

when we were at the cabin

When I was young, I swept away into the forest with my closest friends my favourite my kin. We holed ourselves up in a cabin in the sun. We waited until the sun went down and sailed over the thin ice of the lake down the slope, three and four to a canoe. We took drugs that dazzled us, and the leaves shimmered and crinkled overhead when we lay down outside, underneath them. The crickets sang us a symphony. We turned over, into the earth, we stayed there for years. Some of us sparkled, that whole time, with anger, young rage. We tried to exorcise each other as best we could. You stayed underneath the leaves with me though. We stayed for years. We held onto each other when voices came towards us — why did we wait so long? You turned into me, twisting the sleeping bag around our legs, and kissed me for the first time. I had loved you for two years. My heart froze in my throat. I couldn't kiss you back.

when i loved you the worst

I remember walking home from the metro, once — I had an awful ache from my chest to my legs, so I got out a stop early, climbed the steps back up to the s

ky. It was incredibly dark. Pissing rain. I don't remember what I had been doing that night — I had probably been around you. Hovering, ghostly, just far enough out of reach to not be a particularly remarkable figure in your life. But I remember, clearly, that half an hour of walking, because I was sobbing uncontrollably the whole way home. Something about the rain peeling off my cheeks made me feel like it was ok, to cry about it. Why, oh lord why, did this have to be me. Why did I have to love you. Why did I have to be in love with you. The entirety of the world seemed hinged on the fact that you would never love me back, that no one would ever love me back, that I was irreparably and singularly broken, and disgusting. The incomparable despair that every teenager must feel, must encapsulate, to go through, scarred and war-torn, into reliable, pleasant adulthood. Every teenager feels this. But even now I look back on the feeling that there was a raging, gaping, black-soul-hole in my abdomen — I can feel it dull but familiar by now — and marvel at how intensely a girl who loves a girl who doesn't love a girl can feel. How do we inspire such killing feelings in each other? What is it that we do to each other to make ourselves hurt, so, so much. To be a teenage girl, in love with you.

I remember sitting in the basement of the building we all went to school in, in the wood-shop where we carved and hacked and sawed away at chunks of everything for the sake of art. This was where you lived. This was where we both lived. I think back to our moonlit glory in those shops, where we were callous handed kings. We were incomparably different people. We will never be the same. We could never do those things again. You

swept in and out of the rooms — was it your industriousness that attracted me to you? I can't even remember, now — and everytime you looked at me I cut my eyes towards the corners. How visiciously I fought to keep myself at arms length from you.

[ I can't breath. ]

I remember sitting in the middle of a studio of twenty or so industrious, focused, single-minded art kids. My family my folk my friends. Sitting on a table right in the middle of all the end of semester, end of year, end of an era industry as you all prepared for the grand finale of our two intense years together. Who was with me, around me at that table? I know I was on, rather than at the table, because a certain state of mind required me to fold myself over my stomach and into myself and you can not acheive that in a chair. I am very familiar with this pose by now.

[ Writing this makes me feel like I can't breath, throat constricted and eyes balmy. Swampy palms. Why am I reliving these small traumas? Why is this, of all things, what I need to write about? That question seems to answer itself. ]

I was folded over onto myself, on that rickety table. I think Leah was sewing, or cutting, or doing something, near me, when I started leaking out of every pore. When you feel like your cries and going to come rushing in through the gaping black hole that your mouth used to be, into your body and choke you, because all you have left inside you is a pit a vacuum absolutely nothing? That feeling? I hope you know it as well as I do, because that would mean that my emotions are tempered, universal, human. I'm sure you know it. I'm sure we all know it.

I think what I'm trying to do here is unravel, with the clarity of hindsight and personal growth, mood-stabilizers and anti-psychotics, and time time time (honestly a very small amount of it, but we made that small amount count) the small knots of trauma along my curled spine. Describing the physical pose of despair, the head to shins full-body muscle spasm, in words, is making my abdomen clench in a way that tell me my physical body isn't done holding on to this. Right now it exists, as a chunk of crystalized tears, right by my jugular, as you stare up at the sky and insist that the sun is going to come up soon, as the drugs you took swim around your head in a luckily benevolent way, and you may not remember how her mouth tasted but you will damn well remember how the leaves look. I can taste it. I need to unravel this hoard of small knots, because I need to be able to map how I've brought myself here. I've brought myself so far, so far away from this, away from you, away from myself. I am happy, I am a happier person, I have learnt so much. I want you to know this. I want the world to understand. I want young, mad, crazy girls who love girls

to see that they can, and should, sob uncontrollably, but that we are a family and we may survive. There have been people like use before us, and there will be people like us after us. We can uncurl, together, in the sun. You will have a girl twist towards you in a sleeping bagse leaves look from down there on the earth.

[ I am exhausted, now. I don't want to name you. I'm not really writing, for you, to you, but you are an emblem of my suffering, my love. How did I ever sustain a relationship with you, when I felt such grandeur, such pedestalling of your virtues? How did you suffer me for so long? It feels like we lived in a dream, that we were princesses or knights that came together in an impossible, mythical land. But we did love each other, in a practical stable muddy earthy way, as well. You were my creature and I was yours. We shared bodies, we fought, we spat. We were both real flesh and blood, once. Now you are an ethereal being. I go to your house for tea and if I were to reach out and touch you my hand might pass right through. ]

All these I's and you's cut me too close. I am not a grandmother yet. I am seeping out of all my pores, I am fogging over my glasses. I need to fold myself back into my blankets for the night, for nights, for years, more. I am still bandaging myself up, I can't help you yet, so literally. Slip away from these I's and You's for now. ]

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They didn't want to leave.

She didn't want to leave the bank. A small depression in the grass, perfect along the spine. Bits of grass itched against bare skin, pressing into legs, and shoulders, writing their tiny fairy letters. Tiny fairy thumbprints from stones. Tiny fairy tears from the dew. If could run her hands along her calves and imagine what the blades were trying to tell her, there. This was where she meant to spend the day. A small group of feral dogs ambled around on the far bank, just far enough out of reach that they looked like a shifting, grey cloud, nuzzling around in the rocks. Nose to the water. She had seen them before, she knew which ones they were, could draw them if she had thought to. But she did not know where they had come from.

She imagined she could here them outside her window at night, small scuffling noises, warm wet breathing, small cajoling whined calling her out into the night. Blankets trailed behind her in her dreams, impossibly soft and expansive, whiter than they ever where in daylight. The coffee stains blood stains mapping out her outline in the too-small mattress were gone, that's how she always knew she was dreaming. The dogs would be

waiting for her, though, in she woke up and went down the hall, unlatched the front door. They would trail her to the waterfront, front the cover of the trees. Maybe it would be the one she imagines looks sweetestm kindest — the shaggy colar around its thin fox face speckled, eyed peering out wide and generous. Would wait for her and lick her hand as they come up behind her and tear out her throat.

If knew these dreams were just dreams. She didn't know where the dogs came from. She didn't even know wether they wer actually feral — what even makes an animal feral wild a stray, what are the qualifications? As she watched them from her hollow, they slipped through the trees and out of sight. The river was deep and wide, and long. They didn't trouble her in her wakng life.

If was a baker. Seeds and nuts and fruit were folded into wheat and rye and oats casings under her hard palms. The roll of a strong knead, the pattern, felt like the roll of the ocean to her. She leaned into it, and into her roll as a nourisher, as someone who helped bring food to mouth, from feilf through the oven through to mouth. Her mother was a baker, too. If's favourite thing to roll into her bread were jewels of honeycomb, wraped up like little parcels. Biting into a honey comb would take your breath away, she always wanted to say, to someone, to who? There was just something about it.

When her loaves came rolling out of her oven, especially the first loaves of the morning, small children came. Large cats came. Workers on their commutes. It was one of these mornings, when If was parceling out rolls for the first customers of the day, that she saw you. You were standing behind the regular lineup of familiar faces familiar orders. You had shining, rolling, silver hair. You had a small, quiet face. It seemed, to If, through the storefront's early morning shimmer, that you were staring at the particular nothingness right about her head. You would tell her later that you were thinking about the sweater you couldn't find earlier that morning. Grey, with the mended patches. Your favourite. It was important that you have that sweater on that day. You had secret reasons. But If didn't know that. All If knew was that there was an angel in the storefront. She wanted to peel o;ut of her skin and grind her bones up into dust. She couldn't do this. She couldn't look at you. She couldn't she couldn't she had to work you were a customer How can I help you what can i get for you yes ok onion rolls yes we have that she was fine was was good you were out the door mere minute had elapses since she spotted you in the corner and you were off on your way.

That night If dreamed that the dog who lured her out towards the water's edge had fur that shimmered grey, and she got close enough to touch it's wet nose before they leapt.

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nov 5 goal: min 3.5, 3.700 or more goal 5000



You came back to her bakery a few times that week. You rolled her loaves in your palm as you walked your way home, along the dirt paths of the alleyways that lead to where you lived. This good sweet bread nourished you, but you did not think of it that way. You ate the bread If made without a thought to thinking of the strength and effort that went through it into you. Eating as always a sacred solem thing, for If. It never as for you. Pains curled up in your belly and grabbed and you chest and you put things inside you and were off again an apple a bit of cheese some snap peas. You stretched yourself out in parks, your small bag full of the bakery's warm rolls. The sun caught your hair, and it was ragged and blazing with split ends from the bleach and dye. Youwere not a natural silver. Bits of grassed peeled away ith you as you sat up, belly full again. You had come here to restt.

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You are runnign through afield, your feet are dark and heavy and weigh you down. The forests edging your clearing are deep and dark, muddy rusty green bron red, and imposing. Heavy bodies are running alongside you, tisted facesm, grimaces, you've seen them before, somewhere, in a different world. They swim around and before you. you are dreaming, but you don't realize that. There is fighting. It's a battle field. A thin river cut's through, and you are running away from it. On the other side are more twisted faces. You have been reading too many fantasy novels, you are too young. Where did you see such

things. They are shooting at you, volley after volley, with the precision of a trained fleet. They duck down and then stand up. The people next to you fall, some one them, with a grunt or a sigh and a thud. You are still running. You aren't here to fight, scared for your life, nothing has ever seemed so real and so terrifying than this battlefield. Why did you turn back? Why did you try to look over your shoulder? What was that flash of silver? You slow up and swing your heavy boots around and look to the sky. there are heavy tattered rags flying above head. What are they? The whole moment takes a split second, the turning, the looking, the recognition, and the arrow thudding home, right above the hollow of your neck, right through the bone, the voice box, the nape of your neck. It is a feeling that is completely painless but somehow with much more force than such a small object should be able to place on you. Your entire thorax feels like a thick iron band. It swells around the arrow. This is the arrow's home. You aren't able to move any part of yourself, except widen your eyes. You can't breathe. You can't see. Black is swimming in front of you, your waving hands aren't there.

You killed a cat today. No, that's a lie, but you helped someone kill a cat. That still feels like a lie. You helped an animal die put it out of its suffering sent it off to a better place. You don't actually know what you should say. Euthanasia. How many times have you been on the receiving end of this. How many animals have you had slip away from underneath

your fingers. How many lives have passed you, small lives, tiny insignificant warm lives passing you by. You are racking them up. You're tally are large lives is extremely low. Almost non-existent. Life has let you be lucky, so far. Small lives, and your own. Everyone else has been safe.

This cat had been extremely sick, and the killing that you did help do took place in a small clinic, surrounded by his family. His loving girl, her father — you think about how kissable he is, feel deprived. We keep baby blankets for this purpose, hand quilted, pink and blue and plush. Her was wrapped in them, he was sedated. Ketamine. Give them that little bit of peace. Talk to him, she said, to them. He can still hear you. Then, when it was over, when there was no flutter left in his chest, Look how the pain has dropped from his face. You don't remember what he looked like a moment before, but you believe her. Smooth whiskers back, ease eyelids half shut. Fold the blanket tighter around his body. They cry. Of course they cry. You have always seen them, coming on of the room, empty handed, empty cage, red eyed, J'ai perdue quelqu'un. Even then, you would have to turn away, take a deep breath, press your tongue to the top of your palate. But you never had to be there. To see someone else cry, is the worst ripping empathetic feeling. Watching someone else lose their pet. Soemthing you fantasize about when you can't feel any worse for yourself, when you imagiune that you deserve the worst possible punishment that the world can pour out, when you romanticize despair, when you almost crave it — that is what you imagine. What if, what if — pet lost, pet dead, pet dead by your own neglect, by your own hand. You know how to punish yourself. So watching someone else go through this, this ultimate despair that you sometimes even wish on yourself, that you would for the

same reasons never, ever, ever wish on anyone else, you think you might break your jaw, clenching it. You must look like the most unfeeling slab of stone. But you are strong. Your options are to stand there, back straight, hands at your side, dispassionate observance on your face, immediate obedience, a strong golem for the doctor — or to cry, and cry and cry cry cry and relive every time something someone you loved died in your arms. Stop thinking about it stop thinking about it.

He voided his bowels you scooped him up any way, pressed him against you. he folded, limp, heavy, very very warm. You hold him to your chest. [ Wash yourself when you getiu home he is contagious highly contagious ] You swaddle him once more, one last time. You place him in a quiet back room, and leave the door open a crack. So his soul won't be trapped in his body, she said once. It's important to her. You stay ed late — half an hour, then an hour. You don't want to go back there and put his body in the freezer. You might stay here all night, until his natural warmth or soul, whichever, has seeped out of his body. But you can't. As it is now, he is still warm, hot even, to the touch. He had silky thick smokey coloured fur. Dusted lighter, beige grey, underneath his belly. You smooth his fur down. It springs back up. it waves along his flank. You can't focus your eyes. It sways above the rise and fall of his breath. But he isn't breathing. You cana't focus your eyes. He is breathing. He isn't. Your hand rests lightly on his flank. He isn't. She listened to his heartbeat die out, she wouldn't make such a mistake. He isn't. He isn't he isn't and the uncanny warmth under your fingers in dead warmth, running away. You can't keep it. You might as well help it escape. Into a white plastic bag, support it against your chest don't let its weight fall even now. Into the freezer he goes, and home you go, writing along the way.

The silky softy back of a cat arched underneath and against the inside of If's knee. Hello, tiny. She is in the green space next to her house. Tiny is her cat, or she thinks of him as her cat. She suspects her may belong to many people at once. His fur was a beautiful shaggy bronze, speckled with bits of leaves and a bur near the base of his tail. She picked it off and stuck it to the sleeve on her sweater. Where has he been? What has he seen? How many small animals has he killed in the past week? If spent a lot of time thinking about how domestic cats decimate their local urban ecosystems, btu also about how the purr and weight brought her breathe out and her pulse back in. How much worse everyone would be without deomestic animals, how much more neighbour-neighbour violence. How many more drivebys. Just go pet a dog, she wanted to scream, at news headlines. The cat wound itself around her legs a few times and then bolted off into the juniper bushes that hedged the path along the river bank. It was a small and overgrown, rarely used path, and Tiny could slink through it like a jaguar. She stood up, patted flour off of the front of her shirt, pressed the heels of her hands into the hollows of her eyesockets. Tiny silver starbursts, fading into the warm orange glow of closed eyelids facing the sun. She loved that sensation, as if she were inside of a blanke fort — her body the blanket fort. Seeing the sun through the insides of your eyelids really placed yourself, forcefully, as someone ~in~side a body, rather than just a body itself. She loved it. She could spend good chunks of time in front of a mirror, pulling her cheeks away so she could get a good look at her teeth, the way they sunk

into her gums. That's part of a skeleton, that's my skeleton, that's part of my skull, she would say to herself. She did love a certain type of morbidity. When the stars faded from her skull minds eye completely, she opened them and swung back around to her small house. Her hand reached out and absently brushed over the rosemary standing tall by the back door, spreading it's heady dry smell. She absently brought her hand, with a few of the pines, to her throat. She wasn't much a fan of perfume, but rosemary was a scent she wouldn't mind bringing with her everytime she entered a room, something she could wrap around the necks of people she leaned in close to. It was a strong independent smell, tempered with old knowledge and robust practicality.

Inside her house, small house, two full rooms and a bath, she pressed up against the wall and squeezed her way past the heavy coat rack that was standing in her back hallway. There were atleast a dozen things hung from it, coats but also floor length dresses, heavy blankets, and a few scraps of pelt. Inside the front room of her house a similar build up of personal items stood in corners and doorframes. Half of the couch was piled with scraps, rags, folded blankets and a basket of knitting. She had been keeping busy, though nothing really ever seemed to progress far enough to be moved from that half of the couch. More time on the couch, she thought. In one corner, leaning into the gap between the fridge and the wall, slats of wood and metal. A disassembled loom, a gift from her father, who had salvaged it from an old lady's barn. There were brushes and bundles of plants strung together by the stems and tacked up along the line of moulding — her ceilings were high,

and she was tall. More rosemary, of course, but also basil, soft lemon thyme, sage, grown from her garden or her neighbours`. There were also bundles of wild flowers, things she picked with a guilty conscience because the speckles grabbed her eye. They always faded so fast, withered and wrinkled into a completely different kind of colour — still lovely though, and much more befitting the dim light and tattered couch of her front room. She flicked on a burner as she passed by the kitchenette, setting the heavy iron kettle she had found and insisted on using, even though it took infinitely longer to boil than another kind. She liked to imagine the iron leaching into her tea and fortifying her blood, and connecting her with all the old ladies who infused themselves with the kettles strength before her.

Her room, with the small mattress and the stained duvet, was a picture of bright minimalism compared to her other room. There was a wide window that let in the setting sun at this time of day, when she arrived home after work. The stacks of potted plants on the sill and underneath it shone with a glow just like the one inside her eyelids. She picked up a small piece of chalk from the sill and scratched in a white line on her window frame, one of many. She hadn't been counting them, but they started to build up, and it had become her daily ritual. Satisfying in the same way ex-ing out square of a calendar would be, if she bothered with one. Her day was done. She stripped out of her flour covered clothes and lay down on top of her blankets, goose bumps, underwear, and shift, to wait for the whistle of her kettle. Her day was done. This was her time.

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nov 6 - do 2000 more at least

You arYou are writing now, without being able to see what you've done. This will be your  
form of automatic writing. HE asked you last night, your partner, your love, — what are you  
writing about? Yourself? Of course, you scoffe.d It hadn't really occured to you that there  
was somethiong else to write baout. Everything in your life ois really, honestly, about you.  
And that is alright. Be shameless. You are the only point of reference that you have in this  
world. Everything that has been done to you or around you or by you holds only one things  
in common. The most removed event on the other side of the globe, you perceive through  
your lense only, through absolutely nothing else. Everything is tinged by you. If you close  
your eyes, inside your eyelids, you are all that is left..

So of course you write about yourself. I wil write the stor of my being. How did I get here?  
How did I become this thing that I am at last proud of?

I never slept well as a child.



I want to tell you something happy, something about when you were happy, because you were. I want to tell you, so that you can remember it, forever. What it felt like to be surrounded by people who loved you, working all day, all night, on what loved you. One of the most satisfying things, the way sculpting would take you twelve hours of a day for a week, to work something out of wood, or sheet metal, or wax. Nothing is more satisfying. This you loved. Once, you gathered yourselves up, you holed yourselves up in the basement rooms where you worked with clay. You papered the small windows in the heavy doors that you couldn't bar from the inside, you took turns rotating sentries. You slipped through the dim hallways, down there, in bare feet, soles covered with charcoal and chalk. You had been giving a project, a drawing assignment, you all had to draw lifesize images of bodies. You were young and lithe and beautiful and took challenges way too far. You didn't know what temperance was. So you all stripped down. First just shirts and pants, standing around in bras and underwear. What do we do now? You had cameras, you had volunteers who wanted to be part of the event but not seen. One girl sat aside, head bent over her work, intent on not being left out but aghast at what we were doing. Why was she there? Anyways, she left us all alone. This wasn't going to work. Who was the first one to decide that? You were wearing that one bra that you had, the grey and light pink one, somehow too small and too gaping at once. If you could swoop back into your life, you would

confiscate them all, bring yourself the soft cotton black tops you where now. Don't do this to yourself. Your aren't comfortable in these things. That is what you were wearing. You never loved bras, anyways. It was off and you don't remember who was the first one but then it was all off and you were a nest of bodies, round wamr tummies and skin and legs and breasts. You had ladders and the expensive halogen lights. You took turns twisting around each other and hovering on the edges of bodies, taking pictures of yoruselves, of the way you skins all looked, pressed against each other. You were looking for lines, for bones, for poses. You twisted around with the discernation of your teachers. You aspired to beauty and ugliness. What you ended up with were rolls and rolls of photos of you all. You remember particularly, a fuzzy bright feeling between your ears, being surrounded, absolutely for the first time, by so many beautiful bare unabashed bodies. You were all completely sexless. You understood why some women were so obsessed with the images of bare bodies, linked hands, dancing around bonfires. How many of you actually get to expereince such comraderie between yourselves? You feel blessed. You have been so, so blessed. Your head did spin though, you small baby gay head. You tried not to look too dircetly, to head long, in the moment, you tried not to linger. You were doubly blessed by all of their generosity, and generosity that you participated in as well. As much as you took their bodies in, they took yours. And then, later, when you all were clothed and in class, in the morning, back above ground, too early, but proud, showing your professor — conservative old man but generous, ambitious in art — what you had done, what grand plans you all had, what beauty and what pride. You would display yourselves, naked, shining in ink and charcoal and paint, completely unashamed. One of you was a particular

star, for whatever reason — her eyes, her neck? Her graceful lines. Her limbs lined the halls. You have no idea what her mother much have thought. You still have those photos. You have been so blessed.

There were so many times where you would stop, and take a heavy ragged breath in, and sit with the feeling that you had finally found your place. And you had. The only problem with that was that you didn't realise how dependant on time where your place would be. You didn't want to acknowledge that belonging was a transient experience, that only lasted in any one place for so long. You felt like you would tear out your heart when it came time to leave. You spent days hunched over on tables, clutching your stomach. You spent lifetimes frozen in doorways, trying to tell each and everyone of us how much you loved us, and in which very particular ways.

Once, near the end, you came in on the weekend to work in the print room. Saturdays, that spring, where nearly guaranteed to have a few other industrious souls in the studio. You looked forward to it. You probably planned your arrival to coincide with when they would be there. This particular time, it was just you. The print room was a beautiful, crowded space — square tables filling the room and creating small channels that you had to navigate around with precious chemicals and proofs lifted high over your head for safety. It smelt of so many different things at once. Your professors would run around the space without any safety precautions, sticking their heads into rosin boxes all the while

warning us that it would ruin our lungs and too never ever do it ourselves. Over the semesters that we were working in those studios, your hands became cracked , white and red and bloody beyond almost anyone else's (except hers, except hers — she always outshone you in that room). out of some brutal young masochism you would insist on scrubbing the ink off your hands at the end of a session with the industrial strength cherry scented soap that came in a huge yellow tub and contained what felt like ground glass mixed in. It got the job done, and left the lesions around your knuckles glowing and peeling. You always wanted to be so tough, in such small, insignificant, shallow ways. Look at my hands. There was a hot plate in one corner of the room, and one night, after everyone except the most dedicated few of us (that's not fair — the most martyring and obsessive of us) had left, we turned on plate, made a tray out of the aluminum foil we kept for painting hardgrounds, and cooked up hashbrowns for ourselves in that room. We probably lost a year of life from doing that — but we also got a wonderful secretive thrill, and the most gratifying treat to go with our depanneur sangria. The hallways smelt like oil and potatoes all night. Strange men actually came down our lone wing that night, and into our printing room, and we were mortified dying laughing hiding hoping they wouldn't or would notice what we had done. We were tiny wild creatures with access to way too much. But this one particular weekend. The halls and studios were actually deserted. You had come in to work on your silkscreen — horribly behind. You never really took to the graphic, blocky shapes the way that you thought you should, you were never really happy with what came out. Third rate graphics cast off. The most satisfying thing about the process was pouring the emulsion into its tray, and then pulling it across your screen. Your arms were so strong and

steady and precise, any kind of work like that gave you pleasure just for the sake of baring your arms. The emulsion itself, though, a thick goopy turquoise substance that was extremely light sensitive, precious, wasn't accesible except by the chosen few who had been blessed by both the print gods and the reliability gods. Of course she was one of them, and she was there, in the back , in the small light-free area around the back corner of the room, walled off with heavy black curtains. A secret place that smelled like the particular scent of emulsion, sweet and thick and vinegary. You knew how to apply it, but you let her show you agian, anyways. You were strong, you could do it yourself, and so was she. But she wanted you to help, her hands weren't as steady, or rather, she wasn't as cocky and reckless and uncaring about quality as you were. Always she was exacting and precise, and not flawless but infintely skilled. So you braced the silkscreen frame against your knee, leaned you head down so as not to get in the way of what little light the black curtained nook had. It felt like hiding backstage at a theatre, secret and fun and full of possibilities. She bent her head over, so close to you, focused on the screen, on pulling up slowly and straight, leaving no lines a perfect sheet of emulsion. It wasn't good enough for her. She scraped it away, itself a process, and pulled up the emlusion again. The angle of the emulsion tray held against the screen makes a world of difference. It's the precise details that someone who never touches these crafts will have no idea of. It's the most rewarding thing about it. She was done, she was talking, she was so close to your face in that dark corner of that empty room in that deserted wing taht saturday at school. you don't now you never did know what she was sayign to you. The fact of her so close, so quiet, so private of a place. You felt like you were snapping with tiny lighting. Kiss her. Kiss her. You wanted

nothing more than that. You had loved her for two years. Your knee stayed rooted to the spot, bracing against the silkscreen. Where was your hand it seems impossible that you had any hands what would you have done with them at that moment? She was talking so quietly. You couldn't look directly at her. You found her too perfect, and it hurt. You were so close that your foreheads could have touched. Your hair could have brushed against each others. Maybe it did. You don't remember. All you remember is the physical sensation of all your synapses bolting you in place, of all your muscles frozen with a current of want and anticipation, a resolute no welling up against your horrible want to kiss her stupid dumb beautiful mouth. Had you ever kissed a girl, at that point? You don't remember. Maybe, maybe not. But you had never wanted to kiss anyone so badly before in your life. You didn't do it. You stayed like that for a little while longer, talking together, so close, so quiet, halted silences where neither of you moved, but neither of you let go of the tension in your necks. Eventually she pulled away, shelved her silkscreen to dry, had to keep moving, always meticulously busy. You were a hard worker too, but in comparison you spent half your days lolling around on tables just close enough to be in her range of sight. You didn't kiss her. You couldn't kiss her. It would be another perhaps few months before you ever did.

