

## Wax Self-Portrait /

JENNIFER MILITELLO

Dear surrogate, dear estate, dear country, dear tether, promise me forever, promise me an afterlife sewn of pinned cloth.

Small spell I incite from incisions, germinate from pollution, habit burning, pomp circumstancing, water smoothing, division of cells. Small spell bathed in a petri dish, bitterness I say and mean, invention I sear into the brain, o blue thing. Your groomed god sweetens here like a thirst. Small sorrow. Small move. Small spell that certifies death, my skeleton whitens in your cage. Small unopened almanac, electric eel, message sent by pigeon, stitches undone. Small something opened like a door, down like a staircase, up like a sun.

Small spell I bind from hair and skin, small dot as on a map, small bat wing, small toad leg, small mixture of fixtures and listening and fits. Small charting of facts. Small asking, small thought. I walk its plank. I bank like a ship soon to wreck. I navigate flocks that feed. I invent sweetnesses of me. I golden like a fleece. I simper in black. Sticks and stones may break my bones, but let your shape be a kudzu that overgrows all else.

