

House of wounds.

I met a young man with sensible rules: I don't cut myself shaving. I don't fall down, especially when I'm drunk. And I don't throw up. For you and me and our catalogue of hurts: your open-sliced palm, the dented biscuit tin which missed your head, the thick paperback novel which found your fist, the fractures and the lacerations, the insurance claim forms: for people like us. The night we didn't get married, I made a methodical list. I can scream, I can cry; I can rage, I can mourn. I can't get in the car, I can't slap or beat myself, I can't throw anything or cut anything or burn anything. Edicts to guide my infractions, a measuring stick to show the scale of scabs and contusions for the police files. Someone wrote, When I came home as a boy with scraped knees or bruises my mother whipped me. Now I'm grown I never cut myself with tools, and I'm appalled at men who do. I rolled up my trousers to show off my split knee, liquid with yellow lymph; I wanted to repel him; he knelt down to examine it with enthusiasm, *excellent*.