

WOVEN: Snowdrop

written by Guest Contributor | November 17, 2021



WOVEN is an Entropy series and dedicated safe space for essays by persons who engage with #MeToo, sexual assault and harassment, and #DomesticViolence, as well as their intersections with mental illness, substance addiction, and legal failures and remedies. We believe you. If selected for the series, we want to provide the editorial and human support such that our conversation continues long after the stories and names have changed.

Reread the [archives](#), always.

I pushed myself so hard, I snapped like a piece of bamboo weighed down by heavy snow. There were moments in 2017 where I was so broken, aside from going to work, all I could do was sink into the brown couch with its faint dog smell, listen to the soothing lilt of English accents as I watched the entire Downton Abbey series, one episode at a time. Moving through the molasses of depression lasted for weeks, behind my son's back I quietly cried to my husband, "I don't know how I'm doing this." By this, I meant breathing. I learned to give myself time to be immersed in the present, tethering myself to nature in order to jump into the past. I began a small morning ritual, going through a list. Taking the dog out, breathing everything in; grabbing the green leash, feeling the bit of leather by the handle, observing the leaves as they go from green to yellow to crisp brown, smelling the damp earth, listening for birds chirping or wind blowing, tasting the breakfast I am about to make, and wondering what I'm craving. This let me know that I'm here. This is safe.

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I wish someone would have taken a picture of my face the first time my ex-husband asked me for help. I hesitated to answer the phone when I saw him calling. I was in my bed in a suburb thirty miles away from the city I grew

up in, relaxed, reading, happily remarried and waiting for my husband to get home. But when children are involved, the past is always present. Still, it was too late for him to say goodnight to our son. He decided that now, in 2016, after ten years, he would ask if it had been easy for me to leave him. My face contorted, I felt the familiar drip of sweat down my left hand, my hand hurting from squeezing the phone.

"I know you were light years ahead of me back then. I know that I couldn't understand. But when I told you I would change, did you believe me? Did you believe I would try?" he asked.

"I believed that you believed what you were saying. But no, of course I didn't believe you. Too much had happened," I answered.

I notice his "light years ahead" comment and wonder if he's implying that it had something to do with growing up. I was proud of myself though, speaking so calmly, as my cat dug her sharp claws into my chest. Normally I would have her stretch somewhere else, but a little physical pain felt like relief from the moment. He asked me how I resisted going back. "I went back to the why I made the decision. That was months in the making or did you forget? I went back to the why and replayed it all in my head." I was still too nice about it, wishing we could *really* talk. I knew I couldn't trust him. I knew I couldn't help him. But he was having problems with his second wife and I still felt sorry for him. For her. I leave out the part where I did have doubts.

Back in April 2005, we had moved into a two-bedroom apartment in Astoria because we needed more space. Really, it was because he hoped more space would cure my messiness, magically leading to less fighting. We didn't yet know I was pregnant. By August 2006, I desperately looked for evidence that he cheated on me, even while I was packing to leave. I looked through the phone bill, saw some suspicious numbers and immediately called my brother. "Please tell me I'm doing the right thing. It would be so much easier to leave if I knew he cheated," I told him. I didn't tell him getting hit, feeling threatened but not having the bruises to prove it, made it feel like none of it was real.

I was twenty-four, unemployed, with a nine-month-old. I was going to live with my parents in their two-bedroom apartment in a part of Queens where the closest form of transportation was the bus. My father had retired from his job as a superintendent in a building on the Upper East Side while I was pregnant. My parents had spent the previous year renovating their co-op apartment before moving in. It was supposed to be their quiet retirement oasis. I was giving up my comfortable place in a neighborhood I enjoyed living in, leaving behind all sorts of things— books, photo albums. I had to give my dog Nico to my sister who I knew might never give him back. (She never did.) I packed what I could fit into one bedroom, initially leaving behind all the beautiful nursery furniture made of pine. The nursery had been

so bright and sunny. In it hung a large geometric painting with vivid colors—greens, yellows, reds, and blues— that had a calming effect on me while I was in labor. My ex-husband had painted it for the nursery, for our son. After I left, he would never let me have the painting.

