

*Lisa Mangini*LETTER TO MY MAID OF HONOR,  
IF I CHOOSE TO HAVE ONE

Sources do not indicate the etymology of *Pythagoras*, but rumors suggest his name had no real meaning until his famous theorem—the one that tells us we can know the dimensions of one side if we know the other two. Like how *best friend* is defined by the someone else: all the swapped sweaters and sarcasm, photos snapped in varying stages of intoxication or exhaustion, lost handbags and moments to be honest and present instead of texting boys while bitching over pinot noir, blowjob jokes and feigned apathy at not being called back, the promises and pacts of sisterhood, to never become a wife, or wipe someone's milkshit in the middle of the night. This is what friends are for: curling irons and sharing eyeliners, and divining the future through greasy vague fortune slips, turning shrill and silly at the first signs of crows' feet and crepey skin, swearing allegiance until the requisite scrape and scramble of the bouquet toss. To be a girl is to be a mannequin in a room full of other mannequins, to be made of the same fiber and filling, posed in something similar but a different shade. The hypotenuse—the long, weak leg of the triangle—translates to *stretching under*, the side most likely to sag from weight, like a powerline bowed and heavy under a coat of ice. I used to be the shortest distance from two vertices, the quickest route to your tender center, before we both got swallowed in the domestic: checkbooks with matching last names, trendy kitchens, home ovulation kits. It's always a contest with the same prize: try not to be irrelevant by menopause. How easy for Pythagoras—for all the ancient names we know—who get to draw and name the shapes of the world and live forever in each map and roll of wallpaper, in every right angle of the homes we're doomed to keep tidy and welcoming.