6 500

nov 7

You are afraid of how much you love tiny, small animals. Once, someone told you a story of how, when they were a child, they had been given a baby chick, and squeezed it so hard that it died. This is how you feel with all life that is smaller than you, that can fit in your hands. Sometimes you squeeze flowers really, really hard in your fist, lemons, trying to pull out all the good juices. You are so big such a big such big doge wow is how you feel wow. Giant. Giant hands. Giant body. Bigger than ants, he says. Yes, just like that, you say. Why does he actually understand everything you say.

Bigger than ants. It's such a surreal feeling. Almost everything is bigger than ants. We must all be walkign around in a hazy daze. Bigger than ants.

You made new friends this summer, they are all smaller than you. They are younger than you, and older. When they hug you, they all fit right up above your breast and beneath your collarbone. You feel like a mother hen, even though they have so much more of their lives under control. The best way you can help them is by manhandling jerks on the street, by puffing up and staring down and cutting yoru teeth on jerks. You are,, after all, huge. In truth, you are on the shorter side of tall, you are thin, you aren't that strong. You have a short person complex, because everyone in yoru family towers over you, even your younger sister. But you hold your back straight and your chin up, cocky and insufferable, when you want to. You are capable of such a swagger to rival the teenage boys, except that you know you've earned it. You where heels, to give you an extra boost, when intimidation

tactics are needed. They are thick, heavy, tall, they have spikes, they are weapons. You can run in heels, you discovered, once. You will a man's throat out for these new friends. In exchange, they flock around you, bury themselves under your wings, even though they don't need mothering. Yopu understand, though, the comfort of feeling small — something you don't get often. They ease around you, so different but so blessedly accepting. They take your mixed up non-a-thing gender status and your unconventional pronouns without batting an eyelash, they stick to them enforce them remind others. You are so grateful. You have such similar feelings on things that you come from polar spectrums on. You want to soak them up and learn — draping them with your spikey angry gay punk wings is your way of connecting with them, learning how to get your shit together to be sassy to talk back without having anyone realize you're spitting on them. And also, you suspect, your tough interior is all in your head. Sometimes you are not sure. People are afraid of you? People think you are a giant cute cinnamon roll with a tiny voice? You have no idea how people perceive you. You would like to extract yourself from your body, and stalk yourself, observe yourself, and find out how you hold your head when you think noone is looking. The angle of your chin, the way you hold your mouth open (do you?), but also the degree to which you turn heads when you;'re walking down the street, because you know you do. You know you have a power, a sway, but you have no concept of it's nature, of it's strength, of the gaps in your impression's wall. Because of this , you still doubt yourself. Is this the type of person who is impermeable to you? Why do all these others, these strange regular men, fall over themselves? What is it? Will it last? Please, please, you would like to know. But you do not need to. Because you already do, in many ways. You are strong and beautiful and even



though you have crooked teeth and a shaved head and look at the ground as you walk, you exude something confident. Amazing. You are amazing. You love you. I love you. You love yourself. Never let that go.

7200

You just spent the whole evening looking at one-bedroom apartments on the internet. You have a beautiful, affordable house. You just don't know how to communicate with people. You don't know how to set boundaries against other people. You don't know how to not mother people, how to not get riled up by dirty dishes, but you also don't know how to ask for someone to clean their dirty dishes. You want to peel away all dependencies, you want to be free of anyone else. You want to offer up your sanity and your blood and all your energy and most importantly all your money, too be free. Your rent was a week late this month, because your room mate didn't think that it was important? Didn't take the initiative? Whatever the reason, you need to set clearer space goals.

All you want is a beautiful small house with a beautiful small garden. You want to be near your friends and you want to be near your family and you want to be near your bloody work. You don't make enough at work. If you were still working that forty hour a week workshop job that made you want to kill yourself that made your bones feel like dust your eyes feel like lead your life feel pointless — then you could afford it. but would you be able

to enjoy it? And would you have the creature comforts that you have here? Would you have beautiful hardwood floors and crown moulding and a huge room? Would you have a balcony? Would you have an amazing lovely understanding unpressuring super-intendant?

You can hear your room mate outside your door, eating. You need to invest in a good pair of sound cancelling headphones. This is ridiculous. You are so sensitive. You hate the clinking of spoons on bowls on ceramic on teeth on bone it makes you want to rip out your hair and rip out their eyes. It is a blind horrible knee-jerk reation that makes you feel so ashamed of yourself. You don't ever want anyone to feel bad about the way they eat, or the fact thta thye are eating around you, at all — but you can't help but hate the way some people eat you want to grab their wrists tell them to slow down tell them to breath stop breathing chew stop chewing for god's sake why don't they just do it like you. Your whole demeanor has been crafted around avoidign these triggers. You eat slow you eat deliberately you put the spoon gently in your mouth you do not slurp for fuck's sake do not slurp. Why do you have to bang your utensils so loudly against your bowl, anyways? Who the fuck are you trying to kill? Your food is dead! Your food is not going anywhere! Stop! Stop please for fucks sake stop!

There are particular people in my life who instantly make me want to coil back and smack them when they eat around me and I feel absolutely horrible about this but it's true. I broke up with her — heres a turn of events — when I broke up with her, her who I was so madly in love with for how many years? When I broke up with her I could no longer stand the fact of being in a room with her while she ate. I would sit next to her at her dining room table,

every muscle in my body rigid with anger. I can hear spoons clanking on bowls right now as I type. I hate it I hate it why do I have so many neuroses? That is what this is, isn't it? This isn't a natural reaction to a sound this isn't annoyance this is death.

It makes a huge difference how I am feeling when these things are going on. If I am tense (I am so tense I am so so so tense right now) ..... but I do not want to dwell. I do not want to dwell but I can't fucking stop dwelling anyways and it kills me. It is killing me. This horrible feeling of stress and anger is killing me inside and I need to CHILL the FUCK OUT. CHRIST. I NEED TO STOP.

I talk so long about how much I am ~fine I am not angry everything is ok but then I go around and hold so much against people, but how are they supposed to know I am upset if I don't tell them? But at the same time I feel like if I switch gears now, they will be thrown off? Like, Hope used to be chill and now they're freaking out about all the tiniest dishes? Why? but honestly I was never fine with it I hate it I hate how much I hate everything I have so much resentment in my heart I have so much resentment for the world and I don't know how to get rid of it without confronting people about stuff that happened so long ago. . . I feel so bad for asking people to not take advantage of me? But I also feel so bad because I feel like I'm exaggerating and martyring myself? but I have the credit card bills to prove it so I know I'm not.

What are things you need to change about yourself? You need to stop holding so much resentment in your heart. You need to stop pretending things aren't bothering you

when they are. You need to stop assuming that people can read your minds, and know when you are upset with them. You need to stop lying about what is ok and what you are comfortable with. You need to stop using people's impression of you as a nice person as validation. It's ok if you need to be stern firm if you need to do things tht are perceived as mean this is ok you need to take care of yourself first and foremost, You are number one. You need to be surrounded by things that are growing you need to be facing the sunshine. you can never go back and live at your parent's house, you are too much of your own person. That is their space. You have your own. They have theirs. It is sad, in a way, that you no longer will ever have that fall back but at the same time, you know thta it is for the best. You have grown up you have grown into a beautiful self-sufficient soul. You know that. You are proud of yourself. They are proud of you. All you need now is a garden.

All you want is a tiny cottage. A tiny one room cottage with a big space out back to grow vegetables and herbs. You can work from home, you will have good strong internet and you will be a freelancer a designer a programmer. You will be your own person you will be so intelligent so independant so versatile. You can do anything be anything. Maybe you should get a car. A few months ago your heart turned over and all of a sudden you desired the ability to run away. You need to know that you can. All your furniture weighs down your heart. You look at your ikea shelf — it is exactly what you wanted. It is sparse, it is pine, it is as unassuming and as uninvasive as a storage unit can be — but you still feel it's oppressive weight. You have drawers — you never wanted drawers. How did you end up with drawers? You have a beautiful storage trunk, this thing you do cherish — you were given it by Ceit, who got it from the trash. You would never have guessed. You always

wanted such a chest — even though it is extremely heavy and cumbersome, in your mind it represents freedom — all your belongings should fit into this box. If you can pack all your stuff away into it, somehow you will be free. You don't think you can. You are not living the dream, not yet.

And then there is the matter of your cat, the small living baby thing who is the most dependant on you, out of anything in the world. She is your child, your baby. She is what you live for, in a way. She needs you — no one else in the world needs you like she needs you. If only she could help you pay rent.

8600 goal 12000 nov9

I am trying to rip myself up right now. Rip myself up through sheer will power. I have a pad of paper next to me, I was furiously jotting down a schedule on my way home tonight. I have two options. Either I can fall into decay, I can let myself rot, I can roll over and give up, or I can fight tooth and nail to stay afloat, to stay successful. I am falling prey to the hustler mentality, that everything you succeed at in life is due to your efforts. I know this isn't true. I know that if I can't complete something, if I can't complete what I committed to, if I can't succeed at what I said I'd succeed at — that that doesn't actually make me a failure. but somehow, it still feels like it. So I shackle myself in, the most rigorous of expectations. I have over 6 hours of work micro-managed, next to me, right down to five

minute breaks for tea and snacks. At least there's that — at least i know thta there is no way thta this would be sustainable if I didn't schedule myself in some time to unwind, to relax. I can stay away from facebook for an hour if I know I'm going to get gratified a little bit later, and feel all the more productive and smug for it. but is this really healthy/ Can I really do this, should I really do thi? Is this honestly what I need to do to stay on top of my shit? I feel like a mother packing a weeks worth of lunches ahead of time for my sad, hopeless child. How can I be expected to succeed when I fall into every single pitfall on the way? Every distraction? Though honestly, I am proving myself wrong right now. I am wporkign I am writing I coded a whole tiny concept demo of morse code in not even forty five minutes, before this. I may not be able to get this all done but God fucking dang am IP going to try, and i am going to feel good about it.

This feels very much like I am trying to trick myself into hypomania. Really, it's more like I am trygin to just channel the attitude and energy of my hypomanic phases, without actually triggering it. I know, in the back of my mind, that that really isn't helpful, even though when I am going through such a phases I feel like I cna kick in the teeth of the world and get everything I ever dreamed of accomplished. These days, I am aiming for much lowler stakes. I am surrounding myself with small, mundane goals, accomplishable — goals that won't send my life spiraling into a firey pit two months after they have been acheived — but I am trying to tackle them with the small part of my brain that loves the feeling that hypomania brings. it's so nice to feel invincible. It's so nice to feel like — to not feel like you

have been sucked dry of your life essence. To feel like life essence! To feel young and unstoppable! To know, truly know, that you are smart and capable and then on top of that, to have the herculean strength to put yourself out there, to talk to people, to bring your work where it needs to be seen, to elbow into the spaces that you previously only wished you could be part of — hypomania is definitely an unfair advantage for the bipolar type two sufferer. Do I even suffer? Can that even be said to be suffering, at all? My bank account does say yes. My sexual safety does say yes. The handful of drivers who almost killed me when I was bounding around in the street say, yes, definitely, yes. Hypomania, double edged sword.

You remember once, a few years ago — you had just come out of a deep depression. It was the spring that you broke up with her — in fact, it must have been only a few weeks ago at most. Even in this short span of time, you now don't remember whether you broke up with her while you were still in the grips of depression, or if you did once you resurfaced. Either way, she is not (hard to believe) the focus of this memory. So you had resurfaced. You had been taking your anti-depressants coupled with anti-psychotics for a little while now, since February of that year, probably. You could feel things again, edges weren't so blunt, feelings weren't so dull, colours were brighter (yes, I swear, colours were brighter). One of the things you had been struggling with that winter was your job as co-facilitator of the fine arts student association's general meetings. You would sit up there in front of a room of your peers and try to regulate the conversation, stop people when they

spoke out of turn or disrespectfully. It was perhaps one of the first jobs you had, in a position of power. it didn't suit you. You were so uncomfortable in this position, so stressed out about the responsibility you had to the assembly, so struck dumn by all the faces looking at you every week. Your palms would start to sweat before you even started the meeting. Your voice would shake your face would burn you would run from the room as soon as it was over. But worst of all, your night terrors returned. At the time, you didn't realise that you had ever had them before — that realization would come much later. You only knew that you had never experienced anything so terrifying in your life. This was just one of the things that plagued you that winter.

So roll over now, to the spring, as you resurface, as your bright colors roll up your legs in thigh high stockings and velvet dresses. it is your last meeting. You sit in front of the assembly, and you can actually breathe. A cute boy you have been pining after is sprawled in a corner, where you can see each other. You hold your back straight, you keep your legs crossed in front of you. Your voice is steady, and your legs do not shake. You accept pizza and wine gracefully — you drink small amounts, not too much (or did you? you may have.) You win something at the raffle! It is a beautiful pen. The cute boy asks you to write something for him, in the notebook that he won. You draw a unicorn. You do not write him a small note saying that he is a babe (you almost did, you almost did!) You follow the group to a nearby bar, you walk with them, inside them, talking with people you know, and don't know. Suddenly the stress of the whole job, the year long ordeal, seems trivial. You are so relieved, so relieved, to never have to do that again. You share your drink tickets with the boy, you sit in a corner, he tells you about his dreams of making soap and hiding in a forest.



At the time, you were enchanted. Your face glowed with admiration, but you did not feel shy. You felt fine. Your beer bolstered you, but you didn't even need it. You had already surfaced, you were floating, floating, floating. He left, and you chose, you dared, to stay. You pulled your chair up to a group of people who were always at the meetings, but had never talked to before. You didn't know who they were, but of course, they knew who you were. You were the mood-watcher, you were that girl they had nothign better to d;o than stare at all meeting, apparently. You had caught their fancy. One would go on to tell you, later, as you were walkign the streets with them, that he couldn;t do anythign but stare at your legs — thighhighs, short velvet dress, pale skin crossed — the whole meeting. You remember that — being told that — feeling something bubble up in your throat. An acknowledgement of power, your power, your sway.

10,000

The whole experience of hypomania is one of power, of finding out how powerful you are, of being able to finally harness what you always supected you had. Are you being strange, are you over sexualizing yourself? Were you? Are you still? You don't think so. You are strong, you are powerful, and your sexuality is just one type of many that you hold. So don't worry, don't blush, don't feel ashamed of your younger self. You were loving it. You are loving it. You have things to work out, kinks, real kinks, not kinky kinks — shit you need to deal with. But that first onset of hypomania, maybe triggered by spring, anti-psychotics, anti-depressants, your breakup, simple brain chemistry, or a combination of any and all of

those things, that first onset was when you really came into your own with regard to the power and sway you hold. You went right up to those people and joined them and used your voice and your face and your smile. You found them extra drink tickets, you pulled your weight as a facilitator, a person of power. In retrospect, you dazzled. You sparkled. You drank, and lit up from the inside out. The boy was interested in the marker you got — oil, paint marker. You were talking about lipstick. You said he would look great with black lipstick. You said he should let you paint his lips with what you had there, your oil marker. The worst, the most stupid, the most dumb. In retrospect, the safety guard in you (that's a lie you don't have one, the kelly voice in you) screams all the no's in the world, but you are drunk and he is under your sway. You paint his mouth black. You parade him around the bar. How cute he is. How attentive to you. They are going out, going dancing, they think you are so fucking fun, they want you to come along. Everyone else has gone home, you have stayed with the best of them. Of course you go, of course you go. You rage and sparkle the long walk there, you make friends with his friends, you instantly click with everyone around you. It is spring, it is beautiful. You run ahead with his friend, a tiny girl, a dancer, you fall back with another, you talk heads close as you walk, you run back, around him. He waits for you, watches you — you have the feeling that he is watching something wild, something that he is not sure is going to stay, something that might flee. That is how you feel, exactly how you feel. You are a moth, a squirrel, a fox, you dart in and out of lives, now. You have transformed. Hypomania has transformed you. You are no longer you. You no longer recognize yourself. You are also watching a wild thing, from outside your body, you

have no idea what you are going to do and you know that you aren't going to think about it at all before you do it. There is no way for you to catch yourself. You are gone.

He asks you what you want, you want a double shot of whiskey. Who are you? You measure up your effect on him, always, constantly. The wild creature you are has become calculating. he is impressed. You are impressed with yourself. He brings you whiskey cut with gingerale. You don't complain, but you cut your eyes at him. You are invincible, doesn't he know? Doesn't he know.

that may have been the first night you really danced, really found out how much you love to dance, full bodied, not trying to temper your limbs, reign in your desire to be sexy. You always want to, you always push it down. It comes out only every once in a while, in the tilt of your hip as you stand, waiting for the elevator. But now you have been floating, floating, all night. You are flying. You are drunk on chemicals in your brain, serotonin, you can't temper it. You are drunk. You are impossibly, excruciatingly, happy. Kissing is electrifying — you never knew it could be. It never was, with her — not in that same way. Not in the way where you feel like you have complete agency over yourself and your reactions, the way you feel like you have everything under your wings and you are tearing into a kill. This is a new feeling. You soar. You cut eyes, you pull him back, you beckon. You have never in your twenty something years ever beckoned with your eyes before. Impossible.

You have no patience for the timidity in his step when he invites you back to his house. Where else would you be going? Why do you even have to ask? Here is where the dangers start to surface. You have been so lucky, your whole life. You have dodged every

bullet, bullet haven't even been shot at you when you stood around on the street corner with a target painted on your chest. Of course he should be timid, of course he should ask, but you had no time, no mind for that. You wished he wouldn't you wished you could speed up time. You wanted to be there now, you wanted to fuck him now. A few hours ago you were sitting in front of the fine arts assembly, talking about decorum and quorum — remember this. Remember where you came from, in this trajectory. Do not get caught up. You have hindsight now. You know now, that this was not healthy, or normal, or safe or ok — but at the time you felt like a queen.

You thought this was bad enough? It's not winding down yet. We walk to the bus stop, you swinging wildly on his arm. You kick at everything within your reach. You cackle. Your boots are miles high. You kicked a box down the street towards another guy, just as the bus was pulling up. What did he say to you? Whatever he did, you threw it back in his face, with a shit-eating grin. He starts talking with you and your first guy. You are pressed up against them in the crowded night bus. You aren't tired, but you lean back against him, against new guy #2. He is getting off, he says you should come back with him. You grin — this is what you are alive for! You nod at guy #1, he asks you if you are sure. But you are contagious, he catches the light in your eyes, and you run off the bus after guy #2. He ushers you both into his room, feeds you both whiskey and cigarettes, you smoke in his room, you climb over both of them. Guy #1, you don't remember what he was doing. You leave black and blue marks on guy #2. You are into him, but he isn't into your guy #1. He dresses you both in his clothes, he sends you home with nice shit. You don't fuck him, yet. Guy #1 offers to leave you, but you say no, no, I came here with you, I'm leaving with you

— you are attached, your flame is for him, first of all. #2 can wait. You remember him as being softly touched, you are dazed by your benevolence. He tucks you into a taxi — you are incredibly drunk by now. Another bullet dodged, though you will go back later. You spend that whole spring in a haze of pushing-you-luck decisions. You go home with him.

11 280 almost at 1200!!!!

You went home with him. When you left him in the morning, splitting on the metro, he looked at you like you were an angel, and asked if her would ever get to see you again. You had never elicited such a response from anyone before. You said he would. You walked away through the tunnels of the jean-talon metro station. Glancing up, passing an archway, you see each other again, walking parallel. He comes back to you, confesses that he was looking for the busker who was playing lovely lilting acoustic melody. He wanted to give them some change, because he felt like he was in a movie. You smile. You shake your head in disbelief, and you leave him.

That was the very first few days. That was the height of your power. You saw that particular guy again, maybe twice, on purpose, but it was never the same. You lost some of your brilliance, some of your invincibility — the strain of, the upkeep of, hypomania, was wearing on you. Cracks were starting to show. You didn't glow as bright. You were getting ready to plummet back under the surface that you had been floating above. You floated back

down to the surface for a while, a place that you would have been happy to rest at, a place that one winter ago you never thought you would ever reach again. But another downfall of hypomania is that that perfect, mild, tempered floating, right on the surface, feels dull and slow and heavy in comparison to everything you just ripped through. You are no longer satisfied. And Once you are no longer able to sustain hypomania, the disappointment with yourself helps to drive you back into depression. These days, you have been floating, floating, floating, for a while now. You have managed to even yourself out, for now. You micro-manage, you do your dishes with a startling regularity. You put all of your anger into scrubbing your stove clean. You wake up at the same time everyday — you are forced to, but you are also glad. Your work regulates you, tires you out, and also confines you to a bus for up to two hours a day. Public transit for you is forced stillness, forced quiet time, forced reflection, meditation, hopefully silence. You didn't realize how much you came to cherish this ritual of sitting, quietly, in yourself, until your trips are interrupted by someone particularly loud, or someone who will not respect that you don't want to talk. You have come to lap up that quiet ride. You are not lonely. You are with yourself. You are floating, floating, floating, from the center of the city out to its edges and then back in again, slightly greyer, slightly more limp, ready for sleep. You see your partner with a pleasing regularity, one long sleep and day a week, sometimes a small night visit to go with that. He smooths you out, he smooths you out. He rubs your back free of kinks, he holds you against him while you rage about money (he knows them too, you should stop complaining to him, stop dumping on him). He is a huge support. You don't know how you would be without him. You also don't know how or where or who you would be without your cat, without a small

loving affectionfilled being who relies on your reliability for life. A reason, above all, to get up in the morning. You feed her with a regularity that nothign else in your life has. Nothing else is given, except that you will feed her in the morning. More guaranteed than coffee. Small rituals of life-giving. You pass it on, pass it on. You are floating, you are stable. You dip and dive and crest, but you remain floating. You have not been hypomaniac for a while. You have skimmed depression and come back up. You have asked for help when you needed it, you have mended the tears that your wrought when you were deep inside yourself. You have nothing to fear, nothing to fear. You are powerful and you will be fine.

One thing I don't ever want you to forget is the way you lied to your psychiatrist — the reasons why, and what came of it. You must never do such a thing again. You must always speak up for yourself when it matters in these ways. I know you can, I know you will. I know that by the time you read this again, you will smile, and nod, and say, yes, you did, I did. I am glad.

You had come back to her, that spring, that summer, splitting at the seams. You knew something was different, you had strong suspicions, you had heard seen the words bipolar, hypomania, flitting by the corners of yoru eyes, online, as you searched for reasons, when you were depressed, when you were trying to get your courage up through self-diagnosis, when you were trying not to kill yourself. It was a concept you were vaguely familiar with, it was something you carried around, a creeping vine in your pocket. You brought it up. You were happy. So happy. Almost, too happy. But you said this with a

controlled voice, you slowed your racing pulse, your desire to let words drop stacatto from your mouth and bounce around the room. This is what you had been doing, and you knew that it could be a symptom. You didn't want to influence her diagnosis — you didn't want her to see how you really were. You put the idea out there, but then you hid anything she would need to make an accurate judgement. You saw this happening. She seemed skeptical. She thought you seemed in control of yourself. You smiled. You were fine. That was all you wanted to know. She told you to keep an eye on your state, though — she told you to watch out for signs. The signs were impulsive, excessive, uncharacteristic spending, and impulsive and especially unsafe uncharacteristic promiscuity.

