

Tamara L. Panici

Autumn Epiphany

My body is suddenly aware of becoming itself. The idea of me crawls through a body much like my own—same sensitive elbows, same tangles of brown hair, same vaguely distant, vaguely brown eyes, same mole on the torso, same bony ankles, etc. Everyone is a kind of torso. A smell creeps in through the cracks of the front door. The air catches something pungent. Another Chihuahua is on the loose. The illusion of true form peeks in everywhere. I throw the broom against the wall. I pick it up and do it again. I cannot decide if the broom becomes more of a broom or less of a broom. I find a candle under the bathroom sink in the scent, *Autumn Epiphany*. I think this is terribly contrived name for a candle. It is perfumed with hot cinnamon oil and deeply earthy pumpkin. It is a burnt orangey red. Why not call it *Cinnamon Pumpkin*? Or, *Pumpkin and Cinnamon*? I toy around with the idea and come to the conclusion that it is not the name of the candle that I abhor, but the idea behind it—the human inclination to pattern-seek (why does fall need cinnamon and earthiness?) and its evolution into a grossly available, mostly imagined commodity veiled as creativity or uniqueness (what kind of epiphany should one be experiencing through such a conventionally perpetuated display of fragrances?) The underlying issue, of course, is not creativity or uniqueness per se, but the observable division—the visible and metaphysical gaps—the inevitable fissures they create between one person and another. Division, I am convinced, is the source of all evil. The source of all evil, I am convinced, is divided. Of course, division is necessary for all forms of growth, even on a cellular level. To be divided is to perpetuate story, and there is no story of weight without loss (and a story with no weight is simply a string of words or surface level description.) I let the idea sink somewhere deep inside the infinitesimally small folds of my mind. I eat six butter crackers and drink water directly from the kitchen faucet. I begin lapping it into my mouth and swishing it between my teeth. It tastes like a warm metal. I have come to

understand that I could just as well be the most ephemeral cat in the universe. (How I claw! How I lick! How I roll on the floor like a body in need of soft movement. How I paw, paw, paw!) I am reminded of a creation story involving a large cat with piercing gold eyes. The story unfolds as follows. Before the concepts of time and no time existed, there was an immense blackness, but the blackness was not blackness, it was nothingness, and the nothingness was so void it was undiscovered and unknown. It could not be touched, thought of, or perceived from any angle, under any means or circumstance. The nothingness turned inside of itself. Mistakes were made. The nothingness churned out more nothingness until all that existed was a panoply of various forms of nothingness. This led to a sort of conceptual diaspora because one nothingness needs nothing, but many nonthingnesses need more nothing, and so, some nothings had to go off in sure of more nothingness. One nothingness took on the body of a large black cat, a cat so large it could not be zoomed out on, and thus, could not be sensed or understood by any other nothingness. When the large black cat opened its eyes—a radiant gold and luminously bright—they burned through parts of the other nothingnesses, and time, having been given room to become, began to swell in the holes and cracks like a kind of weed or forest moss. I take on another form of myself. I walk to the clock on the kitchen wall and touch it to validate its existence. Or, the clock touches me to validate my body. I eat three more butter crackers. I look under the sofa and find three pennies and two nickels. I put them in my purse. I pull on my panties and jeans. I go back to the kitchen, this time to the table, and run my fingers across the mail as if I am a rich woman shopping for silk scarves (which is just one of my many other selves.) I sift through the ads: double ply toilet paper is a dollar off, a type of orange juice is newer than ever (and with more pulp), cans of store brand cat food are only three for a buck (purrrfect for your feline), select brands of coffee are buy one get one free, a lotion boasting super soft, non-greasy silkiness is five dollars off when you buy fifty dollars worth of product from the same line, etc. I look for a pair of scissors in the junk drawer. The scissors no longer exist. I carefully fold along the edges of the coupon for two free bean and beef tacos.

I fold and refold back and forth until the crease thins. Then I tear slowly and methodically, quite the opposite of how one is always instructed to pull off a bandage.