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## Berenstein/Berenstain

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RACHEL COLOMBAN

# Berenstein/ Berenstain

*Many of us speculate that parallel realities exist, and we've been  
'sliding' between them without realizing it.*

*—From the mandelaeffect.com Frequently Asked Questions page*

I'm sliding on Long Island ice, Ma, trying to grit the ground  
so I can walk on kilter for the first time in months.

*"Berenstain or Berenstein?"*

*"Berenstein, always."*

I look for cracks, misplaced letters, mistakes in history texts,  
ask my friends how they spell a children's book.

*"Berenstein or Berenstain?"*

*"Still Berenstein."*

Mirrors haunt me twofold, since I see your carbon copy, 21 years  
young, separated by a glass, a world, a letter, maybe.

*"Berenstain or Berenstein?"*

*"You know the answer."*

I just—I need someone to answer the other, just once, because maybe,  
I'll come home, and you'll be there, reading it to my nieces,  
and I'll stop stepping on cracks  
because I'll have you back.