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We Love Venus!

Cackle cackle cackle We do! Lacing our greasy hands together We skip down the street blowing raspberries on each other's cheeks leaving red and purple stains there. We laugh, shove berries into our mouths pulled out from neon plastic ziplock bags, laugh and the red spittle and purple spittle and a little bit of blue spittle rains on the sidewalk in front of us and We laugh and laugh and laugh! When We laugh too hard We run a little bit a little ways ahead until We get the laughs out it makes us stop and focus on running. And laughing!

We have left the world behind and We are going to live on Venus. We have bought our tickets with money We saved up working hard jobs for dirty, stupid years in boring cities where everyone thinks they're funny they're not funny they are our real enemies! Dumb blowholes stuffed fat and sulky with all the stupid, inhumane facts of the world.

Back to blowing bubbles We go at it, We blow big red bubbles at the sky laughing seeing where Venus sits scary bright. You can hop a space flight to one planet or another with a mask on filling your lungs full of air and your space mask on making you look ugly and your space mask on making you look smart or your space mask off, slowly strangling and finally your lungs get sucked out into space without you and eventually hit the sun and explode. Sorry lungs! But it did feel good to go out without your space mask on the air in space, We hear, smells like cookies. Anyways on Venus We need no masks it's set up for all good to go! Biodome alright!

The letter came out only a month ago in the worldwide newspaper of the deformed and dead-gone which is all of us, at this point, not We but all of everyone else except We. ARE YOU DONE WITH EARTH DO YOU WANT TO GO TO VENUS it asked. Yes We want to go to Venus We screamed! We slapped each other with wooden spoons and blew raspberries at our ugly neighbor and did a wild dance on our brown dried dead front lawn to our favorite songs whose lyrics are something like "DANCE THE SKIN OFF YOUR HEELS AND SQUISH THE BLOOD INTO THE SIIIIIDEWAAAAALK" which is a really good song to dance to, outside, next to the sidewalk. We acted it out literally but cheated scraping our heels on the sidewalk 'til they bled then hobbled on our heels chirping at the ugly

neighbor chirping at each other being really excited for We are going to Venus!

The first thing that must be done before We go to Venus is: sell our house. Our house is painted red, purple, and a little bit of blue and is shaped like a bigass donut, a round circle surrounded by an empty moat We filled with broken glass instead of water because most people these days can swim! And We don't want anyone trying to swim into *our* sweet donut! You enter through the triangle-shaped door (that's the little bit of blue) and you see, through the glass wall slobbered with lipstick and greasy handprints the interior of our donut, the center donut hole which is a garden We've decked out in every kind of flower that will grow in our dead-like city that is also red or purple: roses, slinky velvet violets, peonies, poppies, forsythia, wisteria, irises with goofy fluffy beards. There are garden stakes with artichokes slapped on top with googly eyes glued to them, the heads of our enemies! Bloodless representations for any who dare enter to see that WE! DO! NOT! FUCK! AROUND!

Who can We sell our donutty house to that would not offend us greatly by razing it to the ground to build a condominium housing one of our many enemies? We think about it for a while while We paint our nails one hand purple one hand pink one hand yellow one hand blue which We do by pouring the polish straight from the bottle onto each fingertip, plop plop ten times and then We have entire fingertips all dipped and colorful for weeks! So We do our nails and brainstorm and suddenly We think, Pansy! Pansy lives in a dog igloo she likes round houses! Pansy paints walls with confetti icing and smears it on the window "Hey y'all it's tinted windows!" she says! Sell the house to Pansy for the price of a dollar plus an original brand new just for us performance of which Pansy is always the genius queen! We pick up the phone with our still sticky nail polish fingers smearing our sheer pink plastic phone that has its electric guts glowing neon purple and call up Pansy:

"Hi Pansy howdee do!" We say.