At the time she warned you of this, you were on your way through your entire life's savings. You would end up spending seven thousand dollars in three months, while you were still living under your parent's roof. That was seven thousand, none of which went to any sort of rent, or bill. You burned through money, you must have literally burned your moeny. You drank it you smoked it you drove around town in taxis you put everyone else in taxis you sent them home you went home with them you got them drunk you got into their beds you sponsered the continuation of how much addiction? You went from a monogamous lesbian to a predatory she-wolf, you racked up dicks like trophies you carved the head count into your cunt you did all of these things that she warned you of you were an unrecognizable human, to the people who followed you around at night. You kept her up with worry, you don't even know how many nights, those three months. She thought you were going to die, immolate, catch something contagious and quick spreading and killing. Aids aids aids she thought. You laughed in her face, laughed at her worry, took the concern



from her heart and ground it under your heel. You didn't realize how much you were hurting her. You didn't realize how much you were hurting yourself.

In the psychiatrist's office, you bit your tongue, you nodded, you promised you would tell her if any of those behaviours cropped up. You didn't mention that they were already full sway. She had decided you were fine, you didn't want to tell her anything that would make her reconsider. Why would you risk your status as fine? You still see her, to this day — she wrote up your newest prescription just last week. But still she doesn't know. How could you tell her now, when you are floating and fine and everything seems warped by the prism of a mediocre, quiet, focused life? How can you be sure you aren't exaggerating? How can you be sure your memory doesn't lie?

That is (one of the reasons) why I write.

12600 goal 15000

Your heart is filled up today, absolutely filled up. You feel so grateful for the people around you. They are so generous, so patient. They are so sensitive to your particular needs, your peculiarities, they nod and sweep you up in the arms they overwhelm you with consideration. They want to fight people for you they want to defend you, the same people you feel like a mother hen over. They say they want to be more like you you bite your tongue you should be more like them — you feel, though, that that is a good indicator, telltale signs of symbiosis. mutual respect. you tell each other you can yell at each other, that's all you really want. to be able to talk to people straight on, with respect and frankness, and to have people do the same towards you. You are so, so bad at this. You have

been waiting how many days for the perfect time to text your room-mate and ask them to clean the dishes, clean all the pans you've left in your sink. You constantly circle around and around, the same obsessions, the same small triggers that leave you ruffled, upset. You hunkered down in your big arm chair last night, before they could get there — an act of aggression, of possession, and why not? it is your chair, they can get their own chair. You hiss and spit like an angry cat when your mother suggests that you share your food with them — doesn't she know, doesn't she know what you've suffered through for other people? Your teenage melodrama flares up in a way it hasn't in so long. What is it about mothers that always seem to draw that poison back up to the surface of a wound? Don't ever dare suggest that you share your food, ever again. You are afraid that your recent interactions with people, at your adventures in roommate ness and cohabitation, are turning you vicious and bitter and unsympathetic to anyone or anything that doesn't have your best interest at heart. You should never live with friends. All you want is for everyone to do their dishes, wipe down the counter once in a while, is that really so hard to ask?

You have been micro-managing your life, these past few days. You remember hours of staring at a screen, unsure of what you should do next, but you remember it the same way you remember winter, during the heat of the summer. You have tapped into a loophole in your life — you have become invincible, in a tiny, tiny way. You have taken, recently, to thinking of yourself as a tiny martha stewart. if you just manage your days in small bite sized chunks of work, you can successfully dodge burn out and exhaustion while wringing

out every last drop of productivity from your bones. Suck yourself dry without even noticing it. Though, you are beginning to suspect, that the more you work the more filled up with pulp and creativity you become. The more you write, in particular, the more you feel like you are brimming over with words, with memories, with things you haven't thought about in ages, with insight you would never have believed was your own. You could do this forever — you might do this forever. Why did you ever stop? you remember the ache in your wrist, the unbearable lag of your physical body straining to catch up with your racing brain. That's why you stopped. You used to write by hand — how could anyone ever write by hand? Ooh, the unbearable idea of every lifestyle prior to this one. How did anyone empty out their hearts and their brains? maybe they spoke, sang, put their hearts into songs and let words babble out of their mouths instead of trying to pin them down onto paper. Futile, futile. I am a cyborg, I could never have gotten in touch with myself, with my feelings, in this way, if it weren't for the speed of my typing. I would never be brave enough to commit this to song. I am no bird.

two days ago, your friend messaged you to tell you that he was coming out as trans. initially, he thought that he would use gender-neutral pronouns, and identify as non-binary, but since then he has decided that his identity is male. you were lying in bed with your partner when you got the messages. You had just finished crying over children's cartoons and credit card bills and you were already on a roll. big salty tears rolled down your face and into your mouth and your ears. you didn't make a move to wipe them away, and

neither did he. it was too much, too much — too much feeling for one day. You don't actually mean that in any negative way — it was probably the happiest thing that you heard all day — your friends, he was honouring his truth, he was braving the world, putting himself out there, paving the way. You felt, you still feel, like he is, in some ways, honouring your own truth — you feel that way whenever you meet someone who is openly trans, who makes no apologies for the way they are. You do not live like that — you do not want to say you can't live like that, though you honestly do not know if you could. But you live in silence and secrecy, you only tell those who love you deeply, who have shown through trial by fire that they are no transphobes or trans-exclusionary shit stains, or binarist jerks who think non-binary trans people are ruining binary trans folks chances at acceptance. There are so many assholes in the world and you absolutely do not care to cater to them, to give them any more of yourself than you absolutely need to. You never correct anyone on your pronouns, you never ask that others do that for you. You hold your truth inside you, very secret. Your friend, he did not. He spread the word, he asked you to do the same. He shines in his truth. He is beautiful, and you are so, so proud.

A friend asked you, today, how you felt about her correcting other people when they used she/her pronouns when talking about you. You felt like you would split open. You saved face. How can these people exist, these good generous sensitive people? You are constantly surprised at any act of generosity. You can not believe, you can not believe. How do these people exist?

You remember being very young, and hiding in closets nooks tiny places. You wonder, now, why the attracted you. You would take an ikea catalogue and a canadian tire magazine, and circle one of every type of thing that you wanted. You would plan your nests, right down to the particular type of inflatable swimming pool in your backyard, which ornamental garden ornaments. You do not know, now, why that appealed to you. You no longer have the same generic nestign impulses — they have been warped, you wish for particulars, not catalogue scenes. But you do still connect with the need to hide, in small places, to take comfort in enclosures that hold you, in the dark, where no one knows you are. Where you can draw your knees up under your chin and throw a blanket over your head and be silent, be inside your self, The most private place you ever really knew. There is a love of self-sufficiency that lies behind this desire to extract yourself, you think. You imagine you are the only person in the world. One thing that had an intense pull for you, as a child, was a character from Card Captor Sakura — the time card, which would freeze time for everyone except Sakura. She could go around, undisturbed — obviously, this wasn't what she did, but I remember, vividly, day dreaming for ages after I watched that episode, what that would be like — especialy to be able to harness that power, at your fingertips. To be able to opt out of the world at any time. You do recognise now the escapism in this attitude, the unhealthy, the impulse to shut yourself away. You have spent hours and hours and an infinite lifetime online, thinking about your desire to escape. You still don't know exactly what you are escaping from, but you don't really think that that's even the point. You could be in the perfect place in the world for you and you would still feel this impulse,

to stop time, to extract yourself, to fit yourself into a tiny corner where no one knows you are there.

14000

You don't know what you are going to do with this, once you are done — once you've written fifty thousand words, fifty thousand whole bloody words. You started off thinking you might write a fictional tale, and then thinking that you might veil your experiences as a fictional tale, but in the end, you are only interested in writing as catharsis, as witness, as remembrance. Thing thing you say you are the most afraid of in the world, and you think you are right on this, is forgetting. Having no ability to dip back into your past and dwell, being forced to live in the moment only the moment forever and ever, until your moment shrinks to only a few minutes at a time. What is the point of loving anyone, if you can't ever reflect on the good times that you had with them, when, invariably, they are done, over, gone? You only ever experience anything instantly, once. Everything else, every reflection every feeling, requires some sort of pull upon your memories. Of course, there's a difference between long term and short term memory, and it is long term memory that I cherish the most. The feeling when you open your mouth to say something and find that that spot in your brain is empty, even though you can feel the warmth of whatever was living there until just a moment ago. The feeling that you're going crazy. The feeling that you can't trust your mind, in any way. The feeling that anytime you try to rely on your brain, it could fail you. You have trust issues. You don't trust your brain, your memory, you don't

trust Canada Post, you don't trust your roommates you don't trust your boss the busdriver the cute girl who smiles at you the people who invited you to parties the people you fuck you don't trust any of them. You trust your partner, at least. You think. Yes, you trust him. Out of all the people you know, maybe you trust him the most. That is not why you left him, that time. You never stopped trusting him.

That's a lie.

when you stayed out all night, drinking with your friends, those strange strangers you didn't want to love, that boy you didn't want to want to hold in your hands, when you didn't tell him you weren't going home, when you didn't tell him not to wait for you. You spent the night in a whirlwind, you spent the night on the edge of hysterics. Separation anxiety, or the need to be loved by everyone and the knowledge that this is your last chance, your last chance at something you know you shouldn't even want. You spent the night drinking and trying to convince yourself you didn't like these people, and then drinking and trying to convince yourself you did. You were able to hold both, in suspended animation. You cried and laughed and slapped backs and said goodbyes once twice three times, and then slipped away, finally, or, well, they slipped away from you. You always try to hold on for as long as you possibly can. They slipped away from you and you slipped back home to bed. The next day you messaged him, apologizing, meek, ashamed for yourself, but did not expect what you got in return. Accusations, the implication that you needed to exercise self-restraint, that your drinking was something that you just needed to muscle through and control, that your impulsivity and frankly addictive nature was

something that you had to account for, a thing that was your failure if you could not control. The implication that you should not put yourself in situations that would make you emotionally volatile, as if your entire life was onto a tight-rope walk along a hot blade edge, hypomania and depression one to each side. You are not ok, you are not ok, you are literally, actually, physically sick. You were sick, sick to death, with the things that he said to you. You spent nights crying, you spent days distanced. You did not know how to trust him, during that time, it is true, it was a lie. You do not know if you had ever been so blatantly caught off guard by someone's response, before. He knew he knew he knew everything about you, knew your bipolarism, knew your tendency towards addiction, towards substance-abuse as a coping mechanism, and still he had the audacity to throw that in your face. You know now what you didn't know then, know that he was scared, that he was hurt, that none of that is an excuse or a reason for his behaviour but that it is enough to let you forgive him, because you love him. You know, you know, how much he knows he was wrong, you cut him down as soon as the words ever came out of his mouth, you recoiled the way you should have under so many other tongues, but never did. You took care of yourself, maybe because this mattered so much more, this relationship, than others. You lay down your rule, you told him never to fucking speak to you like that ever the fuck again. And you are good, you are fine — and no, you know as you say that that it is not a lie. You figured out, somehow, over time, probably only because of time, how to trust him again.



This has become a journaling, an as it happens journaling. This is no novel, no novel, but that is ok. You feel like this is important, very important. You are doing your life's work one of them, at You are writing, writing. You were remembering your partner, as if he was no longer with you. You will continue remembering him, you will remember him as he was last night. November tenth, two thousand fifteen. You were 23, a month away from twenty four. You were finishing your last and unessaecary semester of your bachelors. You had broken up with him, and gotten back together — you had been together now for a year and a month. You say all this now for posterity, because you really are writing for yourself, when you are older.

The thought occured jiuust now to you that you might die before you get to look back on this, before you get to read this small novel of feeligns, again. This will give you a reason to live.

But you were remembering your partner, in that small, very specific point in your life when you were almost 24 and he was 27 (27? you think. so. You may be wrong. You are preoccupied with yourself, you can not remember anyone else's age). He came over last night, came to you house. He had asked you , earlier that day, if he could see you. If you wanted to see him. If you wanted to fuck, you said yes, yes, emphatically, yes, you were working hard all day but you would see him at night. When he came over, though, he was surrounded by a small rain cloud, a dense fog that halted his words and made his hands hover, awkwardly, around his mug. he buried his face in his tea. He stood in the middle of

your kitchen and your heart ached with the second hand embarrassment of his stance, of his body language, of the discomfort that seeped through him. You wanted to help, but you also did not want to touch him. You know that mental illness is not contagious, but you do feel like energy is. You are your number one preoccupation, and you felt bright, alert. You watched him from where you leaned against your counter, probably infuriatingly aloof. You felt like a small bird, hopping back and forth, tilting your head and peeping, observing, with glimmering eyes, trying to ascertain whether a certain something was tasty, or even safe. You felt like a doctor. You wanted to psychoanalyse him, sit him down and pick him apart with the opportunity that your uncharacteristically clear headspace would afford. But you didn't. You listened to him, you stared at him. You did not respond to what was clearly a plea for reassurance. You tell yourself, after the fact, that you can not do that emotional labour for anyone else, that you can't love someone until they know how to love themselves, that you can't be a source of reassurance, for anyone. But why do you feel that way? Why do you feel like you only have a tiny well of love and strength that is disposable in you, that you must save it all, drink every drop for yourself? You know if you do this that it will seep out of your pores and wipe off onto all the people you love, you know that this isn't a complete act of selfishness, that is you are confident in your love for yourself you will be able to love everyone else all the better. But what he was asking for, (you think you think you really honestly do not know) was for you to dip directly into that well, that you have, deep inside you, for you are a bastion of self-assurance, you are a bastion of self-love. He was asking for you to drop some of that elixir of life directly into his mouth, to parcel it out to him, to send it off and seal it with a kiss and hold him tight until it seeped

into his bones until his brain stopped hurting him stopped telling him these awful black lies stopped telling him things that you sometimes think, yourself. Why couldn't you do that? You lay still by his side, unspeakign, instead — you fell asleep, you woke back up, you checked to see if the cloud had shifted — it hadn;t. You told him you didn't know what to say — you honestly didn't. You didn't really want to kiss him. You couldn't help him, so you didn't really want him to be there.

You find that you have so much resentment for anyone who tries to latch on to your emotions. You want everyone to be a lighthouse of emotional strength in your life, even when you yourself are not. But it is telling, the way you yourself treat your emotions when you are not strong, when you are depressed. You hole yourself away, you act like no one can and more importantly no one should help you . You hold yourself to impossible standards. You maintain that if you can't dig yourself out of this hole then you probably deserve to die. You have no compassion for yourself when you are depressed, and it scares you to see that you have no compassion for others in the same spot.||

1600

A note to your partner with regards to last night:

ok so the prepend / tldr to this is that i am a selfish ice bitch right now and u should probably get more supportive friends u are a good person and i am feeling mean @ everything

I'm sorry I didn't make you feel any better about your anxieties last night, I wish I could have. I'm really sorry. I wish I could promise that next time I will be affirming and loving and reassuring and a source of emotional support. But. I don't know that I can. You are asking really little of me, and I understand what it is, and maybe next time it will be fine and I won't be a cold bitch. But it might not. You say that all you really want is confirmation that I'm willing to be emotionally present for you while you work through this, but what if I'm not? What if I don't feel like I can be emotionally present for you in such an intense way? I feel like that is a pretty shitty thing for someone's partner to say but I am not going to lie about this. I wish I could offer you an infinite well of support and affirmation and validation but I don't have that, I can't. That is part of where my inability to be verbally expressive comes from. Sometimes I just don't have it in me. I am so sorry, also, that I feel like I am making this about me. There are too many 'I's and 'I feels' in this paragraph already. But there we go. If I were able to just say, "that's not true, I love you and I do want you around and I do want you to tell me about your anxieties and I do want to assure you they are not true" if I could just say that then we wouldn't be having this conversation but I can't. I don't always feel this way, but right now I do. Right now I am working really hard to keep myself together and I can not support you when I can hardly support myself. I know that my mentality that everyone should be an emotional island is flawed and shitty and garbage, but that is the only way that I can function when I feel like I am close to going

under myself. I wish I didn't resent that you need my validation that your anxieties are unfounded, but there's a part of me that does, and I hate it. But it's a feeling and it's there. I can't say those things to you when you come to me with your anxieties because I feel like I need to keep anyone else's dark feelings at arms length, because I am afraid that they are contagious, because sadness is infectious, and that the really fragile balancing act that I have going on right now on the edge of winter will crumble if I don't maintain myself as yeah a stupid fucking emotional island. I feel hypocritical that I want to share you good feelings but shut off at your bad feelings, I feel horrible because I know that you support me and that you do emotional labour for me when I am in my own dark feelings, but right now I can't do that emotional labour for you, I hope this doesn't make you feel worse than you already do and I apologize if it does, but I don't take it back. This might make me a bad partner. It's ok if you say it does. It's ok if you are angry about this. But. That is that. This is why I am the way I am. I'm sorry I'm not able to offer you anything else. I hope you have other people in your life who can offer you more emotional support than I can right now. If you feel like I am at arms length from you when you are feeling like this, I might be, and this is why. It's not because of you and it's not because of anything you should worry about. I will not always feel this way. Right now I do and I am sorry for both of us. For what it's worth I do love you and I want you to feel better and I want you to never have to feel like that again. Maybe I will feel completely different and full of love and support again tomorrow. I don't know. I guess I am not doing as good as I thought. I'm sorry this is so long winded and wordy, I have been writing all day every day and feelings that I can't really verbalize are bleeding out of me and I am trying to look at them even the really shitty ones.

You are dating an emotionally unavailable island sorry. Also I realize there's a lot in here that might seem self-deprecating and I usually hate when people are self-deprecating cause it puts the other person in a position where they feel like they need to backtrack and comfort the person when it should be the other way around so please do not feel like you should do that here, theses are shitty things about myself but lord they are true.

1670

Honestly what i want the most out of life, what I would wish if I couldn have any magical wish in the world, would be to be able to transport myself into the minds of a handfull of different people, and compare my emotional states and my emotional volatility to others. i would hold a poll. I would hold an "am I truly crazy or is this just the way people are but no body talks about it" poll. An election. And then I would elect the most stable, rational-minded soul out of the bunch to regulate my life, to chart themselves so that I could have something to hold myself up against.

(1700)

If lay back on her bed, closed her eyes. Her mind was racing, occupied eternally by the rythm of the kneading of the dough she worked with all day, every day. It was something that rolled along under her like the sea waves, it was somehting she could not turn off. It followed her around throug her chores — she searched for the echo of the rythm in

everything else she did. The step of her feet, the tap of her fingers on her keyboard, the rise and fall of the purring of her the cat that sometimes came to sit on her lap. Her world was filled with patterns, with the undercurrent of a solid, earthly rhythm. She had only been to the sea once, but there she had found it, the source of her internal beat. The tide was going out, and she could feel the pull of all the water in the world, trying to drag the life out of her and down into its core. Then the waves came rolling back in again, and release her breath. She stood there in the shallows of the Pacific, the one time she ever saw the ocean, the greatest ocean on the planet, the largest body of water. Its rhythm was so plain to see, so blatant, and she felt a deep affirmation in her lungs to stand with it and breathe in, out, with it. She would watch other people, and try to pick up on their internal rhythms, try to detect it. They floundered around, they tapped and popped and hummed with an erratic energy that crackled, never settled. Sometimes, she would try to teach someone the way to knead bread, the gentle but strong roll of the heels of hands pressing by never compressing, easing, with strength. Most of the time, they do not find it they fight with the dough, the bread comes out chunky, lumpy, low. They are unable to parse out any of the strength and airiness that she has found with in herself, within this craft. She can't impart the airiness that she has struggled so hard to perfect. She feels like such a light-headed new-age hippy child when she lapses into this thought pattern, has to prevent herself from putting her hands over her friend's tense knuckles and telling them to breathe. No one appreciates that, and this is not what they are doing it for, anyways. For them, they merely want the sweet satisfaction of beating down into something that came out from under their hands. They don't perfection, they don't have to find unity within the world in the baking. Maybe it is her

short-coming, not theirs, the perfectionism that keeps her baking, kneading. But her life feels stable, tied along to the rhythm of her muscles this way. A lifeline.

What would it be like to be such a person, without a lifeline, like a child without a grandmother — they exist, of course they exist. They roam around in packs, with a sad lack of heirloom blankets and butter cookies, warm dishes of their individual heritages, cuisine tied to blood. They exist, they exist just fine. She knows it is naive of her to think otherwise. And yet, she still holds such grandmotherless, rhythmless people in small islands in her brain, small lighthouses, — they can reach out to each other but the connection is not concrete, it is just rays. People floundering around in the world, their heartbeat erratic. Palpitations. Her friend once tried to explain the feeling, of a sudden onset of heart constriction. You are fine one second, going about your life, your day — and who knows why this day is special? Did you forget to eat anything today? Is there a blood clot in your veins that you have no idea is inching towards your heart? Whatever the reason, you are fine, and then you make a sudden movement — maybe you sweep down to swoop up an armful of kittens, or bounce off a flight of stairs because why the fuck not, you are happy. Suddenly there is a fist of blood in your throat. You can feel a small bird beating inside your ribcage. A mile a minute. It thinks it is going to die. Your heart thinks this is the end. It is valiantly trying to get in as many beats as it can before it is snuffed out. But this very overachieving is what you fear might actually kill you. None of your limbs are getting enough oxygen, because of the fist sized chunk in your throat. Your vision swims before



your eyes. You take breathsion small gulps. You feel around frantically, with tiny hand motions, for a chair within reach, but you fix your eyes to a point in front of you because it feels like if you move them even the slightest bit, you will lose your grip on your vision and pass out. The relief of being able to find a chair is palpable - though somwtimes you can't sometimes you lower yourself gingerly to the floor, sometimes you throw up instead. If you are able to sit, you wrestle with your breath, you fold over, head between your knees. Breath regular breaths, long breaths - it feels like cutting through sludge with a fist. or a spoon. Or sometrhing incredibly dull and inefficnet. You press your palm against your heart, willing it to calm down. You can see yourself, form outside of your body, face drawn, all the blood colour vanished. Maybe your brain is atropbhying from lack of oxygen, slightly, every time this happens. That's a terrifying thought, and sounds very plausible. How have you survived so many of these occurences, how are you not dead? You are twenty three, twenty three — at this point you are frantic, If's shoulder shook under their hands. It's not like this even started as an occurence after you started smoking — it was always there! Are there just tiny clots floating around in your veins, time-bombs waiting to get lodge in the wrong way and bring you down? You are an oxen, but tiny thigns can kill oxen — you are disillusioned about your invincibility and part of your mind, the bleak part, knows it. Your giant bloody oxen heart could stop at any moment. You over reach, with your wine — you have long since surpassed the concept of one glass a day to promote heart health. You are twenty three, twenty tree — who did you think you were kidding? Ultimately, no matter what, your heart will be the death of you. No matter what the cause of

your death is, it is the heart stopping that truly does it. And you have no faith in that organ, no faith.

If has hoenstly never experienced this feeling. She thinks of herself not as an oxen — a mistake she believe her friend is making in overestimating their virility, vitality — but more as a small horse. She plods along. Her thighs are thick, her ankles even thicker. She has the beginnings of sinewy cords along her forearms — something she can't decide feels incredibly sexy or gross. But most of the time her body creates in her an extreme apathy, or a gentle affirming feeling of "yes, you are working, thank you for working, these hands are good hands". She is like a tiny, slimmer version of the rock golem in that ridiculous movie, The Never Endign Story. Except in her version, her hands do not fail her. She looks at them and thinks, yes, these are good, strong hands. Good good, strong strong hands. She believes this is due to her affinity to the pacific, a good and strong thing itself.

She knows she is lucky to have such a luke warm and dependable relationship with her physical body. She had, again, friends who do not. Friends who feel like they are an army of ants, living inside a human skin, crawling, constantly crawling. That is not how they tried to describe their discomforts and dysphoria, but that is how she sees them, in her head. it is something that she actually, honestl cannot relate to. She trries, she tries, but she always ends up breaking against a wall. It is a concept that feels utterly alien to her, and so she wonders if maybe she is the sack of ants, and they, who share such a braod and seemingly

universal experience of discomfort — maybe they are the ones who are truly and properly human. She closes her eyes. There are aspects of every human experience that I will not experience, there are aspects of me that no one else feels, or, no, that many other people share, but that many people do not. What's more, it is impossible to ever know if what you are experiencing is the same as what other people are experiencing — this may be the only true human experience. There is no way to translate your reality into someone else's reality, to compare, subjectively, without the tint of each person's individual experiences. A degree of pain in one person, experienced in exactly the same way by another person, objectively speaking, may be rated completely differently on a numerical scale by these two in-pain humans. It is a futile effort, and the thing that she would like to experience more than anything else in the world.

