

## The Eve of Artemis

LAST TUESDAY, ARTEMIS, GODDESS OF THE WILDERNESS  
AND DAUGHTER OF ZEUS, STARTED A BUSH FIRE.  
CLOSE BY, EVE, FRUIT LOVER AND WIFE OF ADAM,  
POINTED AND LAUGHED WITH HER.  
THE NIGHT, ALL THE GODS RAGED.  
THAT NIGHT, ALL THE DAUGHTERS SMILED.

IN THE OLD TALES, ARTEMIS IS THE LONG LOST  
NIECE OF EVE.  
THE LEAVES EVE USED TO COVER HER MODESTY ARE THE  
SAME LEAVES ARTEMIS BURNED THAT TUESDAY.(THE TWO WERE SEEN  
CONSPIRING IN A STARBUCKS ON BOND STREET)  
THE SAME LEAVES THE OLD GENERATION COVERS YOU WITH  
WILL BE THE SAME LEAVES YOU WILL LIGHT A MATCH TO  
10 YEARS FROM NOW.

LISTEN. ARTEMIS TELLS YOU NOT TO BE AFRAID.  
LISTEN.  
THE GODDESS OF THE FORESTS BURNED HER OWN LEAVES FOR FREEDOM.  
WHO SAYS YOU CAN'T DO THE SAME?  
ONE DAY YOU WILL RUN AND YOUR HEELS WILL THE SCRAPE THE  
GROUND SO HARD IT STARTS A TRAIL-BLAZE FOR THE GIRLS WHO COME AFTER.

EVE TELLS YOU THAT YOU WILL HOWL. THAT YOU WILL CRY.  
LABOUR PAINS ARE YOUR PUNISHMENT FOR THIS.  
(BUT THAT'S WHY THEY INVENTED EPIDURAL).  
LISTEN.  
THESE TEARS OF YOURS WILL FORM THE RIVER OF A NEW CITY,  
NOW WAVE GOODBYE TO THE FATHERLAND.  
IT IS TIME TO NAME YOUR COUNTRY.

## I am allowed to regret this

*DO I REGRET HIM?*

*I REGRET HIM.*

*I REGRET HIS NECK. THE WAY THE EVENING SET UPON IT,*

*I REGRET HIS CHARM, HIS 'YOU CAN TALK TO ME ABOUT ANYTHING.'*

*HIS EAGERNESS, HIS BOOKS,*

*HIS SHOES, HIS KNEES, HIS BOW LEGS,*

*HIS ARROW TONGUE. HIS 'I CAN'T TALK ABOUT THIS NOW.' HIS 'MEH'. HIS  
CHANGING. HIS SACRILEGE, HIS 'IT DOESN'T MATTER'S'.*

