

## Clara

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As far as I know, Clara has always been there. Like the inexplicable stain in the curtains that I always end up looking at even though I really don't want to. I see it. I see me in it- sometimes a daydreamy possibility of light infused shapes lifting off to soar the open and beautiful skies above, sometimes, everything that is wrong that can't be fixed. Certain stains never go away, no matter how many bristles and suds scratch the surface.

My home is a felt beaked duck. Whether hurtling through the air at a rate of 600 mph or hurtling through the deconstruction of a life at the rate of 600 mindspeeds per second, Clara absorbs it all- the tears that must, but do not want to be shed, the too tight squeezes of spinning out of control, the slow pets down the back of her head that bring breath, the desire for nothing else to exist, just me in her glass eyes- fully taken in.

Clara sits on a shelf in a gingham dress of greens and yellows that connects around her neck in a velcro circle that never fully lays flat. There is a blue ink stain on the hem of her dress of unknown origin, perhaps it was the ink of this story, waiting to find paper. The story of how she has always preferred the shelf, leaving the comfortable pillows, bedspreads, and gaze grabbing corner wall hammock to the bigger, flashier stuffed animals with catchy names and marquee worthy origin stories. She has just always been Clara, patient, unassuming and present. The felt of her beak is both loudspeaker and whisper, it is welcome-back hug and gentle shove out the door, it is the knowing smile that yes, that stain belongs right there—always.

She is my home when I'm in need.