An experience that is not quite this — does not quite reach the transcendence into true empathy, but tries to emulate this on a physical bodily scale, is one that a friend told her about once. Virtual reality helmets connected to real time webcams, that were positions to simulate each other's eyes. You wore the other person's vision, you were transported, you saw them seeing you and they saw you seeing them. You mirrored each other's body movements, you moved slowly, carefully, with purpose. Reach out and had to stroke your own face, touch your own nose. Simulation, trickery but also transcendent. If she has always been disappointed that she missed her opportunity to see this, when it came to the university. She would have loved to experience that. maybe it is a true self-centeredness

that creates such desire, the desire to truly see yourself from the outside in — not a hallucination, disassociation, or imagination. The same thing that makes you so fascinated with your own face when you are in a video conference, or what makes you search for yourself in news footage of an area where you've been. You don't just want proof that you were there, that you existed — you wanted confirmation that the way you assumed yourself to be was true, that others experience you the way you thought they did. It is the most jarring feeling in the world, she thinks, when you realize that someone who you thought liked you, or thought of you in a certain way, actually holds an opposite view, actually hates you, or thinks you are incompetent.

if loved the library up a few blocks from her house. It wasn't actually the closest one, but the one that was even quicker to get to was dingy — looked like it had been shoved into an office building as an afterthought. Offwhite walls, grey metal shelves, sad chairs, tiny selection. The one she went to was big and open and dark — hardwood and brick. Her favourite place to go was a small alcove that overlooked both the main and basement floors of the library — there was a cutaway that allowed you to look down into the children's section below. The space was round, and the railing was glass. She had never actually looked, purposefully, at the ceiling to identify the skylight, but she knew it was there from the type of sunlight that glowed orange and slanted across her pages. She had forgotten about reading for a long, long time. There had been a point in her life, when she was still running off of achievement fumes, where she decided it would be a respectable

and impressive tool for her to have all the 'classics' of literature under her belt. She didn't realise at the time that what she meant by classic literature was actually only the white, western, male canon. She found that she hated what they had to say. She found that, even worse, she didn't care. They were dry, they were drab, they were irrelevant to her life, to her experiences. They held no insight for her. But, workhorse that she was, she plodded on, determined to finish that dusty tome, and then the next one. She became itchy, and jaded, and declared reading boring, something she no longer enjoyed. She forgot about how, when she was young, each and every book sat like a heavy jewel in her hand. All she ever wanted to do was tuck herself away and peer into her pages, glass over her outer vision as her inner sight danced over the pages. She tore through books voraciously, she stayed up all night, tome after tome. She read what pleased her, what caught her eye — book with mice princesses and warrior badgers, girls who tamed falcons, men in dark, heavy coats and thick voices. She read what she shouldn't and lived in fear of being caught with blatant descriptions of sex, of adult life. She lapped it all up. She filed it all away. She never went anywhere without something to read. Her mother would later laugh and talk about how she would forget about it for whole days at a time, and then apologize, thinking she sounded like a bad parent. But it was just that if she would stay still, very still, curled up in a corner, blissfully content. She also went through a period where she felt like this kind of reading was a sort of escapism, potentially unhealthy, the same way she latched on to video games and their momentary gratification, their hit of dopamine, their achievements for every tiny thing. A page turned was an achievement in itself, but no one except yourself would recognize that. And then when she tried to turn her competitive side to books, when she

challenged herself to read the classic canon, she found that she despised the way books were tainted by it, and quit.

She lived her life after that, for a period, completely content. There was one less thing to occupy her, one less thing to distract her from things that got her, pushed her forward, in life. Reading felt like a chore that took up huge amounts of her time — instead she learnt to code and sculpt and build and knit and sew, she spent her time doing things that brought her in money or brought her happiness, satisfaction, or the creation of tangible objects. Long before she gave up on reading, she gave up on writing, something she did almost as compulsively, though in a less obvious way. She would create worlds and characters and backstories and relationships, sketch them into complex comics. This was writing, just as much as traditional writing would become for her. She created, and her characters stayed in suspended animation until she realized that it was not childish or embarrassing to pick them up again. She could bring joy, and delight, through her characters, and to embrace the need for escape sometimes, as long as it was in healthy moderation.

How many things could she do, was she good at? she was rolling a pen between her teeth, stressing out her jaw, trying to make a list of things she could do for other people, things she could make so that she wouldn't have to buy anything. It was the ultimate stress, holiday seasons. The utter expectation. She didn't know if other people did this, but the

weighing up in her mind of what other people previously got her, how much they had to spend, how much that lines up with what she got them last year, did she have to make up for it this year? It was horrible. She knows that this is not the way that gifts should work, and she hopes that other people do not apply the same thought process to what she gives them, because if they do the calculations on how much time a sweater takes to knit, and then translate that into money, because time is money time is money, she would be the most generous of them all. But it doesn't work that way, because time isn't actually money, time isn't a concrete thing, time isn't just one thing. Time is parallel time is multiplicities. She can do more than once think at a time. She can think while she knits, is that not important? Is that not worth something? Is thinking not a profitable activity, should she not figuratively pay herself out from her bank account everytime she spends time thinking?

She rips the list in half. She is sitting at a table, her eyes glazing over, looking at the beautiful plants that line her window sill. Right now, she is living in California. California, california.

She always feels like she needs to give people context, when she explains that she is living in California, when she tries to make people understand the way the word drips with nectar off her tongue in a way that is completely gimmick free. California, to the rest of the world, she feels, has become a concept. Stupid grayson is from california. Nectar. Take that out that is not fiction. The concept of sun light and sand and sunscreen, palm trees and teenage dramas and high-class high school with fundraiser and drug dramas, and adobe (adobe?) roof houses. Of course california is all those things, any place that is stereotype

can find some kernel of truth, of reflection, in the things that people scoff at it for. But she comes from the north. She comes from the cold. She comes from a place where the first signs of cold roll in with a heavy wave of despair, at least for most. A place where, no matter how hard you try to fight it or deny it, you see the people you love at least fifty percent less than you do during the warm months. Winter translates into four, five months if you are lucky. More than half of waking life, more than half of a calendar, is devoted to fighting against every cell in your body screaming not to go outside. What if for seven months of the year, the south was a tiny bit on fire everywhere, constantly? If the sidewalks literally had tiny little flames, impossible small flames, but flames nonetheless, that made every moment outside and sometimes even moments inside (sometimes the tiny little flames crept in under your uninsulated door and snuck into your bed and nestled right under your toes, setting your bedsheets aflame). Would you want to go outside? Would you honestly ever stop complaining, or thinking about, or trying to; ignore but failing miserably, the tiny little flames inflicting their tiny little bites to your ankles? Or what about, perhaps a better analogy, swarms of ants covering every outer surface? Sometimes they would morph into biting ants, even fire ants, and always they would be swarming up up up your legs trying to get in to your boots your eyes your mouth your clothing. You would come home and peel yourself out of the protective layers of plastic and bug repellent fabric that you swarmed yourself in. Would ever a day, honestly, go by where you did not curse those ants?

She holds so, so much bitterness to the California natives who have never known the north. She feels, in all her twenty six years, a bone deep ache, a knowledge that she has seen the true darkness in the world, that they are living in blissful ignorance, children at any age. She



is a crone in comparison, wizened, jaded, with residual traces of frostbite in the white tips of her extremities.

/\*

2 300 yesterday you wrote 3200 that is amazing you are amazing. all you have to do is keep wri/ting a few words every day on the bus and you will succeed!\*/

her heart seizes up when she remembers that she ddid not live, all those years, at the tip of the world, but somewhere halfway — that there is almost half a hemisphere above that land, where it gets colder, darker, deader. That people live there — that some people even, sort of, in a tiny quiet way, thrive there. She thinks of the people living in the northern tundra of the continent, who have built rythms of their lives to coincide with the ebb and flow of the snow, the rise an fall of the sun. Drastically less than what she ever knew. sometimes, the sun never even rose. A twilight zone, a true twilight zone, where you can walk around on your head and not even realise it, until all the blood rushing to your brain kills you. Where you could close your eyes and keep them closed for weeks, and the only thing you would miss would be your sad, drawn reflection. How do they do it, those titans of the north? She wonders, softly, if they get seasonal depression too, those from populations who are indiginous to that land. So much can be stored in genetics, memories of seasons, of skills, of traumas. She thinks it's plausible, that they don't — not in the same weak, broken way that everyone who crossed the atlantic and tried so hard to pretend that it was livable up there does. They are not suited, she is not suited. It is a lie, a lie, that she

could ever thrive there. Survive, yes, maybe, for a while, but not thrive. How can you call spending half a year indoors thriving? The word is synonymous, to her, with bare skin soaking in sun, with strong calves working their way over mountains, hills, a ravenous hunger for honey and the smell of dirt, for carrots that have just been pulled up, for bread that doesn't fall flat in the cold air of your drafty kitchen.

So she moved. She did it. She took her whole life and wrapped it up, the parts that she could, the parts that she could tuck into the trunk of her car. She threw away so much. So many pillows, heavy blankets, coats stained with salt and the kind of dirt that only shows up with february snow. She gave away her boots, willed good luck and more hapiness on to the reciever. A spell f;or dry feet — somethign she knew she could never truly guarantee. A few small moments with the beautiful corner desk and chest of drawers the she'd found, and an intensive screening process for the new parents-to-be of all the plants that she had managed to keep alive all these years. She could start again, — she was going somewhere where she would never have to fight again to keep her plants warm and sunlit. That thought alone made her briefly constrict with excitement. The anticipation of such a small hapiness, of such a small weight lifted off her shoulders. She hoped that should would never lose sight of these small thigns she was gaining — if she did she would be banished back to the north, until the could appreciate once again what she was getting. A few precious things she packed away in a cedar chest — the woolen princess coat trimmed in real fur that she used to wrap up around her face when she felt, bravely, rarely, like she could withstand the world and come out a dazzlign snow queen. It always worked — the impression she gave off, when she put in the effort to, was something completely opposite

of how she felt. Before she packed it away, she mended a small tear that had opened up in the thin, soft leather of the fur, and pressed her face into it, thanking the animals that had helped her stay afloat, for whatever it's worth. She could sell this coat, or give it away, but it was something too precious to her. It would not come with her — what would it do in california? It would wilt, it would cry — but it would wait for her, if ever she came home. Then, still radiating sun, her inner battery still giving off a charge, she would wrap herself again in the thick grey wool and sable fur and bring her sunny face out to all the winter hovels, all the hideaways where her friends were still trying to eke out a sort of life. Her sunshine would nestle in the lining of her coat — it was the only coat that could ever contain it, she thinks — and then she would wrap her friends in it, one by one, pressing them into her impossibly large and impossibly warm arms. She would hold them there, against her chest, for as long as they needed, for as long as they took to thaw, and then charge them up so that they could carry on through the remaining months, a little lighter than before. When she was empty and cold, she would fly back south. Maybe she would go even farther, pass over her new home, through the clouds, never stopping, never disembarking, until she got to where the monarchs lived. She would pass two large borders, and many smaller ones, and then follow her inner compass to places where mango trees grew and great hordes of orange and black butterflies settled, gently, hiding just as she was, from the cold and the wind. She would stay with them until they knew her, until she filled herself back up with sunshine and mango flesh, and they would light on her eyes and drink in the sugar filled droplets that seeped from her pores and the corners of her tearducts. She was never a huge sweet tooth, but for the monarchs she would do this — she would eat fruit after fruit until

her blood ran thick and the sun helped her crystalize. She would lay down in the earth, in a bed of flowers and leaves, and they would aloght on her and drink her up. It would rain, warm, warm rain, a rain that never visited the north, and her body would melt, and run into the rivers, and feed the sweet candy fish and the tiny mammals, and none of them would ever, ever be cold again.

21 400

It is the morning again. She was dreaming about butterflies, she thinks. The sun is bright, the sky is clear. Impossibly clear. She stands at her window, crosses herself. Wraps herself in nearly nothing, goes outside. She eats on the go, a chunk of banana bread as she walks, a tall agua frsca from the street vendor she passes every morning. Horchata. Another nectar of gods. She can remember the first time she ever tasted it, and her eyes grew big like saucers, saucers of cinnamon rice sauce, cubes of ice swimming, sparkling. Why would she ever drink anythign else? She didn't for a few weeks. Horchata agua fresca, or death. She could be obsessive like that. She would cook up a batch of cinnamon rolls every morning and soak them in the water, bake them into obscenely decadent bread puddings and eat them in the shade. Then it was avocados, avocados that tasted like nothing she ever knew existed. She always found it amazing, everytime she tasted a flavour — you always assume that you've actually, this time, tasted everything there was to sample. That there was nothin left todiscover in the world. (But then again, she told other people about the way she felt and they said, no actauuly, I never feel like that , so maybe it just had to do more with

the bleakness of her outlook, less to do with a universal human unimaginativeness. Once, when she had told someone this, they lent her a book, about someone who had travelled the world hunting for all the fruit flavours that were across the globe, rather than just the few varieties that most are familiar with. Since running away from the north, she her eyes were suddenly bright and filled with all kinds of different foods that she had only ever read about in that book. As she walked down the street, sipping on her rice nectar, she watched someone across the street walk about from another street cart with a huge plastic cup filled with cubes of melon and pineapple. Her stomach growled. She swung into the bakery, a blissful second shift, sliding behind the cash and popping her head into the back to survey what was baking and rising. Her coworker handed off the loaves and rolls to her supervision, and slipped out. She settled in to her busy, bustling routine, throwing new loaves down in the marble countertop where they cut cold dough and pulled trays in and out of racks like clockwork. She was munching on a handful of raisins from the pantry bulk bags when you came in.

- Hello.

You pressed cold palms against the marble counter of the front desk. Or was that granite? It was cool, dark, stone. Your hands felt impossibly hot against the cold slab, and you pressed them against your burning cheeks. Did you have a fever? Do you have anything? Wow I hate these people sitting behind me. Wow wow wow. Pumpkin? Do you have any pumpkin? You say again. You mumble too much. You don't know if she even heard

you, except the woman turns on her heel and disappears behind the double swinging door. She popped back out again, empty handed, and started rattling off a list of a whole bunch of fancy sounding mysterious artisanal maybe-breads. Give me whatever is freshest, whatever you've just made. I don't make what it is, anything. You left a few minutes later with a paper bag with six beautiful glossy pumpernickle bagels. The smell of roasted caraway trailed behind you as you walked down the street, back to the beach. This is where you were staying. This is where you would eat. Your ears were still burning, but you felt the color in the cheeks fading. She was so cute, so cute. You settle down and eat the first of your bagels. It is delicious, warm and filled with tiny bursts of onion and cumin and heavy with the cloudy taste of molasses and rye. Your belly is full and you fall asleep in the sun.

Nov 14 22.1

You are one hundred percent preoccupied with other you. You find yourself completely swept up in trying to anticipate their perceptions and feelings towards you, trying to balance every little action, every small choice that they have the slightest chance of noticing, in your favour, in favour of them. You don't know why you do this. Approval, validation? You do this for men more than for anyone else. Even more so, you do this for men you've slept with, or who have ever given any indication that they would want to sleep with you. Even if you aren't particularly interested, even if you know you don't want them. You've been very well trained to see the attention of men as something of extremely high value, something that would be foolish to pass up, to not try to win at every turn. How long did

you spend trying on clothign in front of your mirror this morning? Of coourse some of it is for you, you have an intense sense of aesthetic and gender presentation that fluctuates from day to day. If you don't find something that nestles nicely into your converginig identites for that particular day, you're not going to feel very good. But that's not the only reason, you can't lie to yourself. You think about how you will be perceieved by men, even when you're going to a space for women. Even when you're going to a space where you are open and safe a a trans person, as a gender non-conforming person, as they. Even then, you will fall prey to trying, unconsciously or otherwise, to wrap yourself up like a shiney, attractive package for men. You put on your wings today, swooping back from the outer corners of your eyes. Suddenly they are larger, more slanted, more cutting. Sharper, smarter, prettier. You haven't done this in a long, long time. You twist you head this way and that taking in the effect, approving of your handiwork. You do love this. But why did you do it today? You know why, you know why. Even with the men that you do like, you try o hard to coddle them, to make sure that your prsence isn't threatening, doesn't break their idea of what they are attracted to.

Nov 14: 22.5 (.4)

The sun is coming up. You only wrote four hundred words yesterday. That's ok. You are on the eleventh floor of your university, participating in the GAMERella game jam. You just

came to mentor but you ended up roping yourself into a game, an exciting game. Your theme is making space, taking space.

You are tired you are so so tired your stomach feels like it is filled with battery acid your lips feels like salty lemon wedges from the sahara your tongue is a permanent burn in your mouth heat rises from your cheeks in feverish waves and your eyes swing around with a glassy eyed unfocusedness.

Nov 15: 22.6 (.1)

you need help

You are tired of writing about yourself. You are tired. You want to write about someone else.

You are afraid so you so so so afraid. How can you even keep doing anything.



half aay there you're not even half way there.

Youce, when she was a child, she once  
wejss

once when she was a child she set out with a beautiful small pack on her back, she crossed streets and alleyways on her own. She left behind her dog, who was small and dark and loved her, and her mother, who was tall and bright and also loved her. But she had to go. She wrapped her winter coat up in a fine lace tablecloth, her mother's favourite, and the tied it to a stickk. Then she was a true traveller, a true icon. Everyone would know. Everyone would want to help her. Shes crossed out of her city, her urban jungle. To get to the edge she had to pass through industrial parks, more city-like than anything she'd ever seen. Concrete overwhelmed her. BUT SHE KNOEWS THTA ANYTHING EVERYTHING HAS AN END IF YUO JUST KEEP WALKING FAR ENOUGH, AND SO SHE CAME OUT THE OTHER SIDE. aBRUPTLY. tHROUGH A LINE OF BULLRISHES THAT GREW UP ALONG THWE EDGE OF THE CONCRETE LIKE A SHEER CLIFF. hER TOES TINGLED, FINALLY, WHEN SHE GOT THERE, AND SHE felt fresh. Rejuventaed. She walked through. On the other side of the

bullrushes was the snow. Not directly in front — she walked a while still. she walked on tiny silent pads, and teenage feet.

press your palms into your eyes. you see stars you see all of the men in your life that you've ever loved how many so few. you feel your brain reel over and over again why are you so stuck on repeat why can't you let go of old hatred you just want to be a pure cloud and you are muddy sullied sucky gross you spit and scowl and throw fits. you hate you hate you hate.

22.9

You are a huge fan of plants. You love them, you love them. You are in love with their velvet their petals their smooth plastic rubber paper hair. You are in love with the way they can be held up to the sun, exposing their blood and cells. They creep around your baseboards and your cellars and they crawl up up up towards the sky. They live under water. They are slimey, they are beautiful. You fill your mouth with them, your mouth pouch. You are a tiny rodent, who lives with them, at eyes level. You crawl down on your hands and knees and push your head through tall grass in the empty lot behind your building. The sharp little rocks dig into your palms. Tiny stalks of what with their miniature sheaths brush your forehead and poke your nose. Grasshoppers springboard off your back. You stay there for ages. You twist a long strand of grass around your tongue, pull it into your mouth, try to

much it. No, this is not for you. You have no multiple stomachs. You can't eat grass. So. You cover yourself in plants, you plaster them to your body. In the fall, you bury yourself in leaves, in dead, you burrow into the dry, crisp, newspaper rustling pile, you don't even care about all those spiders. YOu burrow deeper and deeper, until you come to the soft uncovered dirt. You keep going. You dig through layers of decomposing matter, you shimmy your body down the tiny trails made my earthworms. Your eyes and nose and mouth are filled with dirt, but you can still breath, and the air tastes like rain and iron. This is where you belong. You are a creature of the dirt. You stumbled upon the nest of a mother vole, who, being blind, doesn't realize you are not one of her young. You smell like dirt, like earth, like her children. You nestle in against their velvet haunches, curl up, fall sleep to the rise and fall of tiny tiny chests.

When you wake up, you leave the nest, nibbling on small roots poking down from the burrow. They taste like parsnip, raw potatoes. Your stomach grumbles. You set off now down the alley ways carved by voles, your eyes shining like lamps. You have been here for so long. You have adapted.

23.3 Nov 17

You pitter patter through the tunnels, roaming. You come to an end. You begin to dig. You dig and you dig, down down down. You dig with your teeth, your nails. Your bones grind

down to a pulp. Your blood trails behind you, mixing with the deep earth. You keep going. For days and days you dig, You have cracked through boulders, deep buried layers of cement, coffins, layers and layers of the earth's crust. You passed through water at a point, but you just dug through it. You barely even noticed the change. You haven't seen light in years. You know that if you stop now, you will lose all momentum, and all the layers of earth will cave in above you, you will never get out. You have brought yourself here, so, so long ago. You can't remember why you made the decision to start digging in the first place, can't remember where you were even trying to go. You have a sneaking suspicion that the answer to that is nowhere, nowhere. Or, exactly here. So you keep going. You are polished, metallic, shining, by now — your body has been transformed into an intense wedge. You use its new properties — it is indestructible. You no longer leave a blood trail. You are no longer flesh. Now, as you dig, you feel a heat. It seeps into your metallic skin, it nestles into your heart, and it grows, exponentially it grows. The rock in front of you, underneath you, gives with more ease, you push through it, you no longer dig. You wedge your shoulder in and it gives way. It seeps around you, it oozes back into the space that you had just come from. You no longer have an escape route, but you no longer need one. Your head buzzes, with a faint, but solid, vibration. The hum of the earth glides around your head, like the very soothing drone of a hive of bees -- not frantic, but containing the rhythm of the universe. Your edges are melting now, and your weight is doing all the work for you — you simply let yourself drop through the strata of magmas, the different viscosities and compositions delighting you. You are made of minerals, you can taste them all on your tongue. Your body is melting too, joining, bonding, with the core of the earth. you are being

compressed, into a tiny droplet of dew, a tiny metallis shimmering teardrop, completely crystallized but somehow completely liquid, both at once. You have reached a particularly special point of temperatur. You are in the heart of the planet. You feel the way in which gravity has slackened it's pull on you — you are at it's origin, it is a close to you as it can be. At the same time, though, you feel the entirity of the world pushing innwards to you — you are pressed in by it on every imaginable side, an unbelievable squeezing, like being wrapped in all the blankets in the world. It is comforting. You are reminded of the way your mother used to tuck you into bed at night — impossibly snug. You are impossibly snug, here, now, at the center of the earth. You are crystalline, you are magma, you flow in and out and all around, your have become part of the core. You have gone through so many stages of life, you have changed yourself and pulled yourself and dragged yourself this far, and now, you have earned a rest. You close your tiny, mineralized eyes, and the spears that have formed on your eyelashes seal them shut. you can't tell where your arms are, or if you even have arms aymore, but you have the general sense that they are wrapped tight around you, around your chest. You are so, so sleepy, and you are so so content. You brought yourself here, and now it is time for you to rest.

24.k

When you finally feel rested, when you are ready to regrow your bones, you shake the sleep from your shoulders are your eyes. you test your strength by squeezing your fists of magma together — they make tiny weak baby fists — your muscles are still awakening. You shake

out your spine and stretch it out, in any direction — any way is up, is out, and you are ready to start afresh, new, you have no particular direction in mind. You kick your legs, together, like a mermaid made of energy and molten rock, and propel yourself lazily, unhurridly, towards the spaces where you sense the density thickens. All you want, right now, is a good hot cup of tea. Your body has no solid form, hasn't had one for a while, so you slip through the cracks of the innermost layer of compressed rock, slip through the space between the [particles, the elements, the atoms. You feel yourself leaving the sludge of the planet's core behind. It is being sloughed off you like dead skin. you pick up particles of what you squeeze past on your way, and from that your bones begin to reform, bit by tiny bit. They are a bit crooked, they are no longer smooth, they may have impurities and bits of trace elements in them, but they will nourish your body from the inside out. You are mineral, you have always been mineral,. Nothing could be healthier for you than this change. You know you are dragging yourself back up now, against gravity, against physics, against the natural stream of your most natural instincts, but the shred of rock against your fresh, new skin, tearing you raw, is invigorating. The sting is sharp in a way that you never felt, when you were resting in the earth's core. The edge of the sensations screams in your body, and you continue, now clawing, now pushing, impossibly, firstfuls of dirt out from above your head. The impossibility of your task never occurs to you. The direction of 'up', 'away', 'towards the moon' sings in your head as strongly as any magnetic north ever sang to migrating birds. That is what you are, you realize. You are a migrating animal. You spend a heartrendingly brief moment in the topsoil of the world, relish your last few moments in the underworld, away from all troubles — you have arrived, you have arrived. But you have

come so far, and your body is shiney and pale — it needs you to bring it into the sun, to begin anew to nourish it in it's chrysalis state. Back arches and breaks through the surface, and you pull yourself up out of the earth, spine first, gasping. Your skin is fresh and tinted a healthy rosebud undertone, sore and soft to the touch.