*HIS STRENGTH. HIS ARMS. HIS WEAKNESS. HIS HEART.*

*HIS HISTORY BOOKS. HIS REFUSAL TO LISTEN.*

*HIS FRIENDSHIP. HIS WANTING MORE. HIS LOVE. HIS HEARTACHE. HIS  
ACCEPTING.*

*HIS LEAVING. HIS COMING BACK. MY OLIVE BRANCH.*

*HIS CHANGING. HIS CHANGING. HIS SLACKNESS. HIS 'NO'.*

*HIS 'I MISS YOU'. HIS DRUNK. HIS DRUNK. HIS SOBER. HIS ABSENCE.*

*HIS REPETITION. HIS RINSING AND REPEATING. HIS 'WE'RE FRIENDS.'*

*HIS FLIRTING. HIS ABSENCE. HIS TRYING. HIS FAILING. HIS TIME WASTING.*

*HIS SEEKING ADVICE. HIS IGNORING ADVICE. HIS FORGETFULNESS.*

*HIS SLACKNESS AND SLACKNESS. MY TRYING TO UNDERSTAND.*

*MY IGNORING. MY LOVING. MY HATING. MY FORGETTING HIM.*

*MY FRIEND. MY FRIEND. MY IGNORANCE. HIS IGNORANCE.*

*WE'LL NEVER TALK ABOUT THIS. WE'LL NEVER TALK ABOUT THIS.*

*OUR SCARED. OUR PATHETIC. OUR COWARD BEHAVIOUR.*

*(TWO COWARDS SHOULD NEVER BE IN THE SAME ROOM)*

*MY SOULMATE. MY SOULMATE. HIS GROWING BRAIN*

*AND HIS SHRINKING HEART. I REGRET. I REPENT.*

*WHAT WAS THE POINT.*

*WHAT WAS THE POINT.*

*I REGRET. I REGRET.*

*IF IT ENDS LIKE THIS. I REGRET.*

## Why you wanted a tragedy

IN YOUR DREAM, ICARUS SCREAMS AT YOU BECAUSE YOU  
TOUCHED THE SUN AND DIDN'T MELT.  
IN YOUR DREAM, MEDEA CURSES YOU WITH A KNIFE  
TO YOUR JUGULAR BECAUSE YOU COULD PERSUADE  
YOUR LOVER TO COME BACK TO YOU.  
IN YOUR DREAM, HERA PUTS A NOOSE AROUND  
YOUR NECK. SHE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND WHY  
THE ONES YOU LOVE ARE FAITHFUL TO YOU OF ALL PEOPLE.  
IN YOUR DREAM, ACHILLES COMES FOR YOU  
WITH THE RAGE OF EVERY FURY IN TARTARUS  
BECAUSE YOU SENT YOUR LOVE TO WAR  
AND HE CAME BACK TO YOU, UNHARMED.  
IN YOUR DREAM, ALL THE GODS AND QUEENS  
ARE ROLLING AROUND IN THE DIRT, WONDERING  
WHAT HAPPENED TO WHO THEY WERE.  
IN YOUR DREAM, YOU ARE NOT HAPPY.  
YOU ARE NOT EVEN CONTENT  
BECAUSE YOU'VE NEVER KNOWN MISERY.  
YOU'VE NEVER WANTED TO RIP THE HEART RIGHT OUT OF YOU—  
OR TEAR THE SKIN OFF YOUR BACK AND SWALLOW IT DOWN.  
IN YOUR DREAM, YOU ARE JEALOUS OF TRAGEDIES.  
AND THE TRUTH IS, WE ALL WANT OUR OWN TRAGEDY,  
BECAUSE LIFE IS PALE WITHOUT IT.  
WE WANT THE TEETH, THE SCREAMING, THE SURVIVAL  
THAT COMES WITH IT."

It was you, it was you

*I DID NOT SUFFER FROM LOVE,  
I SUFFERED WITH IT.  
WE WORE THE SAME UNIFORM.  
WE WERE BOTH IN THE SAME BARRACKS,  
WE FOUGHT BESIDE EACH OTHER ON THE FRONT LINE.  
YOUR NAME WAS OUR WAR CRY.*

## Medea gives advice to a young girl with a broken heart

*LISTEN GIRL,' MEDEA SAYS, 'YOU ARE  
NOT THE FIRST PERSON IN THE WORLD TO  
SUFFER FROM A BROKEN HEART.  
BUT I WILL TREAT YOU LIKE YOU ARE.  
LISTEN GIRL. HE IS NOT CALLING OUT YOUR NAME.  
YOUR NAME TO HIM IS NOTHING.  
IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN BEFORE.  
ONCE, YOUR NAME MIGHT HAVE BEEN  
THE ONLY WORD HE KNEW WHEN HE  
WAS BLIND SAD OR BURSTING WITH SUN.  
THOSE DAYS ARE OVER.  
YOUR NAME CAN ONLY EXIST IN YOUR OWN MOUTH NOW.  
SAY IT OVER AND OVER. SAY IT UNTIL IT DOESN'T SOUND  
LIKE A NAME, BUT JUST A SOUND.  
THE PROMISES HE MADE YOU ARE JUST SOUNDS NOW TOO.  
REMEMBER THAT.  
YOUR HANDS ARE WHAT WILL HOLD YOU TOGETHER NOW.  
AND YOU WANT TO BE MAD? BE MAD.  
HERE IS A PLATE. THROW IT THROUGH HIS WINDOW,  
LISTEN TO THE CRACK. THE SHATTER. LAUGH INTO THE NIGHT.  
CALL YOURSELF THE SUN. SEE, YOU WILL RISE.  
AND ARE YOU LESS OF A WOMAN FOR THIS? NO  
WHAT IS WOMAN?  
WOMAN IS THIS—ENDURING.  
LISTEN GIRL, YOU WILL SURVIVE THIS—YOU WILL.  
BUT WHAT FOOL SAID YOU HAD TO DO IT SILENTLY?  
HERE IS A TIP—SCREAM*

