

CHAPTER ONE OF VIRGO

IN WHICH

*Virgo copes,
Capricorn intervenes,
and Taurus suggests*

I keep Legos in my purse.

When life overwhelms, I take them out and I build a tower: Blues on blues. Followed by reds on reds. Finishing with greens on greens. I don't use yellows because yellows show smear lines and I haven't yet learned to cope with smear lines.

I build them into a tower. I make the tower's edges straight as a razor. I trace the edges with my finger until the skin slits. Then, I look at my blood and I suck my blood and I visualize precision.

It's a coping process that never fails me. Some people use inhalers. I use Legos.

Surviving life is about recognizing your specific discomfort and coping.

And I cope consciously.

I'm a conscious copier.

I swear.

"Can we please focus on the bricks?"
Capricorn asks.

"No," I say, "We absolutely cannot focus on the bricks."

Capricorn huffs and continues circling the Pond.

Capricorn has no room to huff. Capricorn cannot tell me anything. Capricorn has donated bricks to the Garden.

This is not OK.

Bricks make interacies. I cannot cope with interacies.

(Not intricacies.)

(Not interspecies.)

(Interacies.)

(I cannot stand interacies.)

Interacies are the spaces between adjoining brick or tile. They can be shaped like stop signs. They can be shaped like shit. They come in many shapes. All of which are flawed. And their flaws get into my bones and I have to crack them. I have to crack my bones. I have to. I have to clench my fingers and

crack them into fists. I have to rotate my fists and crack my wrists. I have to pull my shoulders back and crack my shoulders. I have to twist my rib cage and crack everything connected to it.

It's how I cope.

And I cope consciously.

As I'm a conscious copier.

Scouts honor.

(Also, I have trouble with uneven corners. I carry sandpaper like other people carry tissues but I am not ashamed.)

"Please don't step on the interacies," I say to Capricorn.

"But I have to count the bricks," she responds.

"Ok. But please avoid the interacies. Don't step on the interacies."

She huffs and continues to step on the interacies.

I squat.

Squatting lessens my aerial view of the interacies. I do this in bathrooms regardless of a clean toilet seat. It's an opportunity cost with which I've learned to cope.

"Virgo," Taurus addresses me, "You should try meditation. I think it would calm you."

Taurus cannot tell me anything either. She's too complacent. Complacent people cannot tell me anything. I know she looks down on me in my squatted position much like she looks down on me in our friendship but I am not ashamed. I remain squatted.

I start to sweat.

"Try counting the bricks," Taurus continues, "Counting is meditative."

"Why would I count the bricks?" I ask, "The bricks have interacies, Taurus. I would only be counting interacies. Why would I count interacies?"

"Then why don't you leave the Garden? Go to the bar."

"I can't! I can't! I can't!"

"But why, Virgo?"

Because the interacies swell out of their cruelty like welts from a whip, you cow!

(I tell her half of this.)

The floor is lashed but I am the one writhing, you witch!

(I tell her half of this.)

"I cannot cross the interacies, Taurus, because I cannot cope with that situation. I simply cannot."

Now, I'm a conscious copier.

True.

But

I didn't know these interaces would be happening tonight. If I'd known it was going to be a problem, I would have brought more Legos. But I didn't know, so, now, I'm forced to employ my final coping option:

I close my eyes.

I visualize my brain as a bone.

I stress my body and push all the blood to my brain.

I attempt to break this brain-bone with the force of my blood.

"Stop her!"

I stress harder.

"She's making herself faint!"

"Virgo!"

The pristine black of my unconsciousness rises in a smooth swell.

Oh I want it.

Oh I need it.

Woah I need to bathe in its uniformity.

Fading, fading, come blackness come. Wash over me. Make everything lovely and smooth.

I hold my breath to expedite the process.

Because this is how I cope.

Usually, I'm a conscious copper.

Usually.

But damn thse cursed interacies — Capricorn — this world — everything flawed that is now washing into nothingness as I cede into a medicinal black...