24.4

You are covered in dirt, but underneath it, you glow. You can see your new bones underneath your flesh — they glow with a heavy grey luminescence. Your flesh beams, infused, steeped as it was in the lava of the world's heart. Your eyes are larger, wider, and your gaze is pale, sightless, but you don't notice, at all. You are dazzled, even still, by how bright the sunshine *\*feels\** on your naked body. Every pore, every tiny colourless hair covering the surface of your skin, is singing, reaching up towards the sky. You crack open the line of your lips, tiny, perfect children's teeth sitting in milky rows, and let a sigh escape you. You had not realized you had been holding that air inside your lungs since you first went under ground. Maybe that was your lifeline to the surface, this whole time. God knows that every other shred of your being has been reworking through the cleansing scour of the infinite distance you travelled. You have no idea where you are. You can not see the details of anything with your maladjusted new eyes — their pale yellowy color fading into your whites — but you can see shapes, and sense so much more with your reworking fingers — not a single life's day worth of callouses or buildup on them, your fingers almost cry out in pain at every touch. Still, you touch everything. You first bend

down and run your hands over the soil that you just emerged from, smoothing over traces of your rebirth. You brush the soil from your ankles and thighs. It clings to you in other places — you will find a stream, somewhere — you are not concerned. You can not see yourself, anyways, and your avain sense of navigation is, somehow, filling you with a strong sense of isolation. It is a comforting sort of knowledge, the feeling that, for the time being, there is nothing around that might threaten you. You know, you know, you can vaguely remember, the feeling of being constantly plagued and hunted by who knows what — a menacing dread that hung over your life. You think that maybe you are in a fallow farmer's field. You search every pocket of your emotional being, and you do not find your cloud of dread. You release it from your memory — it was the memory of someone else, and you do not need it. As you begin to walk, in the direction that you feel the most pull towards, the feel the sinews in your legs snap back into place. Your first few shaky lengths were, if not discouraging, not extremely promising, but you stood still for a few moments to rebalance yourself, and suddenly became acutely aware of your toes. You stretched them out, and planted them back down, buried them into the warm top layer of dirt. There was a clover stuck between one of your two smallest toes. you looked at it, feeling more than seeing it, and then continued on your way, much more confident in your strides. HALFWAY!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

When you came to a small cottage, the person residing within bundled you soft up and set you down by their stove. You could tell, by the leathery texture of their hands and the weathered creak to their voice, that they were quite old, but you did not understand their language. You were not sure if you would even recognize the tongue you spoke before you went under ground — nothing felt familiar to you. That made everything sweet rather than



scary though, at least so far as you experienced it. You allowed yourself to be lowered into a warm bath, warm dark iron, and you washed yourself. You were afraid to tear your parchment skin, afraid it might still be in a hardening and polishing phase, so you poured cup after cup of water over your to gently clean away the remaining soil. You kept your hands under water until your nail beds shone milky white, and your palms were covered in pruning. You realized, with a pang, of surprise, of mysterious, unidentified emotion, that the words you had tattooed into the pad of one of your hands had vanished. There was not even the faintest indication or trace. You had shed the ink with the rest of your skin. After a moment of quiet mourning, you fold your hands together and climb out of the bath — content with the amount of time you spent on this discovery. Your body is new, your body is new. There are warm clothes waiting for you, all made of wool — you remember wool, its smell and texture coming vividly back to you. Much of the clothing feels strange and unnecessary, but you slide it on again and adjust the creases and seams until they lie flat on your body and do not distract you. Within a few minutes, you have acclimatized, and sink into the cloud of sheep that you have been enveloped in from head to toe. You have been bundled up by the stove again, and you are keeping your eyes closed. You don't need to rest again yet, but you are soaking in the sounds of the cottage. Creaks of wooden floorboards, the sound of a heavy iron stove door, the whistling of a kettle simmering along above the flame. Something warm is pressed into your hands, and you accept it silently, with what you remember to be a grateful smile. You breathe in the steam, and realize, with a leap of your heart, that it is a cup of tea. You will enjoy this life again, you think. You are infinitely soothed, and sensory memories that you thought you had abandoned come rushing back to

you with the taste of the tea. There were so many things in this life that you loved, and there are so many ways that you can find yourself in a small space of rest. You don't always have to go to sleep in the core. Soemtimes, you could just have a good cup of tea, and you might have what you need.

25.5. 3k is ur goal for today.....

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today' you can't stop thinking of what of how you were, with your partner, two days, ago, three days ago. you find it diffcult to pin down exact memories, but your body and your bones have a thick and visecral physical reaction when you try to call up your memories. you had been incredibly tired, walking ded, — you fell asleep curled up on your cat bed for a while, and he had to wake you up. that weekend had been an all night all day game jam, and you pulled up upon ysome of your tiny reserves of strength to raise hell and frantically work the whole time, but you were hysteriocal and exhausted when he finally arrived and brought you back to your house. maybe that was what made thesex so exceptionally greeeat that night — the fact that you were on the edge ofyou soft, diull mildly crazy blade. the fact that you probably could have pushed back over into hypomania that night, if you hadn;t regulated yourself back into sleep schedule with the ferocity of your new mundaneity... for the knight you felt like it. your eyes refused to open, and you lay inert unde rthe covers, still completely clothed, next to him, with nothing on your mind but completly sweet sleep. you were so, so tired — all you wanted to do was sleep.

but even still, as soon as her ran hands over your hips, and along the seam of your jenas, of not despite pf but in particular because you were so exhausted, you had no defense up, none of your usual ticks or tense ness of you body. that lovely wonderful shivering aoft tickling feeling travlled from your thighs up through yor spine, and you lay there, still , with your eyes. closed. you traced only your tips of your fingersin thecircles along the small dip above his hips, above his shirt. you could have stayed there for ever, perfectly cotnent, letting the slow echo of shivering warmth play up and down your spine.

your mistake —- thought no, you only say that rehtorically — it absolutely was not, was that you slid youp hands down from the small of his back over down to high thighs, and back up to rest of his butt. you had perfectly sized hands, for this . your bodies fit together impossibly well. you ran your thumb over thedenim so lightly, so lightly, and unless you didn't know how effective the smallest touch could be you would have been surprised at the strength of his rreaction. as it was, you knew that you were in parallel states — you could feel your whole lower half pooling with blood, with that surprising ache of longing that is so completely grounded in physicality that it is almost alarming. is whntin g sex supposed to literally hurt, because it feels like it is sometimers extre,ely close to that threshold. that is where you were, form a simple tracing oof your hips and spine, a deliocate light touch through two or three days or winter clothing. so when you rested you hand on his perfectly sized bum and hs pressed him against you in the faiontest possible

way, you weren't surprised at the way he bucked into you, pressed against your leg, already impossibly hard. you wondered if he had already been, for a while. you float outside of your body, still bone-tired and physically drained, and watch yourselves. you continue to escalate, dragging your nails now, up and down the denim on his leg and dipping down near his zipper and back. you do it automatically, even though if you had asked yourself you would have logically said that you would rather sleep than have sex. but that ache said otherwise, and when he slid your hand underneath the waistband of his jeans and back against his but you pulled him roughly to you. he was always so gentle and probing, at first, during foreplay — especially when you were so tired. to be fair, he was almost always ready to have sex, and maybe one of these days you would honestly be too tired, and you absolutely appreciate it. if you had rolled over and fallen asleep, that would have been fine with him as well, if a little bodily trouble might have occurred. he never expected anything from you in any ways. but because of that the way that his body responds with glee when you do affirm that you want this, right now, that it is ok, that you want this just as much as him, it makes everything all the better when he redoubles his efforts. sometimes, when you don't feel like vocalizing but you can tell from the tenseness in the way that he tries to hold his body still against yours, at night, rock hard, you just slip his hand between your thighs and let him know, in the clearest way possible, that you want him too. It is incredibly lovely, the affirmation you find from each other, that you are both so, so deeply enmeshed in each other's bodies, enchanted by the way you feel together. the way you can read each other impossibly well, the way you fit together perfectly against rock yourself against him in a rhythm that suits both you and him perfectly. the sex has always been ridiculously

good, and it washas always just gotten better and better as time has gone on, but even just recently since you decided to get back together after your breakup and try again, you can't believe the impossiblity of your luyck, o the way in which your body defies all statistic and deliver to you orgasm after organsm just from riding his dick. You feel that overdone, overlysentimental earth-connection your your whole body, starting at your groin. You dig your fingers into his flesh, you use the weight around his torso to pull in him in, closer, deeper. You are wrapped around him, and he is pulling against you, spreading nad digging in deep. You feel so, so full. you are such a loud fucker, you pant and moan and whimper and whine anas you press your body more and more completely against him, as you build up your momentum. you can not believe, you can not belive. You are so, so lucky. who else gets to have sex like tyhis? it's something you find yourself wondering to your self as you sit on the bus to work, as you walk down the street. You know tehre is no indication at all on their faces, in ther dewmeanor , that can hint as to why how who is having the most amazing sex. you know that the two of you on the street are an odd, mismatched couple. you know that you both feel like the other might be more suited to someone else, in a fairy tale story — you would never be chosen by others for each other. but her you are, and you are perfect, and you are crying out into his neck in pleasure and rocking back on your feels agianst him and pressing yohis hands into your neck. you have amazing sex.

you have incredibly, unbeliveable sex, the kind that you would have never thoguht you would get when you were a teenager, the kind of thing that you could never even imagine

was what sex actually was. You are so, so gratefully - and you wonder what you should be grateful towards. Your body, because is it your body? Some people are just not responsive, not receptive, need to be coaxed out in very specific and time consuming ways. You once brought yourself to climax without moving a muscle, just by thinking, All that needs to be done is hands angled every so slightly on your hips, the tiniest tug of your body into another's and you are dripped and aching and pressing yourself up against them like a ferocious animal. It's not that you are insatiable, or have an above average sex-drive — if you need to go long periods without, you absolutely can. You have no problem. Often times, when you are in a head space or physical space where you aren't going to be fucking anyone for a long time, you drift off the habit of even fucking yourself, and you live, fine. You don't get an excess of stress built up — that only happens when you are getting boned on the extreme regular. You begin to take this amazing thing that you have, that most people honestly do not have, for granted, you begin to expect it. But if you aren't you get by just fine, and now, in your current situation, you only see your partner once a week or so. You spend most of the week day dreaming about how good he feels inside you, how good you feel around him, how much you are going to love when he pressed you naked against your wall or pins you down, or how you might do that to him. One of your favourite things is to lay him down and straddle him, and use one hand to pin his wrists above his head, or press his shoulders into the mattress and lean back as far as you can, demanding that he lie perfectly still as you grind your hips into his. Maybe his dick is just built for yours, maybe the way it arches one direction is perfectly suited to you, maybe your most sensitive areas are off to one side, as well. All you know is that there is an impossible ache in your abdomen that will only be

soothed by being beat out of you,, fiercley, forcefully. you do not have gentle sex, or at least, almost never. when you do, when you are truly tired, when your muscles cant be coaxed to roar back to life, when all you want to do is lie on your back with your knees falling open to the sides, and be lapped at with the tiniest of strokes, as if you were made of crystalized honey, your sensation start on the complete other side of your body, they start from the outside in, and it feels as if all your blood is draining and your finegrs go numb, but in a way the pleasure if such a tiny, tiny thing, and you wonder if your body might nogt recognize it at all, but there is something about tiny, slow swells that sneak by your body. they go on for so, so much longer, and sometimes they bring no sound from your mouth — un charactersitsicly silent, you lay there with your lips oly very slightly parted, not wanting to scare the creeping feeling away, and if you are, if you are hushed, and if he continues just sp, and if you resist the urge to rock your hips back or pull him up so that he can fuck you roughly, if you have patience and self restraint you are awarded by an organism that swells so hgih and so wide and is so much brighter and longer than what you usually experience, and is sweet in a completely different way.

That is something that you have never spoken to anyone about. You tried, you think ocne , to hitn at it timidly to her, but she really didn't seem like she understood, looked askance at you. Orgasm having a color? You suspect that this is not something that most other people experience — it feels like an extension of your color linked synaesthesia, but you have never heard of synaesthetic orgasms before. But maybe no one really put two an d two

together, or maybe, the same way you as a child thought everyone had numbers and genders and personalities for their numbers and letters, and intricate spatial maps for systems of time in your brain, systems that were inherent and unchanging and made perfect sense, but apparently only to you — probably this is what other people think of? you wonder if you are just trying to be different but no, you know that you are particularly linked to visual stimuli in ways that most people are not. it doesn't make you feel like you are experiencing more than other people, but rather makes you acutely aware that you are all perceiving the world in completely different ways,. You wonder how the math oriented person feels when they look at characters on a sign, or plans their year in their head, or orgasms from a long, drawn out, intense fuck, or from an almost unsatisfying routine session of masturbation?

the way you would try to describe it would be the same way you try to describe any other colour based synaesthetic experience — more like getting a strong ~sense of the colour in your mind's eye, rather than actually seeing it. There are all types of synaesthesia, but that is yours. Usually your eyes are closed, you can never seem to keep them open when you are fucking, you roll them into your head, you die of dramatics, you have to keep them closed, you don't have the kind of sex that one can simply stare at the wall for (you know if your eyes are open then you aren't having a good time). Your eyes are closed, if you're having an orgasm than your eyes are always closed, and colour blooms in your mind's eye. You can often guess, by the particular feel of the buildup towards your climax, what it will



be, — there are so many distinct types of feelings of orgasms, and they all look different in your mind's eye. Some are pristinely white and flecked with liquid gold and radiate out from the center of your mind in sheets of fabric and light. Angelic, angelic. If your life were a comedic movie this is where angels would start singing. It is a quiet sort of orgasm, one that doesn't rock your body in jerky spasms, but insists that you lie, prone on your bed, silent, praying, for a while afterwards.

Other are flowers, literal flowers, you swear, blooming in bright pinks and purples and yellows in your mind's eye. You see fields of them, endless, not a speck of green, and they shimmer in and out of shape like kaleidoscopes, morphing into each other, extremely abstract, but flowers, nonetheless. They are not centered in your mind and edged all around with your familiar black base, like most synaesthetic visualizations you have, but rather spread and roll across your vision and seem to go on forever. The flowers are new. You hope you'll see them again soon. Then there is the sort of deep throbbing purple black red coloured orgasm, the kind that sounds guttural and comes up from your belly to shake your limbs and convulse your thighs, your arms. This one rolls through you in one strong, forceful wave, and when it is done it is gone, as quickly as it came, but you have the impression of being dead, being killed. There is no coming back from this one — any attempt to touch you afterwards is met with almost pain. This one is good, and reliable, like an old friend, and what you imagine the most standard like to be — maybe the red and black is just the inside of your eyelids when you are squeezing them so damn tightly shut.

But you know that it's not quite the same. There are those that flicker in and out of existence like a tea light, here and then gone, a localized flame in your belly that burns itself out so quickly that you wonder if it were ever even there. These are particular, they only occur through that particular type of quick masturbation session that you are only half-heartedly interested in — you more feel like it's something you should do, or have to just do to get sex off of your mind. You are sated in a way, but in another you wish you had been slower, more considerate towards your body. Sometimes you push yourself forward again, because that was not what you wanted, you wanted something deep in your gut that ran through your whole body and left you heaving and exhausted, but there is a sharpness and an irritation to the sensations that taint any others that might come after this one.

You would be so interested to know what others would think of this, of your types, and what they might have to say for themselves. You know, certainly, that not all orgasms are created equal. Maybe it's something you could ask your partner about, though he is not the same type of visual thinker as you are — he might try to translate it more into sounds, which is a language completely indecipherable to you. In some ways you like being on this side of your chasm, where almost no one except those who have these strange links between sensation in their brains live. Over across the way there are others, no doubt with their own peculiarities, their own secret clubs of sensation. You know your mother and your grandmother are and were synesthetes, respectively, but your grandmother is

dead and you would never breach the subject of details of the enjoyment of your sex with your mother. You will never know.

You used to fantasize about being a martyre, a hero. You think you got the idea, initiailly, from Pokemon: The First Movie. Honestly, that may be the most traumatically heartbreaking single piece of media you ever saw in your extremely influential developmental days. You used to daydream the whole bus ride to school, what it would feel like to throw yourself in front of sure death for someone, for something. But in particular, you would fantasize about how much other people would cry for you, about how once you were gone they would share their regrets and their fond memories, and the sobbing, the sobbing. You loved to romanticize about sobbing. If it wasb't you dying a heroic death, it was people around you, succumbing tragically one by one. You romantised death to an extreme, you believe it would bring a welcome lapse from responsibilities — all you wanted to do honestly was cry all day, and if both your mother and father suddenly died in a freak house fire, orphaning you and all your sibligns, who would then be split up and sent to live in bleak and trying conditions, through which you would triumph, strong and harrowed — then you would absolutely have an excuse to cry all day, adn no one could say anythign about it. Why do young peopel crave that sort of tragedy, why do we pray for lightning strikes? Are we really all that bored with our mundane and generally comfortable

lives, are the tragedies of the day to day not good enough for us? The only really close death I've ever known was my maternal grandmother's, and she was quite old, and I was not extremely close with her, and we weren't given much information. I can barely remember when they told us that she had died. What I can remember is lying in bed at night, and wondering, why could I not cry? I remember feeling so blank, so void of proper social response, I remember feeling panicked only that my parents would realize that I wasn't sad. It would not make much of a difference to me for quite a while, I would not realize what I had lost until I was much older. Until then, I thought I was emotionally stunted. Though, when my animals would die, and die they did, in droves, I would lock myself away and sob and shriek silently into my pillow, unable to comprehend life carrying on with the souls that I had bonded with closer than anything else in my life. I think that that was a very obvious precursor to my pursuit of animal welfare and ethics — the intense relationships with non-humans I grew up with, and the witnessing of their life cycles, of their love, and their deaths. I felt the stab of my very first cat dying of feline leukemia so much more sharply than the passing of my grandmother. In a way, I never knew her, and that pains me now, but I have forgiven myself at my limited range of grief, for her.

I remember, now that I write this down, that I told a lie — my paternal grandfather also died, I knew him. I don't think I shed a single tear. At least with my grandmother, I felt warmth, and fondness, which is why I was so guilt ridden for not feeling grief. With my grandfather however, I did not. He never had a good relationship with my own father, from

what I gather, her and my paternal grandmother split up a long, long time ago. I honestly don't know the story. In my child size memories, I recall that my grandmother and my grandfather split up and they both left. My father was the youngest, a teenager, at the time, and he was left to his own devices. My father has had a hard life. He dropped out of highschool and never completed it. He has been homeless, wandering, drifting, listless, if my childlike misunderstandings have not put too much of a romantic spin on the situation. He has worked countless night shifts and dishwashing jobs. He spent some time living with his siblings, when his parents left — they both had places of their own, they were older, but ultimately, he was on his own, for a long time. He met my mother when they were both younger than I am now, younger than I was when I started dating my current partner. From there, I know the story. But all that to say, we never really knew my grandfather, and I definitely picked up on the bitterness my father had for him, and channelled that. I have no fond memories of him at all. He never once showed me a kindness that stuck with me. I will never know if that was my young child's perception, or if that was the truth. I have heard, too, that his second wife (step grandmother is absolutely not applicable here) was a horror to my grandmother, and that everyone seemed to think that they completed themselves in their bitterness. I had such a single paneled view of my grandfather as a child, tainted by the words and unspoken body language of the adults around me that children are so adept at picking up. I once tried to centre an art project around him, to see if I could connect with him in any way. Really it was a more general project about my ancestry and the photographs of everyone I have left, but I discovered that of all the people who make up my family tree, my eyes, I get from him, and whoever came before him. I have the same eyes as

my aunt, aswell. My father's eyes are different — they are my grandmothers. They are unmistakably blue, they are kinder, they are rounder. They are heavy set. My eyes, our eyes, are murky and shifty, and was somethign that always confounded me as a child. I always thought that I needed to know what colour my eyes were, that it was somehow a very important part of what made me a person with an identity — did I fall clearly into the category of blue, green, or grey? But really my eyes are all and none at the same time, and depending very much on the weather and my mood and how hard I have been crying for, people say different things.

She always insisted my eyes were green. I loved that. Most people, who don't pay too close attention, decided off hand that I am defintiely a blue. People also used to say that I was a natural blonde, but that is something that I won't even bother to discuss. But she, she was convinved I was a green, always a green, even if the green was hiding, and I loved that she loved that about me. I loved that she maintained that I was a slightly more special and magical shade of eye colour than I usually probably was. She herself was a standard light blue, not vivid, the kind closely related to grey but with a defintie tint. Very german, her eyes. I have no idea where my eyes come from. Scottish, i supposed. We are scottish everything, in the end. Bludgeon me with a scottish family tree. I don' get what the rukus is about. but if that's so, and if I have a norse nose form my Grandfather Bjerke —

I just remembered somehting I really want to put down. For a very long time, when I was quite young going on nto so young, I wasn't even sure what my grandfather's first naem was. I would be worried that I was getting one and the other consfused, so I woudl just

never speak of either of them, at all. I still don't know quite when my grandfather died, whether he ever met me or held me, or even my older brother. Why don;t I know this, why don;t I know this. What did he die from? Now I find that atleast for my mother's father, I would like to know. He is a character I hear about with love, and that has shaped my perception of him — he is a person to be loved, even in his sternness and his smoking and his refusal to speak french.

— but you has all these components of yourself, a patchwork doll of scandinavian ancestry, and yet your doppleganger is a distant italian something or other cousin. It is uncannt and eerie. You remember when your mother showed you the picture of her — thought, now tht you think about it as wlel, you don't even know if it is a girl you are related to or not — but your mother showed you thepicture, and she was in awe, and you did see what you mean. At the time, thoguht, you were a teenager, and were'nt in the habit of looking at yourself in mirrors. You did not truly know your face yet, you were not intimately familiar with it, you did not know you had dimples. But you knew that she did look liek you, look just like you, right down to the eerie was she held her shoulders hunched and draped her long hair, same colour, same texture as yours, across her face, trying to hide from the camera without breaking the spell that rooted her to the spot. She is your twin, and she is out there somewhere, maybe still in Italy, maybe somewhere completely different.

30k! go you!

If's pulse was thick and slow. She was sitting on the park bench that was embedded the farthest back into the cedar bushes. The park was shaped like a long oval, pointed at both ends. The path cut through the center of the eye shape, making a roundabout in the middle, an iris embedded with a fountain. The park was nestled into a very populated residential area, mostly apartment buildings of low and mid-low income range. Everyone either had children or were poor old Polish ladies or young spinster adults living off of twelve thousand a year with three or four cats. It was an eclectic neighbourhood. It was also quiet, in an unexpected way. The park was a jewel that she stumbled upon, in her early roamings of the area, when she was constructing a mental map of her new surroundings. It lept out at her, a tiny oasis. It was empty, and no one was around. It was high summer, the first time she found it, and the cicadas were screaming along with the electricity in the telephone wires. The park was filled with well kept beds of plants, but what was surprising about them was that they were not the normal park flora, predictable flowers and low-maintenance shrubs clipped close to the ground. Huge patches of herbs and wild plants blossomed, and were allowed to grow to many tall heights. Echinacea soared up past her hip in two symmetrical spots on both sides of the path, and were surrounded by velvet lady's mantle. She bent down to brush the large, fan shaped leaves and roll the perfect drops of dew around in their cupped centres. It had the texture of closely cropped, dense fur — this was a plant that was truly velvety, not prickly or sparse in its covering. She pinched off a stem and pressed it to her cheeks, drawing tiny circles on her face, savouring the sensation. She loved this plant, and she could make medicinals out of it. Lady's mantle, called that for its help soothing uterus cramps. She marvelled that it was chosen for a park



— it was an extremely pleasant plant, but uncommon in the area, unconventional. She wondered if maybe she was in a private area, and hadn't realised it. But no, there was the public park's metal sign, up on a pole on the sidewalk just outside the opening in the black iron fence, and it had all the trappings — a communal central fountain, well kept paths, benches at regular intervals along the paths. At one of the tapered end of the park, nestled away, was a tiny grove — she was being generous in callign it that — of evergreens, of all kinds. A blue spruce, in the back, with it's silvery, dagger like needles, a christmas pine, a few jack pine's with their cloud-soft bundles closest to the park becnh. She walked over and sat down. Those small trees were close enough on both sides that it she reached out a hand sehe could brush them, and bring the scent back to her. This end of the park was shaded, and the ground was covered in dense clover rather than grass. she slipped her feet out of her sandals and wiggled her toes into the dense dark green. A feeling of quiet excitement was bubbling up in her. It started at the very base of her spine, at her tail bone, and she recognized it as the same feelign she had as a child when she found a particularly good place to hole away and read all day. From where she sat, she could only see a small patch of sidewalk outside the gate, and the other tapered end of the park was partly obscured by small crab apple trees, scattered here and there. She was fenced in by tall sculpted cedars, hiding her and dampening the sound of the already fairly quiet street. What a place she had found, what a place. A young girl took a sharp turn into the park, smoking a cigarette, and If slipped out the other way as him. She would ocme back, she would come back.

And she did come back. The next time, she passed by the park when she was out stalking the pavement, trying to shake her head out of the black cloud she had gathered.

