

TRANSMISSION

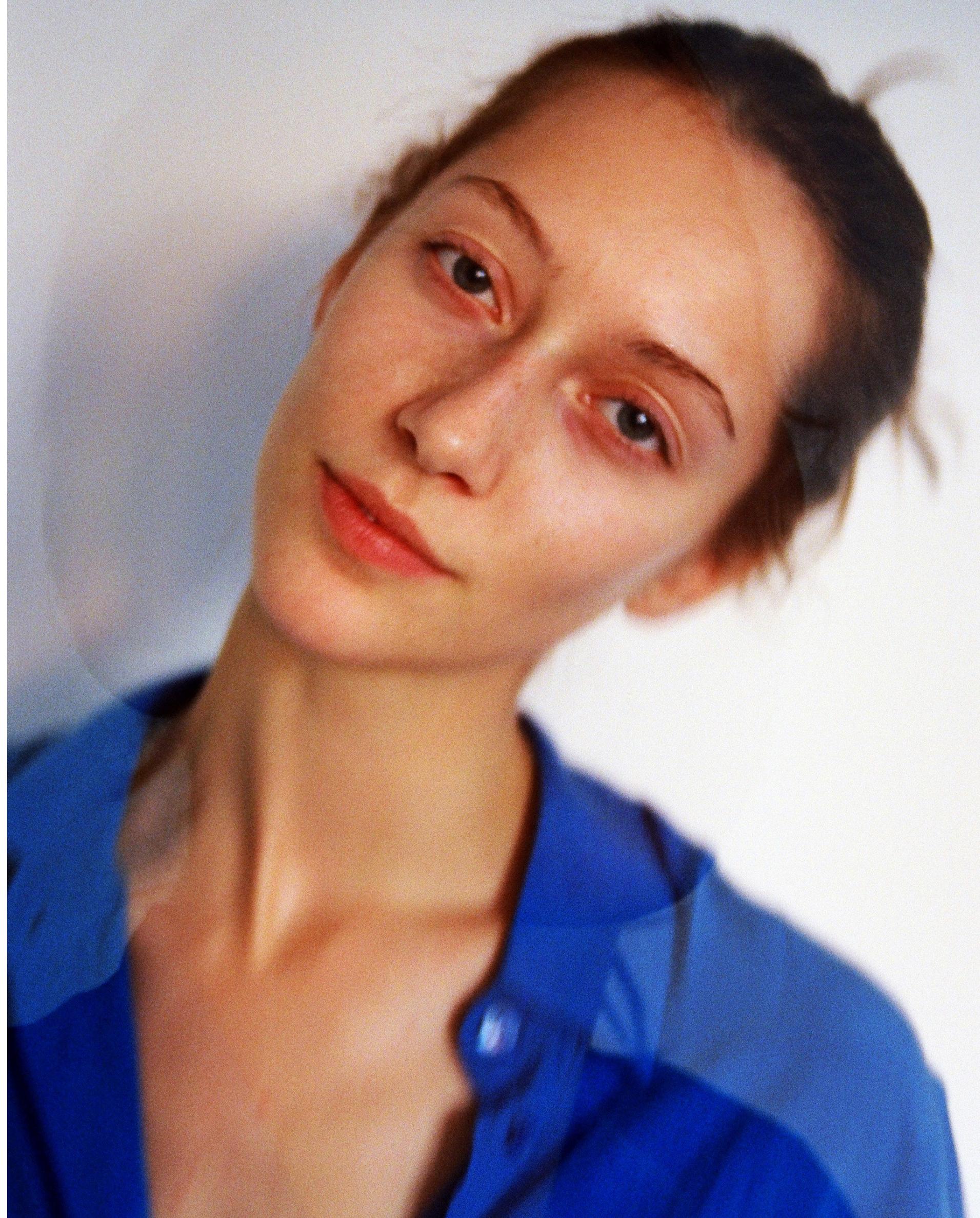
ISSUE 02: TRANSPARENCY





Between my straw mattress and the bed planks, I had actually found an old scrap of newspaper, yellow and transparent, half-stuck to the canvas. On it was a news story, the first part of which was missing, but which must have taken place in Czechoslovakia. A man had left a Czech village to seek his fortune. Twenty-five years later, and now rich, he had returned with a wife and a child. His mother was running a hotel with his sister in the village where he'd been born. In order to surprise them, he had left his wife and child at another hotel and gone to see his mother, who didn't recognize him when he walked in. As a joke he'd had the idea of taking a room. He had shown off his money. During the night his mother and his sister had beaten him to death with a hammer in order to rob him and had thrown his body in the river. The next morning the wife had come to the hotel and, without knowing it, gave away the traveler's identity. The mother hanged herself. The sister threw herself down a well. I must have read that story a thousand times. On one hand it wasn't very likely. On the other, it was perfectly natural. Anyway, I thought the traveler pretty much deserved what he got and that you should never play games.

-An excerpt from *The Stranger*.



Why do I care so much about this I person?
I try to explain this I, I try to defend this I.
I'm always talking to this I.

I talk so much about this I, I am the hype man for this I.
I is going to do great things, I is going to give you hope.

I is the greatest.
I is terrible.

I hates itself. I is disgusted with itself.
Why does I feel so seperate from myself?

Why does I have to be this thing?

This perfect thing?
This pure thing?
Why is I not what I am? Why is I so distant?

Why can't I become I?
Why can't I forget I?
Why is I still here?

Why is I not who I am?

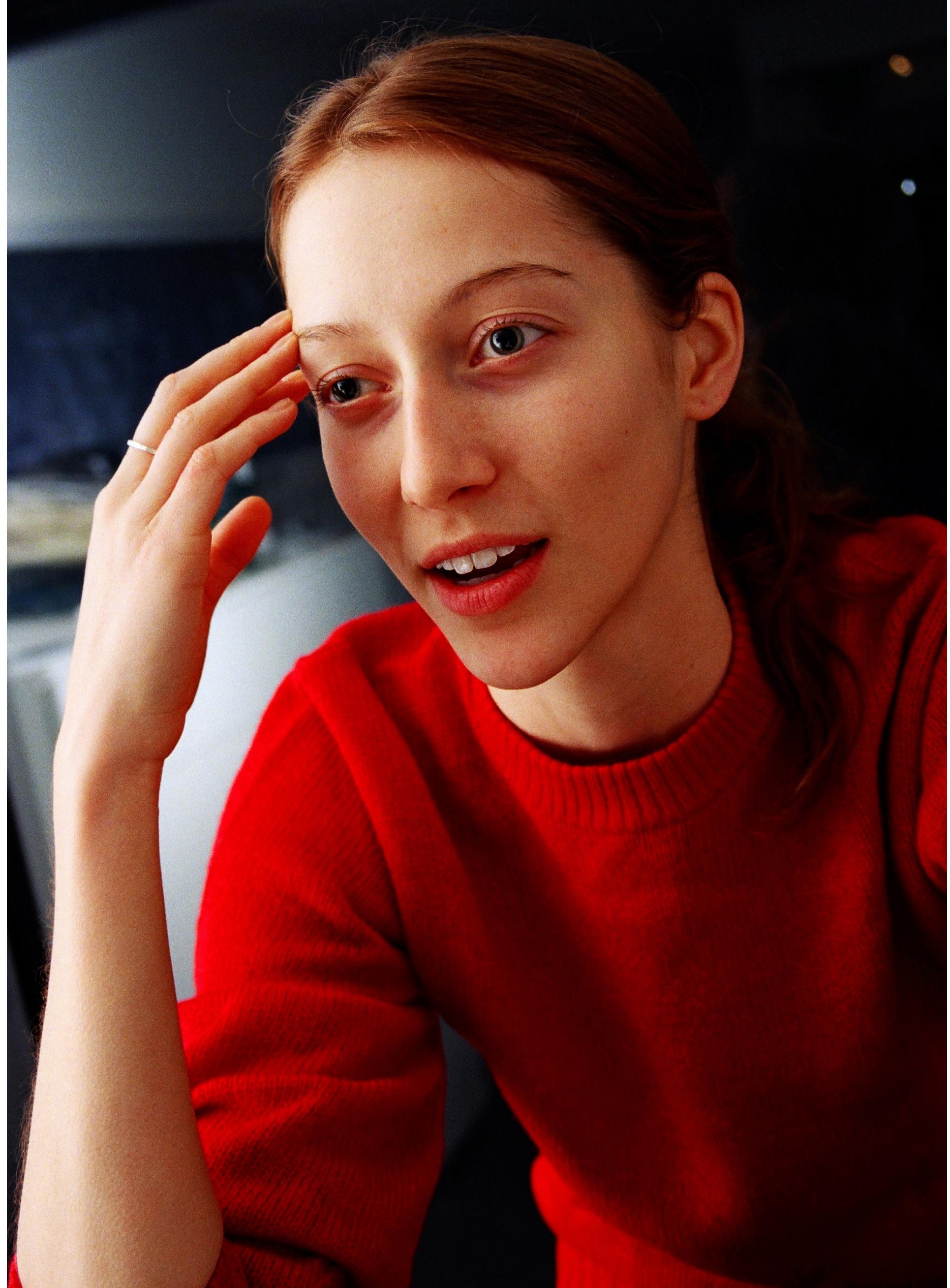
Why can't I just be?

Am I being used?
Or using?
Or are the things I'm using
Using me
Who controls me?
Because it's obviously not me.
And not a he/she
Or a they or any one two three
Maybe the things
Maybe an item, an idea
Some thing I think I should be.
Think I am.
Some fight I dont care about.
Proof of something
Of what?
Proof to me/he/who?
Who cares?
Do I?
It's really only me, isn't it?
So why do it?
Why do it to myself?
Torture myself
Race myself
Make myself
Do things that
Hurt myself

For no reason, but
Myself.

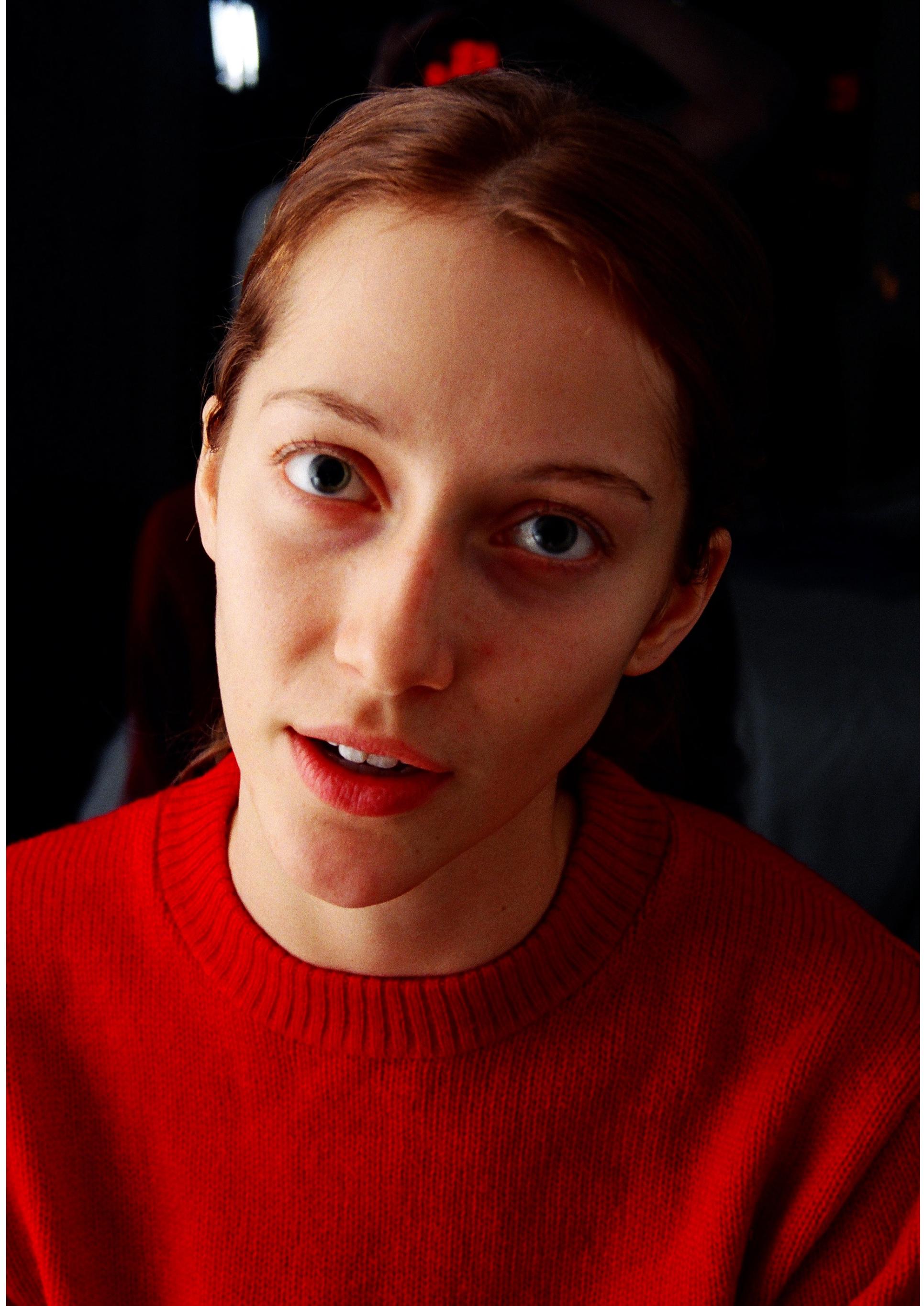
I think I should just calm down
But I get bored.
And then it starts all over
Again

And again.
And again.
And



“Wrong!” he shouted. “I’ve got plenty of courage, as much as you! . . . Only, if you want the whole truth . . . everything, absolutely everything! disgusts me and turns my stomach! Not just you! . . . Everything! . . . And love most of all! . . . Yours as much as anyone else’s! . . . The sentimental tripe you dish out . . . Want me to tell you what I think of it? I think it’s like making love in the crapper! Do you get me now? . . . All the sentiment you trot out to make me stick with you hits me like an insult, if you want to know . . . And to make it worse, you don’t even realize it, you’re the one that’s rotten because you don’t understand! . . . You’re satisfied repeating the rubbish other people say . . . You think it makes sense . . . People have told you there’s nothing better than love, they’ve told you it’ll go down with everybody, everywhere and always, and that’s good enough for you . . . Well, I say fuck their love! . . . You hear? . . . Their putrid love doesn’t go down with me . . . not anymore! . . . You’ve missed the train! You’re too late! It won’t go down anymore, and that’s that! . . . What a stupid thing to get steamed up about! . . . Why do you have to make love, considering all the things that are happening? . . . All the things we see around us! . . . Or are you blind? . . . More likely you just don’t give a damn! You wallow in sentiment when you’re a worse brute than anybody . . . You want to eat rotten meat? . . . With love sauce? . . . Does that help it down? . . . Not with me! . . . If you don’t smell anything, it’s your hard luck! Maybe your nose is stuffed up! If it doesn’t disgust you, it’s because you’re stupid, the whole lot of you . . . You want to know what it is that comes between you and me? . . . All right, I’ll tell you! A whole life is what comes between you and me . . . Isn’t that enough for you?”

