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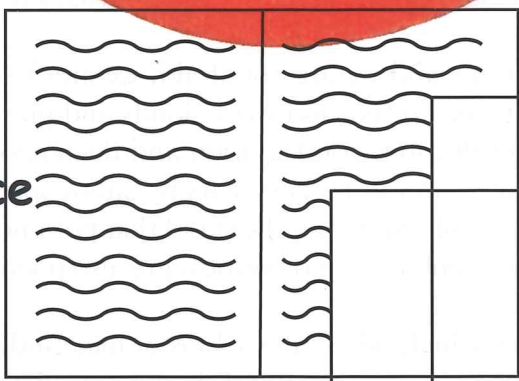


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SECRET

(sometimes a book is just a book)

balance



scale

rhythm

proportion

FREE to you and a friend!

emphasis

harmony

WHERE IS HE?

Rachel Wilson

cautiously crossing second avenue
carefully ignoring screams from skyward walls
and glass against boarded up windows

head down
hands in pockets
sorry, I don't have any change.

getting off at the interchange at Tent City

out of sight
out of mind
how it is

looking up at wells fargo
so grand it bends toward God

so where is He?

maybe He's in
a blue-lit bathroom
watching over the man attempting anyways

in the break room of a crowded mcdonald's
in between the time clock
and a crying server

at the shareholder's meeting
where wages are perplexing to profits, to
our serpentiform kings

He may very well be
rumbling along the pavement
toward burning buildings and
a burning mist in the air

cleansing the temple
with holy fire of
righteous rage

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO THE PERFECT PIE

Sarah Immel

Begin with 3 cups flour (plus extra for dusting), 1 cup butter (salted), 1 egg, 8-10 large apples, 2 more tablespoons of butter, freshly squeezed lemon juice, cinnamon, nutmeg, cornstarch, and a spoonful of sugar (at least). Set out all the ingredients. Realize that you only have 5 apples, all of middling size. Throw a blouse over your nightgown and hop into your little gray sedan. When you stop at the lights, avoid apostrophizing to the backseat. Remember that those days of carpools and family errands are long over; the boys have their own cars now.

At the store, wander aimlessly for a while. Get distracted by the chocolate. When you get to the produce section, spend ten minutes choosing between Granny Smith and Braeburn. You'll pick the Grannies, of course, but it's important that they feel properly appreciated first. Pluck each one from its bright setting, rotate its not-quite roundness in your palm until one of you molds to the other. Hold it up to your face. If it is ready, it will whisper sunshine in your ear, fill your mouth with streams of cool water, fleck your eyes with liquid mirth. Tuck it into your bag like a lover's note; slip away to the register before anyone else sees.

When you return home, console the spaniel for your absence. Call her *good girl* and *Cinder-pup*, graciously ignoring the white hairs on her snout—goodness knows she's been kind enough not to mention yours. Place the apples on the counter; steer Cinder's nose away from temptation. Chop up the butter. Stick it into the freezer, followed by a bowl of water. Used to be, you'd just crack the window open and leave them on the sill. These days, you find that you can't bear the chill.

Remove the butter from the freezer once it hardens (or once your patience melts, whichever comes first). Taking a fork in each hand, cut it into the flour until it creates an even crumb. It never will, but it's nice to pretend. Add a touch of the cold water to the bowl, and remember: there is no "just enough," only "not quite" and "someone had better start building an ark." Choose wisely.

This part is the hardest. Maybe the crust can't smell your fear, but it can feel your frustration. A smidge too much body heat, and its flaky layers will rally into a single, toughened disc. Keep your hands cold, dispassionate. Crusts are like desert flowers, or children. Too much heat and they evolve, impervious, impermeable. Delicacy is only free to blossom in the shade.

Work the dough, forming it into a ball, smoothing its sides with a tender caress. Be careful not to iron out too many of its wrinkles, though; let it be as soon as it can hold its own. Too much fussing will only make it harden and shrink. Divide the dough in two and chill for half an hour. Let the dough do likewise.

Roll each half onto the counter atop a generous sprinkling of flour—*generous*, mind you. When you're done, they should be even circles, large and supple, smooth as the hundreds of playdough pies your boys made you way back when, but only half

as salty. Transfer one of the crusts from the counter to the pie plate, bolstering it with three spatulas, two hands, and several desperate prayers to the Almighty. Cinder will offer to help; don't trust her for a second. Behind those wide eyes is quite the criminal history: pie theft, repeat offender.