She was smoking herself, something she only went back to these days when she was full of pent up irritation. Ripping cigarette after cigarette out of a carton and pulling sharply into her lungs gave her a sort of outlet for her frustration. She hated that she smoked. It felt at odds with the way she lived the rest of her life, her slow, steady flow, her baking. She thought of herself as an all around steady person, healthy and stable. She couldn't even tell you how she really started. It made no sense, and yet here she was, and it was a testament itself to the addictive power of nicotine, she supposed. So she was stomping up and down the pavement, in an irrational and irredeemable mood, when she noticed the park passing by her on the other side of the street. She crossed over, and stood outside the fence until she finished her smoke — there seemed something sacrilegious about throwing cigarette butts on the ground in that beautiful serene space. Her head was faintly dizzy — she rarely ever smoked and when she did she smoked too much and made herself sick, so she lowered herself down with her back against a tree halfway into the park. It was one of the crabapples, the biggest one, with a lovely twisted trunk and a very low fork. She forced herself to take a dozen slow, deep breaths, and then started looking around herself, at the grass and the scattering of old crabapples that lay around her. It was still high summer, and she could see them gleaming above her head, rosy pink and yellow globes, not an inch across. It was so rare and so lovely to see edible food growing in public spaces — even though she doubted the usual residential family would be particularly interested in crabapples. She plucked one off the ground that looked like it had just fallen that day, rubbed off the grass, and took a tiny nibble. Her lips puckered up and her eyes snapped shut involuntarily, her mouth filling with intense starchy sourness. She tossed the rest of

that one away, but filled her pockets with fresh apples from the tree when she stood up, and baked them up with sugar and regular apples that night in a lovely crisp that she ate right out of her ramekin. She loved makign herself luxurious deserts and eating them in just her own company. The fact that they were free made them even sweeter. If began to think of the park as a plasce she could go to recieve gifts from plants — every time she passed by she brought a small bit of something home with her, wether it was yarrow leaves, more crabapples, or a dried spear of echinacea that she wove into the braided charm that hung on the inside of her door. A witch's braid, it was, starting with a base of twigs the she harvested from her favourite old juniper bush — stripped of its leaves but still faintly pungent. Thick cord was looped over the twigs in gooseneck knots, and then were braided in and out of each other, coming together or branching apart to accomodate the objects If kept adding into it. There were the delicate bones of a crow she had scavenged, and rings that had been cut open and then squeezed back around with pliers to pinch some of the coords into a bottle neck, set with tiny rocks. Strands of hair from her favourite people, who were always welcome in her home, and branches of rosemary, marigold flower heads, a chunk of rose quartz. A tiny painted bread charm she had made and painted, To this she added the wand of echinacea, after all of its petals had fallen off and she shook the dried flower head upside down to collect it's seeds. She would try to grow more on her balcony next spring season — the park was always gifting her thigns.

She would intentionally steer her route far out of bounds so that she could pass by on her way to wherever she was headed, just to put a rock in her pocket, for good luck — especially if she felt like she needed it. She bailed on a date once because the rock in her pocket felt a bit too heavy. If trusted her gut, and swooped around her world picking out omens and prophecies from the marks the grass left on her thighs and the way the crows organized themselves on the telephone wires outside her house, and the crackle in the glaze of her bread. Her bread, her bread. Her most beautiful magic. She always marveled at the way in which she could nourish bodies. She knew, actually, that technically, this was science, not magic, but what did she care. Yeast bubbled and grew, alive, swelling, screaming I am here and filling the room with its earthy odor. Flour sprinkled all of her clothing and left traces of itself all over her, where she would find, behind her ear, in her eyebrow, and be reminded. Kneading dough felt like the closest thing to meditation she had ever experienced. She always left her hand on the door of the oven after closing in a loaf, kissing her baby good bye with her fingertips, sending it off to its first day of school. She was a mother. All witches were mothers. All creators were mothers. It was inherent and in their soul.

She knew that she was fortunate to be able to do what she loved, and live off of that. She knew that the fact that she could live the way she did, alone, undisturbed, was a large blessing. She did not need much, she did not spend much, she lived a simple and mostly solitary life, so she never really spent much. But she felt that she needed to live alone, love

alone. She could not imagine sharing her spaces, again, and maybe that was a bad thing. Maybe she had lost, along the way during her during some failed life skills tests, the ability to cope with other people, to cooperate. Seclusion did not breed amazing results, she thought. She thrived alone, but she knew that she was an outlier. The world would fall apart if everyone secluded themselves the way she did., But she was happy, and calm, and content, and she was able to fill her house with weeds and braids and bones and rocks and no one could tell her otherwise.

31877

There are so many things that you can not stand in people, so many sounds and so many emotions and so many needs that you instantly become irritated and inflamed when exposed to. You feel like you might honestly be a horrible person, if you are being honest with yourself. Your partner scolded you last night, not to start that rhetoric, when you said he was a good person, because he never had mean thoughts. That the idea of saying you're just not a good person, that you're a bad person, is in some ways a thing or an excuse that people use to actually just not work on their shit.

But in some way's it still feels true, and relevant. Her doesn't go around with invasive thoughts about how ugly other people are, about how weak they are, about how they're failures. You do, you really do, have a hard time being around people who are suffering from insecurities because your brain rears up and fills your head with all these horrible uncharitable things, things that part of you honestly does believe, horrible mean nasty

standards that have been ingrained in you by society, by ableism, by capitalism, by the concept of productivity as the greatest value of worth in society. If you are not productive, then what? You have. The problem with trying to exorcise these thoughts out of your psyche is that part of this rhetoric is what you use to keep your own self feeling strong — you are doing better, you are, you are, and you can't just pin that down to luck and support, because you know that's not true. You dragged yourself out of this shit yourself, and yes you had a lot of help from medication, but other than in order to defend your position as someone who saved themselves, you see them as victims of themselves, victims of their lack of self-confidence and products of their weakness, their inherent weakness. You hate this rhetoric of weakness, and yet it can not and does not exist without the rhetoric or strength, and that, the idea of inner strength, is something you use to buoy yourself up immensely, is one of the foundations upon which you've built your survival. You are strong, you are strong, and so what does that make everyone else who was not able to do what you are doing, every day? That it was all you. And you were the one who decided, on your own, with no source of support, that you needed to get that medication, as well. You did this for yourself. You took initiative, even when you were the closest you ever came to killing yourself, to pull yourself out of this mire, that mire, and you have so much pride in yourself for being able to do that. You did do it. You were strong. You were brave. You were honest with yourself. But the problem with that is that it means that, as you acknowledge all these things you did for yourself, that when you look at other people who are in the middle of their suffering, who aren't able to do what you did, or who are trying and floundering (as you did, just the same, for a very long time) you have a hard time

empathizing with them. You see them, and you see the things that you narrowly missed becoming. And you see,

TeYou are afraid that people who are struggling and suffering can not be around you, you are afraid that you can not give them any support. You where trying to explain yestyesterday night to your partner what kind of mean exactly you were, in your head. And it is like this: you were talking to her, her, the first intense love your of life, her that you have already written so much about, her that you loved so tenderly and consumingly. You were talkign to her on the phoen and all you could think of was how pathetic and weak her voice sounded, how unsure of her sentences and her ideas she was, and how much you detested that. How her sentences trailed off =, how all of her sounds sounded as if they were squeezed out of her, uncomfortably. How all she could do was talk about how badly she was doing, and how all you could think about was how scornful you were of the fact thta she oculdn't help herself out of it. How she woujldn't just asit the fuck up straight and take a deep breath and let out her words in a clear , unwheezing way, stop dwellign on hthe same shit she has been obsessed with forever. How I am so tired of hearing her talk about her diet troubles, how literally everytime I talk to her it is the same shit.

I want to rip out the throat of this man sitting behind me who is whistling. I am so tense and irritated right now and it is reflectign in my writing and I wish that these small sounds did not affect me so fucking much but I am on a bus and there is literally no where else for

me to go and I am just trying to sit here and be productive and write but this fuckign whistling oh my god this fucking whistling. Is this not driving everyone else crazy as well? Is this not physicllay painful to other people stop whistling stop whistlign stop existing please die.

32.8

New rule: you are not allowed writing when you are irritated. You are a horrible horrible person when you are irritated. It is true. You are at your worst most intolerant most uncharitable self.

You were worried that you would not be abl;el to let iot go, but, at least atleast. you were. You let it go. your day was fine and you will not be bothered by the person next tp you no you won't no you wont. You have been doing so much, so much, and you are going to do so much more. It's as goal to do thing after thing after thing keeps you afloat. You are hoping to adopt a new animal. You are hopign to adopt Stanley. Was that the first name of somethign in your life that you uttered, aloud, in your head, that you allowed yoruself to name? STanley, stanley. Stanley the cat. Maybe it's not true but it feels like it is. A big part of you hopes that if you adopt another cat, a cat that has special needs, that needs medication and that needs daily care, that you will be forced to become a more responsible version of yourself. You know, you feel like you are already on your way, but there still more work to



be done. Yesterday, as you lay on your cats fur covered dog-bed, you explained to your partner how there was a banana, a rotting banana, write by your bed, and every day for the past four days, you got up in te morning and you looked at the banana and you thoguht abhout pocking it upo but you never did. Even as you were telling the story of the banana, it lay four feet away from you , still on teh floor next to your bed, and you thought about thinking about picking it up and you did not. He picked it up and threw it out when you pointed it out to him, later in the day.

That situation, that sewuence of events, feels to you very much like a tiny harmless capsulation of your experience with depression. That banana lying on teh floor next to you bed, and your inability, for some reason, even though you have been maanging to be a compleyley fuinctional human being in allmost all other reagrds, to just deal with it and pick it up, is symbolic of every struggle that you go through when you are depressswed. Everythign in your life become like that dumb rotting abana, and for some reason you can not do anythign about it, even though you are fully aware of the problem and continue to look at it. You look and look and lay in bed and do nothing. That is the smeinal experience of depression for you, adn you were wporried that because you couldn't pick up that banana, thatit was a harbinger of thigns to come, That the banana betrayed the fact that you were only pretending to be able to keep a clean, clear life and house and keep everythign from going to shit and falling apart. But no, no, you refucse t;o beliecve that. You were merely lazy, you have had a momentary lapse of laissez faire, and you have scheduled

a period of cleaning into your evening micromanaged tasks. You really don't feel like you are lying to yourself when you say, you are fine, you are fine. You may not be Martha Stewart, that you have made your piece with, but still, you are fine, and you are bringing home a special cat brush to scrape all the fur off your bedsheets and brush your cat down and remove as much of her excess hair from her body as possible so that you don't have to stare at your cat hair covered duvet cover and feel like such a failure and a slob in the morning when you wake up. Luckily, your partner doesn't usually make you feel gross. Sometimes he does, when he squints into the bottom of the glass he pulls down from your cupboard, wipes at it with a finger. You get irrationally mad when he does that, when he scrutinizes. If he doesn't think it's clean he can just fucking wash it again, but if you have to peer so goddamn closely at it to decide it's dirty that you are pretty sure that it isn't dirty enough to qualify as dirty, thank you very much. You are a strange person with regards to cleanliness and messes. You know that you can train yourself in and out of a lot of different habits, and that you are ultimately a creature of schedule, and that you are completely capable of washing your dishes every day. So why aren't you capable of brushing your teeth every day? Why do you insist on living with severe gingivitis? It's horrible and your teeth are going to fall out when you turn thirty — is that really what you want? You don't know why you continue to ignore this reality, you feel like it isn't quite true, the same as growing truly old, and dying. You are driving past the barren moonland of construction, along your bus route, was home. Something that has so surprisingly slipped into a welcome part of your day. You spend at least two hours commuting back and forth every day that you work, and it has become your time to write, your time to read, a forced

amount of time spent inwards, in yourself, in reflection. Maybe every month you should do something different on the bus ride each day — the month before this you were reading, and now you are writing, writing everyday, writing often over two thousand words on your bus rides alone. You have learned to keep your laptop charged, to keep your bag packed with everything you would need, your headphones, your cord, your books and your computers. On days when you accidentally forget these things, you feel lost, you flounder around, you twitch and hope around inside your skin. You feel like you are wasting time, wasting away, like your head is growing to crack open or your fingers are going to fall off. It is even worse when you have all your stuff, when you are prepared for a good long inwards session of productivity all goal-reach and achievement earning and word-count growing, and you can not get a seat on the bus. Not only are you unable to follow your earned, familiar, daily schedule, but you also have to carry the heavy burden of your brick of a laptop, weighed down with the thousands of words it is carrying. Your shoulders ache from the weight of your unwritten words, on days like those. You consider sitting on the floor, though you always decide against it. What would people think what would people think.

She is exhausted. She lays down in the park, the bare skin of her back, the gap in her low scooped dress, digging into the ground. The blades of her shoulder press deeply into the mounds and tiny hills underneath her, and she wiggles them around with a weary slowness. She knows she should go home. If she stops here for too long, she may never get

back up again. Like falling asleep in the snow. Once, when she was younger, she drank too much and fell asleep, on her way home, in a residential area, on a couch on the side of the street. She woke up to birdsong and rays of sun hitting her face, and extremely disoriented, hauled herself off and started walking again. It was half an hour before she realized she was going in the complete wrong direction, that she didn't know where home was, that seriously horrible things could have happened to her. She was lucky, she was always lucky. If lays in the park now, completely sober but thinking about that occurrence, impressed with her lack of precautions. She thought about pulling herself up off of the grass and the clover, thought about tensing the muscles in her arm and lifting it up and then raising up the rest of her body with it, but she thought about it and did not do it. She continued to lay there.

34 18

The worst mistake I ever made, the worst mistake I ever made... Honestly I don't know what that would be. In many ways I see all the mistakes that I've made as really clear pointers to becoming the person who I am now, and I love myself, so I don't know that I regret any mistakes, I don't know that I quantify them like that. I can think of things that I am doing right now that may become my biggest mistakes, particularly expressing (or not expressing) my love and gratitude for certain people in my life... but that takes the kind of foresight that I don't have. I can look at it but not be concerned. I think I would say that the biggest mistake I've made is actually a sum of many tiny mistakes that I kept and maybe

still do keep repeating over and over in my life. I do think that I have learned so much, every time I repeat this mistake, every time I learn from it, a bit, a bit, and I chisel another notch into a wall instead of my arm and I move on and then I do it again. I look for approval in men, I seek affirmation in them when I know I should not. When I know that I am so much better than that. I twist myself up and throw myself through fire and ignore everything when my body is screaming at me to run to run I stay I stay and I laugh and I smile and I suck dick and I ride dick and I pretend I'm enjoying it so much more than I am and I pretend that I think they are funny and I pretend I pretend I pretend to myself that I feel safe. Sometimes I do feel safe, sometimes I feel so, so safe in the arms of men, and that maybe is what I keep craving, and what I keep going back for, and what I am searching for every time I make this mistake. But I don't really know if that's true. And I don't know why I feel that way. I don't know why I feel the need to feel so small, to be a tiny body pressed up against a much larger one, a much stronger one, one that could snap me in half. Why does that feel safe? Why does that feel safe when I know that their interest in me relies on me denying so much of who I am and what I am and how and what I feel? How could that ever pass for safety? How can I sleep next to the people? That is what baffles me the most. How could I ever sleep next to these men, in peace, wake up rested the next morning, turn over towards them and tuck myself back into the crook of their arm and run my hands over the hair on their chest and feel ~SAFE. And I did, and to say I didn't was a lie. But to say I was was also a lie. It's a situation with multiple levels of lie and the suspension of belief.

I also feel the need to say, for the sake of posterity, for the sake of my older self who is reading this and does not quite remember who I was and what I felt when I wrote this, who can't remember who I was with and who I meant this to be about, I do want to say that there are men now who I love and who do make me feel safe, and it is a completely different kind of feeling, and it is a feeling that rings true and is based in no lies and all love and you love and are amazed that you can love someone who is a man, any man, even just one. It amazes you, and I hope you've kept some of that, I hope it isn't gone from you, future older self. Sometimes, to the disbelief of all, and especially to the disbelief of you, you find you love a man. And more miraculous than anything else, you do not feel like loving a man means you need to be less of anything, less gay less trans less queer less masculine less androgynous less fluid less pinnable as girl as feminine less anomaly. You are allowed to — not allowed to — you are celebrated Because you are all those things and you can not believe it. You don't know if you had that kind of support even when you loved and were loved by someone who wasn't a man. You know you are incredibly fortunate.

You are gushy and blundering now and an edge of you feels like you are being overly sentimental and that you may be writing this for his benefit, that he may read this, and you know what, good, you hope he does, you hope he understands that you love him and that it is in spite of and in contrast to your experience of men as a whole.

You suspect that here you are winding up to tell a very specific tale, one that, if you're being honest with yourself, is unavoidable. You can not live your life and you especially can not write your life without addressing this story, this thing that has become something with a life of its own, something that has scarred you in clear, tangible ways. It relates to rape, and to the suggestion of rape, and to the threat and weaponization of rape, and to trust and lack of trust and the fact that you can not trust, you don't know how to trust, a man. In many ways, despite everything that you just said, you can't. You are not up to speaking names, here — you have been avoiding it the whole time, and you will continue to do so now. If there's anything you are certain of, that the future holds, it's that you will not forget this, you will not forget this (and yet as you write that, as you form those words in your mind and as they drop like heavy pearls, twice, for emphasis, you wish it to be untrue. you wish you may forget. if you have forgotten, weep tears of joy for yourself. it is what you would have wanted).

You do not know, you have never known, how you stand on your history of sex and sexual assault and rape. You do not know if you would call what you have had happen to you, quite, that. And yet you know that if it were not you, if it had not been you, you would. If it had been someone who had come up to you with your histories, your parallel lives, in distress, you would have said yes, yes, your pain is valid, your anger is valid, and you would arm yourself with crossbows and knives and set out into the night, kill all rapists. The only motto of the world. And yet, you do not feel distress. You do not know if that numbness you

feel is due to implicate guilt, knowing that you had a very strong hand in the outcome of the situations, that part of you wanted what you got — I know how that sounds but it's undeniably true. Your first fuck was because you, you, you, wanted it, you might as well have been begging for it, you were all over him, all over him. But then, you were so, so drunk. You were impossibly drunk. You do not remember the followup to taking off your clothes, except a brief flash, a brief recall, of the ceiling, as you saw it. Was this rape? In the morning, you were proud, you were happy. Was this rape? In time you came to feel shame and distress and then, with more time, it faded away. You know what your friends would say, what advocates of consent would say — yes, yes yes it is. And yet, and yet. You do not know that you want to say, that that was rape. And yet again, it happened to you, impossibly drunk and dripping with want and falling into their laps like ripe fruit, and saying yes yes yes the golden words dropping from your mouth before they even have the chance to ask and yet — and yet. You felt like you wanted what you were getting, and first, and then you felt like you did not, and you felt all the realities of your impossibly drunk, and your impossibly tired, and your impossibly shameful, when he tried to keep you going but you couldn't you couldn't, you thought you would die if you didn't sleep then. And you told stories, afterwards, mortified, but armed with an arsenal for parties — a good story, when you fell asleep in the middle of sucking dick. A good story, a good laugh, a knife in your heart. Was that rape? Yes, yes, a tiny, tiny, extremely tiny voice in your head wants to say, and you have never really said it before, and you are going to say it now, yes, yes, it was, it was. You have healed, and you are fine, but there maybe was something that would not



have closed, and now you have said it and now you have put it down in writing in permanence in history it is history and maybe now that may close.

This is a different story than the story you meant to tell.

But, at the same time, in many ways, this is the same story. Because when, years later, another turned to you, another that you had spent so, so much time with, that you had bent over for, that you had laid yourself bare and stuck your neck out on the chopping block for, as you were naked in his bed next to him, his body between you and the door, when he turned to you and suggested, mildly, humourously, jokingly, that he could rape you, you felt a knife that was already lodged deep inside your back twist even deeper, a knife that had healed shut almost over the blade, a knife that you almost always forgot was there. And you exploded, and you thank your lucky stars and you thank all the gods and all your sisters, and all the people and the ideologies and the tumblr rants that had prepared you for that moment, because you were able to turn into a hissing and spitting animal and pull the knife out of your back and throw it at him and unsheath about a thousand razor blade claws. You were so well prepped, you hissing spitting wildcat. You were able to rake a furiously line across the bed, remove his hands with just your voice alone. You did all this in the infinite and instant moment — you did not stop to think about why and how you reacted until so much later, when you really started to reflect. There have been so many micro-aggressions, your life among men is just a long series of micro-aggressions, of rape that you never knew was rape, of assault that you just bundled up against and walked away fatter afterwards — and the laying bare of all pretense finally allowed you to pour out all your hatred, all you

bitter poison and anger. It took a long time for you to leach enough poison out of the knife wound in your back to carry on, and you still are not clean. You still wake up from dreams in which you are screaming, shrieking, fighting, against him in particular and against no one at all, drenched in sweat, shaking. You have not healed yet, but you are trying. In some small ways, it is working. The best way to start, the best way you know, is to honour the truth of your trauma, and you will. You will not rewrite those words. Yes, yes, yes, it felt like it and it was, and you pray that you will be able to never let that happen to you again.

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So you are fiercely protective of yourself, you channel this every day, except on the days when you do the exact opposite. You know that is what you are doing. You have never fully let the ridge of hair standing up along your spine, bulking you up and filling you out, never let it rest quite fully. You keep your edge about you. You forsake your identities, you build new ones, that will not enslave you to the type of people who did this to you, even if it doesn't come as naturally, you twist yourself up and you don't mind, you love what comes out, you love challenging yourself to love the things that, if left quite alone, you would hate about yourself because of the things you've been taught about yourself by society. The whole process requires that you break away from those standards, and every time you fall back and make that mistake, you rebound from it by building yourself back up even stronger. You love the hair on your body now, you love the way your jaw cuts a bit stronger than what anyone would call feminine, you love the dry crackle of your skin, you feel

like indiana jones when ever you don't moisturize and you revel in that, and like a dewey prince when you do. Like prince bubblegum, maybe. You know you know you know, that your anything is good, that anything you choose to do now with your body is good. It has been a long, long time since you did something to yourself you came to regret. You shave off your hair you shave off your eyebrows, you chisel out your cheeks or you hug your belly and let it go soft, you squish around your thighs and that is fine, you stuff your feet into huge boots and your legs into pants that do absolutely nothing for your butt and you walk around, in love with yourself, or you put on sky high boots for stomping around and on hearts and black tights and tight skirts and that feels just as good too, not better, not worse. Every manifestation of yourself is a good one, and you marvel at this. You don't really know what you can do more, to go further with this, but you will just keep doing what you're already doing and you will keep growing, you are sure of it. No one has any influence on you anymore, except yourself. You hold this like a jewel at your chest, you let it glow inside you. Sometimes you want the approval of other people, but at the end of the day, you know you do not need it. If you get it, you glow, you know that people know what you are, you are affirmed, you rejoice with others in yourself, but if you don't, it does not cut you down, you move on, you shake your head and let their loss go, because it is not yours, it is theirs. Have you ever been so healthy, have you ever been so healthy. You want to spread your love of yourself into everyone else, so that they can love themselves with the same ferocity as you, but you do not know how. You don't know, really, how you came to this place you are in. It is the biggest mystery of your life.

You are absolutely forever impressed and pressed with yourself — this is a lie but this is what you feel like right now, right now. You just left the library, champion of coding, fist-punchin the air because you've got it you've got it you're a genius you've solved evrything — . You're computer is whirring like a beast though, and you wonder if the librarian hates you for it. You feel great today, great. You had to (no you didn't have to) cancel your psychiatrist appointment for this Tuesday, though, and you know that this is going to be a problem. You need a new renewal. You are goign to run out of medication, soon — you will start splitting you pills, half doeses. But really, really, you feel great. You do not know if you will be able to see her again, your psychiatrist, soon, but you hope so, you really hope so. You are absolutely convinced on the medication's effect on you, and yet for osme reason your love of yourself doesn't feel any less real. You are a happy sexy bean, a true oxymoron, a happy, sexy, bean. You don't even care. You want to save these words that you are writing to yourslef and stick them in a pocket of your favourite denim jacket, the one you got in Halifax, the one with the knitted cotton. You want to do this, you want to save this, you want, you want. Everything is lovely. Your words are lovely yoru fave is lovely especially the way it is right now, not a single bit of concealer or coverup but shimmery orange tint to your lips and meticulously cropped brows. You are drinking a drink that isn't even vegan , you don't care. You are going to be able to get everyone beautiful Christmas presents, you don't care you don\'t care you don't care. You need to figrue out what to get your partner, though. This is a thing you are not sure of. Maybe, socks with Rosie's face on them, and a pusheen shirt. Or a collar. Or or or. You have completely abandoned the premisses of your novel, and even of your memoirs — you are rambling and putting yoru racing thoughts

down as valid literature. That's ok, that's alright, because your voice is beautiful, your words drop even now from your tongue, silently, like gems, shimmering like raindrops and quenching your restlessness. You could listen to yourself for ages.

