

Waterproof

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I wish that I could cry with the force of a washing machine, with a torrent of water, my insides thundering against my frame. I wish that I could let grief spray out of me, frustration hammer until my body shakes unbalanced like the washer rocking away in the laundry room. I don't like to cry for an audience, so I try to hold it in. I will go silent rather than let my voice break, turn my full attention to some other task. I rage the dishes clean, make the bed sharply: throw pillows to the ground while I cram blankets into place. Dumping the recycling into the bin feels like slamming a door and there will always be the laundry, the satisfied plonk—the clothes toppled into the washer—the small crash of the empty basket hitting the floor. The people who know me best know I have a hot temper. I try not to let sadness morph into fury, fear become a tantrum. I try. I try to be the mom who cries in the bathroom in that space I've worked so hard to make mine after sharing every room with someone else for years. But who am I kidding? I am not waterproof. I cry at all the sad parts in movies, all the heavy moments on television. Even when I practice reading a story, poem, essay that chokes me up in my office before class, I still fall apart in the classroom every single time. I cry when I'm sad, weary, when I am overtired and overwhelmed. I cry when I'm touched and proud and when I am terrified of what comes next and life keeps handing me so many opportunities for tears. I'm always apologizing for them. I am always trying to cover them up, always hoping to be brave for someone else. I want to go full toddler, full body to the floor. I want to demand attention. Knock against the wall a little bit. I pinch the bridge of my nose, press tissues to my eyes. People notice when I'm about to cry. They notice when I grow quiet.