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I have no sense of direction. I've been going to Mongaup Pond Campground in the Catskills since 2011, when I started dating my husband and I was meeting his friends, his chosen family. There's a 120-acre lake, the largest natural body of water in Catskills Park, and trails that intersect through the campground. It's August 2017 and I'm hiking with my black Lab. It's not the first time I hike alone, but the first time alone taking a *long* hike. A hike I thought was a 3.6 mile loop because I misread the sign. I take what I think I need, feeling confident I know what I'm doing. I have my green backpack with water and snacks, the dog's collapsible water bowl, tissues and even wipes. (I have a bladder the size of a walnut.) Sticking to the "carry in, carry out" motto, I even plan on using the dog's poop bags as a way to not leave any garbage behind.

I'm surprised by how quickly I get tired at first. So I push harder. It's easy to keep going, not knowing you're wrong. I take pictures of nature enveloping things, but moments from *Stand By Me* come to mind with *Deliverance* music playing in the background. Ripe for horror, I come across an old tricycle in a rock, a few steps away from the large rusted wheels of an abandoned cart. I can hear my heartbeat in my ears, realizing the path isn't worn, the sawgrass is high. I realize I'm not running into any other hikers. I know there are bears, but I'm not sure what else I might encounter. I also can't remember what I'm supposed to do if I do see a bear. But the trail is marked well, little wooden signs with yellow writing every so often and the dog is with me. So I'm not lost in the sense that I'm still on the trail. I'm still admiring my surroundings, and rather like that I'm sweating, working. I figure I should almost be done and before I know it, I'm sure I've gone well over three miles. I'm tired and rest. I eat some granola bars, give the dog water, but I don't want to start all over again. Going back means starting over. It's my legs shaking and definitely running out of water. I think of the hills I walked through, the tall sawgrass, dreading the steep incline. My fear of a search and rescue outweighs my exhaustion, but I worry even more when I imagine the possibility of the dog getting too tired. I don't have the upper body strength to carry him.

I end up crossing paths with someone, but stay lost a while longer when they point me in a different direction. It seems better to retrace my steps, deal with the path I already took, however arduous. And bumpy. And rocky. I'm dirty and muddy when I emerge hours later, well past the 2-3 hours I thought I'd be gone. Everyone is obviously relieved when I make it back to the campsite and I fight back the embarrassment. I see my son sitting on a stool wearing a gray sweatshirt, the pond behind him, happy to see me. But he's

kind of looking at me the same way everyone else is; the “where the fuck were you we were worried sick thank God you’re ok” look. There’s still light out. My husband is making hot dogs. “We were eating to get ready to go search for you,” he says. He hugs me tight, later telling me how he was trying to hide how freaked out he was. “I got a little lost but I’ve been here too many times. I knew I’d make it back,” I say.

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January 3, 2003, I married at twenty to the son of my mother’s first cousin. (We share a set of great grandparents.) We didn’t really know each other. I found it appealing he got along with my father. I liked that he was from a place that I wanted to call home; the mountains in a small valley town in Ecuador where we spent summers being the popular American kids, where we would beg to be left behind. I thought this boy was made of the familial language I always struggled to master.

It’s almost embarrassing to admit, but I never would’ve gotten married so young to someone that wasn’t related. My mother’s family was a clan. Marrying cousins was not an accepted common occurrence, it was an unaccepted common one. It was, and still is, customary for the same families to marry each other. While doing genealogical research, I learn this is common in small communities for varying reasons—race, class, religion, location—and is called endogamy. It complicates genealogical research having people show up as closer relations than they actually are. There are families from small communities that think they have no blood relations but are like intertwined branches of two separate trees standing too close together.

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It’s early May 2018 and a sound coming from the air conditioner wakes me up at 5:30am. I stand up, bang it, unsure of what it is. The crabapple tree outside my window bloomed little pink and white flowers for the first time in almost five years. I surprise myself with how much I love it. I see a robin, orange chest and black wide wings, flying back and forth. I lay back in bed, the memory foam holding me, listening to the wings beat the metal. It’s alternating between the AC in my bedroom and my son’s. I see she adds a white ribbon to the nest she’s building and wonder if this is safe. I’m sure it’s from a balloon that’s been caught in the trees, wonder if it’s a sign of pollution. I tell my husband, “I don’t think we can use the AC if there’s a nest there.”

“Honey, this bedroom gets really hot.” He goes on about how low our ceilings are, how thick the heat can feel, reminding me heat rises. “We’ll be fine. I refuse to disturb her,” I tell him. He’s hesitant but knows how stubborn I am

and won't fight me on such things. I slowly close the blinds to not scare her away. I want her to have peace and comfort. I'm worried our clumsy eighty-five pound black Lab might scare her, or the cat might jump near the windowsill. She shuffles her body, makes it all cozy, makes the nest deep. She tried building two, abandoning the one on my son's window because his AC has a steeper slant. Unsafe for a nest. My air conditioner has a screen above it and the dirt and darkness frustrate me. I regret not being more diligent about grime. I wish I could see everything more clearly.