You are afraid, that this megalomaniac obsession with yourself, this love of yourself, has filled you up so completely that you can not actually love anyone else properly. You are afraid of this is a very small, quiet way, in the back of your mind. It is not something that keeps you up at night, the same way your fear of forgetting who you are and how you feel does. It only surfaces when you find you are incapable of a certain act of love or selflessness — selflessness is the particular key, here, that stops you. You do nothing out of selflessness. You love because it feels good for you. You never love what doesn't (this is a lie this is a lie this is propaganda about yourself, why are you trying so hard, so hard?)... You would like to believe that you never love what doesn't feel good, but then how can you explain your intense knife-stabbing remembrance of the feeling of heartbreak? How can you explain the years of torture of loving her, of not being loved back? That is a blatant lie, but you leave it up there, as if it were a spell, as if saying it, writing it, reading it over and over and over, will make the incantation come true.

You press what you've done, the how many words, and how many pages, into your heart, symbolically. All these pages, all these pages. You could have done so much else, this month, and you chose to do this, you chose to immortalize yourself. You chose not to try to steep yourself in fake literature, in coatings of fiction and stories. You have always been so

confused as to why anyone would write a memoir, when they hadn't done anything particularly famous — but now you understand. The act of putting yourself down is so cathartic. Such a release on your memory. You have this hear, now, forever, if you want it. Maybe you will do this every year, every november — chart your life. A book for every year of your life. You tried to do that once, tried to put down into writing your life every day, in a journal. You managed two years, and two beautiful hadn-written book do you have to show for them. But it is not a practise that you can keep up. You do not have the patience, for the slow creep of your hand across paper. You have become trained to be able to unleash your thoughts as they come and just never look back.

37640

You are alone, and you tumble through your house. You slip in and out of clothing, in and out of blankets. You trail bits of your jackets and bags and leave trails of crumbs, pacing back and forth from spot to spot and chair to chair. Two tiny sentries are stationed on either end of your house, your small fur children. Right now you live alone, you live all alone. You are thriving. You spend five hours under water and then you come back up for air, you spend another five hours preparing a ceremony that only you will witness, a small pouring of tea or brewing of coffee. Nothing can bother you, encapsulated, crystalized, as you are, inside your house. You feel as if time is transfixed and waiting, when you are here, alone. As if you could do anything you wanted, take as long as you cared, let the world turn

and turn and turn outside and when you put on your denim jacket and skull crushing boots and tuck your keys and your wallet and your life into your deep pockets and step out the door, it will wind back to join you exactly where you left off. You are in sanctuary. You are a small bird with broken wings but as long as you stay here, inside your walls, you can not fly far enough to hurt yourself, you can not stretch you wings wide enough to crack open your bones again. The small responsibilities of a fridge and a floor and a laundry hamper keep you tethered neatly and pleasantly to reality and to life, and to a rhytm of the accumulation of dust and dirt. You float above the floor, but never too far. You teach yourself how to fold your shifts and tuck them snugly into your drawers, like a child caring for dolls. You drag your furniture around the floor at two am when you feel like you have a small furnace built up inside you — when you feel like a small baby-sized mania might be brewing in your chest. You reassemble your structures and reground yourself by rolling your body over the floor, by stripped yourself down and rubbing yourself over, by exhausting yourself and setting alarms and pulling yourself through, holding your own hand. In the morning, you feel fine, and you survey your night's handiwork with pride. Even in precarious moments you have a knack for homemaking. There are small accomplishments that you strive for, as you structure you life inside these walls in small chunks, achievable tasks. Right now you have a row of small cactuses that you are trying to nurse back from the dry death you sank them into. An extracurricular task. They are like icing on your apartment cake — if you achieve this you will be the crowning glory of your entire past life's ikea catalogue pining. You used to do so much of that, you always had this in your bones. You should have known.

This house, this apartment, this home, is a tiny castle that you have come to love deeply. You never thought that your first apartment would ever feel like a home, you never thought you would be able to create a home on your own. And it is true that you did not create this on your own, but you are the only one who has seen it through this whole time. You have a sense in your head of the house as a benevolent and semi-conscious being, and you do not want it to feel bad about its previous inhabitants leaving. You touch its walls lovingly, you broom its floors, you stare lovingly into its corners. You try to fill it with lovely smells, you try to track down ruthlessly the things that you have left go off. You have filled it with charms and trinkets and icons, strings of dried herbs, shelves of books. You have tried to only keep the things that you love, and so show your love for its space through that. You have tried to resist the urge to go through huge amounts of stuff, of junk, of shit, just because you can. You do not bring anything free home. You reject offers of couches and chairs, you are a stern gatekeeper. There are only so many things that are allowed in your livingroom at once, only so many dishes before a switch automatically goes off. You have such a great fondness for the small designs of holes punched into the ends of the old metal radiators under the windows, and for the fireplace and mantle piece that hold no actual fire, but are covered in candles and mirrors and lamps. Your hallway is lined with bottles of tincture and unused canvas stretchers, hula hoops, rolls of fabric. Your hallways are bristling with things to make, things to build. You are a house of creativity. You are a house of potential. Your three closets feel like magical doorways, as long as you keep them closed. You know what is in them, behind them, you know that the middle one is a mess and that they all need lighting to be strung up for them to be useful, but if you sit at



the end of your hallway and look at it, with your head tilted slightly back and your eyes slightly shut, the fairy lights you have strung up convince you you are so close to narnia. You have created a beautiful, beautiful thing. You have gone through s much stress to get here, get to this happy, comfortable place, and you are unsure if it is sustainable once the people you are pretending yo don't actually live with come back, but for now, you are floating. You are in your own, perfect space. You don't really know why you ever were afraid of this.

There is a garland of dried orange lanterns, small little plant sheaths, strung up underneath your shelves of books in your living room. They have been there for a long, long time. They are some of your most prized possessions, even in their ephemerality. You do not own them, they are not yours, you do not even know who put them there, and yet they are a precious part of your life. They are too delicate to move, and so when, eventually, invariably, you do have to move, you think you may leave them here. Or burn them where they hang, and scatter their ashes in the corners of the apartment, a charm for good luck and good will to the next tenants. May they find as much harmony in this apartment as you feel, right now, alone, with your cats, in your chair, in your onesie, still glowing wiht the warmth of your bath. You have the foresight, at least, to undertsand how lucky you are to have come from such levels of unhappiness in this place to such contentedness, and you don't, like evrythign els ein your life, quite now how or why this happened, but it did. When you lived with the other two, your friends, the stress, the seeming responsibility that you imposed upoin yourself as the functional one, the bitterness that grew in you out of that and the stubbornness to maintain your position as the successful, funcitonal, martyred

member of your household could have ruined your relationship with them both. As it stands, it is rocky, but surviving, and mending — but only because of ruthless new boundaries you have set up around yourself, around your reclaimed space. You leave lines of chalk and ground bones, eggshells, salt, trailing down your hallways, marking off the boundaries of your home. When that man left your house, when you made him leave, you set out on a full scale exorcism of his room, in all earnestness. You burnt rosemary in oil, you lit candles and balled fists and cut into your palms with your nails and let all your anger at men at people at being taken advantage of seep out of you and be absorbed by the piles of salt you place in the corners. You left those piles of salt there for ages. When you finally swept them clean, the room echoed empty, fresh and clean and ready for new folks.

Now you live with new souls and new cats, and you feel like you have been scrubbed clean. You know so much more than you did a year ago, two years ago. It feels like ages and ages of learning have gone by. You have transformed into such a powerful grizzly bear, and such a small tiny soft cat. You are full of contradictions now that live in harmony with each other more than ever before. But, if you are being honest with yourself, the things that you love more than anything else in the world, about living alone, about having your own space, is being able to carve out on your own time and on your own terms and in your own location, your sex life. It's being able to bring over who you want when you want and screaming if you want and laying around naked and basking in glory and being wholly, entirely comfortable and safe in your space. You are viciously protective of this aspect of

your space, and you don't think you could ever again live in a space where you were not able to do; this, to have this, to control this aspect of your life. You scoff at the idea of those tiny homes, simply because you could never limit yourself to a loft bed that you would hit your head against the ceiling of every time you arched your back, when you did not have a single empty wall space to press up against, to be pressed up against as you are fucked. You need a sturdy home that you can throw people up against and roll around in and kick your legs against, thick walls that you can moan into and large floors to lie on.

39 327

Today, it snowed. It snowed on the twentyfourth of november two thousand and fifteen, and the snow stayed. It lay down on the ground and did not melt and said, hello. Hi. Remember, I came back. that is a lie, of course. The snow has no conception of itself and it would be more likely, if it did, that each individual snow flake was its own being. But, but, it does not. You think about how snowflakes, each and every one, are supposed to have a complete uniqueness to their geometry. You think about how, each and every winter, more snowflakes fall than people exist. How many snowflakes live in a single snowbank? Are there, at any given time, ever more snowflakes than grains of sand on the earth? does the snow swirlign above our heads count?

the true thing about winter, the thing that kills you, is that your body really does recognize that it is trying to kill you. That this is not a hospitable realm. That your surroundings are dipping precariously close to death situations. As the seasons ebb and flow we dip so close, so close. The squirrels and the stray cat, the deer and lean, starving wolf, all these animals may and do die off, thanks to winter, due to some random gambled algorithm of cloud patterns and cold snaps. Why not us? We come so close. We can manufacture coats and heating systems and big shelters, but the air inside your house still drops to almost freezing, the skin around your ears is still tinged white with frostbite scars. This is trying to kill you, and all the garlands and bright mittens and clementines shipped in boxes from lands dripping with sun, trying to fill up our own sunless bellies, it is all just an attempt at pretending our bodies don't know this. Maybe the case is that some bodies are over, overly, sensitive to these changes. Maybe it is the equivalent of anxiety, but deep within the cells of our souls, the ones that give off a pulse of alarm when your body is close to peril. A physical anxiety, that this winter is the winter you die. This is not a joyful thing, this is death in a sweet white package. you can not fool your body, so you dull its shrill warning signs. You wave your limbs around and try to counter the physically inevitable slowing down of your blood to an oozy, cold crawl. The laws of chemistry and science and all of the physics, everything, proves that it becomes harder to live, harder to thrive, in winter. It seems to you that it makes even less sense to love winter, it makes less sense that people exist who ~don't~ suffer from seasonal malaise. How do you do it, how do you do it? How is that in any way reasonable? It is not, it is not. You are clawing your way back up and you are clawing your way back down and you don't know, the snow had blinding you,

the chill has seeped into your knuckles, you can not uncurl them, you can not pry open your eyelids — your lashes have sealed them shut, permanently. How many times each winter do you fantasize about curling up, lying down, coated as you are in layers of icelandic wool and the protective charms of norwegian snowflake patterns, and falling asleep? Daring the folk tales of a frozen, creeping death to be true? It seems pleasant, pleasant. You have read so many passages about it. It is supposed to feel warm — a creeping pleasantness stealing through your limbs once they have lost all feeling. Like drinking whiskey, you imagine it to be, death pouring down your throat once you are too frozen to feel it. The way icecubes burn, if you close your eyes and imagine a match pressing into your skin instead. It sounds so much more pleasant than death by fire, or by water, or dehydration. Of all the elements, who would have imagined ice to be the most gentle death? Snowflakes flutter down onto your covered lids, your body is completely preserved. There is nothing mangled for your parents to imprint upon, grimly, for the rest of their lives. You wish them the most happiness they can find. You hope people understand that death by snow, your eternal enemy, would be the most like reconciliation with the world. The decision to embrace your weakness and let it wash over you and find peace in that, peace and release, instead of this brutal insistence on strength and fighting the good fight for literally as long as you are alive.; it is ungraceful, and tiresome, and when the snow comes, every year, you imagine letting it bury you and sleeping in peace.

The things that you have been able to do. the things that you have been able to accomplish. You press your small medallions into your heart. The dull metal burns into the flesh of your neck and seals itself there. Long nails of metal curve out from your fingertip, and drip drip drip down to the floor. You are, horribly, smoking. The husky, thick smoke drifts from between your bared teeth, crooked, snagged. Your lipstick is flawless, an oilslick black red blue green purple shimmer, like a beetle's shell. Your eyes gleam in the same shade. You have become so strong and it shows, in the twist of your spine, the stack of your vertebrae. You stand seven feet tall, in your boots. Your heels taper into thick black spikes that stab into your feet and travel back out through your heel. They are your weapons. Your collarbone, sparkling with achievements, stnads, bared. Your teeth are fangs. They bite into your tongue, twisty and dripping. Your piercing clacks against them, and you smile, giving it a show. You are so hungry, so hungry. All you want is someone who can compete with you and keep up with you. You shave your head over and over and over.

You are pressed against a cave, a ceiling, stalactities. They are piercing, very slowly, your back. It pins you up and defies gravity. You can not go anywhere. You are stuck, stuck. There is water beneath you welling up, up to yor feet. Black oil slick water, shimmering just like your lipstikc. You don't think that you can ever get down. You are here, forever, forever. The oil is in your motuh, in your eyes, in you lungs. You can still breath, but it burns, and you can smell the fumes of gasoline. It is, that's what it is. You are still pinned to teh ceiling, you still can not get free. You don't try very hard, though. You stay there and

you float and you keep your eyes closed. You can see through your eyelashes, through your eyelids, the glow of small creatures swimign before you, swimming around you. Fish with blue spines, and luminescent organs, through paperthin skin. They come to nibbel at your skin, and your tows, they pull at the laces of your heeled boots, they swim around your ankles and coil their bodies tight. You feel their small ocean fangs int your blood, letting it flow into the ocean, oil slick ocean. When you are empty, you fill back up again, and the pierced holes in your veins corrode and gape wide with the intake of the glossy black liquid. Your eyes stay closed, stay close.d You do not want to see, you do not even know what you would see if you open youe eyes underneath, there.

You can't feel the creatures around your body anymore, you can't see their light. Youcan't feel the stalactites that you are pierced up against pressed through your back and your organs, you can not feel the ceiling of the cave. You do not feel pinned in, you do not thinkyou are anywhere. You can not feel the ends of your fingers, or orient yourself, in any way. You can't even tell if you eyelids are open or shut. If they are, it doens't make a difference. You are not cold, you are not warm. You don't think you have a body, you don't think you have a nervous system. no skin, defintiely. no bones? maybe. You don't know if boens can feel. What would it even matter, if you didn't have skin that would make you just a skeleotn. You are not interested in thinking about that. You pretend to close the eyes you don't have.

You are aware only of a sense of drift, of drifting, that isn't centered in you but feels, somehow, like something spread out across a great span, in all directions. (659)

40.7

You have had a spare room in your house for over half a year and you are realising, just now, all the things you could have done with that. Of course you didn't know and you hoped that you wouldn't keep the room empty this whole time, but that is how it turned out. In retrospect you could have built ultimate blanket forts and housed a thousand kitties inside it, a tiny bird sanctuary or life size aquarium, a room full of model trains, or you could have hosted travellers, air bnb'ers, made some money, some quick cash. You could have done yoga every day, naked, if you wanted to, if you had asked to be left alone, in a completely empty room, except for the fact that there are children in the school yard next door. You think you may do that still. You can still do that. Once a day, until the new year starts. Until your new room mate is here, finally, here. Start your life off well. Two thousand sixteen. The year of the twin peaks reboot. The year you finally stretch every day. The year you finally let go of the concept of tree planting, of holding on to that, the siren call of release, no responsibility, of working your muscles till they scream and paying no rent. You have children now, you have things to take care of, and you find you are in love with that. And they are not true children, either, so if you ever want to pack up and bring them, across the world, you can (maybe — you can try). You can definitely fit them into two small



boxes and go anywhere you can get to by car with them. You're tiny fur babies. But it's not just them. You know have projects that you have invested so much time in, that are time sensitive themselves. You have been learning to grow organic vegetables and fruits in your garden for three, going on four years now. Every year you try new things, learn new things, innovate, implement. You are doing very concrete, solid, rewarding work there. You find that it is not so much that you feel tied to your responsibilities, but that you have taken on responsibility for things because you wanted to and because you love what it is, whether it be small creatures or the pursuit of permaculture. You feel like you are investing in your life, in your future, in many ways. You have become a chrysalis, you have become all the things that adults aspire to be, but often never reach. You are not sure if this is true, is this true — you want someone with a shimmering deck of tarot cards to assess you and pluck and answer from the void — yes, Hope, you have arrived. You have achieved. You have transcended. You feel like you are so obsessed, so obsessed, with the idea of becoming an adult, but that your concept of adult is so different from what you used to think it was. You want to be old enough to know how to take care of yourself and the things that you love, you want to be old enough to recognize the inherent value of the things around you, you want to be old enough to know how to not take things for granted, lives, loves, experiences. You want to be old enough to finally, //finally// discover a few secrets to better communication, to knowing how to talk to your parents on a level of equal footing, to take pride in the things that you have done. To love yourself without having it blaze out and consume you, to have a schedule set enough that you remember to take your medication every day but not so all consuming that you fall apart if you can not. You want to brush

your teeth every day, but you are old enough to know that this is not any sort of requirement for being an adult — this is merely you being vain, and not wanting to be the kind of perfectly valid adult who is missing teeth. You have so many aspirations, mundane and small and grand and transcendental, ones that you are already falling into or how already climbed, and others that float so high above your head that no one has ever fully realised them in the history of human existence. And yet you still feel a humn in your hcest when you try to outline them for you, line them up like toy soldiers, assess them with pride. You know what you want, you know what you want. Some of which is materialistic, but most of which is not. You are, as always, impressed at the amount of inner peace you are finding by verbalizing all these thoughts, even if you may never look at or show them to anyone ever again. This is cathartic, and re-orienting. The laser beam focus of your life has been retrained, onto new sights and new heights. You feel yourself moving forward, very slowly, very steadily. You are circling around yourself, in orbit, and while it may feel cyclical and as if you have passed the same markers in seasons, in dips and rises of your life, You still know that your path is growing outward. You are spiraling outwards. Your progress is slow, but it is definite, it is plottable. You want to draw a map of your life through the stars. Sagittarius ripping up the sky. Fully realizing its own potential. It is the only zodiac that truly knows it is a zodiac, and truly knows it is the best. I'm sorry, to all my allies, all my Aries and Scorpio and Capricorn, even my sometimes fun leo friends, my lovely, beautifyk taurus. You are all sweet, but we win, every time. You can not read a summary of horoscopes without rejoicing — how correct and how exactly right and how on point you are, how you shimmer amongst the crowds of types and aspirations. How could

you ever be anything than what you are, beautiful bold sagittarius. You are my favourite people. You could never love yourself the way you do if you weren't (that's not true (you are pretty sure that is extremely true, it feels it, it feels it)).

4166 You have

been tackling so many things that you have never done before. You are scared and you are invigorated and you feel your paths and your walls and your spine being built up tiny crystal brick by tiny crystal brick every time you message someone, every time you explain yourself your process why you made decisions that you made. You think about all the people that you have begun to surround yourself with, you think of how much joy you bring from that. How strong these people are. Where have they been hiding? Is it true, the way it seems that people become stronger as they grow older? And you know what you mean by this —

not the same sort of strength that ties you up in guilt complexes and makes you hiss and spit at tears, but the kind of strength that allows for compassion and kindness and love and generosity and communal uplifting. Communal strength that is found in facebook likes and small text messages and waves across metro platforms and invitations to watch movies and snuggle in cushions. It is showing up to people's events and showcases and talk and it is bringing them bananas and oreos or tupperware and it is talking them through difficult situations and bringing some of the same headspace of vicious self-defense and self-love that you have unearthed and settled into and showing them, gently, how it can be, if they want it. How to do it. Giving other people the permission to be selfish, that is my kind of friendship strength. Giving other people the space to say no. Something you value above almost all else. Being able and understanding when, despite all of this, you are not able that day to be a strong person for them, when you make sure to ask if they are. You are in love with platforms of social media, you will defend them viciously, to the death. They allow for you all to reach into each other's lives and drop smooth, colored pebbles into each other's laps even though you do not have the time or the space or the energy to shift mountains to get on buses and trains and go to their house and see them. It allows for a sort of interpersonal affirmation, that we all love each other and care about each other even if we don't see each other but once or twice a year. That they are still in our hearts. And we keep them close enough to see the same pebbles that they drop into their other friends laps, and we glow with mutual love, because we know that friendship is not a well with an end, we know that it can easily be sent to go on for ever, dipping and dipping and bringing up pebbles. I thought of you, I thought of you. It is the closest thing we have to telepathy yet. How

supported would we feel if we knew, in our hearts, every time someone we loved was thinking something nice about us, was reminded of us in the curl of a flower or the butt of a puppy on the street? infinitely. You live for those occurrences, those affirmations. You try always, to shake the feeling that you shouldn't that this is something weak, that you should not rely, lean, need, these things. You are a symbiotic community of friends and lovers and you all lean on each other and that is alright. No one is at the bottom of the pile, hopefully, no one is at the bottom of the pile. That is not how it is meant to go.

you know that this sort of telepathy is gentle and kind and you want to be able to spread it as far as you possibly can, and so every time you see someone declare that they are taking a break from social media you wave them good by but you stand by your fence, firmly ensconced. You need this, and you are not ashamed to say it! You

you watch them go and you know that they did not have what you had, and you are jolted back into understanding, sadly, that not everyone has the thing that you have, the support and the sense of community that you have, not everyone can open up their laptops and be overcome with love like you have, and this makes you sad, so sad. You want to call them back in and introduce them to all of your folks and show them, gently how to love each other by loving themselves. But you can't you can't. You are stopped by the fear of condescension, paternalization. By the understanding that not everyone operates the same way you do, not everyone filters the same meaning as you do from the same signals. You are trying to have more empathy, to remember that. Not everyone is like you, not everyone is like you. It is hard.

42.7

Press your hands into your thighs, your fingernails into the flesh of your palm. Pull your body in, pull it in tight — your muscles your bones you desire. Reel it in, keep it close, don't let it seep out. You catch a glimpse of yourself in the mirror, side-eying yourself, you are biting your lip. You are showing. Everyone on this bus knows what you are thinking about, your lips give it away. You lick them and press your spine into the seat the same way you press your spine back up against arched stomachs, skin on skin, the way you try to pin their back against the wall with your own if you could, if you were strong enough. You are pinned to the ground, you press up up up you try to use the shape and strength of your

body as leverage but you are pushed back into the mattress, face into the floor, and you are shivering and dripping and coursing with excitement. What is it, that you love, about this, above being shoved down head held down neck strangled shoulders broken in, wrists clamped in fists that you could never break. A body so heavy on top of you that even you, in your spitfire agility and strength, can't get away. This is what you are thinking about, when you are staring at your own reflection with a dazed and faraway lust. You are the most attracted to yourself and you wish you could pin yourself down.

Clementine season is here, sweet and sour and bejewelled. They are tiny little cold bites of what you feel like sunshine should taste like, when you aren't in it. No matter when you eat them, they have a sharp bite of nostalgia, as if you never weren't eating clementines and pining for a happier, simpler time. At the same time, though, they are magical, they have the anti-depressive qualities of an alcoholic shot of pure vitamin D. They are not true summer, they taste too tart, too chilly, they come with too vivid a memory of snow, all around them, and the flavour of pine in your nose. But still you know that they are harbingers of good feeling, at least for a little while. You did always love Christmas time, there is no denying that — you used to lie yourself down underneath the trees and stare up through the branches, along the trunk, and the beautiful Christmas lights, and pretend you were a tiny fairy who lived in there. It may be your favourite smell in the whole world, the crisp and sharp clean stringent wild and green smell of an evergreen. You are going to bring one home, maybe today — you know that you can afford it, you know that

it will bring a lot of tiny joy to you when you open your door every evening after work and are met by that wonderful beautiful smell. You wish you could keep it in your home all year round, but you would lose the magic, in that way. But in a lot of ways, you wish that christmas with all of its scents and sensory uplifting would come at the end of the winter, when you truly need it the most — december is magical in its own right, it has the fresh sparkle of pure white snow, before it becomes grey and slushy, before the mountains of it pile high on the side of the free way and block out the sky, before you forget, truly, what it feels like to be warm. That should be when we bring christmas in, bring in the clementines and the evergreen and the crackling fire and the cider, that is when we truly need cheering and warmth and the remind that family can sometimes, every once in a while, on rare, lovely occasions, feel good and be a support to you. You know that you are absolutely enchanted with the sensory experience of the season, even if you hate the commercialism, the pressure, the dogma of resurrection -- though that is not something that you seem much, anymore. You have been trying to shake off the feelings of guilt and pressure that the value of the things you exchange is telling of what and how much you care about someone, that you need to match or exceed what they gave to you, that they won't appreciate the gesture more than the gift itself. You are trying you are trying. But you are thankful that your family does feel like it is also trying to do the same thing, in parallel with you. You remember being a small child and being truly, really upset because of physical materials, because of gifts, or lack of gifts or some bizarre and distorted sleight that you had perceived, in the balancing and the exchange. You know now so much more than tiny you did. You appreciate that your family understands that you live with very little, that you



mom can laugh at the fact that you are undeniably below the poverty line, that this does not strike fear into her heart. She accepts that this is fine with you, and that you are comfortable, but that there is not going to be all too much in the way of Christmas presents for the extended family, for the friends. But that is ok, again, that is ok. You prioritize who you want to prioritize, and you do not feel guilty about that. You do not bend over backwards trying to pull your extended family into the fold — you struggle enough as it is with intimacy between your brothers and sisters. They can wait, until you have grown, and if they can't you can survive without them. Cousins and aunts and uncles are not your priority, absolutely not. You have so much more to work on, so much more to work on. They are good as well, though, they are understanding as well. None of you have come from strong backgrounds, well off backgrounds, stable backgrounds. They all know and accept the life of less, though many of them have been able to lift themselves up to a level where they can rest and float and catch their breath. They understand that you are not there, and while they do not worry for you — you have always been a strong swimmer — they let you alone, they do not try to reach out hands to you nor grab at your legs. You are floating along and you are doing just fine.

