

Jim

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To dream is to dream is to dream, and I am always dreaming after the big noise, after the violence. After Cecilia. Oh, Cecilia, Cecilia in my house, in my old wooden bed, Cecilia. Cecilia who ran, her long brown arms pushing me away. Cecilia, the baby

But Cecilia is here, she is right here, here to feed me my bologna sandwiches, to cut them for me in the old yellow kitchen. Cecilia to fold the Pendleton over my soft, pale shoulders when I am sad, cold when I am dreaming. Cecilia, the Pendleton—you bought it when the baby, oh the baby, Cecilia, how could you

The television, it is life. It is my life now. It is blue light and stories I don't really understand. Cecilia, turn it on for me, please—turn it off when it is time to go to bed. Help me up, up off the couch, which is the other place I live, up the stairs, your arms around me, Cecilia. You are here, and you tuck me in like I am your baby, not the other way around

Sometimes the clouds part, though I can't see them. The worn brown curtains have been shut over the windows for many years because the sun always makes me cry, and though I have always been a soft man, no one needs to see that. But I mean, I'm talking about, talking, not out loud—I don't do that much these days—the car took that part away from me but it gave me the dreaming and so when they part, I try not to fight it, though it hurts me not to dream

I know there are things called years and I know there are things called minutes, hours, they talk about it on the dream machine, the television my baby bought for me. I think her hands are rough from the work she does, the cleaning, the serving, she is like her mother, Cecilia. I am so lucky, though, because they are the same, and I have her, she was never lost. I am always found. I have the baby and I have the dreams and the sunshine is something they keep from me so I can dream and dream it is always night

Oh, Cecilia, I am trying not to talk about it, but I do, I do, dream, dream, I am always dreaming of you and though I am so often confused, I know you are gone. You left as soon as the baby was born, and I loved you even more for it, Cecilia, I love you. Where are you now, Cecilia? Are you in the dream machine? I see you there, and I see you on the red hills in Oklahoma with the rest of your people, speaking about pain the way you never could with me. But sweetheart, I could feel it—it was always coming out of you, making something beautiful, destroying everything

Once you spoke to me about the schools, those boarding schools where they took children like your mother, she was stolen, she was ripped from the womb of your new red home, the way you tore yourself from your own child, yes, I see, that was very safe. They hurt the babies, Cecilia—I finally found out, I read about it in a book, in a book Cecilia, oh they hurt them and took their hair and their innocence they ripped, they tore like monsters in the dream machine but

real. Though I am a white man, I would never have hurt those babies, never—I love you, Cecilia and the baby how can they touch with such cruelty oh I love

I have always thought of myself as weak, Cecilia, and now that I am done, it is OK. The sun is put away, and the television lights my face, that is how I grow, like a flower in the dark I am safe. The outside makes me cry—they don't try that anymore, the baby, you, the one who comes to help the baby make me a baby again and take care of me with sweet, strong hands, the doorway like something out of the dream machine. Do you know that I always see it surrounded by light? I do, I do. It is the doorway to another world where the others exist, where I existed before the car, before the violence. I don't drink, Cecilia, except with you but when you left I couldn't bear it, Cecilia—I have always been a soft man. I began to dream then, Cecilia, and after the car, and the other car, and the violence I was able to dream all the time, Cecilia, and be with you

But I have the baby, and the baby is you, and she looks like you, Cecilia, so there is a way in which I have everything I have ever wanted, Cecilia, a baby that is you and you because in all honesty I cannot tell the difference. I love you, Cecilia, I was always so weak—I said it all the time, and you laughed at me Cecilia but the baby, oh she is just like you, you would be proud, proud. There are ways she does not know who she is and I don't either but she is tough, though she hides it and I only know right before I go to sleep, right in that moment that we all have where every fear is the reality and for me those are the same things. But she is tender with me, she is so sweet—I am her baby, Cecilia I love you Cecilia—and I am your baby's baby. She cuts me a sandwich, she keeps the dream machine on, she switches it off, she carries me to my bed like a child