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The first sign that something was going wrong with my mind, that it was fracturing, was after a drive to NJ to his parent's house. It was 2003-2004, by all means newlyweds; we still had my first car from college, a two-door '96 red Dodge Neon. We had been fighting over God knows what. He got out of the car and I decided it was best if I didn't stay. If I just drove back and did something else. But he needed the keys to the house, so his mother came to collect them. She was nice, always speaking in a calm, peaceful tone. I had an out of body experience when she approached the car, asking for the keys. I reached over and grabbed a couple of strands of hair instead of the keys, tried to hand them to her. (He thought it was gross how my curly hair shed so much, so I tried not to leave stray hair anywhere. Collecting each strand to throw out later.) I didn't realize what I was doing, didn't feel the difference between the weight of the hair or keys. His mother shook her head, said, "No no, the keys." I apologized, realized my mistake and handed them to her. But I still felt nothing, floating away in my little car.

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I do a little research about the robins because I want to know how long the incubation period is. I don't know much about nature, let alone birds. An egg a day. Apparently, they're not sure why robin's eggs are blue and I stand there dumbstruck, in awe, wishing I could touch one like a kid on Easter. Both the male and female robin build the nest, both of them protect it. Rarely will the male sit on the eggs but he will stay vigilant and I notice a larger robin nearby at times, watching from a branch just a little further away from the nest.

The robin will let them cool, air out, so that they evenly incubate and hatch at the same time. They don't mate for life and usually don't live long, but pairs usually remain together during an entire breeding season. Sometimes, if they're successful raising babies, they'll return to the same territory the following year to mate again. They both feed their babies.

I feel like a fool for not knowing that robin's eggs are blue. Everyone seems to know, I see everyone reference it. And it makes me wonder what else I don't know.

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I didn't think anyone would believe me if I described the things he said and did to me. I would eventually be asked why I let him. But it's like a slow drip, it all happens gradually. Bizzare, outlandish behavior that as you're living it, feels like a lie. Accusing me of not buying things at the grocery store he liked out of spite, causing me to stand in grocery store aisles genuinely concerned and wondering if I was going to bring the wrong thing home. Or embarrassing me in front of friends, saying things that weren't even true. Or telling me, with a smile on his face, that I was pretty but no Ms. Universe, leaving me confused as to why he would even bother saying that to me.

When I was between five and six months pregnant, after a long day at the beach with his family, we went back to his parent's apartment. It was a two hour car ride with the baby pushing on my bladder; sweet relief pulling up to the black and white house, walking up to the second floor apartment, peeling off the navy blue bathing suit. The mix of beach smells— sea salt and sunscreen— so soothing, I let out a big sun exhaustion sigh as the warm water hit my back. When I got out, he looked at me funny. He later asked me why I would do that. Confused, I asked, "Do what?" He accused me of masturbating in the shower and saying how embarrassing it was. "Estás loco? Qué te pasa?" I asked. Asking him if he was crazy, he always shrugged when he was accused of something, "You never know. What, I can't ask?"

What happens when you don't have the language or knowledge to identify it as violence?

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It's May 6, 2018, a sunny Sunday afternoon. I'm taking a short guided tour by the Mianus River Gorge of an old growth forest with hemlock trees over 400 years old and over 200 feet tall. I go alone, driving twenty minutes to an address provided in an email confirmation. After parking off the side of the road, I walk up a short hill to meet with a group of people I don't know. I

never do things like this, but I'm too intrigued. Old-growth forests are at least 120 years old, not altered by humans. A lot of the land in the area was cleared for farming in the 1600s, remnants of stonewalls are on many of the trails.

Walking around, I realize I no longer need to look down, watch every step I take, making sure I don't trip. I don't know how long that's been the case, but I remember when I first started hiking in 2010, I felt like I was missing out on everything around me because I was so focused on not falling. It's odd, but the change makes me feel stronger. The guide explains that hemlocks are also known as the redwood of the east. A large in diameter hemlock (larger than the area of your arms for a hug) can be 200 years old. A small diameter hemlock (one where you could wrap one arm fully around it to meet your body, like putting your arm around an impossibly skinny friend's waist for a picture) can be 150 years old. The width is dependent on sunlight, not age. They are extremely tolerant of shade and can remain that way for hundreds of years. He points, saying, "A larger hemlock with a larger canopy didn't allow the other tree to grow. But storms and wind will eventually knock over trees, or open a hole in the canopy creating an opportunity for growth."