-An excerpt from *Journey to the End of the Night*.



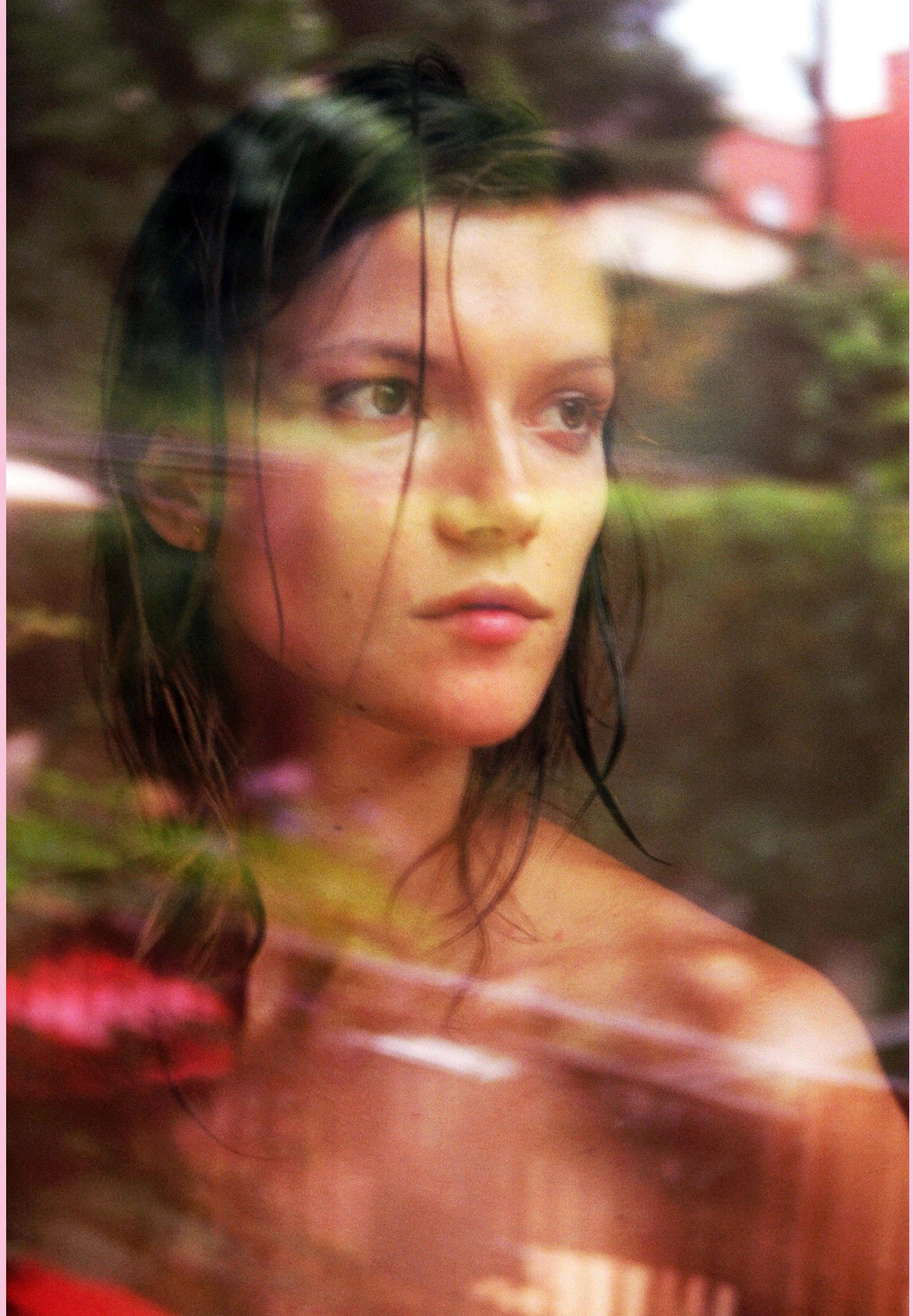


BLAME IT ON EVE

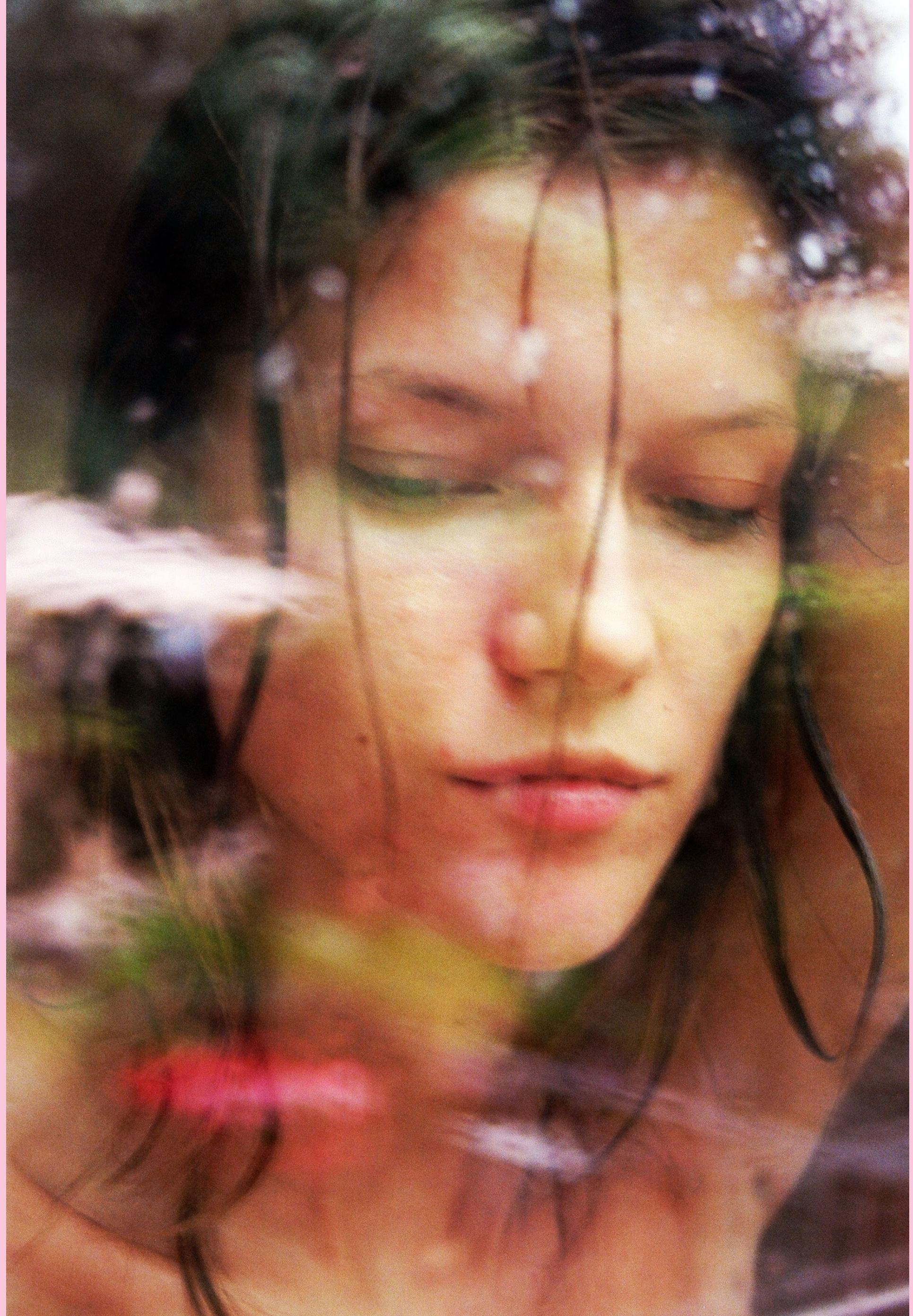


I DON'T CARE









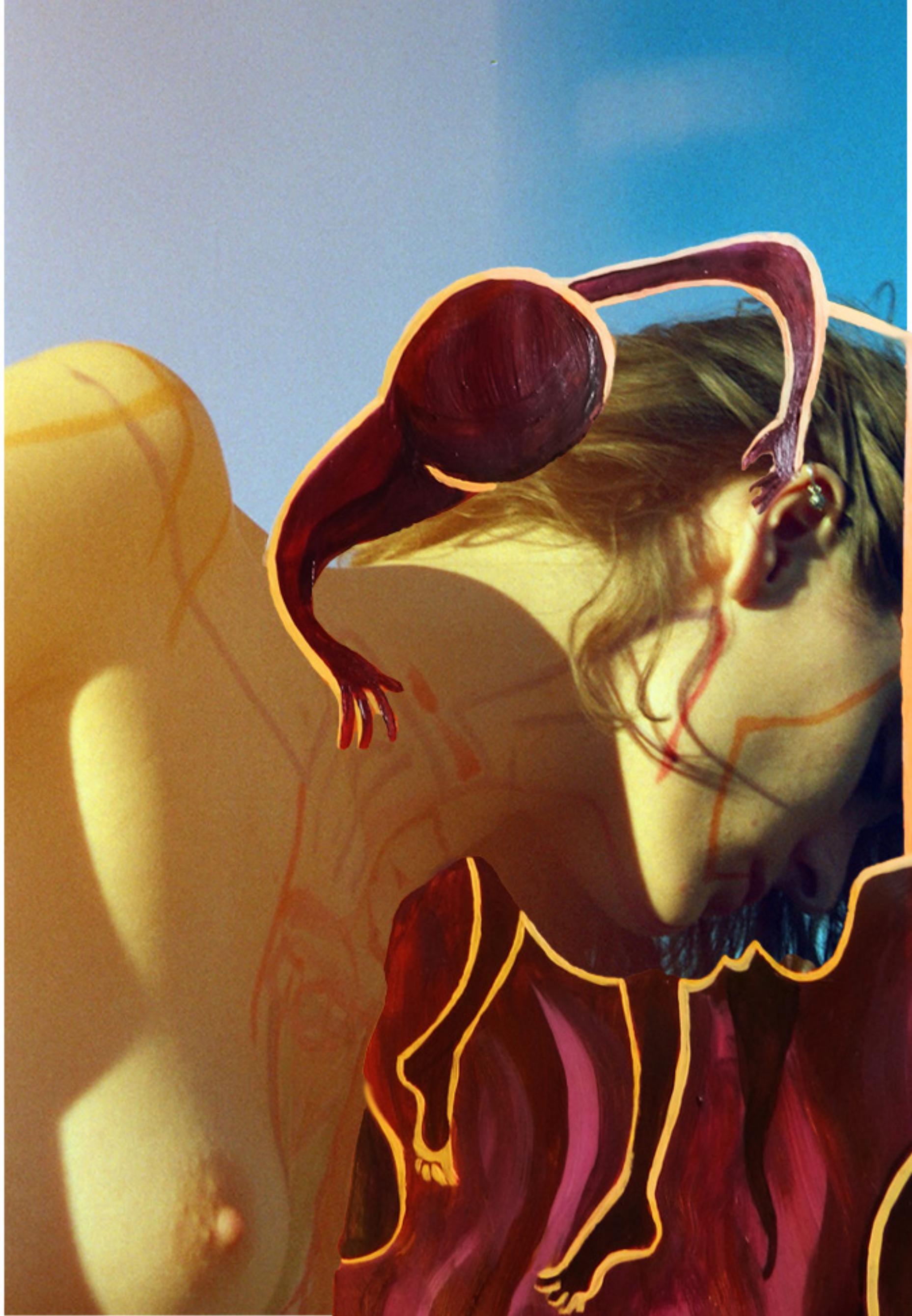






















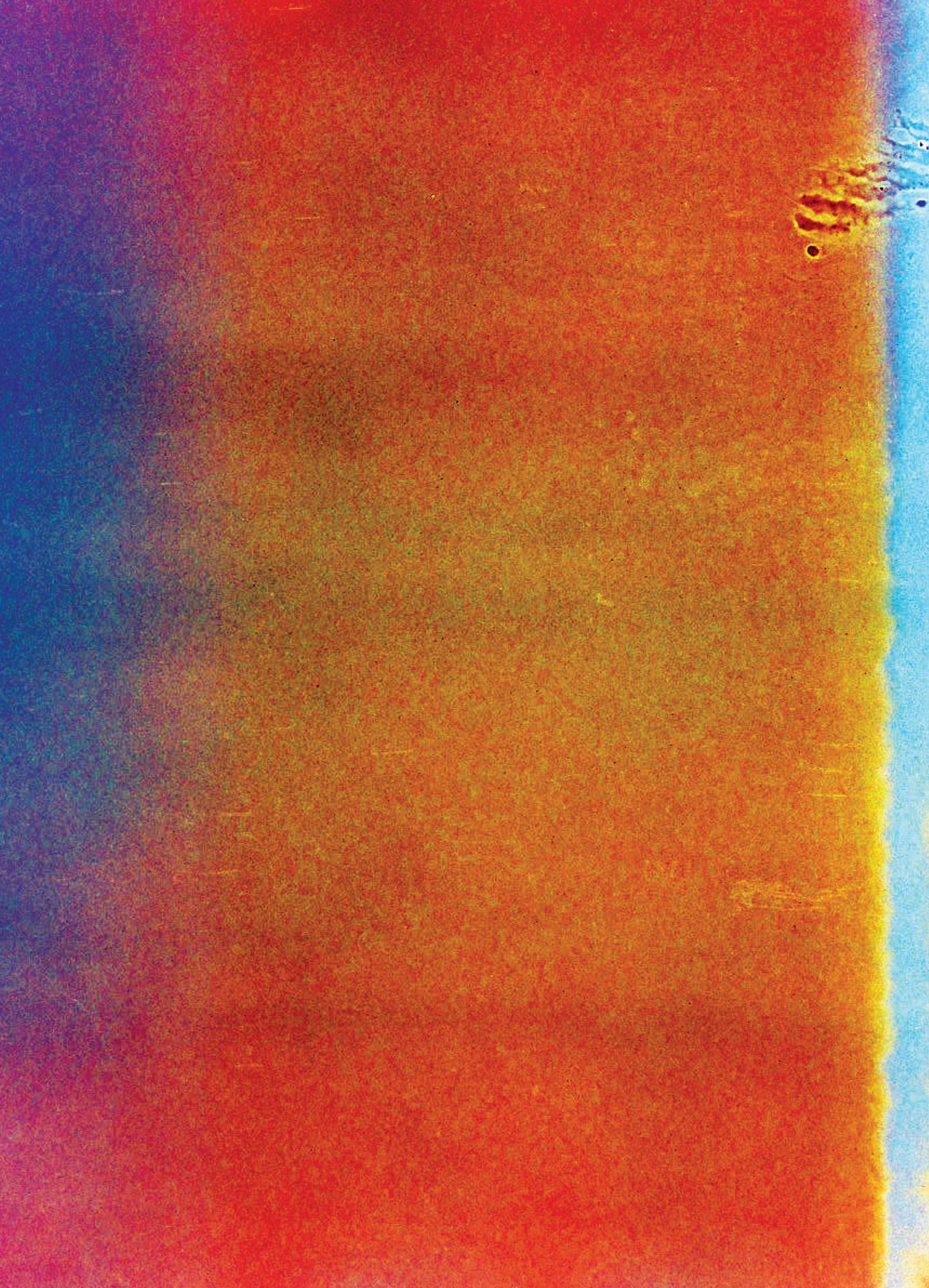






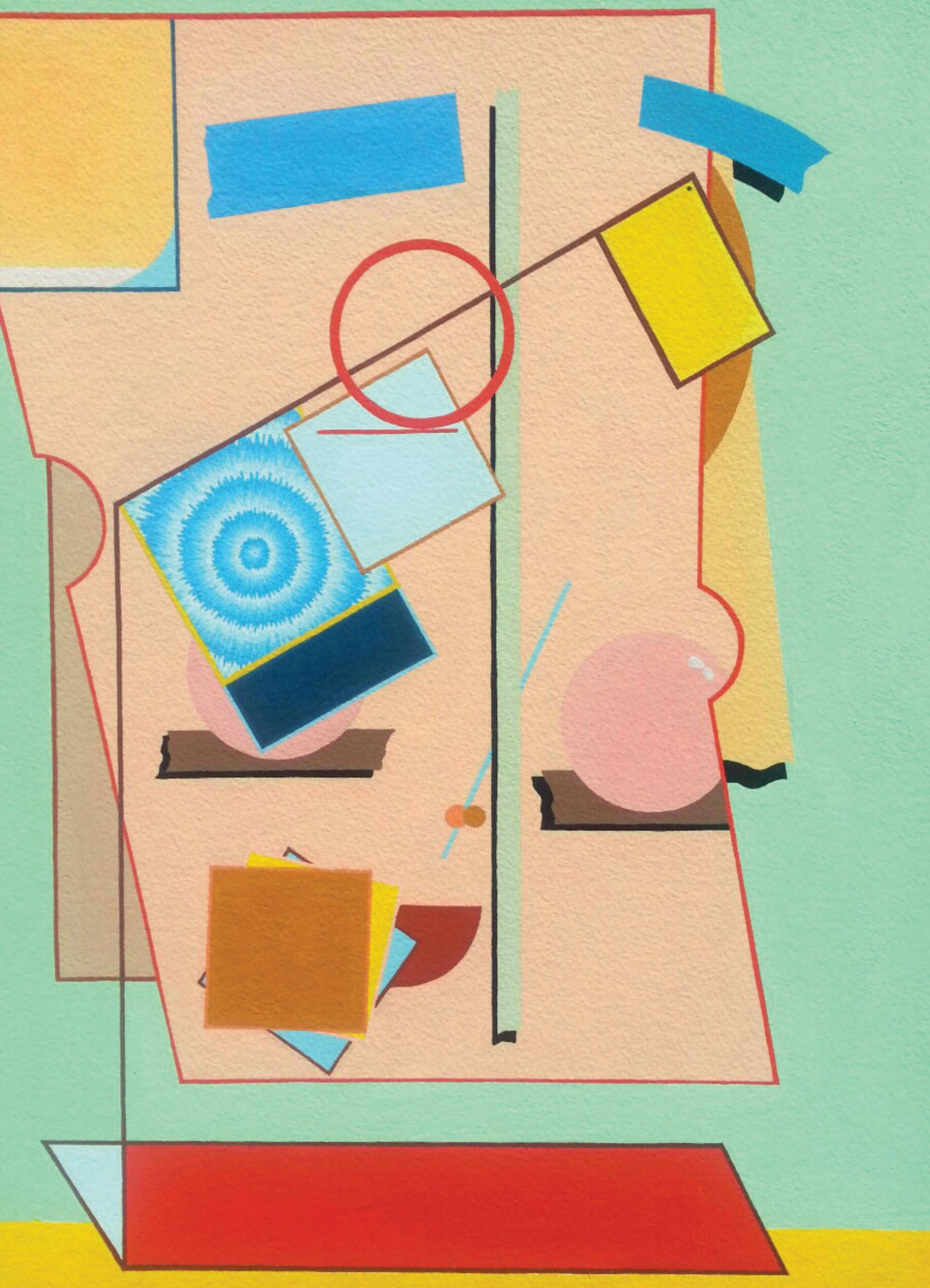
























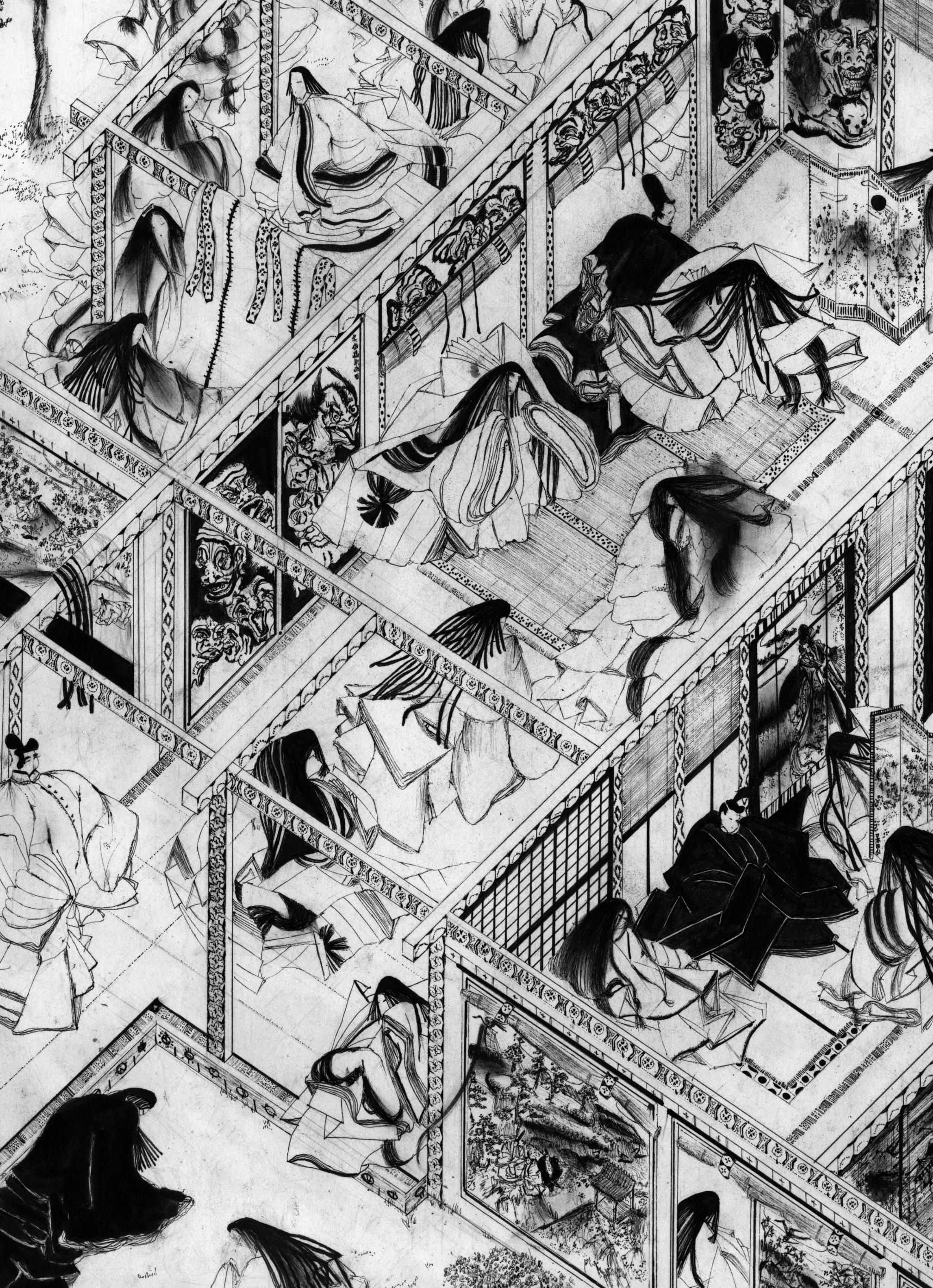


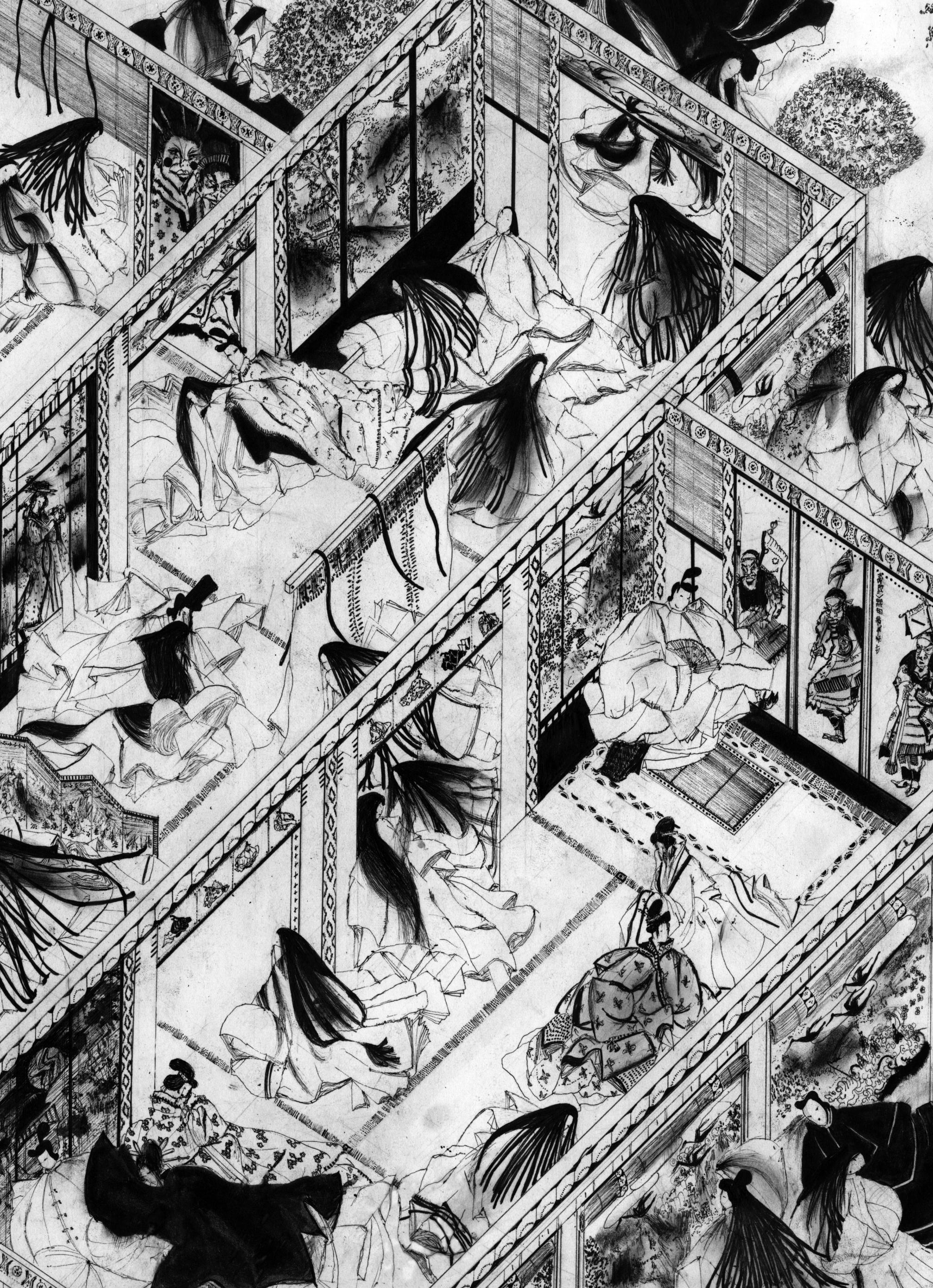












Before her, I had no idea what it was that I wanted. Secretly worried about the approval of those around me, I chased the girls who everyone else followed. Never knowing why I walked toward a dead end that didn't interest me, I remained blind to all else around me.

Suddenly it was as if a light had been turned on.

I began to notice a pretty girl at school who seemed to be wearing different hair and clothes every time I saw her, sometimes only hours apart. I asked my friends if they knew anything about her and found out that it wasn't just one girl, but two identical twin sisters.

"Why didn't anyone tell me there were twins at our school?"

I was intrigued. It was something new; something I had never seen before in our boring town. (I was used to everyone looking the same... but by choice, not by birth.) My friend Tucker had gone to junior high with them, so I asked him to introduce us.

