

ALYSSA COOPER

DISTAL RADIOULNAR JOINT

I wish it were possible to write trauma
off your bones.

I want to kill the parts of me that
remember him, like carving away rotten
flesh, but if I peel away all the pieces
touched by unwelcome hands, I am afraid
that there might be nothing left.

Every woman I know has a story, and
they all sound so much alike. They bleed
together like drops of saline in an ocean,
until it seems that we are made by our
hardships, like we are defined by their
touch, like we are not a part of that
narrative of womanhood until we reach
the fork in the road and are shoved
without permission down the path that
our sisters and mothers and grandmothers
have all walked before us.

And how I wish that I could pluck the weeds,
with their invasive, insistent roots, that I
could walk streets at night without being
afraid, that I could sleep without
remembering, without questioning, the
burden of the survivor, these memories
that stop and start and zoom and stall,
this constant question—

what did I do to deserve it?

And I wish that I could write this trauma off
my bones, that I could scrub them white
and clean like they used to be, that this
silver tongue could script a narrative
where *woman* is not synonymous with
victim, but there are not enough words
for that.

There are not enough words in the world
to bring us back to what we were.