

At first, we thought it was only our mother who was disappearing. We found her in the kitchen, partially translucent, eating a low-calorie muffin after coming back from Pilates class. Vi pointed and we watched silently, from behind, as a blob of muffin worked its way down her esophagus. This was followed by a swallow of coffee, which went down faster. We couldn't watch either the muffin or the coffee go all the way down because the view was blocked by our mother's blue sleeveless top, which—like the muffin and the coffee, but unlike our mother—remained solid.

Hey, Vi said, you're see-through.

Our mother turned. She looked like herself except for the fact that parts of the kitchen were now faintly visible through her head, her arms, and her legs. She glanced down at her right hand; splayed the fingers so she could inspect them; rotated her wrist back and forth.

I feel okay, she said, blinking at us. I feel lighter.

Are you solid? I asked.

I am to me, she said. Feel me.

We went to her and each took one of her hands. She never let us hold her hands, because she said holding hands made her too hot. Aunt Liz told us that our mother refused to hold hands with anyone even as a little girl, and once screamed at a crossing guard for trying to take her hand without permission. We jumped at the chance to do it now.

Soft but mostly solid, Vi announced. And a little cold, and weird.

Like holding a balloon filled with cool air, I said. But in a nice way! I added that last bit because I was worried she'd think I didn't like balloons filled with cool air, and maybe I didn't, but I also didn't hold it against her. Plus, I didn't want her to let go just yet.

What does it mean? Vi asked.

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