

JOELLE BIELE

## Apologia

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That I only had a vague idea of what  
mothering would be, that it hurt, that  
I was tired, that I wanted it to stop,

that some part of me thought I could  
stare death in the eye, yank it from the corners.  
That when I watched you inch around your crib

I could act like nothing had ever happened,  
nothing ever would, that I didn't watch  
you enough. That when you were born

I thought I already knew you. That I tried  
to please everyone but you, that I did things  
I never thought I'd do. I don't know

what is worse: that sometimes I cared more  
about words that could never love me back or that  
sometimes, most times, I could not hold

your gaze. There was nothing better  
than kissing the sweet give of your skin,  
lying down, extending my arms so you could float

over my head. That I needed to learn to say  
*apple and cup, doll and spoon,*  
that in betraying myself, I betrayed you,

and that even now I am afraid to take your wand,  
tap myself on the shoulder, that I am afraid of what  
it would mean to suddenly, irrevocably appear.