

Janice

I was having a quiet dinner with my friends when Janice Raymond appeared. We had not invited her, but on the other hand we had laid the table for six when only five of us girls were expected, and there was plenty of roast pig to go around. "Sit down, please

my good friend Hera collapsed. She never was a strong one. Hyssop, who recently had read a zine on millennial witches, grabbed the two-volume Library of America boxed edition of Ursula Le Guin's Hainish cycle from my bookshelf and began to utter

and the three suns chased each other violently across the sky. Janice laid her cold hands on my bare shoulders and I felt the oestrogen depart my body, leaving no sex hormones in circulation at all. My bones would break. In mere years my bones

sit down," I said and cut off a slice for Janice Raymond's Portmeiron special edition plate. Janice did not sit down; she pointed at each of the erotic prints on my wall and her jaw opened and closed, as if chewing with her mouth open, but there was nothing

would break, and in every fourth floor flat across this rapidly gentrifying quarter of our fortress city Janice Raymond was appearing. Oh Jan. She released the children from the cage of the future. Our Lady of Grief. A bell! A bell! A bell! A bell! A bell! And then

in her mouth to chew. It was around this moment that we began to suspect that Janice Raymond was a ghost, which she confirmed by plunging her two hands through the pine-effect tabletop and screaming. There was frost on the joint. At that point

a hex of binding; Janice reached over and snapped her neck. Poor Hyssop. Her tits had only just come in and barely any time to enjoy them. A scent of old roses. The wall of my combination living and dining room was all windows and through these the moon

all was calm and neither Hera nor Hyssop was dead. There were only five seats at the table. No children were taken. Our quiet conversation continued, with small revelations of gentleness. By my left hand my phone screen glowed pure blue.