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"You're too angry and have a nasty attitude." You hear this your entire life. Everyone said it. (And it was true.) But he spits at you, pulls your hair, flirts with other women in front of you. And you explode, sometimes hitting yourself, kicking and screaming. And he calmly asks, "What's wrong with you? Mira cómo te pones. Why are you like this?"

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The hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) is an invasive species killing hemlocks. Part of the free private tour is to raise awareness and let folks know what is being done to protect the area. HWA look like white fuzz in the trees, inserting their long mouthparts and feeding on the tree's stored starches, remaining in the same spot for the rest of their lives. This damages the canopy of the tree, disrupting the flow of nutrients, killing it within four to ten years. (From 2017-2019, over 2,000 eastern hemlock trees will be inoculated against the hemlock woolly adelgid.) The guide explains how hemlocks are an important part of the NYS ecosystem. They're often found along streams, improving water quality. Understanding the importance of one part of the environment seems so basic. Everyone stands there, listening, and I try to conjure life cycle images from childhood textbooks. I grow curious

if I ever cared so much about the environment as a kid, of how much more I suddenly want to know.

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The first time he slapped me, we had been married for two years. Our son was around two months old. But the last time he hit me, only a few months later, was much worse. I thought, "This is it." Still, like magic, despite the pain around my orbital bone, I was shocked when I looked in the bathroom mirror. Not one bruise. Something physical is real, concrete. I was sure it happened, but I needed evidence. Otherwise, it was just my word against his. But physical violence isn't the point.

The first time I left—there would be steps to my full departure—it was because of an incident at the Queens Center Mall in May or June 2006. Something about my embarrassing him at a store, him wanting shoes, my not helping him get them, him wanting some expensive Lacoste shirts for some reason, my saying we couldn't afford them. We ended up driving around in circles in the navy blue Nissan Altima we leased as soon as we learned I was pregnant. I sat in the back seat looking at my seven month old son in his car seat, the surrounding darkness of a mall garage and cement pillars in the background, his large eyes going back and forth from me to his father. As his father spit out words in anger without raising his voice, something in me had had enough. It wasn't a concern for myself. I had no concern for myself. I was like a cicada shell, perfectly molded, nothing inside. I was a ghost. But my son didn't ask for this, didn't agree to this. I didn't want this for him. We had already exited the garage, pulled over somewhere, but I told him to stay. I was suddenly holding the steering wheel, heartbeat in my ears. I remember seeing him standing in the street and I knew he thought I'd wait around or go back for him. But I didn't. I kept driving and showed up at my parent's apartment with their grandson and a diaper bag. And while the next few months and years would be hell, we were also physically safe and my son was loved and taken care of. What I'm saying is, I don't think anyone drives back because they're weak. There are a lot of factors and sometimes, they have nowhere else to go.

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During the walk in the old growth forest, I learned the soil is hundreds of years rich with mycorrhizal fungi, a network of communication that can be rapidly destroyed by the hemlock woolly adelgid. All the dead trees that fall over are preferably left there to decay in order to continue to contribute to that network. Their decay produces heat and hundreds of species live in those dead logs. The things that grow help the wood decompose. I found it

fascinating that something dying could produce so much heat and energy. That if you dissect a log in the winter, you could find a world in there.

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Everyone loved it when my ex was around. Someone once told me how lucky I was that he was such a romantic. He would shower me with hugs and kisses when we were in public. When his parents argued, he would tell them how much he was learning from me. I found it odd but any moments of appreciation and acknowledgment, the breadcrumbs, felt like so much more. One of my favorite memories is driving home, crossing the Queensboro Bridge, leaving Manhattan's lights behind, and singing Oreja de Van Gough. Red in the face, at the top of our lungs, "Perdoname," laughing. Some friends later told me they didn't like him, but some saw him as harmless. He was outgoing, extroverted, a quality I didn't have. He talked about women's rights in a way that I thought meant something. I believed I just brought out the worst in him. Of course I believed it was my fault. He was so nice to everyone else.