Press the somewhat-intact crust into the pan and trim the edges. You can seal off any tears with the excess, but never, ever, stretch the dough. It'll only shrink back down in the oven, and probably break in the process. Some things can't be reshaped at a whim.

Pop the crust back in the fridge; turn your attention to the apples. One by one, wind the stems around and around until they give. This doesn't do anything in particular—you'll be cutting out the whole core anyway—but it reminds you of the games your own mother taught you when you were ten, the year you got the music box for Christmas. You never did think to teach it to your children, but then, they were never interested in music boxes anyway. Stop twisting the last one before the stem falls off and hold it there, watching its slow twirl. If you listen, you might just catch the whisper of a tune.

When the music ends, peel, core, and slice the apple. Sneak a core (or two) to Cinder; pretend not to notice when she asks for more. Put the apples in a pot with sugar, butter, and lemon juice, to taste. Don't leave out the latter, no matter how sour the apples. The lemon makes it taste *real*. Stir in cinnamon and nutmeg—again, to taste. You can measure ingredients for your brownies and cookies, *should* measure them for your French *pâtisserie*, but you can never make the same pie twice, so don't bother. Measure the sugar with your eye, the cinnamon with your heart, throw in a dash of allspice if you're feeling adventurous.

Cook until they soften, just slightly. Ladle some of the juice from the pot into a bowl; whisk in two tablespoons of cornstarch. Remember doing a similar experiment with the kids, once, involving non-Newtonian fluids. Stir it back up to a simmer; step back to admire your handiwork, bubbling golden like a witch's potion. Feel free to cackle. You've made plenty of potions in your time. Good ones, too: a berry pie that summoned your boys off the streets and back home after school, a lemon meringue that transformed the head of the PTA into a nice person (to your face, anyway), and a fruit tart that turned a rowdy football player into a kind and caring husband. He claimed it was love at first sight, but you both knew that there were huckleberries involved.

Once the filling thickens, remove it from the heat and let it cool down. Fill the pie crust, doming the apples over the lip a little more than is wise. Drape the top crust over the filling, trim the edges, then crimp, sealing away the secrets inside. Then cut a few vents in the top—too many secrets well-kept, and you end up with bits of apple glued to the top of your oven. Gloss the crust with a bit of beaten egg, remembering a time when your pies were glazed with a little more love and a little less egg, when the boys' tiny, helping hands got the yellow goo on everything except the crust.

Put the pie in at 400 degrees Fahrenheit, and pray that the oven is merciful. Then wait. Don't check it too often—patience is a virtue—but don't forget, either. And never open the oven until you're sure. Ovens were invented to remind man that, in life, nothing is certain, and pies least of all. As soon as the crust is a deep golden brown, its aroma singing through the kitchen, its filling ready to burst through the seams, remove it from the heat. Remember that, even though it's done baking, it's not ready for you yet. It went through tremendous change in the fire; give it some time to settle. If you cut into it now, if you remind it of what it's *supposed* to be, it will never recover. The filling will weep out, sogging up the crust, and it will be ruined.

Give your sons a call while you wait. Tell them you made a pie, and wouldn't they like to swing by later with some ice cream? They won't come; they never do. They remember those early, failed attempts; they don't know how much you've learned since. Call them anyway, just to be sure.

After dinner, figure out what you're going to do with the pie. Give it to a neighbor, or to the new couple at your church. Go back home and sit with Cinder; toss her the last apple core, the one with the stem still attached. Watch it bounce off her nose, a near miss. Go to bed early, so you'll both have time to try again tomorrow.

JUST NOT YOU

Liberty Lomonaco

I didn't see anything at first
but I felt every bump
and crack of the dirt road
the sudden jolt and sharp turn
of the wheel
as we made our own road
around the boy.

mumbles and stares
from all aboard
with one voice above the rest,

"No, we can't stop"

the boy took a crooked shape
on the fluorescent rust colored dirt
as others formed
a crescent moon around him
and began to wail

"Msaada! Msaada!"

the ground was dark
and muddled around his torso
and

that was it.

we had moved on
down our new road
a road that existed
without the boy crumpled
in the stained dirt road

because we're here
to help.

