



## THINGS TO THROW FROM A BRIDGE

My stomach hurts. My legs hurt. My lungs, my tongue. Even my skin hurts. Only my heart is like a pebble at the bottom of a well where no light can touch it, dark and peaceful. Smooth and round. Cold as the water cradling it.

The bridge straddles the gorge which splits our town into two almost equal halves like the back of a beetle bisected by its wings when they're folded. The good part and the bad, the yin and the yang. The wings rarely touch. When they flutter beside each other it's in uneasy symbiosis, keeping the fat body of the beetle airborne. Of sorts. No guessing which part I'm from. The never-will-amount-to. Stamped and labelled by an accident of geography.

What unites and divides us are the things we throw from the bridge. The rich girls from the other side throw away the dolls they've outgrown. The eye-shadow they no longer use though it's still neatly caked in its compact. The hair bands that are last season's fashion. And the gorge plays its part. It opens its mouth and swallows everything patiently, working it inwards to the earth's core. Digesting it. Absorbing the history of the town and its inhabitants in its iniquities, in all its secrets.

It's quite a drop, from the bridge. Four seconds of freefall. I like to imagine four seconds of freedom, of the liberation it will never feel if I keep it. Brief, in that context, but four seconds, better than none. That's what I think.

The gorge swallows. I swear I can hear it belch.

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"Where you bin?" Ron asks. His brows meet in the middle. His hands are shovels. His mouth a leech. What Mama ever saw in him I don't know, but there must have been something or else she wouldn't have let him move in and take over. Wonder if she still sees that something, though. Can't imagine she does, considering she's gone blind in all other ways.

"Over by the bridge."

Ron grunts in acknowledgment. "It's done then?"

"Done." My heart, a pebble.

Over by the kitchen sink, it seems Mama's gone deaf, as well.