

Marysia Paruzel

*Svetlana*

December 12, 2024 - January 30, 2025

1

S., 2024

Archival pigment print

45 x 55 cm

3 x 1 AP

7

S. at home, 2024

Archival pigment print

45 x 55 cm

3 x 1 AP

2

Baby rats, 2024

Archival pigment print

45 x 55 cm

3 x 1 AP

8

Tiffany baby spoon, 2024

Archival pigment print

45 x 55 cm

3 x 1 AP

3

L. looking at toilet, 2024

Archival pigment print

45 x 55 cm

3 x 1 AP

9

S. vaping, 2024

Archival pigment print

45 x 55 cm

3 x 1 AP

4

S. by barracks, 2024

Archival pigment print

41,5 x 55 cm

3 x 1 AP

10

S. with fish, 2024

Archival pigment print

41,5 x 55 cm

3 x 1 AP

5

S. with cyber truck, 2024

Archival pigment print

45 x 55 cm

3 x 1 AP

11

L. lurking, 2024

Archival pigment print

45 x 55 cm

3 x 1 AP

6

L. vacuuming, 2024

Archival pigment print

45 x 55 cm

3 x 1 AP

12

Svetlana in sunset, 2024

Archival pigment print

41,5 x 55 cm

3 x 1 AP

I met Svetlana through the TaskRabbit app. She's 24 years old, and her 7 year old son is still at Baikal Lake. All the Eastern European cleaners on the app look like models. Svetlana tells me about one "girl boss" who uses her Social Security Number and has over a dozen undocumented girls cleaning for her. Combined, they've completed around 2,700 tasks.

Svetlana considers changing her gender. She thinks it could help with getting asylum in the USA. She said she could still dress like a girl, and nobody would know. The day after the election, I went to visit her in Brighton Beach. Her home is kind of empty but filled with light. Her husband isn't there. On the table, there's a bunch of white flowers he bought with her money as an apology. We only take photos for a few minutes and mostly just talk.

I'm stunned by the results and think, "well, I also look most beautiful when I'm sad."

I've done jobs like that, back when I didn't have papers. Washing dishes and making beds, she can remove all traces of her own presence. Not being seen is so relaxing. I really like photos to be the same way and try to evoke that mundane, heavy, peaceful feeling—like trespassing together into a space we don't belong in but where we have a task for now, only to leave again soon.

Carol Mavor writes about Muby's and Hannah Culwick's photographs:

"I am drawn to their efforts to imagine the other (as well as the subject) without sacrificing or closing off the possibilities of his or her identity."

I'm not sure what exactly she means.

I see Svetlana again a week after the election. We drive to New Jersey, home to the oldest American lighthouse. There, we visit Fort Hancock, a historic site that housed nuclear missiles during the Cold War to protect Manhattan. She tells me she deleted her profile on TaskRabbit. Her husband got a job as a truck driver and will now be gone for weeks on end. She smokes weed and watches a sitcom called Fresh Off the Boat. She says she'll get her permit, and then they'll drive trucks across the country together.

I say America is big and scary. She replies, "Not as big and scary as Russia."

We get stopped for no reason by federal police. They don't ask her for documents, but we see someone else in the distance getting arrested as the sun sets. It looks like an old Western movie.