## The graceless matter of loving

*WHEN I LOVE, IT HAPPENS ALMOST ALL AT ONCE.*

*IT IS INCONSIDERATE, UNREFINED—*

*A CHILD SCREECHING IN A SUPERMARKET.*

*IT IS A THUNDERCLAP.*

*IT IS A SMALL VILLAGE BLACKOUT.*

*IT IS APHRODITE RISING FROM THE SEA FOAM, FULLY FORMED.*

## Skin in mourning

*IF I WAS A RATIONAL PERSON—IF I HAD ANY SHAME, I WOULD SAY I WISH IT  
DIDN'T.*

*BUT I'M NOT.*

*MY SKIN WILL MOURN YOU UNTIL IT WITHERS.*

*MY SKIN HOLDS A MEMORIAL FOR YOU EVERY THURSDAY NIGHT.*

*IT DRESSES ITSELF IN BLACK AND RECALLS EVERY MEMORY*

*IT HAS OF YOUR NERVOUS FINGERS AND YOUR TREMBLING MOUTH.*

*SOMETIMES MY SKIN READS A EULOGY*

*AND IT GOES SOMETHING LIKE*

*“SHHH, SHHH SHHH.”*

*IT IS THE NOISE YOUR CHEEK ALWAYS MADE AGAINST MY CLAVICLE.*

*THERE ARE DAYS MY SKIN SCREAMS FOR YOU LIKE IT'S TRYING TO BREAK THE  
STAINED GLASS WINDOWS OF A CATHEDRAL.*

*THE HAIRS STAND UP LIKE FAITHFUL PEWS,*

*BUT THERE IS NO GOD LISTENING TO THEM*

*BECAUSE THEY BROKE THE WINDOWS*

*AND GOD IS FOCUSING ON THE REPAIRS.*

*AND THEN SOMETIMES MY SKIN BUILDS*

*A SHRINE AND SPRAYS ITSELF WITH YOUR PERFUME.*

*IT REFUSES TO TAKE A SHOWER AND WASH YOU OFF.*

*SEE, IT WOULD RATHER BURN.*

## War and words

*I AM WRITING TO YOU IN HELVETICA 8.5.*

*FROM A SMALL WINDOWLESS ROOM SOMEWHERE OFF CYPRUS.*

*NO.*

*NO, I AM WRITING TO YOU FROM A LITTLE CAVE PLATO LOVED TO VISIT.*

*I AM WRITING FROM CARNAGE..*

*FROM A THIRD WORLD COUNTRY FROM A BROKEN PENCIL IN THE HAND  
OF A BROKEN WOMAN.*

*I AM WRITING FROM 30 AD, A SCARLET LETTER FROM JUDAS THAT WILL NEVER  
REACH THE HANDS OF THE ONE MAN HE LOVED. AND HE LOVED HIM.*

*LOVE IS JUST A SYNONYM FOR ABSINTHE.*

*ABSINTHE IS A SYNONYM FOR 'I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M DOING ANYMORE.'*

