

Mark Hammond - Empty Cupboards

Homecoming aches in me, heavy and grating like rusted shackles around my ankles. It thumps, thumps, thumps to remind me that I have not been home in weeks.

I bleed with it as my mother's voice seeps into my breast beside the place I beat. Yellow walls watch me feeling, they watch me hurting and breathing and getting angry. They tell me I won't get my deposit back if I keep lashing out, if I keep being violent, but I can't figure out how it matters when I've already punched holes in the doors and left wine stains on the carpet and mould that creeps from under my footsteps. There's no sticky-tape that can fix me.

Above where I'm lying, fresh paint drips onto the carpet in thick globs. Wet sunshine splattered over grease-stained drywall, pretending everything's still how it used to be. The ceiling sags under the weight of my existence beneath it and I feel myself weighing heavy, heavy, heavy. I'm dripping into the carpet like an infection, white threads growing red and stained and tender to the touch like a fresh bruise. I am throbbing and bleeding with hurt that has no release or comfort. No arms to wrap around me, no kisses on my forehead or fingers in my hair. There is nothing here. Empty stomachs, open wounds.

Shadows beat at the walls like drums, like fists, like my mother's shadow standing outside telling me to come home through a frosted window. I know I have not been home in weeks; I know, I know.

There's herbs dying on the windowsill where mum's palm rested when she spoke through it asking me to visit, and cobwebs in the corners of these stupid mouldy ceilings. I still don't know how to cook by myself so I haven't eaten. I haven't looked at food and I can't stop myself from heaving and heaving and heaving at the wine-stain on the carpet.

The feeling in my chest drips into my stomach, making me feel full like I'm bursting. Splitting apart at the seams like a poorly-made teddy even though the herbs are untouched and the fridge is empty and there is nothing but empty space inside of me. The cupboard doors are still dented from my bloody knuckles and I am furious in my absence of femininity, in the absence of life inside me. I am violent in the gaping wound in my chest that grows bigger, sinks deeper into me, never spilling.

I have not had a period since I left home. Sometimes, when I lie on my mattress in the guest room at night, I listen to the train rattle inside of me and I hear my womb telling me I do not deserve womanhood now.

If I will never be a mother, then I will never see my own. I can't look at her knowing that she will never see my swollen belly full of life or feel the warmth of grandchildren in her arms. I am broken and wrong and I can never be fixed, can never go home to the house where I got my first period and my first miscarriage.

Motherhood will never find me, and I will never feel full again.