

A HEN CAN LAY ONE EGG A DAY, BUT A DUCK
CAN LAY TWO | I

Today I talk to someone who isn't a farm animal
or you on the phone a couple hundred miles away.
The self-checkout station at Ingles stops working

as I'm just about to pay, forcing interaction—
excuse me help it's not

The hawks circle overhead. A woodpecker
lands on the fence. I feed the sheep
and the goats and the chickens and the ducks

while rain pours downhill in its deep trenches.
I'm still the only human I've seen
down here in the holler.

I check the bird yard again for eggs—

there's six in total, covered in bird-shit mud
and I know I should be able to tell
the ducks' from the hens' by now, but

today I cry about the death of the Mars rover.
I google "gay bars near me" and the search comes
up empty. I call you again and suggest we try

phone sex as a performative act of missing—
yes baby like that

UPON LEARNING THAT FOOD CHANGES
FLAVOR DEPENDING ON HOW YOU CUT IT | I

I watch as she peels a pomelo, butter
knife gliding through the thick, pithy rind—
never too close to the flesh. If you pierce it,
she says, the entire fruit blushes bitter,
ruined on your tongue. How different
this is from the way my mom would cut
our morning grapefruits, right in half, then
so surgically precise between the slices
they could be scooped right out with those
serrated spoons. Sometimes, an eye-full of sharp
juice. And how much sugar we needed on top,
syrupy layer forming in the pulp. The pomelo
tears apart quietly, muffled crunching like
stepping out into crisp snow. Successful, she places a
sweet, pink chunk in my palm.