*I AM WRITING FROM MOUNT OLYMPUS.*

*HERA'S HAIR FALLS INTO HER EYES AS SHE WATCHES HER HUSBAND DEFILE HER  
AGAIN.*

*HERA IS WRITING A SUICIDE NOTE. NOT THAT ANYBODY WOULD KNOW.*

*HERA THROWS IT AWAY. NOT THAT ANYBODY WOULD CARE.*

*I AM WRITING TO YOU FROM A PLACE THAT BURNS,  
WITH A HAND THAT HAS LOVED YOU TOO MUCH.*

*I AM WRITING THIS IN HOPE THAT YOU BURN TOO.*

*I AM WRITING TO YOU FROM THE TROJAN WAR.*

*I AM WRITING MYSELF AS A GIFT.*

*A HORSE MADE OF WOOD  
WITH A BELLY MADE FOR WAR.*



## Eve Says

THIS IS WHAT THEY'VE DONE WITH EVE:  
THEY'VE SOLD HER. THEY'VE SOLD HER WELL.  
THEY SELL HER WORDS  
LIKE THE SLOGAN OF A MAKEUP AD—  
THEY SELL EVE AS A POP PRINCESS WITH MANUFACTURED LYRICS.  
SELL HER AS A PILOT EPISODE FOR THE DISCOVERY OF MAN—  
HER VOICE IS DUBBED, HER PRAYER IS LOST,  
TRAPPED BEHIND A TV SCREEN.  
THEN EVE IS ARRESTED AFTER A ROBBERY GONE WRONG.  
ADAM HAS FLED THE SCENE.  
SHE IS BEHIND A ONE WAY GLASS.  
THE FAITHFUL POLICE GIVE THE DAILY MAIL A STATEMENT.  
TELL THEM THAT EVE SAID:  
'IT WAS ALL ME. ALL MY FAULT. I WILL TAKE ALL THE PUNISHMENT YOU AND GOD  
GIVE ME.'  
BUT EVE IS STILL BEHIND THAT ONE WAY GLASS,  
IN THE SOUNDPROOF ROOM, AS THEY STAND WATCHING  
HER WITH THEIR DEGENERATE EYES AS SHE BANGS THE WALLS.  
'TAKE BACK YOUR RIB.' EVE CRIES.  
'I DIDN'T WANT IT. I NEVER DID. IT IS WEIGHING ME DOWN.'

## The Girl Myths

IT WAS ANNE SEXTON WHO SAID THINGS COULDN'T BE CONCEALED—  
NOT A SMALL LOVE—NOT EVEN A SMALL COUGH.  
I AM TRYING TO CONCEAL A METROPOLIS OF LONELY GIRL GODS IN ME,  
WRECKING ME WITH THEIR MANGLED BYRONIC SOULS,  
ROAMING THE STREETS, HALF SLEEPING, HALF AFLAME, WHOLLY AND HOLY.  
IN ASTRONOMY CLASS, THE MUSE URANIA ANGRILY WATCHES A PANEL OF MEN  
TALK ABOUT THE WONDERS OF THE STARS AS THOUGH THEY CREATED THEM.  
SHE LEAVES THE ROOM AND HOPES THAT ONE DAY,  
THEY GET CLOSE ENOUGH TO A STAR THEIR SKINS CORRODE.  
IN COURT, I AM SUING A MAN FOR TOUCHING ME WHEN HE SHOULDN'T HAVE.  
CASSANDRA COMES OUT OF ME AND TELLS THE TRUTH.  
NO ONE BELIEVES HER.  
CASSANDRA SCREAMS.  
NO ONE CAN HEAR APART FROM ME. MY EARDRUMS BEGIN TO BLEED.  
AT MARRIAGE COUNSELLING, ATHENA SAYS SHE WANTS A DIVORCE.  
SHE NEVER WANTED A MARRIAGE TO BEGIN WITH. SHE DOESN'T LIKE LYING WITH  
MEN. SHE DOESN'T LIKE LYING WITH GIRLS.  
THE THERAPIST TELLS ME TO GIVE IT A CHANCE.  
I CAN'T. I SAY. I'VE TRIED.  
'I MADE THE GREATEST OF GODS GIVE BIRTH TO ME,' ATHENA DECLARES. 'I AM  
IMMACULATE. I AM IMMACULATE.'  
THERE ARE DAYS I WISH THESE CARAVAGGIAN GODS WOULD BE QUIET. WOULD  
LET ME LIVE. WOULD LET ME CARRY ON THE WAY I SHOULD.  
BUT THEY SCREAM. THEY ARGUE. THEY SAY NO. NO.  
WE DON'T LET YOU SURRENDER. DO YOU KNOW WHAT WE ARE?  
WE ARE GODS. WE WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU.

