



MELANIE BRAVERMAN

Select Pieces

BRAVERMAN

-Does the world love us?

-The way it loves a tree or a snake.

Gratitude: it's the constant need for fixing, for repair, electricity failing in the last big wind causing our clocks to blink in the dark. We set the time, set towels against the chimney to staunch the leak, measure the door for repair. One sets out pills in the morning and afternoon, the other knits hats against the cold. Pipes freeze. One mother has cancer, one has an intermittent heart like the blinking clocks. One is here, one far away. When we hit the lights at night it is a fitful sleep that greets us, dreams full of instruction as to what needs doing next, and we wake grateful for help. We drink our coffee strong, we walk the happy dog. Happiness, what is it. Six in the morning, three in the afternoon, quiet sweeps in from the corners like dust. Dusk not long after on the shortest days, evening stretched before us like a sheet, smooth after dinner and a glass of wine and television and knitting and sleep. One helps with the shower, one feeds. One makes a cashmere cap for the mother

who will lose her hair to drugs. This happens here where the clocks slow down, where the tides shift imperceptibly until once again the stairs are gone and water overflows the shore. Gull-buoys mark the swells, wind shoves sand round the rocks. It's a battle out there in the wind or it's a joy ride, depending on which direction you walk. If you want to get home you have to walk both ways: oppose and acquiesce.

I could tell from the striations of sky that there was snow on Long Point but the wind was blowing the weather away from us for a change, allowing the sun to break through. Suddenly three flares arced across the bay, perpendicular and perfect, smoke trails crazed by the wind. But there were no boats on the water to be seen, nor any signs of distress from the town visible from the shore as I walked. The flares disappeared so fast I began to imagine they hadn't been there at all, when just as quickly three more passed across the sky, and what was the world trying to tell me as I walked, what was I supposed to be looking out for?

Hardness of chests, trick of pants, of slick, well-worn favorite shirts my men friends scan each other as if mirrors to find the flaw they knew was there all along when I who love to watch them watch excuse myself from the table to wander the street and see who's lining up for the clubs, who's paying the steep covers and who is getting let in free for being local or flirtatious or both, watching my friend clear the door without seeing me, his body consumed by the strobos and the pedantic thump of the music, this man I thought might father my child, the two of us backlit and separate in the vaporous June fog.

Boys in red boats call to each other in the harbor, voices full of insult and warning. Nothing at all harsh about the day, a modicum of sun, whaleboats headed to sea for their search. Feeling, for the moment, hopeful.