"Hi howdee do-de!" says Pansy, We say,

"Will you buy our house Pansy?!" and she says, confidential-toned,

"You taking that first spaceship to Venus?" We says,

"Oh yeah!" Pansy replies,

"Oh *yeah!*"

and We've sold our house to Pansy! We tell her what We want in return: one dollar and a Very Special performance and Pansy comes over in an hour to perform for us. We ready the donut hole for her performance by

lighting candles all around, candles We made from the beeswax of our ugly neighbor which We stole because fuck you ugly neighbor! The candles smell sweet like honey and We burn them, twenty or forty of them on top of the artichoke heads wax melting down into the googly eyes take that representations-of-our-enemies!

Bang bang bang Pansy knocks on our door and We run click-clacking in purple patent leather pumps to the door shrieking Pansy! Pansy! Pansy! Because We know she will be wearing the best outfit and she is. We open the door and Pansy is wearing short shorts made out of stretchy tight cheetah print fabric which she sewed herself into with thick red yarn criss-crossing at the sides and crotch like knotty, soft fresh scars. On top covering her ample tits Pansy wears a swath of musty-smelling black lace smeared with baby powder, tied in front like a bow with a big rhinestone bumble-bee brooch snapped on there how did Pansy know about our beeswax candles?! Tied into her hair hangs little ram's horns swinging around Pansy's shoulders with sequins glued haphazardly there too making them shine when they swung. Pansy's bare legs bore things she'd tattooed there herself with ink and needle, like every dinosaur ever discovered in dotty miniature, and We always like to lick the stegosaurus a little bit. It takes up the entirety of Pansy's left thigh it looks so good! And the other leg with a lion starting at her ankle and roaring yellow fire all the way up her pretty and thick cellulitey thigh— it took her forever to finish, like ten years of supremely patient stick-n-poke good job Pansy!

Pansy hugs us and makes her way to the donut hole where she will perform for us. Pansy's thermal-color plastic high heel mules are turning blue and then red and then pink as she click-clacks down the leopard print linoleum front hall. She licks a dollar bill and slaps it to the glass door where it sticks before she opens the door to set up her theatre outside. It's dark out by now and We can see exactly three stars in the sky but those three are super bright and they are next to Venus! Which has moved so conveniently close to the moon all by itself! The two of them sisters like We looking on each other in the sky is a good omen. Pansy sets out her costume: yards and yards and yards of synthetic hair macraméd together with shiny beads and fistfuls of hardened wax and bits of wilted, dirty rags. Pansy wipes electric blue stripes over her eyes with blue paint and Pansy laughs with her head thrown back and mouth to the sky and Pansy tells us to shush and then Pansy hitting the play button on her tape player begins:

She became Pansy-as-monster, dancing like a wild thing in her costume dangling dried pig ears and little silver horns. She brandished a knife and

ground her fruit-bruised knees into our donut hole stage, her plastic-hair-hood removed to let out the dark bouncy curls and ram's horns, ice-eyes shadowed in bright blue doing their own kind of howling she cut apart a bundle of wax and hair. It wasn't a real baby her laughter said! She was inside herself totally performing that inside-ness for us and We could feel too her relief our relief at finding out the baby she killed wasn't at all a baby! We really felt and still feel that this was well worth the price of the best house in the city the donut house We sold to Pansy for a licked dollar and a dance *THANKS PANSY!*

We needed to get our stash our stash of money. We needed to move out move out of our donut house, clear the way for Pansy. We put on our moving outfits of stretch pink and purple ice-skating costumes and began making piles of needs and not-needs, what to take and what to burn in the spot designated for burning unwanted items in there We tossed:

Wigs and wigs and piles of wigs in purple, red, pink and a little bit of blue, our bed in the shape of sea shell in opalescent white our pink Kitchen Aid mixer our fifteen hula hoops our high heeled mules in every color our lipsticks in every color our fridge full of fake meats food-colored purple and red our knives with their abalone handles our collection of metallic nail polish our jewelry made of plastic and gold our artichoke enemy heads on stakes our beeswax candles our collection of porcelain sheep dogs left to us by our grandmother our dresses of which there's at least 100 last but not least our not unsubstantial hat boxes filled with hats all blue our dollar bill from Pansy and in the not-needs pile:

Thousands of frizzing balls of our real hair three hairbrushes ten pairs of matching bra and underwear sets our green wool couch with stuffing popping out of its many loose cracks two three-legged chairs dead plants by the millions dirty plates dirty saucers dirty tea cups full of mold. This We burned in the fire pit of our ugly neighbor who We tied to a tree while We used his pit ha ha! Our ugly neighbor cried and complained and We laughed and burned and burned. The burning hair smell rose into the air and even Pansy, pushing a little red wagon full of her waxy-haired not-babies, wrinkled her nose at the smell of our sour hairballs bursting into flames so We threw some roses from the donut hole at the burning pile and that sated everyone everyone but our true enemy our ugly neighbor who likes nothing We do, ha ha!

