

Jeans

She holds the knotted necklace
 with fixed eyes
and pinched fingers,
nails too nubbed to prick,
searching for a space along the tangled chain
where she can
loosen
 one chain link
to make space
 for another,
 just enough
 to widen
 the loop.

Slowly,
she tries to pull the silver thread
through,
 though her fingers quiver,
and at the sight of
 their shake
her neck begins
 to tighten.

 Air is pulled inward,
she has
a rubber throat
folding in on itself,
collapsing from
 its center.

A feeling she has known
 each and

every
time,
she has tried to
speak
of it.

She shoves the necklace back in the pocket,
where it has lived for days,

knotted and disheveled.

She has just finished scrubbing it
with dish soap and
scalding water.

This gift from her mother
she has worn through every night.

She has worn in every shower,

bearing the Saint of Protection.

Now.shoved.in.the.crease.of.
those jeans.

Perhaps it worked?

Protected,

as it was pressed
into her skin

slight enough

(not to leave a mark)

but **firm enough**

to be coated in

his sweat.

That sour fluid,
she thought the

remnants

might soil the metal.

Perhaps she ought to wear it?

Drape it over the bruises,
a color of molding blue.

No longer fresh like

clammy palms,
and damp underarms
and flush cheeks.

They
present themselves

in the bathroom mirror

at work.

Never enough
bb cream,
concealer,
foundation.

They present themselves

unlike the images

hanging or hovering

at the back of her skull,

unlike the words

bashing against her teeth.

Staring at the jeans hung over the wicker chair,
she wonders...

will this necklace become a relic?

To What Has Not Been Said Aloud.
To What She Will Not Speak.

Each time she retches
word vomit

rising up like

an uncontrollable child,

as an incessantly flat tantrum—

I am okay, really

Really,

I don't even know why I am crying—

her mind presents a glass shard of memory
smelling of stale beer.

Each fragment tastes of the bitter liquor—
she had enough sense not to swallow.

That realization, stung,
stings,

her lips sipping from a cup

she did not ask for

“kind of like sherry.”

This.

Then her night
belongs to narroweyes,
 long limbs
 in a palebluecollaredshirt.

She can kind-of picture the navy couch.
It was
so
low,
so
deep
and
worn
it looked like someone had
 beaten it to the floor.

She can almost feel polyester-corduroy
and the dirt
 dusting her skin
uncomfortable from the start.

She is pushing away the parts on its surface.
 Sinking
into the cushion,
 any prior portion
where she might have thought,

charming.

Beautiful, suits you.

He asked about her necklace.

What was the sound?

She'd know if she heard it.

Like his hands,

calloused,
dry,
and cold.

Even when she was in the

in-between

space,

a semi-numb feeling,

he was still

cold.

And who was watching

when he was

up her shirt

he was so heavy

on top of her
chest

all over ?

Her head was

in some dark basement

s w I r l I n G

Outdoors?

in the back of the garden

the one with the sign: "*See something, say something.*"

and all the flags and art

she had smiled at.

Then, there is a dark alley.

Rows of trash cans

at 2am?

3am?

A wa ke

she found her body was

Burning!

A disgusting puppet.

She had enough sense to
fall

to the ground,

the grime,

and

look up,

~~unbuttoned almost unaddressed.~~

She rushed up that alley-street
stumbling over crevices and
cracks.

Was he surprised?

“See you, darling”

Humored?

Clearly,
she can remember,
walking for some time
along the main road,
tears streaming,
putting her
entire face
under a nearby fountain.

She must have looked sweaty when she finally found a taxi.

Her necklace stuck to her wet fountain-skin.

She remembers how it felt
when she could not see
the clasp of the chain
through the throbbing
She just
needed
it
O F F!

She thought she might **rip it**,
leave it,
shove
it
in one of the cushions.

Instead,
into her pocket.

Darling,

she kept hearing

Darling.

Still, in her bedroom,
again,
in her bedroom.

She picks up the jeans and places them in a plastic bag.

She places that bag in
 another bag
 already full of trash
and walks
directly
out of her apartment
down to
the large
neighborhood dumpster
rotting in the heat.

This, only after,
 she removes her necklace
and places it in the front cover of a used journal—
 a months before journal.

She places
all of it,
cover
not fully closed

in the very back

of an unused drawer.

She laughs at the garbage.

If only.