The first I met was Allie, an earthy band geek with long, straight hair. Tucker brought me over to her. I awkwardly said "Hello," followed by a quick "nice to meet you," as I rushed away with Tucker, who had just then remembered to mention that she already had a serious boyfriend.

Next I met Lin, and after having already met Allie, I had a back-story and was able to approach her on my own. She was the shorter-haired of the two. I found out she had a class on the third floor and that's where I found her.

"Hey... you have a twin, right?

"... Yeah."

"We just met the other day... I wanted to see if you two really were identical."

"Yep. We are..."

I asked her about the book she was reading and if she liked it. It was a textbook; she looked confused... I pretended it was a joke. I've never known how to start a conversation, but I've always been good at saving myself from an awkward one.

I walked with her to class after that, pretending we shared the same route. Always late for class myself, I walked that same route with her every day, just to be beside her.

She was cute: shy, nervous, awkward, dorky. She had reddish-brown hair, which fell just below her shoulders, and puffy, tired eyes. Her nose was long, slim, lacking a dip, and held most of her freckles (it was probably what gave her her funny, stuffy laugh). She smelled like ginger and seemed to have a glow.

She always seemed to be a little sad too, which I think is what really drew me to her.

I'd look for her outside during lunch or after school to show her music that I thought she'd enjoy:

The Unicorns, Modest Mouse, The Moldy Peaches... and she actually liked it, a dream come true. Finally someone who shared my taste, someone who didn't look at me strange when I spoke... someone who wouldn't tell me that my music was too depressing after I played "Creep" by Radiohead for them, with eyes pleading that they too feel the chills running down my spine.

She eventually found out I had no class on the third floor, but by then we had already become friends. I just blushed, acting embarrassed at my exposure.



*You're standing by the grey ice water,
Out in the wind, above ground, out in the weather.
You had yourself a crazy lover,
Becoming frozen, trying hard to forget her.*

Love & Loss

A Year Of My Life



We began to hang out more often. I had immediately fallen in love with her and I'm pretty sure she knew. I'd joke around, hinting that I had feelings for her, but she'd always brush it off. "I wouldn't want to ruin our friendship..." And not wanting to scare her away, I'd hide my feelings... though I never could for long.

After two months I began to make stronger advances; I asked her why she wouldn't date me.

She said I just "wasn't the boyfriend type." She had heard about me fooling around with different girls and didn't want to become just another one of them.

I was shocked. I hadn't actually been with many girls... at least not successfully. I tried to tell her that she had it all wrong, but she knew about one of my few sexual experiences; it had happened with a friend of hers.

I'd been meeting with one of her friends to talk about my frustration over Lin, and the friend eventually took a liking to me herself. She knew I didn't have any feelings for her, but she didn't mind. She was eager and I was horny, she was rich and I was hungry. She'd feed me sandwiches and sometimes flash me her breasts... I took what I could get.

She blew me once in her family's snack closet but I never came. That was pretty much the extent of my sexual experience.

As time went on I craved Lin more and more. She had gotten used to the benefits of having a boyfriend without actually having one, but for me, friendship wasn't enough. I started to play games with her emotions to move things along.

I'd spend all my time with her, give her everything, then refuse to see her. I'd tell her that I couldn't do it any more; tell her that it was too hard for me to just be friends. By then I was the only person she hung out with. I knew she'd miss me as she spent her time alone.

We went on like this for a while; interest then disinterest. She'd miss what she'd lost then wonder what was wrong with her that had made it go away.

I'm not sure how much of this was done consciously on my part. Maybe I only realized what I was doing as I was doing it. All I knew was that I needed her... and my subconscious must have done the rest.

Finally I gave her an ultimatum. I really was fed up by then; I wasn't just playing games. I was so in love with her that it drove me crazy not to have her. I told her that I couldn't see her any more and I meant it.

She left my house crying and walked toward the main road. I followed close behind her.

At the end of the road she stopped; she realized she had nowhere to go. I asked her to follow

me to the cemetery across the street. She was calmer now but kept the tears in her eyes and her red cheeks were still swollen. We lay in the dew-covered grass and looked up at the stars.

I tried to explain how hard it was for me to be so close to her without being able to have her. She told me she understood, but said was dealing with problems of her own and didn't know what to feel. She didn't want to lose me though, and I didn't want to lose her, so we decided to stay "just friends" for the time being.

As we walked away, I looked back at the imprint our two bodies had left so close together in the wet grass.

Soon after, we went to the beach together. We skipped on rocks to stay out of the water. I found one next to hers buried deeper in the sand and stood on it, bringing us eye to eye. The rocks were close and we were close; our eyes locked and my breathing stopped. I felt her lips press against mine.

Confused and shocked, I fell off the rock. I was unable to think and unable to talk. I looked at her to ask if what I'd felt was real. She smiled and nodded to assure me.

We went back to my car to listen to music, reclining our seats flat. Lying on our sides, we looked into each other's eyes. I leaned in and kissed her on the forehead, then again just next to where I had before. She was smiling, not stopping me. I told her I'd kiss her entire face.

Continuing from her forehead and working my way down, I hesitated near her lips. I still didn't dare to kiss her there. As I leaned in to kiss her cheek once more, she moved to catch my lips with her own. I was struck dumb all over again... but unable to resist, I leaned in once more.

Finally she was beginning to love me as I loved her. I never could have imagined how frightening that would be.

I had finally gotten what I wanted, but having Lin was almost harder than wanting her. Right away my emotions shut down; my instincts told me to run away. I completely lost feeling for her and couldn't figure out why.

I had to tell myself, "Dylan, you've loved this girl for months... and now that you finally have her, you've turned off. It must be temporary, stay on."

And after a while my feelings did come back, I had only been scared.

But that was just the beginning.

When we were together I was perfect: I was present. I had no doubt within me and nothing on my mind other than her, her stare, and her warm body pressed against mine.

Without her though, I was something else entirely. I'd had insomnia and anxiety for years, and now spent my restless nights consumed with Lin.

What if she stopped caring for me? I couldn't bear to lose her now that I finally had her; finally felt love. Every second away from her was a second I'd been forgotten, a second alone.

It was the first time I'd allowed myself to open up to anyone since the death of my father. I'd spent ten years holed up in my basement bedroom, learning about pain and loss while forgetting love and life... learning that nothing can be relied on... and learning to turn off. I had lowered my shield and any blow dealt could send me back into the dark, unable to trust anyone again.

If I didn't hear from her for a day I'd assume she'd lost interest in me. I was always just paranoid, over-thinking everything, but the worry made me sick to my stomach.

Once, while on my way to the auto body shop where I worked, I was overcome with such an overwhelming, tight and twisting anxious pain in my stomach that I decided to never go in again. I didn't even call to tell them I was quitting; I just disappeared. I wanted to spend all my time with Lin anyway.

But my family was poor... and now I was broke too. How was I supposed to pay for gas for the ride to see her? Or do anything with her at all?

...Things always seem to come to me in a pinch.

My therapists had been pushing different drugs on me for years. One of them was Adderall. I'd previously refused to take it, but once I found out it was speed and that kids would pay for it, I decided to give it a "try." I had found my new source of income.

Now that I didn't have to work, I spent every second outside of class with Lin. I never saw my friends; I was obsessed.

One day, I asked her to help me find my father's grave. It was something I'd feared for so long. Bringing my dad up around my mom still upset her, even ten years after his death.

It's strange how we did somehow find it. An odd-shaped tree triggered a vague memory, leading me in a sort of trance down a narrow dirt path beside it. Reluctantly hopeful, yet already accepting defeat, I prepared to brush it off. *I never expected to find it anyway...*

Lin held my hand quietly while I scanned through the engraved names to my right, searching for my own. There it was. Forsberg. The grave was cleaner than I'd expected... and lacked some desired effect. It didn't feel sad, only empty. And there were no flowers.

I looked from the grave to Lin, as if to ask what I should do. She stayed silent.

As I reached out to touch it, one of the few memories I had of him came to me. He and my mom used to write on my back with a finger each night

before I went to sleep, so I decided to do the same on his grave.

"X marks the spot with a circle and a dot... dash, dash, question mark. Upsies, downsies, all-aroundseys and a... *pinch*."

I felt silly as I did it... and to this day I still don't know what it meant.

I whispered a prayer out of habit and we got up to leave.

After sharing so much with Lin, I wanted her to do the same. But it was harder for her to open up. All that I learned about her I learned slowly over time.

She had grown up wealthy in New York City, but when the Twin Towers fell, her family lost most of their invested money. To maintain their lifestyle, and to get out of the city, they moved to a small town close to mine, along the tiny coast of New Hampshire. She'd lost her friends in the move, her parents fought more now, and she and her twin sister were beginning to drift apart.

She was very insecure and had just always been depressed. She hated her beautiful body and felt awkward around other girls. She cut herself, too. Her wrists were covered with scars that I hoped to erase.

I always used to downplay everyone else's depression because their reasons for it didn't seem to meet mine. "What excuse do you have for being upset? My father died when I was six; I've had my ass kicked for most of my life. I'm poor. I'm hungry... I this, I that... at least you have food in your fridge."

I felt my depression was stronger than everyone else's, so I suffered alone. It made my pain feel more authentic because I was the sole bearer of it. Realizing that I wasn't special would weaken my suffering. It would comfort me and I couldn't have that. I wanted to feel something that the others couldn't; something my own.

Lin was the first to show me that sadness can't be weighed in tragedy or eased by wealth. It's silent, pure; it's in your core. Maybe it started from a heartbroken look your mother gave you when you were still young... or maybe it was the inability to express yourself around other kids, making you introverted; feeling rejected.

The rejection made you angry... and the inability to express your anger frustrated you, making you feel helpless. Helplessness made you weak, depressed. And once you found an emotion that you were able to express, once you found sadness and self-pity, you held onto it.

Like a strong laugh shared with a friend that you wish would continue, you bring up the same joke to prolong the feeling. Once you've reached that point: that warmth; that expression, that connection... you feel cold as it leaves you. It's the

same with sadness. Being in one state or the other, I'm fine. It's leaving where I am that frightens me.

We gravitate toward what we're used to; we gravitate toward comfort, stability. Loneliness is the only true fear and through that we fear change. Transition. Going into the black of the unknown. Going somewhere we might not understand or be understood; somewhere alone.

I can't say why Lin was depressed. She just was.

I was texting with her one night when she was especially down. Then she stopped responding. I called and called to no response. Worried that she might have finally tried to kill herself, I got into my car and sped to her house, chain-smoking clove cigarettes.

It was midnight, but when I pulled into her driveway I saw that her bathroom light was on. *She must have gone in there to do it...* My heart sank.

I ran up the back stairs and through a spare bedroom.

"What are you doing here so late?" a cracked voice called out.

It was Lin's father, sleeping alone.

"Just checking on Lin, sorry. I'll be gone in a minute."

I kept on to the bathroom. She wasn't there.

I found her sleeping in her bed. She woke as I came close.

"You smell like cigarettes..."

"I'm sorry, I smoked on my way here... I was worried about you. I came to make sure you're all right."

"I'm fine... just tired."

"OK, I'll leave you then... I'm glad you're all right."

I leaned down to kiss her, left the room and closed the door behind me. I walked back past her dad to let him know I was leaving.

"Sorry for waking you up..."

While on my way to Lin, I'd thought back to a story my mom once told me about her destructive relationship with my father. I always imagined it as the epitome of romance.

Supposedly, my father used to disappear for days at a time, until finally, someone would call my mom to tell her where she might find him.

I envisioned it so beautifully: him lying in a ditch somewhere, weak, fucked up and alone; my mom frantically searching for him in tears. Until the final moment when she found him, embraced him, and nursed him back to health.

That was true love, I thought. Someone who loves you so much that they're always there to save you, no matter how bad you get.

So many times before, I'd imagined myself as

lying in a dark ditch, wishing for a glowing hand to reach down and save me. I wanted to be that hand... as much as I wanted that hand to be there for me.

Because Lin was my first, she became something of an experiment. I had never before felt these emotions, and as with everything else in my life, I had to push them to their limits. I had to feel purely and deeply, experience great happiness and sadness... and I had to know that she could too; I had to know that she really loved me.

To force her to prove herself to me, I'd start a fight over something trivial: some way she acted, something she forgot to say. I'd pick and prod, looking for a weak spot until finally she'd fight back, which would only frustrate me further. And so I'd push harder.

I'd choose my words cleverly to trip her up or ask questions that couldn't be answered, until finally, she'd cry. Only then would I "forgive" her. Only then would I know she loved me. Seeing her tears, I'd feel better. Not because she was sad, but because she was able to be sad for me.

And at that, I'd apologize. I'd wipe away her tears and kiss her salty lips. She loved me, and now I knew... for now.

But nothing is ever enough for me... and my depression would always regain control.

On the nights I didn't see Lin, I'd line up a row of sleeping pills the size of triple-stacked quarters on my computer desk. I'd take one every hour to see how close I could get to death before falling asleep. I went up an extra pill every few nights until I was swallowing five or six before passing out. I was constantly in a daze, acting without thought.

One snowy night when I was driving Lin back to my house, I decided to have some fun on her long, ice-covered driveway. I spun the wheel to make the car lose traction, whipping us out of control. But I didn't see her black basketball hoop. We smashed into it, snapping the metal pole in half and impaling the car.

It was the third car I'd wrecked in a year and it had only been in my possession for a few weeks. It'd been given to me as an early eighteenth birthday present, and I knew my mother must have opened a new credit card just to afford it. I was crushed.

My mom came to pick us up and drive us back home. I sat quietly in the back seat. When we arrived, I asked to be left alone in bed. Lin went to hang out with my sister upstairs.

My depression plummeted to a level I had never before felt. I was disappointed in myself for being so irresponsible and now had no way to get to Lin. I imagined I'd hardly ever see her again... something I couldn't bear.

My body was drained and my chest felt

shallow. My thoughts were stale and slow. I stared vacantly at that cold, sad feeling without putting it into words. It paralyzed me, hypnotized me; I feared it would consume me eternally. I was nothing, weak; I couldn't speak. I could hardly breathe.

I tried to tell myself that the feeling would soon pass, but the thought of it ever returning frightened me still. I couldn't do it anymore; I couldn't be me anymore. I just wanted it to end.

