



I sleep the whole day. The dogs miss their walks and meals and whine in discomfort. I rise from bed only to finally let them out.

The next day, I let the stillness return to the house and to my routines. I do not take time off from work. I ready the gardens with layers of newspaper to warm and enrich the soil. I cover other areas with carpet remnants to prevent growth.

There is the belief that the soul looks like the body. I imagine a translucent Martin. It's easy to become paranoid when thinking about the dead.

I refuse to believe the world of the soul trumps the world of the body. I can climb the thick branches of the holly and amongst the sharp leaves pick cicada shells from the bark, watch a cat bird jump and bob its tail feathers—clicking, whining—turning its small eye to mine. Birds have filled their bones with air in order to fly. We have filled ours with rituals to keep us grounded.

I find myself thinking more and more about the ground as an incubator. It holds the seeds and their potential, waits the winter through until the planet turns on its axis to warmth.

We wrap bodies in cement boxes to keep the ground and its creatures out. A tight space of air and gas, a closed lid—an environment still warmed by the ground. I want to let the ground in.



The fruit is both bitter and sweet. There are seeds, many of them, and they push out of the fruit onto your face and down the front of your shirt. The fruit is warm from the sun and the activity taking place inside it. There is ripening and movement toward fermentation. The fruit wants to be eaten. Seeds move through bodies. It's a rough risk, a movement toward variation, toward mutation and survival.

Continue to eat the fruit. Finish it; discard any stem or cartilage-type material. Hold a few seeds in your palm from this tomato. It's a dark and bulbous type, Black Krim. The seams split and grown over, sections of growth compete with other sections. There is a riot of movement outward and a celebration of excess. These tomatoes were discarded for a century because the need for symmetry and neatness was so strong. Vines needed to be heavy with produce. People wanted to shake the fruit from the stems into their palms. They wanted short and controllable plants.

They didn't want these black tomatoes with six-foot-tall stems, with rivers of yellow flowers and fewer successful fruits. There

was so much green growing to make so few tomatoes. When the heirlooms were introduced back into the soil, the bees found their nectar unfamiliar and wild. They rushed the flowers, found beauty in the tallness of the plants and the way they wanted to grow.

Why contain them in cages? To help them grow, to make them produce longer and to lift the fruits from the ground.

I never use cages, but I admire, in some way, those who do. No, not admire, envy. I envy those neat enough to cage the plants and organized enough to tame. My vines runs into each other, develop strange tendons with roots that reach down to the ground. Do the plants want us to limit them and cultivate them, to make them more successful? There is a case for and against this argument.

Those seeds in your palm—dry them on a sheet of wax paper. Put them in the window in the sun, away from the dog's snout and curiosity. Let the seeds harden and seal their life in against the wet rush to decompose. Make a neat package by folding the paper into an envelope. Label.

This is a way to worship.



I became accustomed to catching glimpses of people in self-conscious moments: the run to the mailbox in a towel, the bathrobe or pajamas; the person perched by the window waiting for a letter, cracking their knuckles and rubbing their palms on their thighs. Being a mailman was good for this reason, for the way people were between work selves and home selves; people caught in transition.

Corbina caught me off guard. She appeared in the window of an old farm house and I recognized her from the farmer's market. This was only the second time I had seen her, one of my last days at work. I was holding her phone bill and several mailers. I was also holding her name. Corbina. A name that surprised me with its roundness. A tall stone of a woman, a strong jaw with large teeth she probably ground in her sleep. The first time I saw her she was selling Black Krim heirlooms—giant ugly tomatoes that split their own seams. She was concentrating on a book about soil pH, barely registering anyone around her. She had kicked off her shoes and pushed her toes into the ground, digging them

in, wriggle by wriggle, impatient to absorb what she needed to know. I took a dark purple tomato and kept walking. I didn't look back until I was in my truck. She hadn't noticed, her eyebrows still gathered, lips in a slight frown. I bit into the blackness. Juice ran down my chin.

Retirement came, a party with cake and blue icing, soda. We celebrate like children when the old leave. I pulled out my sweet tooth and dug in, mugging for cameras, feeling sick. My mind was already forming the new self that could drop into her life.