

Sock me in the stomach until I forget it. Down, down, baby. Down by the roller coaster.

by Tia Prouhet

She wants to be an apple on a stick, a mop and handle, a brain attached to bones. She is glazed and smiling, fingernailing toward dust, but more importantly, perfection. Since multivitamins and biotin are enough to sustain her active lifestyle, she will eat half an apple before she runs into the streets filled with asphalt rumbling Tejano and eyes that hold her too long. Half-moon pupils on oily skin, and she swallows against coffee and mushrooms in her throat.

She can feel herself losing it. She is a hot road, air bending into puddles as she pinches and pulls—hair, thigh, shirt. Somewhere there is a memory; mirage, mirror, admire, mire. Make my tummy go two forty-six. Skipping rope with eight year olds and punching herself in the leg while pissing; she can wiggle she can wobble—but that's just it, isn't it.

Once, something horrible happened. More specifically, something horrible happened to her and she doesn't know it but it isn't her fault that she is any of the things people whisper. She keeps trying to origami into spaces, but look—an ankle, an ear. Her voice is too loud and her clothes are all wrong and you have to know you have to know you have to know it is someone's fault. It is her fault. It is—is not—is is.

