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Loveladies, New Jersey

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ARIANNA MILLER

Loveladies, New Jersey

*after Meggie C. Royer's
"For 20-Year-Olds Who Have Never Been Loved"*

a woman is skin. she folds/stretches/creases allows lying
lips to sink in. fog secretes oil, her hair frizzy, vellus
follicles pursed ready to welcome the burn of no
-named man's hands who would rather spell his name
between her thighs than sit for . a lovelady of new
jersey knows nothing of love yet she knows hands were
made for tilting man's jaw so his lips press just below her
earlobe. she removes emeralds from her ears, remembers
to rinse them in ammonia later, licks relentless salt from
her lips (and his). loveladies measure their worth on
breath, steal snippets: trace collarbone, memorize
muscle, finger-point veins to hearts that will never be
theirs. whenever she tries to open her mouth her legs
scream (in)voluntary response these women don't know
to stop scarring. they are exposed pink & triangled white
& their blood is blackened blue. they breathe the sound
of a shoreline that won't stop receding.