



is for Rapid City (or, Babysitter's Husband)

*How many acts of genocide does it take to make genocide?  
How many birds does it take to make a flock?*

Duriel E. Harris, "He Who Fights with Monsters"

A bird in a tree is a bird in the bush. Who feels  
the whoosh of power?

A hole in our carpet    rain drips through the roof

—lazy-assed actors  
harass

whoever dislikes  
baby-man crying for the monitors  
like born-again housewife married to a conservative judge  
who writes on your Facebook page:

*You don't know anything about the law*

because her husband is a little like Brett Kavanaugh  
& she was my big-cousin babysitter  
showing up one summer  
assuming you were adolescent & fat  
traveling a thousand miles to assuage your fears  
in a beehive hairdo got a date  
with your regular Rapid City lifeguard

That blond dude appeared at your screen door not wearing trunks  
Rich white frat boys

wave ceremonious flags comprised of women's underwear  
promoted to the highest office in the land  
married to the girl they didn't rape

How do we shake  
the deepest parts of blood  
to measure the shell, fastened but not secure?

And what about the sound of the law before a different  
babysitter's husband  
put you to bed? You were 8  
this babysitter's husband  
massaged his dry old-man's fingers  
into your teeny little-girl vagina

You enjoyed the rub  
until his nails clawed—inside  
your vulva—you  
screamed

and told—. Little girl brain loved and *told*  
Mrs. Babysitter—sweet Mrs. Apple, or her name was Apel, she was the Able-est, an  
Ableist—you thought kindest babysitter on the block—she shouts  
*You're a LIAR*  
*pants on fire pants on fire*—reproduced trauma of rejection  
in *mis en abyme* circles like a mirror you speak of  
“truth,” you filthy thing  
*LIAR!*  
(*You, the “filthy thing”*)

Bad bad mouth whose soap-mother closed the door

closed	the	door	<i>did not speak</i>
Just closed. Door. <i>white ceiling</i>	Left you. <i>bland blue walls</i>	Behind. <i>white vanity</i>	<i>wooden door frame</i> <i>beaded white bed-spread</i>

*Mother. Forever fades*

Violence shares a cheekbone  
You are always the perpetrator  
You will not tell the FBI, perp that you are  
your telling is

not to believe is not to *speaking*  
*in tongues* or silencing

listening to birds  
as they congregate in the crab-apple tree

saying  
*Let's fly south*

*Fly south!*  
*Fly south!*

*Let's get the fuck out of here.*  
denuded. Debunked.            You get a degree.  
You work. You are not noticed—you never spit back

Fly where? You are neither held nor dead

Until one day you become every woman  
in an amphitheater  
the echo

story so familiar that the bird of a family feather  
flies south together

avoids the storm  
leaves you alone

*they left you alone. No one spoke  
or was kind to you  
to you. Label is a Liar.*

If you don't close your mouth  
the door will close

so you won't will  
the judges of the supreme world  
controlling your embodied  
acts like being—just  
breathing     genocide's  
                 air.