

*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.