I had planned to die by eighteen for as long as I could remember. The thought comforted me in a way; it gave me a plan. Without it, the future frightened me; I saw nowhere to go. It gave me an excuse for not paying attention in school; it helped me to turn off and ignore. Now I would finally go through with it.

I gathered all the miscellaneous sleeping pills I'd been given and swallowed them all. I counted between eighteen and twenty-four in total: three or four different types.

And I went to sleep. Forever, I thought... though for some reason I didn't care. I wasn't being dramatic as I had been before. I wasn't crying... I really wasn't thinking at all. I had just turned off.

Maybe a few hours later, I awoke with a severe pain in my stomach. *I thought this was supposed to be painless...* But the pain didn't last. I soon passed out again.

The rest I remember in flashes. I guess either some part of me decided not to die and went for help, or I really had to piss and used the rest of my strength to get to the bathroom upstairs before collapsing.

I awoke on the bathroom floor to my mom calling from the kitchen, "Honey, are you ok? What's wrong?" She thought she'd heard the door slam, but what she really heard was my head smashing into the toilet as I collapsed.

I pulled myself up and tried to form words, but my mouth was too sedated; I slurred like a heavy drunk. Leaving the bathroom, I headed for the door to the stairs.

The next thing I knew, I was on the floor of the hallway looking up at my sister, Lin, and my mom holding my empty prescription bottles in her hand.

My mom tried to help me up but I wouldn't let her. I'd only allow Lin to touch me. She brought me to a chair.

Through my slur I was able to convince my mom that I was fine, but my sister was crying and agreed with Lin that I should be brought to the emergency room.

... So I was brought to the emergency room.

When I came to my senses, a visibly annoyed doctor was preparing a drink by my bedside.

"How many pills did you take?"

"I don't know. Eight, maybe?" As dazed as I

was, I was still able to lie.

He told me that he thought I should be admitted to a mental hospital, but I was somehow able to talk him out of it.

"I didn't mean to take so many... I forgot I had taken some earlier."

"That many pills could kill a grown man." I guess I'd built up a tolerance.

"I was just frustrated. I haven't slept for days."

He told me I'd have to drink charcoal to absorb the pills. "Remember this taste the next time you think to do something so dumb."

I responded with a smile... "I don't think I'll be remembering anything at all from tonight..."

But I was wrong... and it was terrible. The stuff was black as engine oil and had the taste and texture of crushed chalk. He told me I'd have to finish every last drop.

It took forever. I'd take a sip and look at him, hoping he'd say I'd had enough, but he seemed to be taking some sadistic pleasure in forcing me to drink it.

When I'd finally finished, I was told I could leave.

I became dizzy as I stood, but tried to walk it off. A little ways down I crashed into a wall. My mom took my arm and directed me to a chair, but I instead sat on a plant beside it.

My insides surged. I sprang up, bent forward, and spewed jet-black engine oil all over my hands and shoes until I was surrounded by a large ink puddle.

I remember the annoyed looks of the hospital staff as they sent for someone to clean up my mess. When I got home, I passed out as soon as my head hit the pillow.

When I awoke, the taste of charcoal was still on my lips and Lin was lying in bed beside me. She told me they were bringing me to a different kind of hospital. I was too far-gone to care what that meant.

I stopped in the bathroom on my way out and saw in the mirror that my mouth was still painted black. I washed myself off and headed to the door to put on my charcoal-covered shoes.

Once in the car, my mom explained to me that as soon as my therapist had heard what had happened, he'd suggested that I spend some time at a mental hospital, where I could "try different sleeping medication every night, instead of waiting for our weekly visits." I knew that he really just wanted me under supervision, but I could tell my mom was worried, so I didn't care to argue.

It was evening when I arrived at the hospital, so I only had time for introductions. Introductions to

the doctors, the patients, my new living space, and the rules: lights out before ten; no strings or cutlery (not even spoons) allowed in the rooms, and no touching the other patients. An attendant would stand by your cracked-open bathroom door while you pissed or showered. And if you got too manic they'd put you in a small, padded room.

I signed papers that were still too blurry to read and was asked to remove all strings and sharp objects from my body before being searched. My headphones were included in the no-strings rule, so I was told I'd have to give them up. I couldn't allow that; music was the only thing that relaxed me when I couldn't sleep.

I handed everything over to my mom and was quickly patted down. Then the doctor left so that we could say our goodbyes in private. I immediately asked for my MP3 player and headphones back. My mom laughed nervously and asked if I was sure, but gave them back anyway. I wrapped the headphones around my thigh and luckily wasn't searched again.

I was just under eighteen, so I was put in the youth section. The first roommate I met couldn't have been any older than fifteen. He was chubby with dyed black hair and dressed from head to toe in Hot Topic apparel with the chains now removed. He claimed to be schizophrenic, but I didn't really believe him. He struck me more as just some lonely kid who thought that hearing voices and seeing demons would bring him attention. You never really know though.

My other roommate, Chris, was around my age and in his third stay at the hospital. He said he was bi-polar and was much easier to believe. He told me some of his story:

He'd gotten his girlfriend pregnant not long before, and although they liked the idea of having a child, they worried that they wouldn't be able to produce a healthy one with all the medication they were on. They decided it would be best for her to have an abortion. But stressed by their decision, Chris lost his shit and wound up back at the psych ward. He was optimistic that his third visit would help him.

After my introductions, I was given my first batch of pills and sent to bed. I lay on my back with my music on and after a few hours drifted off into my usual half-sleep.

Our days were all spent the same. We'd be woken up at the switch of a light, some of us still drowsy from the pills, while others popped up hyperactive and immediately began to run around. We'd then gather for breakfast in a vacant, buffet-style cafeteria where we'd get our only glimpse of the admitted adults. They were in much worse condition than us kids on lower dosages. They were pale and drained and seemed to lack the strength to

talk. I never got to know much about them.

After that came our group therapy sessions where they'd teach us "important" lessons such as the difference between being passive, aggressive, and passive-aggressive while learning ways to better share our feelings through ball throwing exercises. Then came the "educational" movies. In my favorite, the friends of suicide "victims" talked about the selfishness of suicide. "I wish you would step back from that ledge my friend," played in the background.

I nudged Chris toward the end to see how ridiculous he thought the movie was, but he turned to me looking moved rather than amused. He said that after having watched the movie a third time, it had finally hit him... leading me to believe that Chris' brain might have finally been washed.

I had sort of hoped that my stay in the hospital would be able to help me... or at least give me a good story to tell back home. But instead I felt like I'd stepped into one of the tacky movies they made us watch.

Most of the kids there were just outcasts who didn't seem to have any actual problems worth being admitted for. I felt like we'd only been put there to keep us out of everyone else's hair.

One Puerto Rican boy, maybe six or seven years old, was there because he had too much energy and trouble concentrating (aka ADHD). He told me that when his mom wouldn't let him play his dinosaur hunting games, he'd do "This!" sticking his middle finger into the air. He didn't even know what it meant; he only knew that it upset his mother and whoever she had flipped off in his presence previously. So... off to the psych ward.

He'd go from running up and down the halls to filling in color by number booklets after being fed his medication. I understood that he was a lot to handle, but seeing him sit still like everyone else was like watching a bird with its wings clipped.

The doctors there treated us patronizingly, as though immaturity were our only problem, yet all the while pumping us with mind-altering drugs and contradictions... "You're no different from the other kids. But unlike the other kids, you have to take these pills... to make you like the other kids." It made no sense.

To counter them, I'd try my best to make the kids feel understood. "Being different isn't something to be corrected. Look at our doctors... they're the ones living a lie. They're satisfied with lies; they're comforted with lies. They don't listen and they aren't heard. They just can't see as you see. But don't worry. You're not alone. I see it too..."

But though I tried to help those around me, my own problems weren't going anywhere.

Imagine not being able to sleep for up to five nights in a row.

Once when I was sixteen, I just never got tired. The sun came up, and nothing. I couldn't even nap during the day. I figured I'd be so tired the next night that I'd fall asleep immediately.

I start at my computer. Four a.m. comes around, so I move to my bed. My mind is still racing.

It starts to drive me mad; it starts to make me worry. I feel a surge pass through my temples like the quietest, tumbling stampede. My body aches but my mind is alert. Everything feels like it's pulling.

I try to clear my mind: *nothing, nothing; black, black*. But it's like closing my eyes to the sun.

I brush against the stuffed animal beside me; a polar bear. *Remember that kid from Alaska who got bit by a polar bear? Where is he now? He had that scar on his head from it. He was in an amazing band... Shut up!* Back to black.

Something itches. My body is never comfortable. I can't figure out where to put my arms; one is falling asleep, I'm lying on it wrong. *I wish I only had one arm so that I'd be able to lie flat.* The covers are wrapped weird around my legs. I'm hot, I'm cold; I'm sweating.

Stop thinking! Now I'm thinking about not thinking. *Stop.* This isn't working. I give up. Back to the computer.

It's too late, there's nothing to do. Back to bed; try to sleep again.

I should at least try to rest my body. I lie with my eyes closed.

The next night it happens again. I've heard that after being awake for seventy-two hours you're considered clinically insane.

I walk like water. I pass through my brother's room and say "hello" to his drum set... it looks like a face. I laugh at myself; I know I'm loopy.

Each night, more of the same. Only my music can soothe me.

But on my fifth night at the hospital, an attendant caught me listening to my MP3 player in bed and demanded that I hand it over. I reluctantly gave it up, but went into a panic as soon as he left.

Not knowing what else to do, I yelled that I'd kill myself if my music wasn't returned. "Your rules are stupid! I could tie a long sleeve shirt around my neck if I really needed a string!"

Hysterical, I thought to try something we'd do in middle school for a free high: asphyxiation, but we called it Space Monkeys. We'd strangle ourselves into near-unconsciousness, regaining our senses to everything shaky and strange. I'm not sure why I tried it... and I almost immediately realized it was stupid.

When the doctor came in, I told him what lengths I had gone to for sleep without music. I'd

hoped for my MP3 player to be returned, but instead they stripped me of everything with long sleeves and moved my bed moved into the bright padded room.

I spent the night with the light on, casually chatting with the guard outside the door.

And after that, they finally resorted to stronger medication: Seroquel, an anti-psychotic usually reserved for schizophrenics. It made the veins around my pupils swell and my eyelids feel like weights. Usually I can't sleep because my mind races... Seroquel brought it to a halt.

Toward the end of my first week there, I was told I had a visitor coming: a cousin, which didn't make sense because I've never been close with my cousins and wouldn't care to see them. Instead, it turned out to be Lin. Her mom had lied to get her in because only family was allowed to visit.

Lin looked tired, pale, and in much worse condition than I was. Her hair was all in knots. She said she was so upset about my being there that she hadn't been able to sleep the entire time I was admitted. She looked dead, but was beautiful to me, because I knew what it meant.

Together, we decided it was time for me to leave. I called my Mom the next day and asked her to come get me. When she hesitated, I told her that I wouldn't talk to her anymore if she didn't. I've always shared everything with her and she didn't want to lose that. She said she'd come to pick me up the next day.

When the head doctor found out I was leaving, he talked to me for the first time since I'd arrived. "If it were up to me I'd keep you here for a month."

But what did he know? Being there for a month wasn't going to solve my problems any more than a week had.

To see me off on my last night there, my roommates treated me to a show. They snuck forks, spoons and even their laced shoes into our bedroom. (I still have no idea how.)

They swung their shoes by the laces like a helicopter and yelled, "Look what I can do!" to later joke that we were only denied our strings to be denied this fun.

The next morning I packed my stuff, put on my shoes, tied the laces, and broke the final rule against touching the other patients by giving them hugs goodbye. The doctors actually tried to stop us.

When I neared the exit, Chris shouted my name and pointed to a dry erase board. He'd written, "We're all here because we're not all there," a phrase I've liked ever since.

I waved one last time, turned my back and left.

Back at home I tried to return to my usual routine, but all motivation had been lost. My new medication finally helped me sleep, but only sleep, awake or otherwise. It shut down my emotions so that it was hard for me to feel anything, even toward Lin.

We began to fight more. Before, I'd start fights because I wanted to know that she truly loved me. Now I started them to convince myself that she didn't—a futile attempt to make myself feel better about my own fading feelings.

I'd be driving her home.

"Sneak out tonight to come see me."

"I can't... my parents might find out."

"They won't, don't worry."

"They might... and I'll get in trouble."

"What are they going to do anyway? Ground you? Just sneak out again."

"Dylan, I just can't."

"You just won't... I'd sneak out if it was me in your position."

"I'm sorry..."

"You're not... you just don't care."

"But I do! I see you every day!"

"For a few hours before homework and dinner!"

"I have to do those things..."

"But why? Never mind. Just forget it... I see what's most important to you."

She'd begin to tear up. Maybe she really felt bad for upsetting me, or maybe she realized I was only trying to provoke her. Maybe she just felt trapped, like she couldn't do anything right. Maybe an infinite amount of things...

I'd lost interest in love. I couldn't feel emotion, so I began to crave something more concrete... an accomplishment that came with recognition; I wanted to prove myself.

I was feeling powerful. The kids at school had begun to look at me differently since I'd been released from the psych ward. Rumors had even spread that I'd escaped through barbed wire. I felt as though I could pluck whatever I desired from the walls.

At that same time, one of the girls from our group, Liz, began to catch my eye. She was confident and sexy, a complete contrast to Lin.

She had just broken up with her long-term boyfriend and had instructed my friends not to tell me... supposedly she didn't want me hitting on her.

They told me anyway; they didn't think I had a chance.

So, realizing that I wasn't being fair to Lin by keeping her when I couldn't feel for her, I told her that I didn't feel right seeing her anymore.

When I told her, she cried. She knew I had other girls in mind. She'd felt my glance go over her

head and into another's eyes.

Her lips shook as they opened, but the words got stuck in her throat.

Finally, they broke through.

"*Why am I not good enough?!*"

But you are! I'm sorry...

Though really I said nothing. I stood silent, paralyzed.

I searched for words as I stared into her eyes, but my silence had confirmed her suspicions. She didn't want to see my face anymore.

"Just get out! Please! LEAVE!"

I closed the door behind me and stood listening to her cry. Then left, knowing she'd be crying there for hours.

I wanted so badly to come back... to sit down beside her and pull her head into my chest. But there was nothing I could do. The only one capable of comforting her was the one who had hurt her. I felt powerless.