We look at our checklist what next? We must go purchase our tickets our tickets to Venus! We say Pansy can We get a ride and She says sure no problem get into my wagon. First she unloads the not-babies into her new

home and then We hop in and Pansy pushes us all the way to the ticket office. On the way there Pansy sings to us a song she made up about being lost at sea. The lyrics went “Now I’m where I oughta be/lost at sea/ now I’m where I oughta be/free in the sea/Now I can birth my baby/baby in the sea/I birth my baby free/free in the sea/cuz the sharks in the sea/ they eat my baby/and the only way to be free/is a baby at sea/in the belly of a shark/along with my knees!” It was a really great song, pretty sad and moaning in an up-and-down way that sounded like the ocean waves nicely done Pansy! Pansy’s back was to us and We had to agree, We had to say to Pansy You have a really great ass and she laughed and had to agree We all agreed on Pansy’s ass.

People had begun giving birth to select limbs or body parts, often just a single, slippery organ. The most frequent cases were slimy eight-pound eyeballs, lumpy wet kidneys and rough, patchy tongues all streaked in the goo of birth when they slid out of the weeping pussies that bore them.

The kidneys and tongues were left on the labor table until they dried up, no longer emitting warm, soft livelihood; the emptied-out bodies of women carted off on stretchers, sobbing in fear and relief. While waiting for the tongues and kidneys to give their last lazy pulse of life doctors and nurses stood with their eyes down, silent.

It didn’t matter if you were a doctor or a midwife or a doula or an aunt three times removed, you kept your mouth shut and your eyes lowered. It’s called “non-denominational praying” and it’s allegedly the most “human and respectful” way to handle this particular nightmare but trust us, We think decidedly not.

That didn’t take long, maybe three or four minutes, the lonely dumped out tongues and kidneys gone hard and cold, mac and cheese left too long on a plastic dinner plate. Their mothers were encouraged to never set an eye or hand upon them, forget the whole mess entirely with a steady diet of woozy neon yellow pills that had the ripe side effect of giving you hyperreal dreams, which often had the side effect of making you piss and shit the bed you slept in, which was sometimes the stove or living room floor. Also recommended for their healing properties were soap opera distractions, but only ones that’d been running for going on hundreds of years. *As the World Turns*, *General Hospital*, plus a little known Sarah Michelle Gellar outfit called *Swan’s Crossing* which We used to watch in the mornings before

school when We were elementary, having spent the night at one or the other's house and splitting a packet of the pink-flavored Pop Tarts our mothers bought for us. These were the great national treasures, relatively concise histories of the American psyche.

The dumpy organs were discarded like cancerous tumors or breast tissue, flushed into the center of the earth where they begin to sizzle mid-way, bearing frighteningly close to that fire-hot core glowing at the exact center 'til they settled somewhere into the layer of bony sediment to which We'll never have access. These things couldn't live—you couldn't even transplant them into the sick bodies that needed tongues and kidneys. Their life was short, shorter by far than a mayfly's, and what could you do but accept it, because it was so.

The eyeballs, though, were a different story altogether, a Hans Christian Andersen tale so deeply and foreverly disturbing it made every kidnapping-rapist horror film look like a pastel-filtered Disney affair.