WHY WOULD YOU WANT TO CONCEAL US?  
OPEN YOUR CHEST AND LET US FILL YOU.

## Ode to Ares' Lost Twin Sister

FOR A MOMENT, LEAVE THE POETRY BEHIND.  
LEAVE IT LIKE A PENNY DISCARDED AT THE BACK OF A BUS.  
WE WILL TALK TRUTH. GIRLS. THIGHS. PINK. BLOSSOM. BLOOD.  
HERE, UNDER LONDON'S STREETLIGHTS, YOU WILL REALISE NOBODY  
ACTUALLY WANTS A SAVAGE GIRL. FEROCIOUS GIRL.  
I'VE ONLY SEEN THIS WANTED IN A POEM CONSTRUCTED  
WITH PERFECT HTML, OBSCURE SYNONYMS AND TIMES NEW ROMAN.  
THE LAST TIME SOMEBODY ACTUALLY LOOKED INTO YOUR EYES  
WAS A TUESDAY TWO MONTHS AGO. ACCIDENTALLY. ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT.  
YOU'D THINK IT WAS THE LAST TIME YOU MADE LOVE. BUT NO.  
YOU WERE TOO BUSY STARING AT THE CEILING AND HE WAS  
TOO BUSY BREATHING INTO YOUR NECK.  
WHEN YOU'RE DONE HE TELLS YOU HOW SMOOTH YOU ARE  
"NOT A SINGLE SHARP EDGE," HE SAYS,  
AND YOU DIG YOUR NAILS INTO YOUR PALMS.  
LATER THAT NIGHT, IN THE DIM YELLOW LIGHT OF YOUR BEDROOM SOMEWHERE  
IN THE CORNER OF THIS HALF-ANGEL HALF-ROTTING CITY,  
YOU TAKE OFF YOUR DRESS AND LET THE SHARDS OF YOUR BODY BREATHE.  
YOU DRAPE YOURSELF ACROSS YOUR BED LIKE A NEON MOTEL  
SIGN GLARING IN RED "DEVILS MAY ENTER." BECAUSE THEY  
ARE THE ONLY ONES WHO WILL LOVE THIS FERAL SIDE OF YOU.  
THEY WILL RUSH INTO YOU LIKE THE DOLLHOUSE YOU ARE.  
WHEN WILL YOU STOP LETTING EVERYTHING PLAY INSIDE OF YOU?  
DO YOU REMEMBER THE LAST TIME YOU STOPPED  
FEELING LIKE A PLAYGROUND?  
BRUISED KNEES, GHOST LAUGHTER, FRILLY SOCKS, DIRTY PINK NAILS,  
KISSING GAMES WHERE YOU ARE THE ONLY PERSON

*RUNNING, RUNNING, RUNNING AFTER EVERYONE.  
BUT GIRLS DON'T CHASE BOYS. GIRLS RUN FROM THEM.  
GIRLS LAUGH. GIRLS SING. GIRLS SHAVE. THEY SMELL OF COOKIES.  
YOU SMELL LIKE COPPER. A PRETEND POEM. THE PENNY  
LEFT AT THE BACK OF THE BUS. GOLDEN RED. BLOOD BITTEN TONGUE.  
YOU ARE ARES' LOST TWIN SISTER.  
GODDESS OF SEDATED BATTLES AND LOST GIRLS.  
ALWAYS FULL OF OTHER PEOPLE AND NEVER YOURSELF."*