Whenever I'd see her after, she always looked tired, worn out... confused by how I could go from head-over-heels to distant and emotionless. "A woman without love is like a flower without sun." I watched her wilt. And I began to get worried.

She'd hurt herself anytime she got down, and now after finally opening up to me, I'd crushed her. And all this after I'd forced a relationship on her that she feared from the start. I thought that if I found her someone else, it might ease her pain... and my mind.

I'd recently made a new friend also dealing with depression who came from a similar background as mine. His name was Kyle. I told him my situation: that I was interested in Liz and worried that Lin might harm herself.

"She's really beautiful, and she's a sweet girl... I just can't feel anything for her anymore."

"She is pretty..."

"Really? You think so? You should date her, then."

"Really?"

"Yeah."

"You sure you wouldn't mind?"

"Of course not, you'd be doing me a favor."

I told him that since he and I had become such good friends so quickly, I trusted that he'd take good care of her. It's still so vivid in my mind.

Kyle took my advice, and before long he and Lin were hanging out together. And at the time, I was fine with it; I was already preoccupied with Liz. I'd quickly won her over using the same technique I'd learned with Lin: showing interest then taking it away. Only this time, it wasn't my subconscious fighting for something I couldn't live without. Now I was cold, calculating. It went like this:

I look at you... hold eye contact... show

weakness; maybe hold on too long, as if in a trance... caught up in your beauty... caught up in my love for you.

I look away quickly, nervously; ashamed... and take a deep breath, as if just now remembering to breathe.

But it's true my heart is pounding; it's true that I'm nervous.

I smile to brush it off. *I'm sorry... I just got caught up.*

I try to move on, but now you look at me differently. You realize that I'm in love with you... and now, you're in love with me too.

But have I manipulated you? Told you certain things in certain ways to make you love me? Shared my pain so that you'd pity me? Ignored you so that you'd crave me?

You don't often feel so much so early for someone, so it must mean something.

But have I deceived you? Should you stay away? You're torn.

Yet if I see you again, you'll feel it again... you'll pity me again, get excited again, love me again!

And is it all deception? Do I deceive myself? Can I not love, only entertain?

My every emotion split in two and my every truth half a lie.

I swear my intentions aren't always bad... I just get caught up. I don't know what I want.

In that moment, it's true that I'm excited. We are locking eyes, we are sharing something. It is real... that's why it feels real.

I want to love you, but then I second-guess myself. I think, "I've only deceived you. You don't truly love me, and one day you'll hate me for deceiving you. I'll be with someone who hates me... and I'll know that your love was only given out of deception."

So then I wonder, who has it worse? I'd love to love truly, too.

I dropped acid with Liz one night and told her everything that had been on my mind: that I felt powerful, that I felt I could manipulate any situation. I even hinted that winning her over so easily proved my power. She didn't disagree.

Her eyes lit up to reflect my own and I resented her because of it; because it was so easy for her to believe things I felt foolish for even thinking myself.

The thought of having power frightened me; it'd mean that I really was different. And then what? Where to go from there? I truly would be alone.

I began to seriously worry about my state of mind for the first time, and felt I needed help. I either needed confirmation that I was different or to

be told that I had simply gone off track. I prayed for someone to show me that I had only been confused... someone to prove that I was just like everyone else.

The things I thought about, the power I felt (forgetting that I so often felt helpless)... everything built and built. It was as if I was surrounded in constant light and noise, as if skyscrapers were rising around me.

I'd also come the realization that I'd never again attempt suicide. It had happened while drinking with a group of friends just after returning from the hospital. Everything felt awkward; no one knew how to act.

Finally, someone broke the ice with a joke and everyone laughed. I remember looking around the room at everyone enjoying themselves... and I smiled.

I thought to myself, "Life is worth living, just for this smile." There'd always be something that I wouldn't want to miss.

So if I was going to live, I wanted to be cured.

My therapist at the time hadn't ever been able to help me beyond prescribing my income, so I decided to look for someone new. A younger counselor who had supposedly helped kids in similar situations was eventually suggested to my mom, and we agreed to give him a shot.

I'd never been fully honest with my therapists before, so I decided to tell this one everything on my mind. I figured that by finally opening up, I might finally find some relief.

When I'd enter his office, we'd greet, sit, and he'd wait for me to begin.

But what to say? On command it's difficult to talk about what you've been thinking. Once asked, you immediately forget. So I'd just start to talk... about something bothering me, about nothing at all. And once I got started, once my mind heated up, I'd go on and on... about how I felt alien... about how I couldn't understand why everyone popped their collars with the trend and were happy with whatever came on the radio... how I must be the crazy one because it was me who was different; me who couldn't fit in.

Things just didn't make sense: how upside down the world seemed to be... that the lowest common denominator of taste was what thrived; that I'd had so much trouble making friends my whole life...

What had I done wrong? Was I really so terrible to be around? Was it that I was sad? Was it because I was poor? Had my family's name been tainted by the death of my father?

An acquaintance once told me, "You're

not looking for my advice. It's as if you're laying out puzzle pieces before you, and as you speak, you assemble them on the floor until your idea is complete." I'd ask questions, but I wouldn't expect answers.

Some days, I'd go into his office with only positive things to say. I'd call myself crazy for ever thinking otherwise. It made sense that everyone liked the songs on the radio... they were catchy; I may have even had one stuck in my head at the time. And maybe girls liked it when guys popped their collars. Who was I to judge?

It's not so much that everything made sense on those days; it's just that things weren't bothering me. Something had gone right; someone had smiled at me. All colors were vibrant and the "smell of flowers lingered in the air." I listened to different music, upbeat and fast... I felt I could conquer the world.

Where as most days, I'd come in confused and distraught. I'd tell him about how my emotions were always so conflicted; contradictory. How I'd get so high on myself only to go so low... "For the branches to reach heaven, the roots must go down to hell..."

I'd tell him that I felt separate from everyone around me; that I felt I saw so much more than everyone else... that at times I even imagined myself a god...

"I know, it's silly. I don't really believe it... but sometimes...

I see that I'm different. When I enter a party, I feel that I'm the only one alone, standing out in a sea of like-minded people. They get along, they dance, they yell... I'm the only one complaining, making sure I don't talk too loud. It's as if I were an alien surrounded by robots...

Yet if I'm the only one who's different, doesn't that make me the crazy one? Isn't crazy defined by the majority?

Maybe it's just that I overthink, and my overthinking keeps me separate. I feel I'm able to see things that the others can't... and because I'm able to see, I'm able to control what the others don't think to control. I see, therefore I can manipulate. But that's not a good thing... nor a godly thing. It's just over-thinking... and usually ruins everything.

But, I really feel that I'm the only one... the only one alone! As if it's *only me* that's capable of sin, *only me* that sees. Everyone else only seems capable of being... of reacting... while I think and pre-meditate. I mean... of course I'm not the only one... but...

My whole life I've felt like every boy around me was out playing baseball with their fathers, while I sat in my room, wondering what it meant to die.

And it's not just baseball, but everything! With my dad gone and my mom lost, I had no guidelines,

no framework to grow up by. Simple things like showering confused me. Were you supposed to wash everywhere, every time? Showers used to take me so long. It's like everything just comes so easy to everyone else... like everyone else knows something I don't.

I imagine them all as moving through life, guided by two steel railings at their sides. They're supported, but also confined to their path. Whereas I stumble and make mistakes, but can walk where I please.

And maybe I have my dad to thank for that. Though maybe not. I don't know... I wonder who I would have become had he stayed around...

Anyway, I'm constantly trying to prove my worth to everyone. I get so worked up in my mania, absorbed in my ideas, that I imagine I can't be refused... that my greatest visions will work out exactly as I've seen them.

How could they not? They're perfect. I've thought out every detail. I get excited, my speech gains speed. *And after that I'll do this*, and so on, all steps making perfect sense, unable to be any other way.

And sometimes things do go well... sometimes I don't feel so separate. But it never lasts for long. If a single person proposes a doubt, if just one little obstacle is thrown in my way, then, *Fine! Fuck it all! I don't care. It was all stupid anyway!* *Of course it wouldn't work!* I'm crushed. I hate everyone and wonder why I ever tried. And all that must be was not.

I go from manic bliss in organized perfection to crawling back inside my shell, unwilling to open up again for months. *It was you who destroyed my idea! You who didn't believe! You who pulled the rug out from under my feet!*

I mean, everything I do is really just a cry for help... yet still, I'm ignored! I spill my heart, but my blood goes unseen.

So, disgusted with everyone around me, I push them all away. I burn all my bridges; sabotage myself. Then get upset, wondering why I can't have these things that I know I don't want. I wonder why I'm alone... after having craved to be alone.

I try to fix the burnt bridges... try to prove that I can win everything back. *Oh you don't want me now? You think you can get over me so quickly? I'll show you. I don't even need you... I'll get you back just to prove that I can!*

And it happens all over again. I torture myself to torture others. I do things that I don't want to do, upsetting everyone around me. All because I haven't found what I want, or can't allow myself to be satisfied with what I have.

Getting what I want would end the chase. I'd become complete: perfect... and to reach perfection—the answer—is to die.

The answer ends the question and the question is life.

And if life is the question... then the answer is death!

How can I choose between opposing sides when I know they're essentially the same and therefore nothing? I feel I'm being forced to become a knowing fool... forced to forever chase myself in circles, or die.

So I endlessly build and destroy my bridges just to keep myself moving, feeling alive.

I don't know... maybe I should just leave for some beachside town, work at a bar and take it easy; live a quiet life. It's all pointless anyway... what's the difference in accepting that my life has no meaning? At least then I wouldn't be lying to myself.

But still, for some reason, a beachside bar would feel like a waste of time. For me to give up on my dreams, to settle into a normal life... I'd be admitting that I'm not as special as I've thought I was. I can't live like that. I can't live a single day without believing that I am who I think I am. I'd prefer to die. If I'm not who I know, then who am I?

The only other option is that everything else is wrong. Everything around me seems off. The things people strive for; the way they act, mimicking each other so as not to stand out. The things they find important, the way they fall in love... what they ignore. Everything!

I just don't want to be here anymore... I don't belong here. I feel like an outcast... and admit I've outcast myself... but I just can't talk with these people! It doesn't feel right... and so I just want to go...

Yet I'm forced to stay here, forced to occupy my time!

But why? And for what!? For my family?
Because to live I must do and for them I can't die?

So if I can't rest, then I guess, Fuck it! And I'm back. It just keeps going on like this... constant contradiction, always in loops. Always the same chase and the same answer, but I just can't shut it up!

...Anyway, what am I even talking about?
Sorry... I got too worked up."

A week after one particular speech like that, I came to my therapist's office in an abnormally good mood. But before I could begin, he said he had something to tell me.

"I don't think it's right for me to see you anymore."

He said he didn't understand my situation well enough and didn't feel right continuing to prescribe my medication.

I immediately went into shock. The frightened look in his eyes transferred to my own. I had shared everything with him and had somehow scared him.

I hadn't been trying to manipulate or confuse

him... I really was this way. I had finally spilled my heart to someone, and in return he'd made me feel as though I were incurable.

Confusion and frustration scrambled around my chest and head. How was I going to sleep without medication? How could I ever open up again? My eyes darted about the room, searching for an escape. I began to cry.

My mom was called in and tried to console me, but I didn't see it like that; I saw it as her taking his side.

I ran out of the room with tears streaming down my face, shouting that no one understood or appreciated me, that there was nowhere for me to go, that I'd never open up to anyone again, that I wished I had died. One setback and my tower crumbles...

I walked to my house, packed some clothes and biked to Liz's to grab a sleeping bag. I told her I was headed to a cliff in the woods overlooking a river a few miles down from my house.

When I arrived, I unrolled my sleeping bag at the top of the rock and climbed inside of it. It immediately started to rain.

I zipped up the sleeping bag over my head and didn't move for almost half an hour. Water began to seep in as the rain finally died down...

I heard a branch break close by, and then voices. I lay frozen, trying to think up excuses for my position.

But as they neared, the voices sounded familiar... it was my good friends, John and Sam. They pulled back my sleeping bag for me to immediately yell, "Dude, it rained!"

They laughed, but there was concern in their eyes. Liz had told them where I was, but they seemed surprised to actually find me there.

They said they'd take me to dry off and get some pizza.

On the drive over, I began to doubt their motives... *Maybe they're going to take me to the psych ward again.* An overwhelming confusion swept through me, verging on panic. My best friends, and I couldn't even trust them.

I pulled up the lock to my door and glanced out the window. *If they look like they're going a different direction... if they veer off the path to pizza, I'll jump out and run away...* I watched every turn.

It was as if everyone were talking, all so loud, growing louder.

My eyes blurred. The dim light seemed bright, piercing. Louder, louder...

Listening in on every conversation; I can't block anything out.

It's overbearing; overcoming me. Washing over; engulfing me.

I'm buried beneath layers of sound.

My head filled as if with water, moving like

waves within me; I'm drowning, losing my mind.

And it all seems eternal... until finally it subsides.

Seeing that we were nearing the pizza place, I began to calm down. We ate and they convinced me to go back home.

I've mentioned that many times I've felt as though I were trapped in a pit, wishing for a hand to reach down and save me. But this time, I would have seen the hand and feared it. Help put more fear into me than being left alone.

Around this time, Lin and Kyle began to show their affection more publicly. Whenever I saw them at school they'd immediately come close, hold hands and kiss. A pinch of my lost emotion returned and I started to regret what I'd done.

I was also beginning to realize just how much the Seroquel had changed my personality and affected my judgement. So in my brief moment of clarity, I decided to quit the Seroquil cold turkey, and coldly quit Liz as well.

It felt like I'd stepped out into a bright summer day after being inside with the shades drawn. I missed Lin, I craved Lin... and seeing her with Kyle drove me insane.

You can't imagine the pain I feel when I see you two together.

I cringe, close my eyes; clench my fist, clench my jaw... and try to shake you from my mind. But my chest feels raised while my heart pounds through my throat.

I look down. Try to blank my mind, try to loosen my jaw. But it comes back! It always comes back!

My eyebrows close over my cheeks to swallow my eyes, while my teeth feel as though they'll shatter from the pressure...

Even the next day, though I try to block the thought of you, a subtle pain lingers throughout my entire body; a constant reminder.

I swear at the start you didn't even like each other... I swear you only wanted to hurt me.

