

THE DAY I LOST MY DÉJÀ VU

The box is like this today.
The box I live in.
Today: like this.

And though similar, so achingly alike,
ad infinitum, line over the nine, *again*,
it's always
nothing like
before,

nothing, not even the surprise
of another, so similar day of box-living.

Once, I was marked
and markedly different
and at times
while hopscotching
the grouted mosaic
felt *my god* I've seen
before a pattern
just like this

I've been here!

But no more.

now, I have never been anywhere
else. ever but here and though I carry on
can't return.

even the day my firstborn son broke me
opened and split shocked shattered that quaint notion of "before"

is no more than a rung of how I got
a mother's now-mind, a strung-together-bead's walk.

this moment. this. this. this.

is not what I
expected...

today my beautiful child eviscerates me.

a charmer, a snake, he fits my living heart
into his fist blunt fangs and I go willingly
into love with him. he is

every day a new child

and every day I'm still in love means

nothing like before.

remember when we
used to

remember

things, every night, say

remember the time...

and the smells of the past and sometimes a portal

opened up

and we slipped in there, into the past

rose up to meet us we were not

so all alone then, our lives had meaning

and we were not born again every goddamn

day but felt it felt like to be there

in those lost places, the gone?

remember? those days? but I can't.

now all of me but this is gone and I was never a girl.

never but mother never

every same day new again. every way is without a way out or
way to look back, to *be* back, to bring the fabric into a tight
pucker or pocket or foxhole or hem, some little space to fall into a breath
like an open grave or little death. instead I learn bird names
for the shapes and colors and songs around me though every bird
is different from every bird. I learn the map. watch the armies advance,

forward! they bellow and jab mercilessly with their spear points,
go on!

carry! and so it is I haul my sons step after day each day so swept away by love
and terror I would sometimes rather kill us all than go on like this
marching, marching, new, new, new, day, and when they
are just too heavy to carry I become stronger
than is possible and carry on

AFTER BABY AFTER BABY

When we made love you had
the dense body of a Doberman
and the square head of a Rottweiler.

With my eyes closed I saw:
a light green plate with seared scallops
and a perfect fillet of salmon on a cedar plank.

Now I am safe in the deep V of a weekday
wanting to tell you how the world
is full of street signs and strollers
and pregnant women in spandex.

The bed and desk both want me.
The windows, the view, the idea of Paris.

With my minutes, I chip away at the idiom,
an unmarked pebble in a fast current. Later,
on my way to the store, a boy with a basketball
yells, *You scared?* to someone else, and the things
on the list to buy come home with me.
And the baby. And your body.

SATURDAY, SUNDAY, MONDAY, TUESDAY

Saturday morning

two hawks flew over the soccer field and swooped in low as Abram almost scored a goal. Moses, on the sideline, sat on a stray ball reading a book, not looking up at the game or the hawks or his brother who noticed. That night at the Basic Trust Day Care Poker Tournament I got knocked out with queen/nine against queen/jack by Dan Shiffman who seemed almost sad to beat me. I sucked on ginger candies and held new baby Phoebe Kate, born on the same due date as the baby I miscarried. When she left I cried and had more candies. In the end, Josh beat everyone and won a 40-inch flat-screen TV.

Sunday morning

I couldn't sleep so got up early, went to the Hell's Kitchen flea market and bought a dining table and chairs from a man named Toney. Bargained him down to \$690 (including delivery) because "the chairs need new upholstery." A 1950ish Danish with expandable top and funny splayed feet—it reminds me of my late Grandma Lotty, her sister Marguerite, and the heavy-laden tables of childhood. I've no idea what it will look like with my small family gathered round or if I'll overworry the polished surface. We'll see—it arrives on Tuesday.

This morning

I got a stack of papers from sophomore lit. The top two had the author's name misspelled. I've not yet looked at any others. I talked in class about how Art Spiegelman chose realism over sentiment, how we conflate historical time with personal time, how on 9/11 I took my nine-month old son

the well-timed hanger joke

took the air out of the room
so that the instruments pulled at their cords
and my gurney leaned on its wheels
and the residents stopped scratching
the bands of their surgical caps
to look in wonder
that the husband
could have been
so crude

Dr. Jew

was the GYN's
real name. no kidding—
spelled: J.E.W.

my hospital bracelet:

