Over the phone today, my therapist asks me, the way she always asks me, how I’m feeling. I tell her I’m feeling confused; I’ve been living in Seattle for the past three weeks and somehow, life here is feeling more and more translucent, foggy. I don’t tell her I’m standing on a roof of some condo in Capitol Hill, watching cottony clouds roll westward towards the Space Needle.

It’s been three months since I had top surgery, and sometimes I dream of the first time I saw my post-op reflection in the surgeon’s office, all blood and suture and broken flesh. The dusty mirror burst open in a snowflake flurry of becoming, and when the glass stitched itself back together again in my image, my eyes swam with tears. Sometimes I stare at my reflection in the mirror for entire minutes, and sometimes, for brief moments, God’s image blinks back at me.

You are not my therapist, but let me tell you about transition. Let me tell you about bodies, and about blood. Let me show you the revulsion I choke back in dressing rooms, the thick cordoned scars that line my forearms and thighs, the confusion that beats in my chest and nests in the crook between my legs. Gender dysphoria is a voice that whispers silk, so light you breathe it in like city smog: *your body is not right*. Gender dysphoria is colorless as mustard gas, so sweet-smelling and soft you don’t even realize it’s fucking you until you’re beneath it, breathless and coughing up blood: *your body is not right*. You are malformed, you are mutated cell growth, why couldn’t your stupid mother’s womb decide *what you are*.

I was supposed to go to work today, I tell my therapist, but I thought I might walk in front of the number four bus if I left the house, so I stayed home.

At my most navel-gazing, I try to come up with appropriate metaphors for the action of pushing a syringe full of prescribed testosterone into my thigh every Friday afternoon. Perhaps, I vainly wonder, I am also attempting to siphon out some of the self-loathing that scratches at my amygdala and lymph nodes and pulmonary artery. Cut yourself, Self-Loathing says. Go deep, right above your spine. I can’t tell if this beast wears a Reaper’s cloak or a bowtie. *Perhaps both?* my therapist jokes. A hawk moth stirs lazily near my left shoulder, almost lands on my chest.

I’ve been in Seattle for three weeks and somehow the people on dating apps here are even whiter than they were on Long Island. I say this to my therapist, and there is a long moment of silence. New York City has spoiled me for this, I say. There, for so long I was able to ward off my lust for masculinity in the biphobic lesbian communities in which I grew up. Now, coarse chin hair and a deepening voice brought with them both attention and curiosity from gay men, and a hunger for them I can no longer repress.

At least these Seattle internet strangers smile while they ask me questions about The Surgery, glistening white pectorals and teeth framed in blurry iPhone selfies.

A cisgender man on Grindr smiles. He lives in Bellevue and only dates “post-op” and “passable transgenders.”

A cisgender man on Scruff smiles. He enjoys hiking, craft beer, and making sure that I am aware that he “doesn’t date black guys.”

Beneath my tongue crouches acid. We are their filthy little secrets, their trannies and niggers and nothings, but when I say I cannot live in this body anymore, there is no word more urgent than “suicide.”

Somehow, this doesn’t make for light dating profile fare.

Yesterday, the white dude I fuck is a forty-something with matted blonde hair. He is very pleasant, and very greasy, and I think his name is Steve, and when I say I fuck him I mean I really fuck him; I sit on his cock and I moan and gasp and I don’t feel a fucking thing. Over the past few weeks of my Grand Adventure to the Pacific Northwest, I have fucked so many white cisgender men, men whose mayonnaise bodies look nothing like mine, and it is not the simple fact of my promiscuity that repulses me. The feeling is something more akin to circling the spidery veins lining their pink dicks, warm to the touch, in my mouth, penetrating me, filling me slowly with threads of nooses and plantation moss, and the cool waters of the Atlantic.

Let’s go deeper, my therapist insists. *Deeper*. I want to know how you’re *really* feeling about your sex life. Okay. On one afternoon, one man, named Greg perhaps, looks at me after we fuck like I am a particularly delicious Something. He jokes about giving my sex a rave review on Yelp: “5 out of 5 dicks,” he crows, blind to the irony. I am perfectly skinny and hairless, he gushes, just vocal enough, exotic. Just like he likes. This man tells me he has *just* finished playing with a boy, a young student visiting Seattle and Vancouver from Hong Kong. That boy sucked me dry, he says, smiling, after I tell him I love to swallow cum.

I suppose you could say I am looking for a place where I can feel safe, with this black skin and this body that confuses me. I think this recklessly but don’t say any of it aloud. All the windows on the building below my rooftop are thrown open to the cool Washington air, and there is even a rainbow flag hanging from the rafters on the unfinished cabana — “Love Wins” hung limply above me, shielded from the breeze. Even the thigh-high barricades that circle my rooftop are closing in on me.

Once, I told my therapist I was going to write a piece about my relationship to my sadness. But I couldn't write you a piece about my sadness without bottling the metallic gnaw of the wind on this rooftop; or the sucker punch of a Four Loko blackout; or the hurricane of grief and confusion that engulfs me when I look down at the “why” between my legs; or up at Thomas or Stephen or Scott as they thrust into me. I couldn’t show you my sadness without fingering the blood lining my boxers the morning after I fuck Jake, or splitting open the clock in my heart, counting down the seconds of how much longer I can live in this body.

Next week, I will fuck a nice guy named Mike, maybe, and when I go into the bathroom afterwards, I will bleed red ribbons into the toilet. My doctor will reassure me that it is nothing to worry about, that this is just a result of the friction, that my internal genitals are drier than they once were because of the hormones I take. She will recommend more lubricant for penetrative sex, and she will say this while performing a PAP smear on me. One day, I will walk in front of the number four bus or I will stay home.

I hang up the phone on my therapist, abruptly; the screen is wet. It’s windy on the roof. I wish I could fly.