



Don't Name Me, Call Me Nothing At All

Maya knits a fence while the children sleep, and they sleep utterly. Each link Maya bends against that night's ground: concrete, packed dirt, cobblestone, thatch. Into one link goes the next, the next, until a meshwork. I carry her fence in daylight, upon my back, so through my shirt a cross-stitching patterns the skin. But it's good to have work. To hem in. Holy laws—I don't care who you are—are for hemming in.

Birds have started nesting in Maya's fence. Their twigs tickle when they swoop onto my back. I am careful not to crack their eggs. Birds—I don't care who you are—fly, and that's worth safeguarding.

Maya wears my jacket. My daughter wears my son's jacket. That's how my children are, like married, swaybacked equivalently, their whispers necessary, decoded. All that space between his wide sleeves and her narrow arms, she'd be wise to stuff with hay. Cold will kill you, I don't care who you are.

Tonight, we reach a cathedral. Its face stone, light yellow. I lean our fence against its side. I knock and knock. The deacon at the door is angry. Get that off there, he tells me. You deface the stone. Inside it's dark but warm. He won't let us in. Not a motel, he says, I don't care who you are.

Outside, I arrange the fence around us. Every kind of holy law says to do this. Hem in your own. For dearest people, be your own warmth. The birds are our models. The birds have done the same.