We soon met for what would be the last time she'd ever show me pity. I'd been able to get over the initial shock of seeing them together, so I tried to mask my sorrow with spite and mock-indifference.

"You have no respect for me. I never would have done that to you... I never would have made you watch."

"You had to see sometime..."

"But just like that? So soon? And so public?"

She paused. I continued.

"You disgust me. You knew I was watching. And you enjoyed it! I'll never be able to forgive you for that."

My mask was falling, she could tell that I was upset. And seeing that, she began to get upset herself.

"I'm sorry... I had to do it."

"Well, great! Because I'm over you now. I don't care about you at all!"

Another pause... until quietly it came out, "I had to do it for my sake as well..."

She looked into my eyes to make sure I understood. Understood that she still cared about me; that she had to hurt me... that she had to make me hate her. I never would have stopped coming back otherwise.

But it infuriated me nonetheless. I saw in her eyes her final compassion. I saw love leaving forever. Someone who cared for me that I'd never embrace again; someone who wouldn't care for me much longer.

I can't remember exactly what I said next, but she finally ran off in tears. I followed her, tried to stop her; hold her, apologize to her... but she only ran faster. I stopped and watched her run away.

But can he really be as good as me? Can you really feel the same? How could you go from loving me to loving him so quickly? And if you do love him, how could you have ever loved me? Can't you see we're worlds apart?

I began to obsess over sabotaging Kyle's life. I had to find some way to affect him, so I told my friends that if they wanted to see me, it couldn't be round Kyle. Some preferred my company, and a few stuck with him, until the group was divided.

In my mind, I had proved I could accomplish the "impossible" again. All these things that seem so trivial to me now were confirming my feelings of power then.

Yet no matter what I tried, nothing I did proved to Lin that she should take me back. Instead, I made myself into a target for her and Kyle to team up against. My hate for them made their relationship more special: they had a spectator, an enemy. By trying to pull them apart, I only pushed them closer together.

But still, I can't forget her. She penetrates my mind. She sneaks in and sits patiently off to the side.

I can try to read; try to focus on the words in front of me... but I always catch a glimpse of her, sitting off to the left, knowing I'm distracted. Just waiting... waiting until I finally give in and admit that I'm not paying attention to anything else.

And so I call her. Please meet me, I plead. She must sense my desperation. She reluctantly agrees.

Here I try to persuade her into taking me back, but she's completely cut off from me now. There's not a straw for me to grab at, there's nothing in her eyes; she's moved on.

"I'm with Kyle now."

I still can't believe it. How could there be no connection? How can there be nothing?

Why does she step back when I move close? Why can't I just kiss her?

It's like she's completely wiped her conscience of me... like we've never meant anything to each other. She shrugs and looks to the ground.

Really? You shrug? As if it was all just a brief mistake? How can this be so easy for you?

And so I get angry.

I belittle you at the last moment with my most terrible thoughts. Maybe untrue things... maybe both true and untrue... but words I know you could do without.

I could leave peacefully, with dignity. But no, I cut you down... selfishly calling you selfish... judging your motives while knowing my own are terrible.

I crave to drag you to my level, but only sink further below myself.

And do I only look foolish? Do you even care?

I over-exaggerate my own importance. I imagine I'll leave you in tears... imagine you'll think about the things I've said.

But you won't.

All along I'm lying to myself and I know it. I act the fool, patting myself on the back while I imagine your nonexistent tears.

You just go on.

I can't take it! My emotions shift so quickly now that it's over...

Sometimes I want to be with you, love you, show how good I can be for you. Take my time to get on your level, make sure we feel the same...

Then suddenly, so opposite. I want to hit you, smack you; these things I'd never do...

Instead, I smash my fist against the wall or shatter a glass to "prove" to you that I'm a man... that I have power... that most times I'm holding back. Oh, how I wish I could show you more...

I lift a chair. "Do you want to throw that at me?"

No... I want to throw it through the window. But you're right... it is you that I wish I could touch.

I want to hurt you for hurting me. For starting arguments out of nothing... for making me show my strength so that you could see my restraint.

And you can't imagine what I'd like to do to him...

But really it's me. I've brought this on myself. I looked elsewhere while you were here. I let you go to someone else.

And so I can't blame either of you. I hate you

both... you in turn can't blame me for that, though you've done nothing...

I just wish that I could end this pain. If only I had the strength to move on...

If only I didn't have to know that my hate for you only proves I still love you...

Oh, how I pray for indifference!

Maybe I lose what I love because I'm afraid to lose what I love... I'm afraid to love.

But you're right, I do always want more. Nothing is ever enough...

And "When you want all, you get none."

Walking down a crowded hallway after school, I was suddenly shoved to the ground.

I looked up to see Gordon, a kid I'd had trouble with in the past, yelling, "Stop talking fucking shit!" before hurrying off. I had no idea what he could be talking about, but he'd created a perfect storm of the things I hated most: public embarrassment and being punished for something I hadn't done.

Furious, I looked all over for him the next day, but couldn't find him anywhere. I figured he must be hiding from me. I saw some of his friends sitting around a lunch table, so I decided to ask them where I could find him.

Before heading over though, I thought to do something I had originally intended to psych out a larger opponent.

For years, I'd imagined myself standing behind the school, face to face with a bully about to beat my ass. Then, with both of my hands behind my back, I'd cut into the palm of my right hand, until it was covered with blood. Finally, as the bully approached, I'd reach out and slap him across the face. Disgusted and afraid, I imagined him thinking, "How can I beat someone who harms himself?" I would have already drawn first blood, and it would be my own.

I found a plastic butter knife, clenched it in my palm and tore it out.

It wasn't easy to break the skin... I had to keep cutting and cutting. Finally, blood pooled in my hand.

I walked over and sat down beside Gordon's best friend, Jeremiah.

"You wouldn't happen to know where Gordon is, would you?"

"No..."

I nonchalantly raised my bloodied hand up for everyone at the table to see and began to pump my fist. Someone nudged Jeremiah. He'd seen.

"All right," I told him. "I'll trust you... but if

I find out you're lying, not only will he and I have a problem, but we will as well."

"I'm not lying... I promise." His eyes were huge.

As I got up to leave, I casually placed my hand on Jeremiah's shoulder as if to say goodbye, and slid it down his arm.

Excited whispers followed me as I walked away.

Soon after, I was headed to class with John, when my guidance councilor stopped me in the hall.

Jeremiah was trailing behind her and laughed as he passed. John turned and followed behind him.

He must have told her about the blood... I was screwed.

But he hadn't. The guidance councilor was only checking up on me.

"How are you doing today, Dylan?"

"Not bad, everything's fine..."

"Do you think you'll be making it to class today?"

"We'll see..."

Suddenly, chants erupted behind me. I heard screams of "Fight! Fight! Fight!" and turned around to see some big jock pinning John to the ground.

I quickly darted over, pushed through the crowd, and launched into the air to bring my heel down into the kid's lower back.

I grabbed him by the shoulders and flung him off John, who got up, leaving us to scramble on the floor.

But before we could even figure out who we were fighting, the school's gigantic security guard was pulling us apart and escorting us down the hall to the principal's office.

As I walked, I began to feel euphoric; I'd finally been able to let off some steam.

Soon, everyone involved was called down to the office one by one. When John arrived, he sat down next to me and I was able to ask him what had happened.

Having thought that I'd been told on, John had slammed Jeremiah's head into a locker. He was angry with him, worried that I'd be sent back to the psych ward.

Then, Jeremiah's friend, the captain of the lacrosse team, had tackled John to the ground.

When I told John that the guidance councilor had only been checking up on me, we both laughed and felt a bit bad for Jeremiah.

Jeremiah was brought into the office next, and we began to get nervous. After what felt like forever, he walked out, avoiding my eyes. The assistant principal followed behind him.

"Can I see your arms, Dylan?" Fuck.

The night before, I'd stayed at my friend Zak's house with a few other kids. His parents were out of

town. We got drunk, high, and went in his Jacuzzi.

Wet on the way inside, my friend Tucker slipped on the floor and knocked over a ceramic plate. As we cleaned up the pieces, he began to trace raised, red patterns on his arm with the shards. We all joined in.

As we drew, Tucker told us about an epiphany he'd recently had while tripping on acid.

He said he'd realized that all his pot smoking and drug use was ruining his life. He yelled out, "Where would I be without LSD?" and I wrote the slogan on my arm with a sharpie.

So now, when asked to see my arms, I realized that I had what looked like a hundred cuts running down to my wrist and "WHERE WOULD I BE WITHOUT LSD?" written over them.

I rolled up my sleeves, extended my arms and rotated them quickly so that she wouldn't have time to see.

"All right Dylan, that'll do. Thank you." I pulled my sleeves back down and was asked to follow her to her office with John.

"Wow guys... I don't know what to say. I feel like I've watched a soap opera unfold before my eyes today."

She told us that she understood we were only sticking up for each other, but due to the fighting, she'd still have to suspend us for a week. Nothing was ever mentioned about the blood.

Our paths had crossed many times over the years and she knew my situation well. She didn't want to see my life ruined. I figured she'd probably just decided to believe that I was a cutter, and that my wounds had accidentally opened up as I patted Jeremiah on the shoulder. What luck.

She told us to wait for our mothers in another room. I finally found Gordon there and I was able to ask why he'd shoved me.

Apparently, Jeremiah had told him that I'd been talking shit about him, which I hadn't.

What had really happened was that Jeremiah was dating Liz's younger sister at the time, and whenever I'd see them, I'd jokingly hit on her to make her laugh. I guess he didn't like that, so he lied to make his best friend do his dirty work.

I felt less bad about Jeremiah's shitty day.

When my mom arrived, they brought her into a separate room. I saw through a window in the door that they'd put her on a phone. When she finished talking, I was told I could leave.

In the car, my mom told me that she had to bring me somewhere. I soon found out that who they'd put her on the phone with was another mental hospital.

Once there, I was brought into a room where a stern lady asked me questions while she scribbled on a clipboard. When she asked me to describe myself,

one of the words I used was manipulative. She asked me to explain.

"Sometimes I speak with so much confidence and enthusiasm that everyone around me believes what I say. And sometimes, I joke with a straight face just to see if I'll be believed..."

She asked a few more questions. Then, in a professionally apologetic tone, told me that she wouldn't be able to approve my entry to their hospital. "We have a lot of very sensitive people here. We can't have just anyone coming in and making their situation worse."

I didn't argue. I wasn't about to let on that I'd never hurt anyone in that situation... I was just relieved.

I went home to start my suspension.

Upon my return to school, the faculty no longer seemed to care how I spent my time. With insomnia as my excuse, I was allowed to take the first two periods off, though I rarely attended any of my classes at all. At most I'd stop in to check with the office or come during lunch to visit my friends.

One day, on my way to my car after lunch, I was stopped by the school cop.

"I've just been told that you've missed thirteen days of your physics class, Dylan. I'm going to have to file you for truancy. Follow me to the office."

What he didn't know was that I'd just left there and they already knew that I hadn't been to class. When we walked in, the assistant principal told him she'd handle it.

Once I was alone with her, I asked her if I should be worried about the possibility of legal trouble.

"You're about to graduate, right? When do you turn eighteen?"

"In a month or so..."

"Well then, you don't have to worry about that... by the time all the paperwork is filed you'll be your own legal guardian. Now please go to class, Dylan."

"Alright, thank you."

I left the office and again walked to my car. The school cop watched as I drove away.

I'd always wondered how certain kids were able to skip class and do as they pleased without ever getting into trouble. Now I knew.

Soon after graduation, I saw Kyle at a party. He came up to me and casually mentioned that he'd had sex with Lin.

"How? It hurt her too much when we tried..."

"I found a way..." And he left it at that.

I was defeated. The girl I had hoped to lose my virginity to had allegedly given hers to someone else.

And I'd done it to myself...

That night I had a very real dream that Kyle and I were fighting. I found myself hunched over him, punching him in the chest. But his chest was rubber... nothing could affect him. He just smiled up at me.

I didn't leave my bedroom after that and refused to see my friends. I didn't know who I was or what I had become. And the one thing I wanted to gain from creating so much chaos, I couldn't have. No matter what I tried, I couldn't get Lin back; I was only scaring her.

I felt I had to do something big to prove that I could change... to prove I was as great as I made myself out to be. Something to impress everyone; something "impossible" again. I decided to ride my bicycle down south.

"How far?"

I wasn't sure. "Just south," I'd say. "I'll know when I get there."

I met with Lin one last time before leaving.

I tried to convince her that I loved her, that I'd always love her. That though I'd strayed and made mistakes, I would always come back to her. That true love was unconditional... that if she really loved me, she wouldn't have let me go.

"I did love you, Dylan."

"Did," I thought... "Well, if you don't, you never did."

I went home, packed my bags, played "The Goodbye Song" by The Moldy Peaches, and I left.

I would have never left had I not left you.

I'm sorry, don't worry, and thank you.





