

## *when miranda*

finally discharged herself from the clinic, Eliot and her father came to collect her. They looked at her strangely. She didn't know what it could be; she was more normal than she had been in months. She sat in the back of the car and looked very seriously at her suitcase while her brother and father looked at her, looked away, looked at her again. She passed a hand over her hair, which lay meek and wispy against her neck. Her hair had been bobbed out of necessity at first. Miranda had been admitted to the clinic because one morning Eliot had found her wordless and thoughtful. It had been a long night, a perfect full moon tugging the sky around it into clumsy wrinkles. Miranda had been bleeding slightly from the scalp and her wrists were bound together with extreme dexterity and thin braids of her own hair.

It had been six months since then but her hair had been kept short. She didn't know why, she couldn't remember having expressed a preference. There was much that she was unable to remember. Especially unclear were the days immediately after she and Eliot had had the news of Lily's death. She remembered going into school and everyone being very sorry for her loss, but Eliot said that he had gone to school and she had stayed at home. The incident with the hair was

completely lost; it seemed that when she'd left herself she'd left completely and it was not worth trying to fetch the images back, pointless trying to identify what exactly it was that had made her snap.

The two doctors who had been 'working with' her at the clinic had mistook her resignation for stubbornness and constantly hovered on the edge of pressing her to remember. She objected mildly, with a sense of wasting her father's money. The clinic was a private clinic. Her room at the clinic had its own phone line and plush curtains and in the common room people checked their email and played snooker. She had agreed to be admitted to an adolescent psychiatric unit because no one at home knew how to help her feel comfortable.

She had had such a strong feeling that she needed to talk to someone who would tell her some secret that would make everything all right. She had been unable to think who it was. She had sat awake long hours downstairs, looking into the empty white arch of the fireplace, her hands on her ribcage. Who was it that needed to talk to her, that she needed to talk to? She had gone through lists of people it could be. She could only think of people that it couldn't be. It wasn't Lily, it wasn't her father, it wasn't Eliot, it wasn't any of the poets whose words stuck spikes in her, not even Rumi. It wasn't God. She did not think it was someone who was alive. She did not think it was anyone who existed, this messenger. So, the morning after the bad night she went with her father to see a doctor, a different doctor from the one who had, through no fault of his own, been unable to help her with her pica. She had signed a form, her name near her father's, and admitted herself to the clinic.

## *White is for Witching*

Whenever she tried to think about the long night before the bad morning on which Eliot had found her, nothing came to mind. The sedatives had done their work and she'd gone away and now she was coming home again. Exactly as if she'd been put in an envelope and posted abroad, then returned to sender. Even if alive the package doesn't, can't, note events, only the sensation of travel. All Miranda had been left with was a suspicion that she had spent much of her first night at the clinic clapping. She thought there might have been a bout of bringing her hands together over and over after the lights in the room went out, her body held in frightened rigidity because if she dared stop clapping then a bad thing would come.