

EXCERPTS FROM OCTOBER

Lily Calary fiction

10/17/2019

There's a little girl who lives inside me. She rents a studio apartment in my esophagus and she's always getting noise complaints. She ransacks her home every night, banging pots and pans, because she's been locked in there. She pleads with a frenzy to be set free, but I swallowed the key long ago. She's stuck inside me forever and her name is the same as mine. She runs in circles and screams so loud that I bet her mind is clear. Every time I hear her vibrations, I want to echo her yells. She's braver than me and she feels things deeper. She lives so close to my heart that she can see it out her window. I think that's why she acts so unbridled, she sees exactly how it beats. Sometimes I'll sit there and listen to her wake up. She opens her eyes to the view of my dull pain and screams with the loudest frustration. Her vocal cords are shot, but she sleeps soundly every night, knowing that every feeling has been expressed.

10/18/2019

I pour wine in my water bottle and try to remember that I am, in some ways, a writer. I sip and stare at my overpriced computer and think about how the words that will go into it are worth far less than the machine recording them. I scream and yell and tell people in a monotone voice that everything with me is fine. I think about how I ultimately only care about my mother and the characters that I have given a reason to exist. I dream in their heads and want the best for them, and I find myself unable to give them a hard ending, because I know what it's like to live in a perpetual hard ending, and I don't think anyone else deserves it. If I am going to invent these people, why do I need to introduce them to pain? But there I am again, protecting other people and in doing so, robbing them of the person that they could become. The narrative that we need hardship to be interesting is one I wish I didn't buy into because it's stretching at the polyester of my insides. Do not wash, only dry clean. That's the extra care I require, and some--most--can't afford it.

10/21/2019

There is a surreal feeling that follows the unearthing of discontent, of

indifference, of intentional but warm dislike. You felt something was off but never knew exactly what it was, and then someone with more insight and less feeling lets you know not what you did wrong, but that you did wrong. That always seems to be the core issue: not what I did wrong, but that I did wrong. This is incorrect, this is hurtful, this is why you aren't loved. You do wrong. And I've yet to meet a soul who will elaborate for me. Please tell me how to be and I'll mend in exchange for love. I feel this need to earn and collect your love so I can prove to myself that I'm okay. Look at all these people who think I'm okay, who think I'm worthy of love and attention. But they always leave. After months, some last years, once one lasted a decade. But living with something people don't understand means everything is temporary. Nothing in this life is permanent for me, because people can only tolerate so much. They can only tolerate this thing, but they refuse to explain it to me and one day I hope someone just sits me down and screams at me and tells me what it is. Because I'll find out, finally, that it's nothing. I'm not doing anything wrong but living with an impediment in my brain that has it function differently from theirs. I'll realize that in the end, it wasn't me intentionally. They couldn't accept all of me and, therefore, couldn't accept some of me. We use this rule, that if we are the common denominator in many failed relationships, it must be us. I have to learn that it's not. Some fundamentally don't understand or easily accept the way I forcefully love and faithfully and habitually slip up, and that during these moments I am blind, I am unaware, and I don't know what I'm doing to them. I know that I love them and that they see everything but that. I have to learn to live with that in me. That I exist not within myself, but I, myself, exist. I have to love to give and there is love for me in this world.

10/23/2019

I like my therapist a little too much. She makes me laugh and she understands me in ways that other people don't. She acts like she's my friend and lets me go on rants, and I realize this is what I pay her for. I like my therapist a little too much. I find myself talking about her a lot. A funny thing she said, or what she called me out on this week. She's someone who I'm happy is in my life. I like my therapist a little too much. I'm paying her, I'm paying her, it's not real. Sometimes I think no, don't tell her that, it'll ruin her image of you, but no, I don't like my therapist that much. She has an earnestness that's completely disarming, and she says, "and that's hard" a lot. She always wears athleisure and she went to school in Boston and she never makes me feel like I'm wrong. Today she looked at me through her phone camera and told me I'm doing a good job. Something inside made me feel okay, the warmest I have felt in months. I like my therapist

a little too much. Because every Thursday at 1:15 is not a chore but a nice conversation where it's all about me, and someone really cares. And only those that like their therapist can truly understand that the relationship is one that is real. I am paying her for guidance and for understanding, but not for the rapport that we have. I'm not making a deal out of things; I'm just saying I like my therapist a lot. I'm happy that she's part of my life and I like to think she's proud of me. But maybe that's because I like her a little too much.