

SELF

He called to see if he could come vampiring over. Asking, asking, asking for skin and teeth and compassion and food between the small things he actually said on the phone.

"No, don't," she said in response. "I'm working."

He hung up, and she imagined him lumbering back into himself, detaching from the phone, taking a piss, then settling in to watch TV or play nervous cards with himself.

You're not really alone with yourself unless you choose to be. When you're lonely alone by no decision of your own, you hide away—under an arm, between two toes, in an ear. If you don't want to be there with yourself, you just aren't.

She wanted to be there now. There were people she could hold, others she could go places with, but she wanted herself. Smooth and flawed, weak-strong and familiar, she would crouch down and taste herself.

Could there be music, or would it only distract? Incense and vibration? No, these instruments would lock her away, would keep her pleasant and removed, mellow and covered. And yet, as she ruled things and places and people out, she began to look for more distractions, she became desperate for them. Food, books, little things that had to be done popped up and up, shouting, "Look at me, look at me. Come out and do me."

To know what's like to be done-to gives you a strange connection with the inanimate. Objects can call to you, voice themselves, demand help and love. They call and you go—you need them, they need you.

But now, now when you have made room for your self-eruption, the things must be ignored. Pinch—you are there. But not here. How to get here, to get whole. To feel and taste and smell vital and sunk-in, sunk-in deep and honest and raw.

Her legs were long melons, appendages like her arms. Where was she, where was the core? In the short, thick torso? In the tight, tense neck? In the dark, dark space of her monkey-clean inside?

Right now, she was mostly in the tips of her hair—tangled and split, yet shiny and living, she circled around herself like a lost angel waiting to come down.