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It's near Memorial Day 2018 when I stay home one day to take my frustrations out on my yard. The previous owner planted running bamboo, probably to create a screen as the house up the hill has a clear view into our yard. Bissetii bamboo is one of the hardiest, strongest bamboos. You have to constantly cut it down to keep it under control, otherwise it will take over the whole yard. If you want to grow it, it's recommended you grow it in a container. I have to put on a light gray long sleeve shirt and pants so I won't get too many scrapes or a rash. I'm sweaty and tired, creating a pile I can barely carry, but I cut it all back. I didn't know the root system is so intricate, that they are not considered individual plants but a type of grass. The root system runs underground and can shoot up anywhere randomly. If you want to stop a certain section from growing, you need to dig deep and use a spade to cut at the root. The root looks like a spine with a nervous system.

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I have an obsession with being fair, which might come from being accused of being unfair. It's in part why I encouraged visitation and tried to be flexible. Logistics were always an issue; a combination of his instability and erratic behavior. He'd change times, call me unreasonable, one time yelling that I made everything difficult. My moving further away from the

city both exacerbated this and gave us space. On days we agreed to meet somewhere, I would frantically look at a map trying to figure out a fair midway point. (It was never fair enough for him.) One Sunday in 2016, I realized a park was perfectly midway and told him to meet me there. On my way there, he called, sounding depressed. I know this voice. He will say that nothing is wrong or that he's tired but it's a specific voice that he uses when he's disappointed. I've known him since I was fourteen. I hate that I know this. I hate how much I care. But my son notices it also. And though we're cordial, as his father walked away, he tells him things like, "Don't be a stranger, I'm your father." The scene is kind of pathetic, but my heart broke a little. Since 2016, my son has chosen to see and speak to his father less and less.

Acknowledging that an abusive partner might enact that same abuse on a child is mystifying to a lot of people. As if the violence is contained solely against another adult, or romantic partner. Nevermind that it's difficult for many to understand the emotional abuse component and its consequences.

For a long time, I exhibited behavior that gave a false sense of confidence and comfort: getting remarried in 2012, hanging out with my ex's family, always inviting everyone over for my son's birthday like one big happy family. Perhaps it's the twelve years of Catholic school, sacrifice and pain believed to be virtuous, no matter the cost. Each birthday for the first decade, I made sure to do something all together. I was told, and honestly felt, it was the right thing to do. I saw and read articles like: "Cooperative Co-Parenting: Keys To Making It Work. As a divorce and parenting coach, I've found that children of divorce do best when both of their parents continue to be actively involved in their lives."

Didn't matter if it made me feel sick the whole time, I smiled and looked happy. Didn't matter if it left me depleted of any energy, that's what mothers do. This level of self-sacrifice, the kind that leaves you physically ill, is supposed to mean something. (What that something is, I don't know. It's bullshit.) It took me a decade to realize that I sacrificed my own sanity and comfort because I also didn't want to make everyone else uncomfortable. How many times do we force another person's standard of happiness on ourselves that makes us miserable?

But it also took some time for me to learn that kids who grow up in unstable, hostile environments, might think it's normal and build a high tolerance for dysfunction. I wasn't sure what was considered an unstable environment, but he had a good job and the support of his family so there was that. I was afraid my ex would try to fight me in court if I prevented him from seeing his son. I figured at least birthdays or special occasions gave me a way to

observe their interaction. I *wanted* to be one big blended family. I learned that all of those “rules” of co-parenting don’t apply to domestic abuse. Conflict and abuse are not synonymous. How sad that this is a revelation to me only now. That I felt guilty I could not resolve “conflict” when it wasn’t conflict. He was still attempting to control me, my behavior and my home. Coercive control is still domestic abuse. The only time we went to court was for child support. I did everything to stay out of court.

From the NYS Office for Prevention of Domestic Violence:

When they confront the courts and ACS/CPS, victims feel they are on different planets. The criminal “perpetrator” is the “good enough father” in Family Court cases or invisible to ACS/CPS. The same woman rewarded for pressing charges is punished for doing so in Family Court. ACS/CPS may prohibit her from contacting her partner while Family Court punishes her for denying him access. Advocates can help women and the courts understand how systems collude with the batterer and support his control and/or use of the children.

Domestic violence laws focus on and respond to individual incidents according to the level of physical harm. Consequently, coercive control, where frequent low-level violence is accompanied by the other tactics, has no legal standing. Few elements of coercive control are currently considered criminal, or are only crimes when committed against strangers.

It should be noted that at the time of this writing, there is a coercive control bill under review in the NYS senate. California and Hawaii became the first two states to pass coercive control laws in 2020 following the surge of intimate partner violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. Countries like France, Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland enacted coercive control laws in the last decade.