RACHEL ZUCKER
12/27/71
JEW

was a kind man, held my hand
asked after my children, said, *I'm sorry*
this is happening, and left a nickel-sized
piece of tissue that made me
bleed for weeks until I

couldn't stand
up the world
a swaying back-
drop all
around and
around and
the medication
failed and the meditation
and Maya massage
and folded prayer I put
in the real wailing wall
and herbs and acupuncture
and waiting until
we went back to our places,
all of us: residents, jokers,
instruments, though this
time through the ER,

so there were other characters and indecencies and I became aware of

how the air was sucked out of all the rooms

aware of how little air there'd been for weeks
and not just because hospital and residents who say *abortion*
which is technically correct and the nurse with bad
English who leaned in close to what? hug me? her breath
in my ear

the only air,

he hurt you?

he!

she's adamant—

heee, heee!

says the nurse at the closed door behind which the husband—

no, no, I say, he not hurt me,

and she misses the vein

and flicks at the tube, does it again and again until

the needle finds a rivulet and hunkers down to pump

the joke I make at her expense keeps us moving through space

and time and able to lie still when it is time

and time to wait for the procedure, until a different nurse,

all pink-checked and matronly, comes in and asks,

how many weeks along?

and no one has a joke ready, for this; there isn't one

she thinks we haven't heard, says,

pregnant... how many weeks? and I,

I'm here for a second D&C because the first D&C after a missed miscarriage
due to blighted ovum resulted in heavy bleeding for the past six weeks now I can
barely stand up and last night thought I am finally bleeding to death and Arielle
said, oh god this doesn't sound good, maybe you should lie down, bleeding like
that... I mean women have babies when they sit on the toilet... I mean the

bleeding might be worse there because of gravity and, I don't know, maybe go to the hospital? and Arielle hates hospitals so you know oh god it really did not sound good and I did lie down with my hips up and did not bleed to death at least not yet though there's always a risk with any surgical procedure and no guarantee the D&C will address this bleeding unless a piece of tissue the uterus can't expel and Dr. Jew can get it out now but it's tricky because they can't see anything on the sono except my uterus isn't empty that's what they keep saying "your uterus isn't empty" but they can't see could be tissue could be clots but to answer your question not, they're sure, a baby, maybe never was all they saw at 11.5 weeks was a hearty placenta and empty sac the placenta supporting no fetus and pumping me full of progesterone so I was terrifically morning sick and popped out in maternity clothes convinced a healthy baby maybe a girl this time why else so sick and big and happy...

but that's not the punch line to anyone's joke
and not what I said. I said

look at the chart in a cracked voice and
she did, said, *oh*.
not the least bit abashed, walked away

no one has a joke about her.

I wish I'd said, sixteen weeks and five days fuck you very much, or something, anything, but nothing came to us, out of comebacks, even the husband, my crude beauty, for once, without a punch line.

WELCOME TO THE BLIGHTED OVUM SUPPORT GROUP.

They say "lost" a baby.

The technician says:

This is the sac.

This is the placenta.

This is your bladder and one, and another
ovary. Nothing, I'm afraid.

Else.

Empty

sac.

The placenta just kept on HCG. Have to pee be
sick. protein. sick. protein. told everyone. the boys.

_____ sac.

naughty fetus, hiding like that.

or invisible or neverwas.

uterine wall.

the unfetus or preembryo. scaffold, sac, yolk.

How do you feel knowing you'll write about this?

the husband asks two days after the first sonogram

is the first time someone

asks me how I feel



I take *Ignatia* for grief.

Acconite for shock.

Chamomilla for anger which out of nowhere like a slap.

Herbs for retained placenta.

Needles for retained placenta.

Needles for weak pulse, for grief, for shock, for disappointment.

I drink wine, coffee and take pills except

I don't, not yet, just in case.

In case hiding. In case mistaken.

Wait. Waiting.

Let go, I tell the placenta. Go.

Go now.

but had lost nothing. would let nothing go, nothing.

The next sono shows the placenta breaking down
and the sac misshapen, deflating?

Nothing was changed then except information.

Still no bleeding, sign, nothing. Not

a baby for weeks or ever

but in a few days, after I see the empty sac,

my belly starts to shrink.

I wash and fold the maternity clothes

to return to their rightful owners. My son

erases the part in his family narrative that says

“_____ is my _____.”

I'd rather write poems about a baby, is how I feel, you motherfucker.



In the prose version I write eloquently about
how important it is for my sons to feel
disappointment like this and survive.

In verse I write nothing, which is
an objective correlative of what I've "lost."

When Nathan calls I cannot
get up. His voice sounds like
his voice like nothing's
happened. Sitting with the *Post*
at the Pastry, wants to know
if I'll come translate
an Ancient Hebrew poem, but
I can't get up.

can only troll the Web for tales more dismal than my own
and there are
many.