**Msaada, Swahili for help*

A NOTE TO THE BEACHES OF MY CHILDHOOD

Sarah Immel

When I was young, the seas seemed shallower,
hallowed, haloed, this world we shared.
As your oceans grew deeper, so did I--
yes, a new depth in my belly and thigh, bloated
with the weight of too many glasses half-empty.

Yet each time we meet, you greet me
with tender caresses, a whisper of wind
tugging my wispy tresses as if to say
that some things are forever, that part of me
will never change. I wish I could say the same.

Goodbye to long moonlit walks where waves tug
at my feet, where gulls are the only strangers I meet.
Farewell, seashells and mollusks, dry sand in all of its
drifting displays. Maybe I'll return, but I fear that one day

you'll be marred beyond what you can survive.

HIGH SCHOOL PROM, MAY 7, 2016

Jack VanderGriend

I can't confirm many details of my high school prom, but I can assure you that it took place on May 7, 2016, and that it ended the same night with a bruised coccyx and a slice of cheesecake. I can also assure you that the whole time I was very high on a narcotic drug called Percocet. To be clear, the Percocet was prescribed as pain medication after having surgery on my left clavicle. Also to clarify, I had never really used a drug that strong before in my life.

Three days prior to May 7, I learned the meaning of the term "lightweight" while sitting on my couch drinking low calory seltzer water and watching *Portlandia* on Netflix. Hours before, I had walked out of the hospital with eight screws in my collar bone and a bottle of pills in my hand. Now, growing up in a family of doctors, I was familiar with all kinds of medical names and procedures (even the most gruesome answers to the question "how was your day at work?" were not spared during dinner time conversation) but under my foggy gaze, the name Percocet looked both alien and dangerous. It was surreal to suddenly be on the receiving end of words like "surgery" and "pain killers," and that even more sinister word "narcotics." Then again, everything seems surreal when all discomfort has been chemically stripped from your body and replaced with a sensation akin to pipe cleaners slipping through your veins and nuzzling your nerve endings. As my father drove me home from the hospital, I looked at the bottle of white tablets in my hand and listened unresponsively to his description of the bone drill that had been used to make holes in my skeleton. Already, the anesthesiologist's personalized cocktail was wearing off, and I knew I would soon have to ingest one of those chalky, white disks.

The next thing I remember was sitting on my couch drinking low calory seltzer water and thinking how the overly parodic characters of *Portlandia* were much easier to understand when you were as high as they were. Actually, it would probably be more accurate to say I was sitting in the couch and the seltzer water was drinking me. That's the way I remember it at least. Even on half a tablet I was euphoric and forgetful, and would make unfortunate lapses in judgement like neglecting solid foods until, alone in an empty stomach, the Percocet forced itself out through my mouth in spouts of bile and cherry Gatorade.

By the time May 7 rolled around, I was slightly more tolerant to the drug and could function enough on half a tablet to accompany my date to prom. By the time we made it to prom, however, I wasn't functioning on *half* a tablet. Forgetfulness still plagued me, and even though my father divided a Percocet in front of me and supervised as I took exactly one half, I took the other half fifteen minutes later, having promptly forgotten my first dose. As I chased it down with a glass of water, I vaguely realized what I had done, but even then my consciousness was slipping into the void that my sense of cause, effect, and general concern had left in their absence. The rest of the night passed by in a moment.

I can only piece the story together through a variety of clues I found upon waking the next morning: A handful of polaroids, A bruised coccyx, and the dried remnants of a cheesecake on my suit jacket. The polaroids were the most useful documentation of the previous night, illustrating my decline into languor with a gradually increasing contrast between my date's consistent expression and my own smile, which slowly melted into slack jawed ambiguity over the course of the evening. Apparently, I slipped off a chair at some point as suggested by my sore backside, and I can only assume by the rest of the evidence that I ended the night asleep in my desert. I hope my date took all of this in stride—I think the fact that I woke up in my bed and not the smashed carcass of my cheesecake supports this conclusion—but alas, I can't confirm many details of high school prom, May 7, 2016. I feel like there's some sort of lesson to be learned from all this, but I'm pretty sure it's not as simple as "don't do drugs." Like my memory, the deeper philosophical implications of the experience elude me. All I know is, I gave my date a night she won't forget, and I'll never be able to watch *Portlandia* sober again.