

Let me paint a picture of what it's like to carry this weight, these bones in sacks of meat unpleasured. Tumbled together. Ruins of some old fortress. I could never play hopscotch. I never had the rhythms. The likings to avoid the rope, the chalk, the finely drawn numerals in the pavement. There are canyons in me. There are slits that I worship. That I try to vanquish with memories of touch. Women are attributed to places. Helen became synonymous with Troy. Its disastrous overturn. Its threshold. Its pain. Women are maps of pleasure and destination. From the great wars we write letters home. By home, we mean them. And soon we've become another ship in the bottle for the mantle. I excavate my heart from its binds. Shrink it. Sunken it. Into a glass jar. For you to keep as a souvenir from your journeys through the highways and bi-ways of my crevices. This land of mine that was once possessed in a sick way I orchestrated, I reclaim as my own. // This sentiment of course holds no bearings to the historical hatred and obliteration rooted in colonization. No. This figure I play, this Jack character, had a hand in this demolition. This wrongness. This unjust. Those lands were not his. No. I am exploiting his words. I am making my context. My own form of my own despondence. // The travels of my heart view warnings. In the distance, an etch-a-sketch reads 1,825 DANGERS. I think on what that could mean. Past? Future? I have a new lover carve it into the side of my left breast as a reminder. I try to continue on the river. It is beautiful despite the aches. And Emma can be light. She can be easy to carry at times. Brings ease and angst. Some thrust her up. Toss her about in a way that threatens to shake her to pieces. She can be hard to ride. Though, I've now learned her resilience. Such rides like this don't come every day. Sparkling dark-eyed girl. Just dangerous enough to be exciting. Others see it as so. And it's true I painted her with fatale red claws, stained cigarettes, ashtray heart, knives and roses and daggers in between her teeth. And their mouth waters as I strip, as the layers add up on their bedsheets, until I expose more than the prescription called for. Until my heart lies naked and open. Until I'm soft, dangerous no longer, and the excitement dwindles. The other parts call out to see a beautiful valley before us. It's hard for me to see it that way. To see through the eyes of a pure hearted woman. That wasn't the role I was cast in.