Those who were piously led into their Twilight Zone eyeball horror show lived nine months with little, and then not-so-little, eyes in their uteri. What this meant, long term, was that a gnarly pet lived out its seemingly endless days with you and your beloveds. They didn't grow, or mature, other than forming cataracts after 40 or 50 years. They'd hum along, silent, alive, and staring, for a regular human lifespan. Sitting in a box in your living room, blinking for decades, what We'd call *mildly sentient*. Long eyelashes matted together unless you brushed them with an extra large eyelash brush at least once a week, which by the way also cost at least three times what a regular comb does which is such a rip. The bootleg versions you could buy on the internet for cheap were just as good, but obstetricians always talked the big virtues of the official products and, you know, those poor-ass souls with eyeballs for offspring lapped that shit up, hungry for something Right and Proper to be attached to the whole mess. Cleaning the crust that gathered at the lash lines' phlegmy edges every day was a very real kind of care. Someone had to do it, and no, there weren't usually ugly stepsisters there to do the work but yes, sometimes there were, and they were inevitably exploited. Some families had two, three, even eight of these sightless suckers. Birth deformities didn't stop people from artificial insemination, which ended up in multiple eye-fetuses 34% of the time. The foster care systems nationwide were doing the best they ever had, placing teenage people in homes where the families would actually be very kind and generous, but also tell you that the one condition of being their beloved new family member rested upon these teenage people's ability to care for the

shoulda-never-been-borned fuckin' eyeballs. And that's considered a healthy kindness.

Eyeball abortion wasn't an option, philosophically, economically, or logistically, for many women. News stories would cycle in and out, women performing abortions on themselves or each other because one of the two clinics left in the country either couldn't admit them in time or were too far away to make an affordable journey of it. Ten women would be on the news in a week, dead from septic pussy syndrome, aka the whole planet having had a worst-case-scenario makeover: Lookee Ma, we're a real live hell on earth! Consciousness raising groups were working hard to offer safe at-home abortion tips for the masses but, you know, not everyone has access to their booklets, their flyers, their organized kinda-doctors running sneakily through big city streets at 2 a.m., Jane 200.0. The thick gray air poisoned the appropriated medical tools as soon as they left their scratched plastic cases, which in turn poisoned your body and sometimes, despite our best latex-gloved intentions, everything just went to shit, shit and shit and shit and shit. Of course the news cycle ran these stories on a loop.

Don't die! Birth your eye!

The eyes, the eyes! They went on and on with their rudimentary self-sustaining system. You could bear them, if you could bear them. All God's creatures, blank staring not-babies pulsing along in your home, never saying nothing, just staring, reminding you that your whole body was just poison ricocheting off the atmosphere and laughing at you. Understandably, people started losing it, hacking their birthed eyes with steak knives, throwing them into the street in pulpy wet masses. Conservative, high-horsed eyeball-lovers with mean hearts would spray a big red eye on your front door and bury the eye in one of their mass eyeball graves. Tiny absurd headstones, all tear-stained plots eventually growing daisies or dahlias, whose seeds were dropped in during the large group funerals. Using flowers to shame people struck us square in the gut: an appropriation of some kind of natural joy flipped into a finger pointing brightly at all the traumatized. The country looked more and more like a massive cemetery conceived by a cruel, sadistic version of those singing *Alice in Wonderland* flowers, all lined up to mock you with their beauty. Nobody liked to see daisies or dahlias anymore. All they meant were poison and gore and sad people and the distinct sense of finality floating around whatever concept was left of human decency.

There were women's therapy groups that dealt specifically with these unfortunate birth-based traumas; therapists were making good money

despite how little money seemed to be circulating. To make someone carry and birth something like a large slug and then expect them to just get on with it, therapist in firm-gripped tow. Even worse, companies dedicated solely to building small chambers for the eyeballs who weren't hacked or aborted, Barbie dream houses in gendered pink or blue satins and silks on which to plop mama's ugliest emission.

God made tongues! God made kidneys! God made plastic and bleach and chemicals and every single everything! God made the poison drifting aimlessly through the atmosphere, curly-q'ing into your nostrils and ear-holes and eyeball nooks! God made dicks filled with sick sperm filled with sick cells who'd tell your lonely masochistic eggs to do the wrong things, cook up the wrong dinner, lead your eggs down the bad, bad roads.

So We understand why women were leaving the planet in hoards. 94% of those warm bodies getting loaded onto the proverbial Venus train were women, women with warm, sick bodies that couldn't take it anymore. We don't wanna live here either! We wanna hop on the nearest truck headed for wherever, forever, and under pretty much any circumstance that, at the very least, promised complete physical separation from the planet that had done this to you.

