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## Ode to my Fur Coat

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my fur coat imitates the dead-- foxes or wolves, maybe rabbits-- but it is not dead. or rather, it is dead in the cold, clean way of those of us who have never been alive, who have never needed to be leeched of blood. my coat is made of cross-polymers and bits of trash, the inbetweens of things. it's born of petroleum and limestone and coal, air and water.

in my fur coat, i am the type of person to think in serif font, staring off into the distance and writing stray thoughts into my notebook the way i'd pull my stray hairs into a bun in the morning. or in my coat i am a snapped-off tree branch shrouded with leaves, skinny, my knees and knuckles sharp little knobs. or i am a girl playing dress up; i am a spell to be broken.

my fur coat is huge. casually, it covers continents, bridges oceans. it carries paris in one pocket and michigan in the other like two decks of cards. fanning them out, i remember last christmas, the coat covering my lap like a blanket. martin and i play texas hold'em and i beat him over and over, grinning and cursing, stacking my chips in neat rows. at night, we sleep in the same bed, and in the morning his mother and i drink cups and cups of tea while we wait for him to wake up.

in my fur coat, i am invincible. i am held. sometimes in the thick of a migraine i use it as a blanket, thankful for its warmth and weight. i call the one i love, say *tell me nice things* and she does, speaking softly into my headphones as i close my eyes, my coat pulled close around me.

or i am shivering, cold curling through my fur coat and into my lungs. it is two a.m. in paris on new years's eve and i am waiting for my service to pick up the call of the one i love, who is angry at me, who i cannot get to fast enough. later a pack of winstons will fall out of my coat and she'll be silent, watching as i apologize and pick them off the sidewalk.

at martin's house, each tea bag comes with a saying: *live for each other* they say, and we do. i wash the dishes with his mother, bumping elbows in her tiny kitchen. after our cups are empty, she lines the sayings in rows on the kitchen walls. they stand like that, stacked neatly next to each other, until one day a wind comes through and knocks them over, bits of paper scattering like seeds. my last day, my tea tells me *empty yourself and let the universe fill you*. i don't know what it means, but i put it on the wall anyway and will it not to fall.

the coat becomes my coat because it is at the end of a rack, the first and easiest to pick up on impulse. martin and i are in the only cheap thrift store in paris, and i am giddy with no longer missing him. i run my hands over the furs. *what if*. he tells me to try it on. it's dirt cheap, 20 euro, and once i pay for it i stuff my old coat in the plastic bag the shopkeeper gave me, give it to martin to carry. i walk in front of him through the cobblestone streets, laughing, making him light my cigarettes-- *ella with her shaky hands i like the coat*, he says. *you look like you*.

my fur coat hangs off me like a shrug, like the curve of a question mark. in it, i am made only of images: thin legs in black tights, black heels, my fur coat balancing on my shoulders like a bell. if you pushed me, i would ring out as i fell, my body hitting concrete.

in my coat, i am loved. in michigan, bianca takes my picture and i look through the camera lens, or maybe past it, laughing or shrugging or posing as she snaps my picture. she reminds the world that i am there. *i want you to know you are so very known* she says. *i am so glad to know you*