

# Passwords

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## Untitled

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## Untitled

### Jenna Tico

1.

Sometimes I see myself as a skeleton

Just a pile of spine

2. Resting blood pressure: 90/60 mm/Hg to 120/80 mm/Hg

What she should have told us was that she was dying *soon*. She was dying yesterday, and the day before that—dying while She measured hazelnut coffee onto a tablespoon, using Her toes to propel a rocking chair back and forth back and forth as She raised the hot liquid to her lips. Just because there are beepbeepbeeps coming out of Her does not mean She'll die any sooner than I am here, crosslegged, moving so fast (thousands of miles above the middle of the United States) that I swear I'm not moving at all.

I'm looking at the man directly across the aisle: a mullet balances atop his head like a piece of raccoon that got tired on its way to the cockpit. I want to find a way to bring it up in conversation, to begin (perhaps) with the tiny star inked beneath his left eye and then find a way to touch his hair, because I'm overwhelmed by the feeling that—at one point—he considered it to be a good idea. His wife is tracing her lack of eyebrow with what looks like a felt-tip marker. I want them to look at each other, for her to hold me in her torso like a cough and keep me there as the landing gear stammers out. I want to touch my cheek to her face and to the window, and I want to scream underwater until bubbles shoot out my nose.

*Ding.*

3. Breathing: 12-18 breaths per minute

A twentysomething from Seville seduces my friend, and then phones his wife. My uncle drinks the mouthwash when he thinks no one is looking. Meanwhile, She is a surge protector at the center of a dozen beepbeepbeepings, small eyes staring forward and up like She can't believe that She is the common denominator. Other than the connection between pencil and post-it, Her eyes are the only things that move. Four blue ones meet and She drinks me in

*Treasure tiny sips of water*

And when I say that I will, I am lying. There is only something green that has the texture and temperature of vomit. While we stand in a circle, crying, my face is pressed into my mother's clavicle; a sharp pain flashes against my cheekbone, and I close my fingers around it. Finally, a pain that reveals itself FACE FIRST instead of the one that crawls up through the box spring of a bed

that I slept in as a child that smelled like summer at the beach and the sex that I didn't even know I wanted to have and the idea that my neck was free,

would ever I can understand.

My mother, suddenly a daughter, and an uncle who smells like a combination of Glade Plug -Ins and flood damage. I wish I could get up in the middle of the night

But I thought I wouldn't feel Her illness in my body until She was done with it.

#### 4. Pulse: 60 - 100 beats per minute

Fade in on a girl eating cereal out of a flowerpot, hips resting against the sink, eyes focused on a point somewhere on the other side of the snow-crusted window. Actually, that's a lie—probably straight out of some TV show I pretend I don't watch. What I'm really doing is eating cereal out of a perfectly normal plastic bowl. With a fork. What are dreams except a Technicolor vision of what we think we've already seen, only minus the smell?

Pan to a hospital scene, beepbeepbeep, and a parade of saltine crackers lining the arm of a plasticky chair. It's my seventh hour here, and they still haven't touched Her feeding tube. Milky liquid pours out of the tracheotomy and onto Her chest, the same place that I used to place my head. I think this thought, I eat it up, and am acutely aware that The Melodrama has placed it there; not me, that it is not my thought, it belongs to this room and the fluorescent light buzzing overhead. But I swallow it anyway, and wonder if airport security can smell broken hearts the way they can drugs and Gatorade.

How much can they see with that x-ray machine?

I can see Her heartbeat beneath the cotton sheath on her chest. Thu-thump. Thu-thump.

Zoom in on a girl standing in the hall, phone pressed against her ear, hear, with a melted face. It's absolutely unbelievable how long it takes someone to die; it's unbefuckingbelievable with all the beepbeepbeeps and the nights spent awake and the diapers and the needles and the numb, the numb, when a relationship can end in the time it takes for tiny waves to travel from a phone in California to one in New Jersey. Roger that. The Melodrama throws its head back and cackles, because surely in this moment I am not alive, *How unfair, How horribly insensitive, How could this Possibly have Happened to YOU what did YOU do to deserve this WHO DOES THAT how could this possibly you won't make it, you won't make it, you won't.*

And much to my surprise, the floor does not open up and swallow me whole. My feet walk me back to Her room, past Her roommate with the stain trickling down her starchy sheets and onto the floor, and Past. Present. Future.

5. Temperature: 97.8 - 99.1 degrees Fahrenheit / average 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit

Optimist, pessimist, narcissist.

One, two, three.

There are different types of knowledge: the things you know, the things you know you don't know, and the things you don't know you don't know. I've heard it said

That bad luck comes in threes.

I've muscled myself into this position

Optimist, pessimist, narcissist.

6.

*Ding. Flight attendants, prepare for landing.*

You feel things too strongly, like the delicate skin under your eyes. The mountains below look like veiny hands, gripping onto California for dear life.

You understand, quite suddenly, what alone feels like—grief is something you do alone. Losing someone is something that only you do. There is more than one position for the neck, and sometimes forward and up feels more like a whispered ah than a freeing of the head or back. The muscles lengthen and widen, but they do it in the weird half-place between sleeping and waking where you can't leave for fear that you'll miss something.

There's a feeling, just a feeling, and the engine hums beneath your spine; and your palms, they are wet. And the delicate skin under your eyes, it is wet.