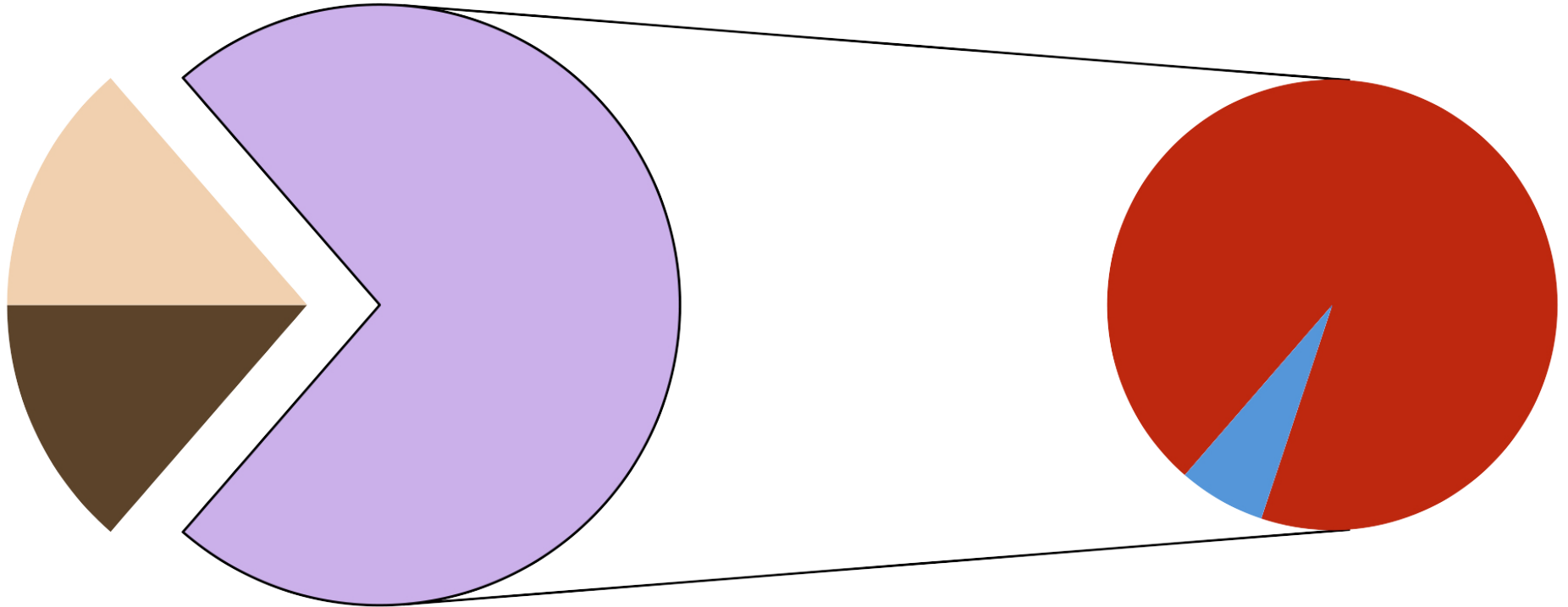


melting pot



■ mom removed her makeup and made three dinners after the diner. she ate hers last just as we finished our plates and glasses. she is absent from photos (a note: daguerreotype was blurry and slow, and to stop their children who might die from the vagaries of victorian life, victorian mothers would hold their shoulders to keep them still for the whole of the long exposure. she would wear a black veil, blurred out of the photos or positioned behind a chair as if she wasn't there. they are called hidden mothers). once i snapped at her and she started to cry and even my quiet felt powerful in a way that made me want to cry myself, as if both our silences were my own.
my tongue half a boy

with a man's shadow

■ my father played dominoes online, and if you're wondering at his skill, know that dad is black and only getting older. he'd become a celebrity in the leader boards, and then change his name. dozens of times, over and over he used the names of everyone he knew—no one wants to face a demigod. the story of america is a black body reinventing itself until it runs out of names. my father's father was a cop. brain cancer took him. that's the story of justice in america. dominoes is less a game of chance than honor. their faces are black and white and made from dice just like me and mine. eventually dad's name always betrayed him. they'd know the odds. to save time, he began to play as random words. he'd dash a career, from amateur to pro in the course of days. he ran out lives as quickly as patience. to some men, this is labor; inheritance ruins bones (american homes). some words sound feminine to strangers. my father, totally silent as he played, was the cypher of a man, and in these times they were silent back. until he was a sweet flavor or a tree. then my father was a bitch

■ i fell apart in public once.
our anniversary.
the waiter didn't notice, or pretended.
the food was fine

■ when it comes to a woman undone,
any number of suns might erupt. or none