

we are moved

I spend a lot of time in that part of the internet
where small beings are given the immoderate care
that all small beings deserve
where a fallen fledgling bird is hand-fed from a pipette and
a garter snake tangled in a bit of tape
is tenderly sponged until the adhesive dissolves
where a newborn is loved exuberantly not only by their
grown-ups but by a comically large St. Bernard
whose nose barely fits between the bars of the crib
and who would clearly defend that baby with its life.
In these videos, the music is very sentimental
and the accompanying text is the kind of thing
you might be emailed by a grandmother who
is charmed by happy endings (if you are
lucky enough to have such a grandmother)
so if you're not into that, feel free to roll your eyes
but also keep reading because
I have a defense prepared.
But first let me tell you about a clip in which a baby river otter
is reunited with its family, which is clearly a gang
you wouldn't want to mess with
a thing designed to protect its own, to throw fierce looks
and punches if necessary and if I had been the one
filming I would have been scared shitless
because the otters ran to that fuzzy lump like it was the only thing that could sustain them
(which yes, biologically speaking is the purpose of offspring
but I mean something more singular)
they scooped it up and held it so close it was absorbed
into the blur of their bodies tumbling

over the beach – which is to say
these videos feel like serious business
and also like testaments to tremendous joy
because think of the way parakeets shimmy with their whole bodies
or for that matter, how happy dogs wag their butts as well as their tails
or for that matter, how happy ducks also wag their tails (and don't get enough credit for it)
or for that matter, how babies dance
and how grown-ups dance when they are near babies.
Surely, there is something essential happening here.
I'm sorry, I had intended to make a more coherent argument
before remembering how we are drawn to one another
knocked me off my feet. Let me try again:
I spend a lot of time in that part of the internet
where small beings are shielded from further suffering
where previously neglected dogs are given new homes with foster families who can't help
but adopt them in the end
where orphaned baby orangutans are wrapped in the arms of
grieving mommy orangutans, who both needed
someone either bigger or smaller than themselves
to hold. And this is in so many ways not what our world is
or could be – especially because this content is crafted
to be consumable, which means commodifiable
and sometimes falls into the two-faced trap of selling us trauma
in order to sell us redemption (if not toxic positivity) –
or this is the analysis I would make
in order to sound more self-aware
in order to remind you that I am a well-educated adult who reads
in a variety of genres. Except
what I am doing here is inviting you into a more private space (which is also an actual file of
bookmarked videos on my computer) where, while watching horses try to stand for the first time,
I feel not like a savvy cultural critic but like

a wet, wobbly foal.

Please don't tell me

if you like me less for that.

But do feel free to tell me if you don't like these videos

and I will say: you do you, friend!

because I realize that I keep trying to use words

to conjure the feeling of being speechless

and even more: the feeling that words are insufficient

which is a ridiculous goal (not to mention

incompatible with my anxious stream-of-

consciousness communication style).

But I will also say: I still need you

to see how easily I am derailed by my emotions. I still need you

to know that I have thought a great deal about the profound and come to the conclusion that it is

often what happens when we allow ourselves

to be affected by the banal

and unremarkable.

I still need you

to come along to the place where the pit-bull is scared and hiding under the car

because it has been hurt before

and then to the place where the same pit-bull gets belly rubs whenever it wants them.

We already know how near these places are to one another

and all their variations: that anguish is an acknowledgement

of how much is worth mourning, that

gratitude is the anticipation of loss

and needing someone – well, good luck

feeling existentially stable.

But in a three minute video the smallness of that distance is so

evident. We can feel ourselves moving across it and maybe that is all

we mean when we say

we are moved.

Anyway, whether or not you join me
in my corner of the internet, I am glad to have the things
that make me think of those I love
so easily accessible.

If you get a moment, forward one
to your grandmother
for me.