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All previous photography and writing by Dylan Forsberg
Unless otherwise stated

01 - 09 Model: Alana Zimmer

10 - 11 Artist: Maisie Cousins

16 - 17 & 36 - 37 Artist: Eric Shaw

12 - 15 & 66 - 67 Model: Kasia Struss

18 - 23 Model / Artist: Elyse Saunders
Painted on and over by herself

24 - 25 & 40 - 41 Artist: Sebastian Wahl

26 - 31 Model: Zuzanna Krzatala
Oil rendition by Artist: Emerald Rose Whipple

34 - 35 & 38 - 39 Model: Hanne Gaby

42 - 47 Model: Sheila Marquez

48 - 49 Artist: Lo Kyung Me

50 - 65 Writer: Dylan Forsberg
 Editor: Wilder Fleming

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MODELS

Samantha Gradoville @ IMG

1, 2-3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 38-39, 43, 45, 49, 50-51, 56, 60, 61

Bara Holotova @ Ford

12, 19, 34-35, 37, 46-47, 52, 53, 55, 58-59, 63, 64, 65

Stef Van Der Laan @ IMG

32, 33, 40, 41

HAIR

Leonardo Manetti for ION Studio

1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 34, 35, 37, 38-39, 46-47, 49, 52, 53, 55, 58, 59, 63, 64, 65, 66

Bok-Hee @ Streeters

18, 43, 50-51, 56

Charlie Taylor @ Bridge Artists

32-33, 40-41

Celine Raymond

24, 45, 60, 61

MAKEUP

Asami Taguchi @ Frank Reps

2-3, 6, 13, 18, 20, 24, 25, 31, 32, 33, 38, 39, 40, 41, 43, 45, 49, 50-51, 56, 60, 61

Kumiko Hirose

1, 5, 7, 8, 9, 12, 14, 16-17, 19, 21, 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 34-35, 37, 46-47, 64, 66

Samantha Trinh @ Kate Ryan Inc for Chanel

52-53, 55, 58-59, 63, 65

FASHION

Cover: Body ALAÏA, Necklace CARA CRONINGER, Earrings GENEVIEVE JONES

Marabou scarf throughout DRIES VAN NOTEN

5: Prince of wales shirt dress throughout THOM BROWNE, Crystal scorpion pin - DRIES VAN NOTEN

6: Embroidered trousers DONA DANESHI, Felted halter ECKHAUS LATTA, Shoes ALAÏA, Rings earrings and pendant PATRICIA VON MUSULIN

7: Polka dot body and gloves throughout ALAÏA, Earrings GENEVIEVE JONES

8: Romper and thigh high boots throughout RICK OWENS

13: mirrored dress SOUTHPAW VINTAGE, Boots NICHOLAS KIRKWOOD, Jewelry PATRICIA VON MUSULIN

16, 17: Body suit ALAÏA, Vintage NUMBER (9)INE head dress

18: Shirt dress THOM BROWNE, Ring NATALIE FRIGO, Earring DAIMYO

19: Ruffled top TOME, organza shorts made for stylist

20: Silk and leather top HAIDER ACKERMAN

24: Metal mesh bathing suit ARIELLE DE PINTO, jacket liner VINTAGE, jewelry PATRICIA VON MUSULIN

34, 35: Embroidered top PUCCI, Necklaces RODARTE

40, 41: Metal mesh bathing suit ARIELLE DE PINTO, Trousers ALAÏA

44, 45: Leather top ALAÏA, Fleece trousers ECKHAUS LATTA, Rings PATRICIA VON MUSULIN

47: Underwear GERLAN, Rings PATRICIA VON MUSULIN, SCOSCHA, DAIMYO

50, 51: Leggings ALAÏA, Fanny pack GERLAN, Necklace and rings GENEVIEVE JONES

52, 53: Mock neck jumper OPENING CEREMONY, Sunglasses MERCURA, Earrings JUDY GEIB, Fleece jacket PATAGONIA, Leather shorts JEREMY SCOTT

55: Knit tank DRIES VAN NOTEN, Earrings DAIMYO, Weed stole GERLAN, vintage drug rug, stylists own weed necklace

58, 59: Rings DAIMYO, NATALIE FRIGO, ZOE CHICCO, SCOSCHA

61: Fleece harness ECKHAUS LATTA, leather pumps RAF SIMONS FOR DIOR

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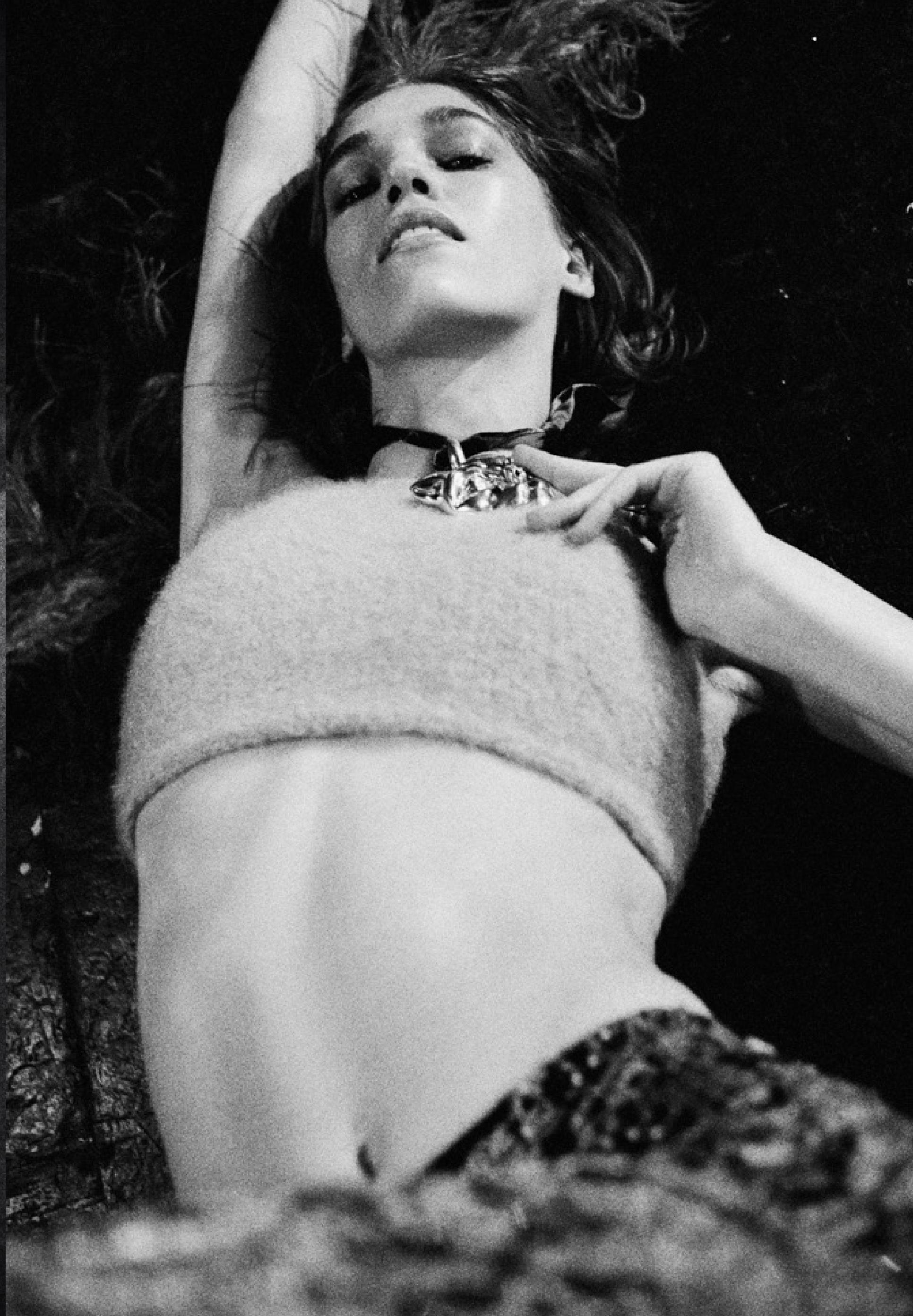












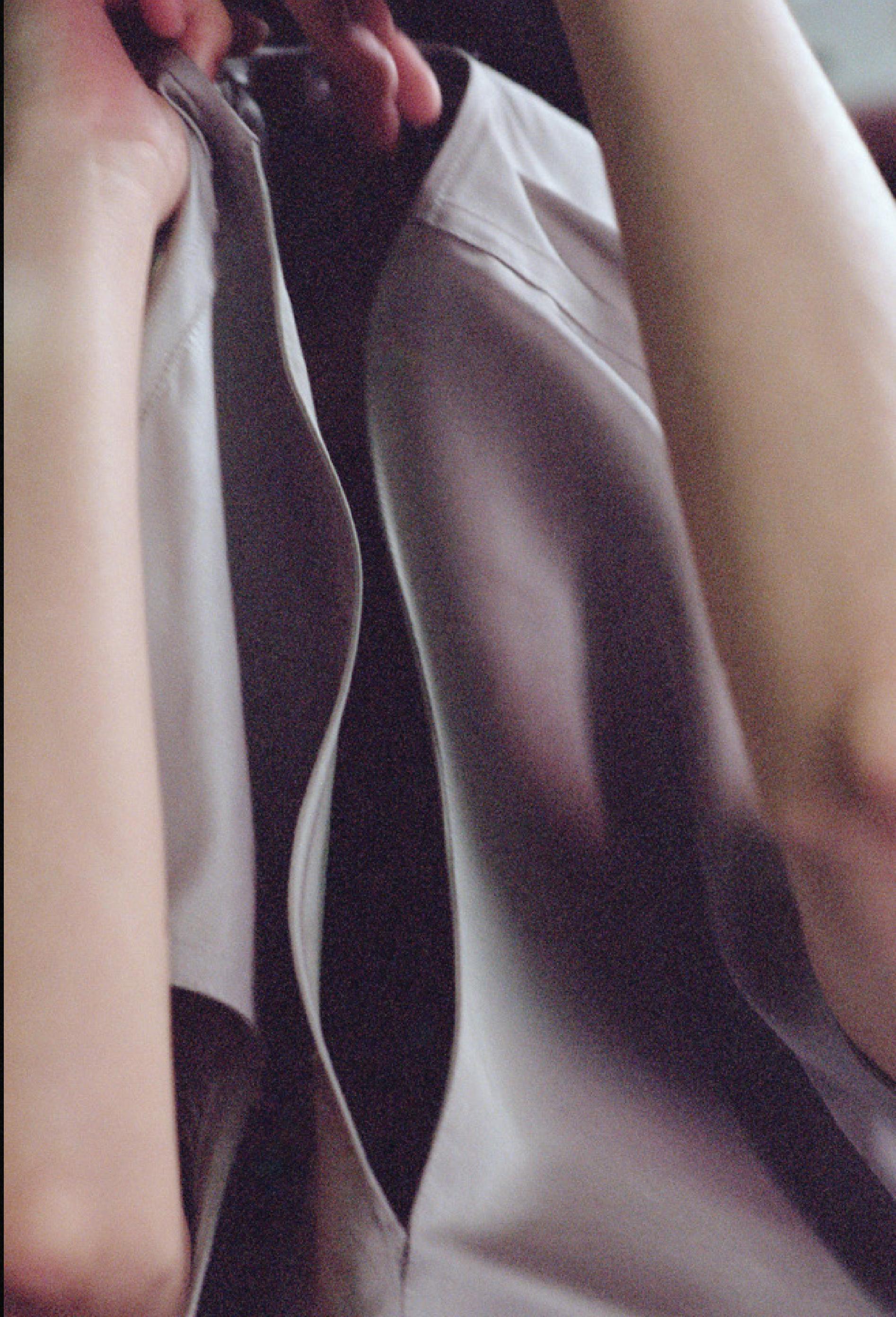




















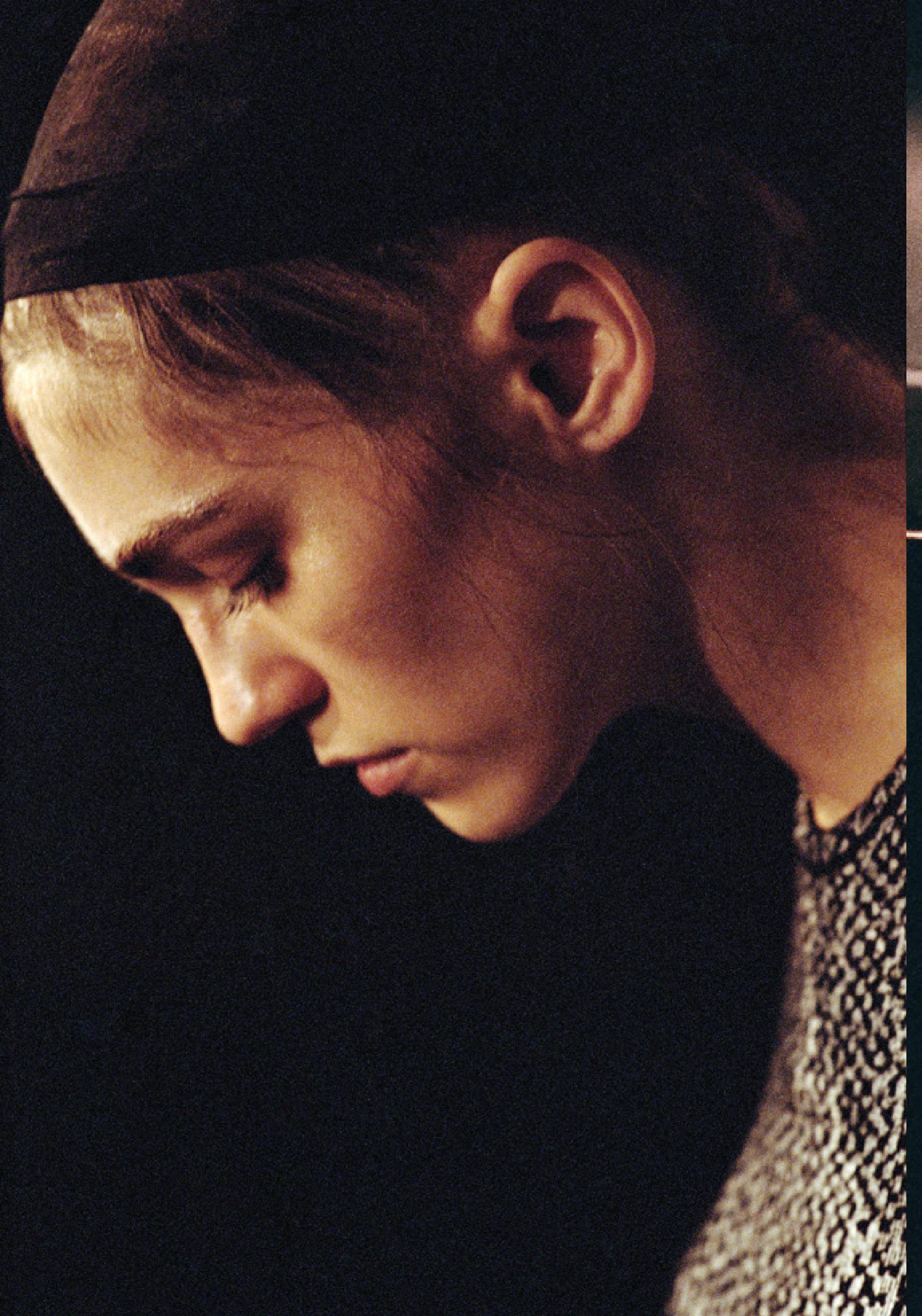




























EXIT











TRANSMISSION

ISSUE 02: TRANSPARENCY

