

Laura Madeline Wiseman

Book of Monsters

Of course I read *Where the Wild Things Are*, a book where a kid sails off to an island of monsters to become their king while wearing white rabbit-footed pajamas. I used to think how lucky a punishment, to go to bed without food, knowing downstairs there were steamy bowls of soup and a whole wheat roll, mugs of cocoa topped with marshmallows and chocolate curls. Should I tell you about all those empty cupboards of roach legs, those fridge shelves of crumbs and splatters, the beer, salt, and ash? My mother painted windows for Halloween—iron footed cauldrons, green-faced witches, children dressed up as monsters. She painted river rocks and boxes, balsawood made strong by bright acrylic and shellac, little spaces to hold something good. I didn't need jungles to grow up overnight. I didn't wish for a sailboat to sail me where they roared and gnashed their teeth. I lived there. *It's okay*, you'd tell me. How much should I tell you? How much should I let die, stay dead, gone? For our first Halloween date, I donned faux rabbit ears and white tail, and you arrived at my door to feed me—great hot bowls of curry soup, whole chickens with rosemary, salted avocados, cocoa made with milk and real chocolate bars.