

Matte Black Lipstick

Gregory Nero

Abstract—Hey kid, you have what it takes to name the past? Huh, kid? You think you have the guts to classify events as they *were* based on how you *remember* them? Good luck punk, you're in over your head.

Index Terms—water, colors

THE VASE THAT SHATTERS

and it's the only way i can describe how it felt! just like that: somewhere in my mind a vase (suddenly) tipped over and collapsed into a million little pieces. and the pieces: they are sharp. and my hands: bloody, shaking! how can i ever put this back together? /// time, dear, give it time.

ALL TORN UP

Blue got all roughed up by the ocean and cried dark grey tears for who they used to be when the sun was shining. Saline dries me out, the air dries me out... I'm all shriveled up and blue. Blue said "let me be" and the ocean consumed them. It was so deep and tough. What was to be done? Blue wanted to see the bottom, though. Feel its darkness and get crushed by its pressure. Blue wanted to hurt down there, after all. So Blue came down from thrones of gold and yellow to the ocean floor to become Grey. And Grey said, amidst riptide heartaches, "Here I am, the ocean, Grey and Blue before me and always. Look, see the beauty down here! Vulnerable and shredded by shells, waves, invisible currents... I'm drifting now, with who I was and who I am." And so Grey and Blue settled on being free from the pressures of identity. Don't be fooled, this was no compromise. No, this was quite the opposite. This was something perfect and beautiful.

CANYONS

I'm prancing, bounding, leaping between the folds of my brain. Sharp, deep cracks. Oh, it's dark down there. Crevices of brain matter turned into canyons carved out by cerebral fluid. Step carefully! I'm losing balance again. Hop across the opening below. Sprint while you can. The gaps are getting wider. Dive, dive from one side to the other. Anything but falling, please, anything.

INKBLOT THOUGHTS

One droplet falls, silent, then: *plip*. But this is real thunder. There's a tension while it's gaining speed. Now I'm sweating thick dark droplets. They crawl out of my pores. And I watch them plummet toward the canvas. There's nothing like the quiet before collision. And when it hits, oh, when it hits... it hits hard and fast and the sound, the *plip* is pure chaos. Then what? Shapes on the page, morphing, growing. I can't describe it because it's changing. I can describe it: everything

is changing. Only after the ink is dry can I finally start to name it. I'll tape it to my wall and look at it for hours, trying to find patterns, trying to find patterns, trying to find patterns... Recursive Rorschach.

THAWING

I'm Spring with you. Ice waits so long to melt. I've waited so long to melt. Darling, I only melt for you. I'm liquid now, on thawing leaves and branches and blades of grass. I'm delicate, formless, dripping, searching for more ways to know your warmth. I knew I was enduring the Winter for someone. Love me like the ground loves the rain. You are the envy of the season.

WATERCOLORS

My nose is bleeding and my mouth is bleeding and I'm only one shade of red. I keep replaying a zoomed-in version of my shower. Slow, building synth and it's warm and wet and my blood is staining my fingers now. I tasted it first. It's so beautiful, the way it drips and swirls down the drain. I'm watercolors. I try painting with watercolors today. I'm a watercolor boy. Or girl. Or neither. Or both at once. I tried blending out the lines with more water, more water, more water and the blood stopped running from my nose and I'm clean now. I want to wash my skin off, grind it down with sun-dried towels, I want to be bare. I was watching a video of a pair of hands removing a gemstone from the earth. They chipped and pulverised and rinsed around this precious stone until it was free. There's blood in the back of my throat, I know it. There are words in the back of my throat, I know it. I'll keep chipping away at who I am and what I want to say. Rinse my hair and wash my face and type some words. And I'll call that progress.

NOISE AND SILENCE

My limbs are so heavy today. I instinctively shut myself into my bedroom closet and turned on the little crayola projector I bought at Michael's. Eight hours of white noise. I'm being flattened here. I finally peeled away from the carpet, now sticky with hair and bones and skin, and wandered to the balcony to figure out where all of the birds have gone.

BRUSH STROKES

I remember staining the deck out back with long brush strokes. Living life between the two-by-fours. Getting that dark brown, burnt red liquid stuck in my hair. I still remember how much I forgot. It was a simple, tedious pleasure. Enough to filter out everything else.

REASSURANCE

I can breathe this oxygen and my body is alive. I can exhale and feel my chest move. I can eat food and drink liquids and sleep. I can stub my toe and I can feel pain. I can sweat and I can cry.

SILLY!

My greenhouse fell over again! Really, I'm looking at it right now on my balcony. Now, on my balcony, horizontal, fallen, just like the inflatable Santa Claus we got for Christmas. The wind picked up just in time. I'm time soup. Soupy time, milk, liquid, liquid milk, I'm time in this soup. Milky soup. Very soupy. I feel so funny. I get cold in the afternoons because of the way the Sun moves. How do I move? Slowly, now. Sometimes I breathe because I mean it. Sure, I'm yearning! Oh yeah, lots of yearning. Just for you, though. My eyes are burning. I'm gonna get a flip phone. Hands, and a truck that eats ass. This soup, is isolation, and I can't even say that I'm having a bad time.

LITTLE SONG

Watching the lilies and
Keeping the tempo of
Somebody else's song.

Painting the tops of my feet.
The air never smelt so sweet.
I've died once or twice just this week.

Crawling and sitting now: still.
Right before bed: two more pills.
Life beyond my window sill.

It could be more grey, so
I'll pretend I'm back Home,
And turn these blue skies into snow.

I wrote you a letter: it's tucked in a book.

And sure I'm a fraud, but
I can't keep my mind shut.

I'm a child of tempo and words.