4.3k

What do I hate there is nothing I hate more than people on the bus saying word of advice piece of advice y'all lip smack y'all word of advice let me tell you Very single day I leave the house without headphones, I end up right right in front of people who need to go fucking die. Just go shut up shut up shut up get away from me. What is your problem. Oh

my god. Never ever ever leave without headphones because you are going to drive yourself off a cliff one day. How many thousands of words of this manuscript have you dedicated to trying to soothe the impossible rage you feel towards people on the bus who insist on speaking as if they are the most self-righteous and the most over-entitled griping and complaining there is nothing that gets into my ears and twists up my peacefulness like other people fucking complaining, fucking hissing and spitting and griping in public outload with the sense of entitlement like everyone else needs to fucking hear this take your fucking negativity and choke on it I am right next to you I do not want to hear this you sound absolutely stupid. The things that you are not even saying are so telling of your immaturity what are you complaining about what are you complaining about. You are not special you are not special. You need to shut up. I live in constant fear of being forced into a situation where I need to tolerate these kinds of people. I am so afraid of having to live with someone like this. Or someone who is a loud chewer — someone like that fucking person who lived with my friends in Halifax who would come and sit right next to me when I was trying to sleep on the couch and eat god knows fucking what macaroni and cheese without, somehow, ever ever ever ever managing to close their fucking mouth. I was on the verge of tears by the end of the first week I spent there, and ended up sleeping in a claustrophobic dust and mold filled attic crawlspace because I couldn't get away from the sound of their eating. I am trying to steel myself against all the sounds that make me want to rip my eardrums out that make me start to suffocate that make me want to hold my breath till I pass out or punch someone in the face and I know that none of these responses are reasonable responses but do I ever want to act on them, would I ever feel fucking good. I

think I would feel fcking good. Nothing makes me feel more neutoric than this, than the physical twitching and itching and rage that builds up fro nothing — absolutely nothing. Small sounds that in different people would nto bother me at all, at all. I think I really need to invest in a pair of noise cancellign headphones. please send help. you aregoing to stop trying to write, for now, for a little bit. Other people have started playign music as well and you can not focus, you are giving up trying to focus. This is imposisble. Imposible. It is gone it is gone now. You feel like a tiny weak moth buffeted about by every single stray breath, you feel your mood hopelessly tied toother people's actions, choices, ticks. You can try and try and try as hard as you want but you can not guarantee that, no matter how early you wake up how gentle you are on yourself how careful youare about your morning routine how softly you pet your cat and whisper murmer into her ear no matter how you take time aside fo ryourself after you've eatin a good filling meal no matter how you listen to calm videos or rub muslce and joint cream on your sore, tense neck or how you set yourself up in blankest and masturbate for hours, there is still no guarantee that when you walk out that door and encounter other people theya re not going to set you off like an impossibly agitated animal. You have nto ofund anytig you can do to guard against this. Nothing, nothing.

This is a small type of neurtoicism, an insidious type of craxy that has seeped into your consciouness underneath and through the vracks of your main issues, through the diagnosis of actual proper solid mental health problems, and it is osomething taht you wiull probably never have any idea of its source. Does it lay on top would it be there anyways? Does it come form it is completely a oart of? Or is it somehting taht would have been fine

but is viscerously amplified by the tendency towards irritability that comes with bipolar?

Everything is stressing you out. Everything is stressing you. Your partner, apparently, lost his shit and threw things across his kitchen yesterday. You are going to see him tonight and you are going to pray that he does not do that and you are praying that you are able to help him and distress him in the small physical particular ways that you can, but you have no guarantee. The idea of a grown man yelling, throwing things across a room, honestly, if you are not going to lie to yourself, is the least appealing thought in the world. You are instantly suspicious, you are instantly on guard. You wish that you had sympathy, but you also feel like the indication of manifesting anxieties and impulses in a violent physical way is something that you do not have to give people space for. You have no room in your life for physical violence, no matter how much you say you want to punch the people talking behind you on the bus in the face. You have no space in your life for people who are going to yell at you and throw your things around and you pray that he never does this around you because you are absolutely willing and you want to you want to help him get over the source of the actions but you will not tolerate and coddle them around you and you will demand that they stop or that he remove himself from your house until he can conduct himself without physical aggression and you know that sounds harsh and you know it is harsh but you also know that men yelling and men throwing things and men being physically aggressive is one of the most terrifying and triggering things that you could personally possibly be around, and that the same thing applies to so, so many other people and women, especially. And that men who don't have control over their emotions have room to understand that — I am not saying that you need to control your emotions in a

ceratin way but I am saying that I feel completely justified in asking that you do not do it any where near me. I fele like that is a reasonable if diffuclt to deal with thing, and I feel like that is somehting that I hope I have the strength to enforce. I don't know if I do but I am going to try.

I have managed to stay, for almost the whole day, unproductive in work sense. However, its ten thirty and my fingers are itxhibg. I have spent the day knitting and cleaning and cooking and wantxhing Martha bakes videos and porn, planning croissant recipes and masturbatibg. But my mind is humming, racing, I can not ask it to sit still any longer. The deadline for nanowrimi is not even the reason why-- I an starting to realise that teh act of writing every day, of shaking out my brain, has been incredibly soothingand incredibly therapeutic for me in the last few weeks. I think it is sonething that I will absolutely keep up. But I am anticipating, si anticipating, thé end of this month. I almost want to write my post mortem, right now, and I think I will. November has been a long, long month. I don't know how long it has been, but it has been long, long time since I rvet looked forward to the coming of December. The settling in of winter, for tru and for good. If you haven't seen me at all this month, know that you are not alone. It has been a big and busy one for me, and I did so many things and I want to tell you about them! During gamerella, Nike amanda mark and myself made a game walking alone at night, called its late -- you can find it here! It is long and slow and unpolished but we did make it in 30 hours, and now that I've had some

space from it I love it. I also decided to participate in nanowrimi, for some reason, for the first time ever, even though I never write -- and I completed it! I wrote a God damn 50k word manuscript. Will you ever get to read it? Probably, because I am egotistical as heck and you should definitely read 50k about what hypomanic feels like and how much I love my cat, I think. But it will take a while. I've also! Been working on the demo version of Ritual of the Moon, a game by Kara Stone, which will be ready for the world at bit bazaar in Toronto this week, which is a thing you should totally go to if u are in the 6 (!!! Shoot me ). More info on that when there is a demo available online! I have ALSO been finishing up my final final FINAL BFA course with pippin barr and my dream team amanda and buddy Milin, making an sad game about dogs who are searching for hope in outer space. you'll be able to check that out ONCE I AM DONE SCHOOL, FOR GOOD, FOR EVER THIS TIME! In a few days all of these loose ends will be wrapped up and I will find myself with time to myself that isn't ruthlessly slotted into extracurricular productivity schemes. This means that I want to see you! Hello, you! Friends! Invite me over for a cup of tea! I miss you! Let me invite you over for a cup of tea! In keeping with my obscene productivity-as-the-only-measure-of-my-value mindset (I'm working on it) I will be doing a few nights of canning / jam making / preserving in anticipation of the holidays and it is going to be chill and you should let me know if you want to come do that with me! This productivity thing is actually a thinly veiled ploy to keep seasonal depression at bay, which is a thing I struggle with in a bad way, and so now that I am not in NOVEMBER mode please keep an eye on me and I will try to do the same for you. Finally I want to give a big shout out to my fellow sagittarii, because our season has just rolled in and there are so many of us and we are killing it!

Nicole Raoul Kelly Owen nico che that friend of my bro who has the same birthday as me but probably wouldn't appreciate being tagged in this like ten of my aunys and uncles and ME! WE ARE THE BEST TEAM SAGGITARIUS PEW PEW I LOVE U! Even u non-saggitarii! Hope to see u soon, in real life.

So there we go. You are doing a sort of magic here, where you project confidence onto something that you need a push on, when you project yourself into the future and declare thta you have succeeded, „„you have survived. It has worked before, and it will work agiba. You invoke this power when you wrote letters to her promising you would never kill yourself, you invoke this power as you write this entire monolguw, biography, volume one of many, adessibg the future self that you, prior to beginning this, were not sure would be around and alive to read this. But now you are, you are certain. You are embedding gems for yoruael, unit you future, small handholds that you can reach for later when you feel blind. You are supporting yourself through and through time with your magic, with your new found words. You are twenty three, twenty three. When you have finished writing this, you will be a few days away from your beginning your twenty fourth year. The completuoniat in you smiles. You have proven yourself both unbeluwvbaly egotistical and unbearable lovibg, you had no idea that you had all this inside you you, built up, waiting for it to come out. This has been such a journey, such a journey. You have proven to yourself thta this is an act of love and thearpy that you can do no matter what, that you can carbe time out for. In any possible situation in the worst of the worst workloads. Tight now even

you are typing this out on the touchpad of your smartphone, because you forgot the charger for your laptop at school yesterday when you ran away, ran home. It meant that you were forced to take a BREAK, take a day off, take a small. Space of time to feel your feelings and feel how you felt about those feelings and live in your space, alone. But now you continue writing, because you truly want to, because you looked at the face of this challenge and decided you didn't actually care if you won it or not, if you met your goal, that you could definitely live with stepping down even this close to the finish line, you found that and you also found that despite that, you still wanted to write. And that is how you know this is something you must continue and will continue to do. .

Last night you went out, for the first time in a long time. It may have been the first real party you had been to in two or three months -- it definitely felt like it. You had been at school working, all day, and you knew that you had to go back home and give your children their food and their medication, and that by the time you got ready and finally went out and got there it would be so late, that you would not be able to take the metro home, that you would have to stay all night to be able to take the night bus home. Something inside of you was curling and uncurling like a centipede in your stomach, a deep gut feeling of dread, and yet another. Part of you felt irrationally magnetized towards this place, towards this people, towards the ones who invited. You and. The one ones that you knew would be there. Despite the centipede in your stomach, despite the knowledge that it would be cold and that you would be tired and hung over the next day, despite the physical part of your body yearning



for rest and ease and comfort (half of it, only half -- the other half was straining for dance, any kind of dance). You reached out to your partner, hoping for an out, hoping he would want to come be with you at home in bed where nothing was hard and nothing was scary, but he pushed you to go out and so you did, you bared your teeth and you did. You were wearing your demon stomping boots, the ones that make you taller than almost any man, and rough cut eyes and practical and impossibly appealing clothing. Your belly in your crop top that flattered and faded as you twisted your arms up and around your head. You did feel invincibly sexy, unbelievable. You did want people to see that. You live for that feeling. You were not disappointed. The people at the door, the organisers your friends your friends they were happy you came, and so were your other friends, and you could have cried at the hugs they gave you, and the centipede in your stomach was banished, you couldn't remember what it ever even felt like. You fell in rhythm, easily, you bantered, you collected compliments and handed them back out just as generously. You attracted attention like moths ( did you/? Not really, but you felt like you did and that was enough for you. Plenty of smiles at familiar faces as you danced next to them, bringing others into the fold. Your favourite dancers were all there, and it took you less time than it ever did to get up the bravado to join them, to pretend you were one of them till you actually did convince yourself you were ( and you were ). There is such magic and power in being able to be the person who is in the centre of the dance floor, who invigorates the ones on the peripherals who pulls them in when they otherwise would have drifted away, that person who says yes sooj how energetically and enthusiastically I am dancing, I am not even that good but I am putting my heart into it -- whenever I see those people I. The dance floor or at parties I.

Am immediately uplifted, I am soothed, I am invigorated, and I join them and now, as I watch myself from above my head, from way up high in the rafters, and I feel my body move as if it belongs to someone else, then I know that I have become the person who other people and I soar. I want to spread to other people the infectious joy I get from really releasing myself, from really and truly allowing for dance. For limbs toreak off for my hips to detach the selves for my breath to steal out of my mouth and my sweat to pour away from me and carry with it all the worries and all the tension that my muscles have held on to. Make them release, make them release.

You have arrived at the end of your journey. It has been incredibly long, an incredibly long time. Perhaps you have been on this journey for your whole life -- you wouldn't be surprised. All you know is that you have finally arrived at the steps at the base of the tall mountain that you set out to reach, one more mountain you set out to climb. Your back is heavy and bent with the burden of all the things you have picked up on the way, but your legs and your heart are also strong, strong and pumping. You take your first few steps with your feet on the ground, and then you realise slowly that you don't need to touch the ground. You know that somehow, your burden will carry you up, if you just keep walking. It will transform from its heavy pack into a pair of wings and it will lift you high high up into the sky and you will pass the top of the mountain, where you will see all the earthly delights that were waiting for you. Feasts and medals of honour and all of your friends, sitting around a big round table, waiting for you. No, your wings will pull you up up past all

that, just within arms reach and you will wave to everyone as you pass by, and they will frown but have back and wonder when they will next get to see you, as you wonder the same thing about them. The new wings on your back carry you up up up through the clouds, and every time you break through a layer you emerge, sparkling with dew and wet eyelashes, wet hair. Your clothes are drenched and plastered to you and then the soaring rushing air dries them off just before you press through another layer of clouds and the cycle starts all over again. You would have sworn that there weren't so many miles of clouds in the sky above your head, you never knew, and inside the clouds you catch glimpses of the most fantastic things, pairs of tigers tied together at the tail, circling each other, silk ribbons floating through the air, bits of rags that you recognize as the fabric of old shirts of people you used to love. Giant luminous moths that flutter towards you and lick the salt off of your cheeks, because you are crying, you have been crying. During these moments, when the moths flock to you as if you are a lamp, you realise that the wings slow down for these moments, that they allow you to have this and linger, giant powdered wings resting on your face and neck. They leave traces of their shimmering dust all over you. When you finally arrive, where you were going all along, where your new wings wanted to bring you -- for you had no control in the matter, or you felt like you had none, to be fair you did not think to try, you were so startled. The wings set you down gently on a cloud, your cloud, and feel your body collapse, spent, from the energy it took you to get here, though you did not realise it was draining you, not at the time. Your wings are evaporating from around you in wisps of clouds smoke, and you sigh, a small breeze up here among the windless sky, as your limbs follow them, twisting and unravelling into dew drops, molecules of clouds.

You wondered briefly if you had arrived at heaven , a place you never held a shred of belief for, no kingdom among clouds, but you wondered it anyways. Now you see that you are up here to stay because you are partly cloud yourslef, human body mostly water, mostly droplets and tears. You are a cloud, and you feel yourself dehyfrolizing, become molecules, chemical bindings undoing them selves. You can see yourself, from the outside right through, you are a shimmering mass of water molecules in the shape of what your body once was, you are foaming up and airing out and spreading thin and joining the reat of the mass, and you know thta you will never cry again. You are a cloud, you are a cloud. You have been reduced and transformed into water, into the source of life, and you will spread yourself thin over the world as you solidify and drop back down and then are pulled back up on the wings of the sun. You have spent such a long long time crying, filled with tears whether you shwd then or not, and now, finally, you do not have to cry any more. You will be just like thr rain, you will wash down other faces they will drink you up and they will cry with you, they will be filled. But the tears that you will become, they are the kind of tears that you shed when you are on your journey here the kind of tears that helped your legs keep moving. You think about the moths that settled on your face, for brief moments In time, and you try to remember what else you saw as you were drifting ip here, on those wings. You try to think of what you had been cyibg about when you were travelling on your way to the foot of your mountain, where your friends are all still waiting for you, their feast going cold. You find thta you can not remember what it was, but you can still retain , in you bank of clouds feeling s and cloud memories, the sense that you went through something great, sometimes hing strange, something strong. What It was, what you had stored up in

that back pack of yours, none of that is what matters. What matters now is that you are at peace in a way that only the colours of the clouds at sunset and sunrise can reflect. You can breathe and your lungs are made of clouds and air so you feel like every breath you take contains the entirety of the world, filters through everything that exists in this atmosphere, because it does. You are air, the air, and you are rain, water, you are the tears in the cheeks of your friends of your enemies of strangers and families you never met, the tears of struggle and the tears that bring the most purging the most learning the most healing. That is what you have become. You no longer need those tears for yourself. You are at rest, and only by being at rest can you help any one else. You spread your molecules far and wide, you lay back, and you breathe in deep, all the air in the world.

Nobody knows what you have put into your book and no one needs to, but you wonder, if you will allow for it or not. You are once again soothed by the knowledge that it was the doing and not the result that made this worthwhile, that drove you forward, and yet you still feel like you have something here that could be beautiful, that maybe should see the light of day. You feel like it is gaping and moth eaten and full of strands that will unravel and break if pulled on but you also know that you can sit down. In January, when it is too cold to leave your house, with your mending yarn and your sewing needles, and strengthen up the holes and patch up the years and reinforce the seams and give it a good shake out in the sun, snipping off the loose strings. You do this because and it is a labour of love for yourself, making a quilt in a way that you never could have with fabric. That is the

one textile technique that you never could get ahold of, that never did appeal to you -- you were never a quilter. But in many other ways all the other work that you do and all the work that you've done here is a type of quilting a patching a recycling reclaiming making the scraps of your memory into something that makes sense again serves a purpose again is beautiful again. You haven't felt like that about the scraps in your brain in a long time. You feel like you have pulled up all your sheets and given them a good wash and aired out your duvet and opened your windows wide to let the cold cold air sweep through and pull away all the cobwebs. The things that are left have been reorganized, the clutter that has been sitting in front of it moved on top blocking block it had all been moved away, sorted through, dealt with, at least a tiny chunk of it has. You have only just begun to make a tiny dent in what you remember, you have so much still that is in danger in your brain. But you have started the work you have done a huge amount. You have started and that is the hardest part.

We are twisted up and tangled, arms and legs and souls. So many of us, so many of us. I can not tell if this hand resting against my face is my own, or one of the scores of others who have placed their own there, once, many times, never. I find it impossible to extricate myself from the physical touch of other people. I feel their presence on me long, long after they are gone. We linger around each other we leave our ghosts in their chairs in the message history we refuse to leave. I was cleaning out my phone, the other day, and I stumbled across the entirety of his message history to me, from the very first thing I ever

sent him, awkward, stumbling. Thumbs hovered over screens, for a millenium, before moving on, leaving intact this history. Why Do I feel the need to keep it. Why do I feel the need to archive the things that cut me so deep? What purpose would the small banter, the learning of each other the quirks and the quivering words, what will that ever serve? How will that ever serve me? Why in my life wiuld I ever drudge that up — to show m grandchildre that even the most horrible people in my life charmed me and delighted me? Do I want to hold on to that partr of my life with everyone, with all of us? I will fight visciously, aggressively, to remember only good things, my mind master of forgetfulness, of glossing over and is rewriting and romantricizing. The accusation, the concept of evil, the fact that that is ever slung around at the people you knew frightens you, horrifies you. No one was evil, no one was that. They were all good, in some smal ways, and some small ways are just as important and thej big horrible things that they shattered you with. You feel these truths are important to keep, maybe. But still, the knowledge that those pohone conversations are there at your fingertips, waiting for the masochism, waiting for the impulse to self harm in the most untraceable of ways... A single mark on your arm glows in the moonlight, scar tissure shining white. Your mother touches it with her eyes, you sitting at a picnic table, both of you dappled with sunshine thorough the trees. when od you ever get moments like this with her? She tells you, blunt, the way she has learnt to be with you, the only way to which you respond — that that looks purposeful. The question unspoken in her voice, loaded. The implications were packaged up perfectly, neatly, in her curt voice, in her arms length posture. This is how you have tarined them to be. You dropped like a stone, the no, yout reply. None of this was on purpose, none of this. You did not mean for any of

this to happen, and yet it did, and yet you did it to yourself, you feel you did, you feel you did. A moment you will never forget, one think, one of the only things, you do not feel you need to immortalize for the sake of your faulty memory. You carry the shining, full moon reminder, you see it every day. Looking at it brings you back the sharp feeling of cold air in your lungs, sooty and dark with the smoke of your cigarette. The shaking of your limbs, in the lateness of the year. The fluttering of your heart, your friends voices ringing in your ears, affirming what you did not want to hear. The feeling that you are not able to grasp yourself that you are running too far ahead of yourself that your body is leaving you you have no control no control, you are going to continue to do this to yourself, over and over, person to person, man to man. You can not be trusted with your own body.

The feeling of a burn, when it is abrupt, unbraced for, feels more like the pain of cold than of heat. Searing flesh of your tender, milky upper arm, underneath the cigarette, held there till you felt every floating strand of yourself return to your roots, and the held for longer. You could see, from above yourself, all aspects of you returning, draining back in to your body, swirling around that point when you burnt through your skin, down to your core. a wound which you could pour yourself back through. You remember every sensation vividly, and you do not remember a drop of pain, not until the next day. You felt your breath slow, simmer, float around in your lungs — suddenly you needed so much less. What was impossible to keep up with just moments before, your heart, your breath, your racing thoughts, all slowed down to the speed of molasses in the winter time, stepping back and letting you catch up. You opened up a channelling point to your demons, and to back to your heart. You knew, you know, that this is how you can bring yourself back from the



brink of floating off the edge of your balcony into the winter sky, from disappearing forever. You remember, grimly, after putting out that cigarette in the soft pale flesh of your inner arm, and chucking it off the side of the railing, the inner calm but also the intense calculating vengeful feeling that settled in your heart, the conviction that now, at least, you will always remember. You will always remember about men. You may act in spite of it, you may choose to ignore the warnings that you burnt into your flesh for yourself, but you will never forget. It sits there, shining, on purpose, so very on purpose. You feel it part of you every bit as much as every drop of ink you ever forced under your skin with a needle and vaseline, everything you've ever done to make yourself deliberate and calculated. It serves its purpose, it serves its purpose. But you other doesn't know that, your mother doesn't need to know that, You can not explain that it is everything and more that your tattoos are, the ones you have done yourself, in your room, alone, meditatively, calmly, blankly. You can not explain to her that this act of remembrance and witness and grounding, that none of this feels like an act of self harm., Everything you do you do for your future self, every day you are only working towards the well being of your future self. You are leaving messages on your skin, in ink and scars, and now you are putting them down on paper as well. You are leaving them for all the future you's and you are leaving them for the others, as well. You know that you can see yourself in everyone, that we all reflect each other back in small ways. You see people with scars that stretch across, that are not single points, that repeat and shimmer up and down a large stretch of skin and your heart wants you to reach out and enfold yourself over them all, but you know that what you do you do for so many different reasons. You did what you did so that you could never forget. You never lost that urge. You

would burn yourself alive, if you could. But you can't. That wouldn't be in the best interest of future you.

Soon, you can rest. Soon, soon, very soon. But not quite yet, not quite yet. You are almost there, but you have a few more laps around your house around your heart to make.

You have been full of love, for so long. You have wandered around on sidewalks looking for someone to dump all of it on, someone who you could shove it onto like a pile of laundry, let yourself go, let yourself free. You never did find someone. But you started breaking off pieces of yourself and giving them to strangers, easing open their mouths when they weren't looking and placing tiny shards of yourself on their tongues. You melt, brittle, bitter, resinous. They do not know where the flavour in their mouths came from. You find yourself carving out of your abdomen and your chest and you find yourself infinitely lighter. You let yourself be pushed along the sidewalk now, by the wind and by the rain and by the sounds of people's voices in bars and in parties. The way you dance is an impossibility, something you never thought you were capable of, something that an old part of you wanted to scream loudly enough to distract attention from, body filling up with shivers. But you don't and you can't and you are fine, the way you are now. You do not need the input of your former selves, you are looking forward. You do not need the affirmation of the you with the long blonde hair, pin straight, razor blade sharp, or the you who lost their mind and hacked it all off and tried to pass it off as a gay thing, the you who shaved half of it and let the rest grow, the you with pink orange purple blue hair, the viscous green bob, the

most brutal the most vamp you, the you who held yourself to impossible standards. The you you are now does not recognize any of these people. They are strangers to you, you look at their pictures curiously, wondering about their lives. You do not remember them, you have already forgotten. All that you want is for the yous who will come after you, who will come after now, to remember what it feels like to be you, just you, right now. You are blowing them kisses through paper, through pages. Hello, I miss you, I missed you.