**Making Myself**

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1. The “remember me” checkbox creates me from nothing, filling all the asterisk-marked fields with a single click. Name, email, address, day of birth: information for identification. Those little words on the screen are supposedly why I am myself and why someone else can’t be. Perhaps even more important than the box’s ability to regurgitate is its ability to relay, telling the computer all it needs to know.

2. What do people need to know about me? I have lists in my notes app to identify what I hope makes me distinct– one of which is what some may call a “bucket list,” but I call a long-running to-do list. I look for things to check off when I need assurance that I have the agency to, collecting life experiences like I used to collect quarters and swimming pool tiles. I’ve learned the alphabet backwards, skinny dipped, and flown a plane. I want to hitchhike, make an important decision with a coin toss, whistle with my fingers, and throw a drink in someone's face. I want to experience the world, and I want to do so on my terms.

3. Another list is called “Things I Like.” I like taut blueberries and wine red. The number 3, double knotted shoelaces, and oxford commas. Crisp sheets, dandelions, people who talk fast, lists, November, warm water, and the word “ointment.” As for what I don't like, I have a list for that too. Fishy fish, open doors, my birthday, cherry pits, and the feeling of space between my toes. I sometimes fear that I talk too much about myself but even more that there isn't a myself to talk about. I am assured by the numbers on my lists, rising higher and higher. Like digits of a combination, I cling to the hope that my descriptors and experiences come together in a combination that is solely mine.

4. I’ve never fully trusted combination locks. With a finite set of numbers, I know someone could break in to steal from me if they just had the patience to. 798: the combination for my grandma's suitcase that she forgot. 798: the number of combinations I entered in one by one until the lock sprang open and her clothes spilled out. It took hours. I took breaks. I worked until I figured it out. I am scared that no one will have the patience to do the same with me.

5. I used to think that it was silly to name it the “lost and found.” Everything in it is still lost. What matters, then, is the label of being found, never mind by whom. I am scared that, in being found by someone else, I will rot away like the water bottles, sweatshirts, and folders in the crusty bin. That I won’t ever make it back to myself.

6. Worse, it terrifies me that my own eyes will never see my face directly– my lips, my nose, my eyelashes– except through the lens of a camera, mirror, or calm water. I will never see it for what it is, without a smudge of glass or a ripple. I am scared of seeing myself through other people. I am scared I will show someone all of me– my quirks and flaws– only for them to decide that they do not like or want what they see. I am scared that I will look through the eyes of another and decide the same.