WELCOME TO THE BLIGHTED OVUM SUPPORT GROUP.
THERE ARE 3 NEW MEMBERS.

WELCOME: THERE ARE 4 NEW MEMBERS.

They say the first thing I asked
after the procedure was,

What was in there?

when I was still on the table
but I've no memory of anything before Recovery
where I woke up crying.

Picture every alien abduction movie
where they experiment on earthlings:
that is the O.R.

Umbrella-sized movable lights like obscene poppies,
fabric stirrups hanging from the ceiling:
Slide your bottom down... down... down, no, too much...

I'm crying.

Dr. Jew holds my hand.

It's hard to have it all be over, I say
not knowing then that when I wake up
it will not be over.

at first everyone says, *sorry you lost a baby*,
and my father has a nightmare: he's riding
a city bus and sees something beautiful
through the window but can't get off
and strange hands come to snatch it away—

he is sorry I lost the baby
and my sons weeping—

the older: *I can't take this—*

the younger: *but where did it go?—*

and some mother at the school says
that's why you shouldn't say anything

for at least 13 weeks it's so
easy
to lose
a baby—

But I didn't.

I held on and on to the sac had to have it
scraped out then could not stop bleeding
the shots and pills and herbs and pellets
even a woman singing and praying over my uterus
and others lighting candles for me, saying,
you need to let it go now

whatever's left just let it go

I could not believe
what bloody else
could be left
I'd let everything
go
until fell
down
and stayed
down, stoned-like
whoosh
goes the world
filling the toilet
blood advice
no one
knows
what
swirling
the stream of it

if I can't have the baby what have I—



When I looked in the notebooks there was nothing there.

I assumed I'd been writing things down and poems would tumble out.

Instead I found instructions about what to do for back labor:

“Assume a semi-prone position, or knees lower than hips, then lie on the side of the baby.”

Fuck the notebooks.

C took her embryo to the doctor's office in a Tupperware.

A had a perfectly good baby stuck in her fallopian tube they used chemo because “any fast-growing cell” but had to blow her up like a balloon and take it out laparoscopically when the tube burst anyway.

B had a rush of bleeding while teaching.

P's water breaks at 16 weeks on her way back from the Cape.

J has a miscarriage in an airport bathroom.

They sustain me with stories so gory I was almost envious back when I was still waiting for something still technically pregnant but without a baby and not one drop of blood or pain to show for it finally agreed to the first D&C because “a relatively predictable outcome” and I was flying to Israel and wouldn't want to end up in hospital so Dr. Jew nice Asian man holds my hand, I say *it's hard for it to all be over* thinking it would be and he says he's sorry this is happening and I wake up in Recovery crying and they say expect spotting and the husband and I get drunk and go out dancing because we are still alive and I've had a procedure which has given us closure and we fly to Israel and the bloodletting begins and nothing will stop it and I'm in the middle of my own very gory

story but too anemic to write it up properly for the all ladies who are waiting and waiting to miscarry or for their procedures who have dead fetuses or empty sacs inside them or are trying to conceive or are pre- or post-D&C or are writing to say this is the anniversary of the EDD for the neverwas baby and they are calling themselves angel mothers and I am too weak to be snide about this and they are arguing about whether a woman can post to the list who has recently had a miscarriage but not from blighted ovum if she's had three blighted ovum pregnancies in the past

THERE ARE 4 NEW MEMBERS.
THERE IS 1 NEW MEMBER.
THERE ARE 5 NEW MEMBERS.

WELCOME.

I'll tell you all what happened, properly and in order, when I'm not so dizzy, if I'm ever more with it, when the bleeding stops and it hits me what I've lost, when sadness finally gets up the nerve to come calling and settles like a scab where they've scraped away the last nickel-sized piece of tissue, a scab too easily dislodged by the sight of pregnant women or newborns or thoughts of last New Year's Eve when we watched the fireworks from our apartment naked after saying and doing crude things to each another and making what would not be born October 1st or worse, the moment we had no answer for how many weeks along when we'd lost everything even our last rusty-hanger abortion joke—

how many weeks?

One, but the lightbulb really has to want to change.
Goldberg, iceberg—what's the difference?

Three: two to hold down the giraffe and one to kiss the fish.
Oy, was I thirsty!

Stupid genie thought I asked for a 12-inch pianist.
Would I Would I... Hair lip! Hair lip!
That? That could lead to dancing.

Keys, wallet, spectacles, testicles.
Bok? Bok?... Readit. Readit.
I said, Go down on the wharf!
Don't worry, Rose, it's something to do with the gentiles.
Because seven ate nine.
The phone's for you, cocksucker.