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Objects in a Box For Class

i.

Baby teeth I wrapped in plastic. Jar of play-doh. A tiny ball,
its rubber skin slit.

Describe, I tell my students. Inhabit. I want you to become your object.

ii.

At the block party, alone at the edge of the fence and watching the girls
scratch at clotted winter grass with a fork, a piece of glass.

I'm alone, the card table in the yard laid with the children's gifts: lensless
glasses, a Kleenex flower, this junk they've dug up from the dirt.

I'm alone. The other mothers are inside with beer.

The other mothers aren't watching and they don't want to make the
moment what it's not—

iii.

I hate you, my daughter whispers from her blue car seat.

iv.

Their crying: beads on a necklace split, spilling, coming undone.

Their crying: beads rolling away from me, under the rug.

The beads roll in the box. Glass marbles or sleeping pills I won't take.

v.

Five days home with my daughters, five days of fevers, cold baths, wrung-out washcloths on foreheads, pink bulbed Tylenol to squirt inside cheeks, I only want to smoke. To smash the cigarette on the asphalt.

vi.

If you don't like your object, I tell my class. You still have to write.

You don't get to choose. The object chose you.

vii.

The other mothers don't lie down in a web of dirt in the yard and leave their daughters inside the house to cry. Don't leave their four year old to snap a rubber band over and over against her wrist while her sister twists in a fever sleep.

Don't leave.

viii.

Object of the gaze. (Eyes like the bottom of a blue glass bottle.)

Transitional object: breast, bottle, pacifier, my ring finger they sucked and chewed.

"The Inaccessible Object of Desire," a French class I took in college.

Objects I collected from their playroom and brought to school on the subway.

xiv.

The objects sleep in their box. The girls dig in the dirt. The sky yawns white, shuts down.