A few months ago We sat on the toilet with wicked bad cramps and ended up pushing out a little tadpole of a quivering eyeball-ette. Still gummy and soft, with only a few short eyelashes and a translucent white film over the face, like a raw egg with a weepy iris in the middle. Could've fit fifteen of them at least on the palm of our hands, but there was only one. We remember, and consider, that rare encounter. Not, like, such a tragedy for us. We didn't want a baby, we hadn't even known We were incubating one. We didn't think to check. We're like that: letting life work it's own way through the body, out the first available hole, flushed down the toilet. It'd never happened to us before. But of course We imagined what would've happened if We'd grown up with the wrong people, with our true enemies, who are tricky and could get us to do whatever whatever just to give them a little something to smile all rotten-gummed about. We don't do that anymore—you better believe! But everyone's young once, so long as they're born with an appropriate selection of body parts. Not just one crummy piece.

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Sometimes We take our heads off and trade with each other. When We were younger, cellulite still little cauliflower nubs undulating in our blood

streams, We'd wake up in the middle of the night, poke our fingers in each other's stomachs and groggily switch heads mid-dream. When We woke up in the mornings We'd discuss how our bodies felt different or the same, how it changed the dream even though the dream was being dreamed in the same head the whole time, just with a different body beneath it. If a dream picked up where We left off, from before the head exchange, it'd usually take an abrupt turn right away. So We'd melt back into the narrative—maybe a beach where We were pulling seaweed out of the shallow surf while someone who didn't look like our mother but was our mother looked on—and all of a sudden a whale or long-lost friend would appear and shoot us in the face and We'd start a new tale altogether. Don't you always wonder about how you can't die in dreams, like even if you die you still have consciousness? You just move on to a different scene—cut!—the worst art film ever made because trying to explain it is like describing color without using any color words whatsoever to a person who's never seen a single color before. We played this game once, and it didn't work because We have four working eyeballs between us. We said, "Like a girl flower, velvety, the color of meat" and We'd answer, "red." Duh. We weren't learning anything new with these experiments, only trying to see if We could trick our minds into misunderstanding, or re-understanding, basic concepts like color and texture. You know—playing.

After We moved away from the coast and into foothills—from one city to another—We traded heads less often. It seemed useless. We knew each other's bodies well enough that it didn't make for anything interesting or stupid or fun anymore. We had a brother when We were kids who told us that some people can exchange fingers and toes but are fairly certain, at this late stage, that this isn't actually possible, though We haven't left the state ever, so have no clear idea of what's really "out there" any more than We have any idea of what's waiting for us on Venus. Besides a big rough canister of planet all empty and quiet, waiting to be filled with sloppy rocks and gravel like We.

You're well aware of the survival narrative. It basically goes: relative comfort, horror, horror, horror, near death, triumph, marginal comfort, horror, horror, and finally either death or living out the rest of your days all silent and nervy from all the horror. Men get to have their honor and ethics because they cheated the odds, more or less—even if they die, no other man's gonna call them a pussy. Maybe they'll have a wife who isn't as good as the dead wife from before but she's dedicated and thankful that someone would have her after all of *her* horror and that's basically where the family

situation lays in this nation. When it comes to survival narratives.

If you've never switched your own head—which you really should have, everyone started doing it in elementary school and even the cryingest kids did it eventually—then you don't know that the best part, after synching up your brain with someone else's muscles, is the goopy suction sound that happens when you twist that sucker off. Sluuuuuuuurp schwooooooooooop !pop! it goes, and all of that so very wetly. Then you stick your head onto the new body and the sound goes shhhhhwwwwwwwomp mmmmmmmmm. Some people hate it so much it makes them vomit instantly, and those people switch heads once or twice and then give it up entirely. We don't know, it got so casual, you'd switch heads with your true enemy if you found yourself playing on the playground with them, trusting they'd give it back, which they always did because who wants your dumb old head with its psoriasis on the scalp and greasy spots, smelling like whatever shampoo your mom could afford?