or things to report in letters, lies, i've run out of reasons to look for feathers. they're everywhere. red heart-feathers shaped like miner's lettuce, growing down from the molding around the edge of the ceiling, the doorframes, in between books on the shelves. shallow water is scariest because you can see all the underwater things that swim there.

*if you chew ginger, then spit it into a storm, the storm will go away.*

i stayed home all winter long, pickling things. peaches, peppers, pears. have you ever had a pickled pear? they're disgusting. i stayed home all winter wearing every scarf i could find, wrapping myself in flannelly wool like a plaid mummy. i'm a bear, i sang to the birds, in hiding. hibernation! look how colorful. some had stripes. some had fringe. i never did consider myself to be fancy. i stayed home all winter turning the heat up, wiping my nose with my sleeve, biting my fingernails. making fourth-grade tornados in pop bottles, watching the vortex spin on its invisible pinpoint, anchored to the cap like the moon. i am a woman made of water. i am a woman silhouetted by the sun, at dusk, on a hill covered hard and cold with snow.

*garlic is a protection against shipwrecks for sailors, against foul weather and monsters for mountaineers, and against assaults by bullies at the local pub.*

my mother calls and says, "old ships are washing up on the coast of oregon, but when the tide comes up in the summer they'll be buried in the sand again!" i remember to look

that up, then forget. that same afternoon, i find a cameo of a forgotten woman washed up in the bathtub. sifting the bubbles i come up with more: a tortoise-shell comb, a cufflink with a pearl button, a broken black eyepatch. reaching down between my legs i come up with a fistfull of barnacles. i am all things salt, all things lost on the bottom. why? my dreams are jars filled with water. in my dreams i am swimming, always swimming.

*eating parsley will make you lusty but wearing parsley on your head will stop you from getting drunk.*

wearing a lilypad on my head (instead), i pinch my nose with a stolen clothespin, open my mouth big with breath, and dunk down under the surface of the pond. at that same moment, someone's nightgown falls off the line, is picked up by a wind and inflated, lilts a scalloped morning pattern off toward the forest, like a tipsy bird, a pink plastic bag, an april ghost. tadpoles rush away from me in all directions. lady-frogs tread water and lower their eyelashes at the whole living show, bashful, spellbound, enamored.