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The second time he asked for help, it was December 2017, two weeks before Christmas. He wanted me to describe the abuse for him. I was in my office, door closed, only a couple of blocks away from Grand Central Station. “I know it’s hard,” he said, but when he calls me his victim, I felt like throwing up. “I can’t remember the abuse. I would black out. I’m trying to get help,” he said. The words registered, my eyes closed, taking deep silent breaths, expanding my diaphragm, hoping it would help.

“I can’t actually talk about it,” I said. He claimed to understand but I offered to write the worst of it in an email. And by worst, I only meant the

physical abuse. I never described or mentioned the emotional and mental torture. I didn't think he'd accept that. But there's a moment of smugness when I said, "I wrote an essay about it actually. I can send you a portion of that." I immediately hated myself for saying it like that, adding the "actually" as if to make light of the situation. I never wrote the essay as a form of vengeance. The truth was and still is, writing it all out reminds me it really happened.

When someone constantly tells you something didn't happen, that you're exaggerating, the night before wasn't that bad, you begin to doubt your reality. And that day, one of the cruelest tricks of my mind was the immediate derealization. It happens like this: my mind wanders, everything feels like a dream. I had soup on my desk but now it's gone and I don't remember walking to the kitchen, putting it in the fridge, walking back. I know I did it but can't remember doing it. If this were a movie, it would be like Requiem for a Dream. Everyone on drugs, bodies moving but their reality is slowed to a crawl as the world moves at dizzying speeds around them. I smile at coworkers, say good night, walk to Grand Central. I acknowledge that I'm walking by a Starbucks, try to focus on a smell, and I am trying desperately to hold on. I try to hear the 42nd street traffic but the sound is muffled. It's cold but I can't feel it. Steam is coming from somewhere but there are no sidewalk grates as I stand at the entrance to Grand Central. I can see the door, I grab the bronze handle, open the door, but I'm frozen. Lead in my feet, my mind hearing his voice, I watch as the door slowly closes in my face. I realize I haven't walked through it. I just have to get to the other side, to where I can catch my train. I need to get home. Breathe. Open the door. Walk. Make sure I'm on the right train. Triple check. Breathe.

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To say I feel sorry for him makes my friends cringe. I told them about his request for help and I couldn't quite articulate what I was feeling. I figured you can have compassion but don't have to show it in order for it to be true. I knew it was true because I know what I feel but people seem to get the impression that means I felt responsible in some way. This still nags at me. There's no denying that for years after I left him, I was vocal about my hatred. I would make comments about wishing him dead, about desecrating his grave. But years passed and I observed my son; I just wanted him to be happy. How did my son's father become who he was and how do I make sure my son doesn't become that kind of person? What will the intergenerational trauma look like for him?

This is why I wrote the email and responded to his request. I spent the rest of my night silent, telling my husband and son to please not speak to me for

a while, feeling numb. I needed a moment. I wanted him to be better so the people around him stopped suffering. Everyone's life would be easier. I would have every other weekend free to do what I want without worrying, watch whatever I want, have sex with the bedroom door open, read, write. Maybe I would stop feeling so guilty when things go wrong. As they naturally do when raising a child.

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I'm quiet when I'm observing nature. It takes me so long to process information, to understand what it is I'm perceiving and feeling. It should be noted that it isn't always a metaphor. I very much feel that something is reaching out, giving me what I need, sending me messages. As if this something divine touches me lightly, like a phantom kiss to clear my mind and eyes, allowing me to see what needs to be seen. For example, the snowdrop. Each year, I notice more and more snowdrops in my yard. I now know they're the first sign of Spring. They always catch my eye because they remind me of a choir, heads bowed, singing. They only grow 3-6 inches tall and have three white petals. The petals face down towards the dirt; there isn't grass yet when they appear, their green leaves point up like hands. They look kind of sad, and I've caught myself sometimes wishing they would "lift their heads up." In 2019, I got down on the ground and inspected them more closely, realizing how beautiful they are.

They contain an alkaloid, galanthamine, which is used in some medicines for the management of mild and moderate cases of Alzheimer's disease. A compound to help preserve memory.

Snowdrops are wildflowers that can grow in clumps in adverse conditions. Years ago, I didn't understand how anything with a flower would grow in winter, when the ground was still frozen. The tips of their leaves are hard and break through the frozen ground. They contain their own antifreeze to prevent ice crystals forming. They have everything they need to thrive.

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