

Good, said Marisol.
Good job, Timothy.
She handed me Levi's bottle.
Her long fingers touched mine
for just a second
and the weirdest thing happened.
I wanted to hug her
really tight
and feel her hands wrap around me
like vines never letting go.
And I wanted to sign
more more more
so she'd never stop hugging me back.
Please don't ever tell her.

WEEK 9

I will never do it again.
You must know that, James.
I will never do it again.
Even though sometimes I wonder
just a tiny wonder
a little piece of dust-sized wonder
miniature wonder
you can only see under a wonderscope.
What if . . .
What if . . .
What if I had one more magic wallet . . .
What if all the bills got paid . . .
I will never do it again, James.
The wonder is very tiny.
The what if is too dangerous.
So I will never do it again.
But I do wonder.
I do.



Hey Dad,
I'm writing this because I have to.
Mrs. Bainbridge is making me write it
in her office
with the plants.
Well, I'm not writing this *with* the plants.
You know what I mean.
Well, no, you don't.
You don't even know Mrs. Bainbridge.
You don't even know why I'm here.
You don't know anything.
Did you ever know anything?
Did you ever think about me?
About Mom?
About Levi?
How *we* feel?
What *we* want?
I guess you only thought about your car
and how fast you would drive it
away, away, away.
I wish *I* could drive
away, away, away.

But even if I could, I wouldn't.
Because there are people to take care of.
People you left behind.
I don't want to write this anymore.
Mrs. Bainbridge, there isn't even a place to send it.



You can't hear an angry burrito cry
when that angry burrito
is a baby with a trach
wrapped in a blanket
so that his arms and legs can't move
so that you can bend his neck over a towel
so that you can pull the tube from his neck
and put in a new, clean one.
The angry burrito does not like you
when you help do this,
even when you burrito-ize him
in his favorite spaceship blanket.
Even when you whisper a story about
dragons and a knight
who talks with his hands.
The angry burrito turns weird colors

while your mom and his nurse
work with superfast ninja moves
to get that breathing tube switched out
1-2-3 FAST.
The angry burrito stops crying
when you give him a bottle
pat his fuzzy head
say, Good job, Levi, good job, little burrito.
The angry burrito drinks too fast.
The angry burrito barfs and
the ties around his neck
the brand-new ties
get covered in barf
so you have to help switch them out again
and the whole scene starts over
an endless loop
because you have nothing better to do on a Saturday
than make up stories about dragons
to soothe an angry burrito.



Confession:

I ran to José's house today,
just for three minutes
to borrow his math book.
Mom knew where I was going.
She watched from the doorway.
But now I can't think about math.
I can only think about other dimensions
like maybe right now our world exists somewhere else,
but everyone has bunny ears
or their butts on the fronts of their bodies.
When I go to José's house it's like another dimension.
The house is exactly the same as mine,
same rooms in the same places
except it is also exactly different.
They have seven people,
we have three.
They have noise and chaos,
we do too.
But it's just all so different,
so different.

It's hard for me to figure out
who has the best chaos—
Beeping alarms, or screeching sisters?
Backpacks everywhere, or medical supplies?
Fuzzy baby head, or guinea pig running loose?
And all of it,
all of it is hidden behind the same-looking front door,
the same-looking windows,
the same-looking garage.
A whole different dimension.
It's just three houses down.
And the only real thing we share
between the two places
is this one lousy math book
that I can't even concentrate on.



José's dad bought a car.
It's a car he says used to be cool.
Now it looks like a giant rusted turtle
with no guts inside.



T-man, you can't keep doing this.
The box drops at my feet.
Don't call me T-man.
A bobblehead falls next to my foot.
I don't crush it.
I need the trunk for groceries.
Her hands on her hips.
Her jaw clenching.
Put this stuff away.
The toe of my shoe pushes at the box.
Football. Shaving cream. Random Dad stuff.
I imagine it on fire.
I imagine it on fire in an ocean of lava.
I imagine it on fire in an ocean of lava
with fireproof sharks circling it.
I imagine it on fire in an ocean of lava
with fireproof sharks circling it
and shooting it with their laser eyes.
There are never any groceries to go in the trunk.
I say it quietly. To the box.
Levi starts coughing.
Mom goes to him.