## Maenads

*YOU ARE SUITABLE FOR MY SKIN TYPE-*

*MY LIFE TYPE*

*MY HEART TYPE.*

*I HAVE THIS PROBLEM:*

*I'M COLDER THAN LONDON IN JANUARY-*

*I WILL LOVE ANYBODY WHO IS OVER 5 DEGREES CELCIUS.*

*EVEN YOU, WHO LIVES LIKE A PURPLE STAIN ON MY INNER LEG.*

*LOOK, I AM A MESS. NOT A QUIRKY WOODY ALLEN MESS.*

*BUT A MESS. CHAOS.*

*THINK COINS SPILLING OUT OF A PURSE ON A BUSY MOTORWAY.*

*THINK A MAP MADE OF CRAYOLA.*

*I DON'T MIND BRUISES IF IT'S YOUR*

*MOUTH THAT MAKES THEM*

## A Standoff with Love

TONIGHT YOU HAVE TURNED INTO A DIGITAL ALARM CLOCK.  
YOU ARE NEON NUMBERS FLASHING THE RISING  
RATE OF YOUR HEARTBEAT.  
YOU ARE A FAULTY ALARM GOING OFF EVERY  
THREE MINUTES SCREAMING "I LOVE SOMEONE".  
DO YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT HAPPENS  
WHEN YOU ARE FULL OF WAR?  
YOU FORGET YOU ARE THE ENEMY.  
YOU REMEMBER THAT EVERY ROOM YOU'VE BEEN  
INVITED INTO WAS REALLY EMPTY.  
(YOUR ANGER RISES. YOUR VIOLENCE TO LOVE RISES.)  
YOU FORGET THAT LOVING SOMEONE ISN'T THE SAME  
AS KNOWING THAT THEY DOG-EAR PAGES IN BOOKS.  
(IT'S OKAY. I'M SORRY NOBODY EXPLAINED THIS TO YOU.)  
BUT FINE, YOU LOVE SOMEONE. AND YOU'RE ADAMANT ABOUT IT.  
NOW HERE IS A QUESTION:  
WHEN DOES LOVE STOP BEING LOVE?  
IT DOESN'T YOU SAY.  
ONE DAY, IT JUST STOPS SPEAKING

## GAIA

*I HAVE SEEN EVERY KIND OF WOMAN—  
THE STORM, THE BURNING CHAPEL, THE BREEZE.  
THERE ARE SOME WHO ARE THE EARTH ITSELF—  
A WOMAN IS THE HOWLS OF GAIA.  
SHE IS THE ONE WHO BORE THE SKY—YOU—THE EARTH—  
WHO WATCHES YOU PULL HER ROOTS  
AND DRAIN HER BARE.  
LISTEN, YOU—LIGHTNING CARRIER—MAN WHO HAS  
FOOLED HIMSELF INTO BEING GOD.  
THE CRACKS YOU MAKE ON HER BODY ARE  
THE SAME CRACKS SHE WILL BLEED YOU INTO.*

## Who Said Muslim Girls Couldn't Fall in Love

*I REMEMBER THAT VIOLENT SUMMER  
WHERE WE STOPPED BEING CHILDREN.  
WHEN WE FORGOT TO PRAY AND THEN CRIED ALL NIGHT.  
WHEN WE KISSED AS OUR PARENTS WERE IN  
THE NEXT ROOM DISCUSSING PILGRIMAGE.  
I WANT TO TAKE A TRIP FROM YOUR MOUTH  
ALL THE WAY TO JUDGEMENT DAY.  
I WANT TO TELL GOD 'I'VE DONE A LOT OF WRONG.  
I WAS TOUCHED IN PLACES I SHOULDN'T HAVE LET PEOPLE TOUCH ME.  
I DID THINGS YOU'D FROWN UPON.  
SOMETIMES I YELLED AT MY MOTHER. I KNOW I DID WRONG. I LOVE HER.  
BUT LOOK, THIS HEART YOU GAVE ME.  
YOU KNOW, IT DID SOMETHING. IT DID SOMETHING.'  
AND I'LL POINT TO YOU. I'LL POINT TO YOU.*



## Spitfire

IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES IT IS  
NEVER BEST TO ASK 'WHERE DID IT GO WRONG?'  
TAKE AWAY THE WORD WRONG.  
WRONG ISN'T FIT FOR THIS, WRONG IS UGLY,  
DEMEANING, A FOOL.  
IT IS A BIG RED CROSS ON A PAPER  
YOU THOUGHT DID EXCELLENTLY ON.  
YOUR TEACHER JUST DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THE  
TRUE MEANING BEHIND WHAT YOU'D WRITTEN.  
SHE WAS A FOOL.  
I DON'T THINK YOU UNDERSTOOD THE TRUE MEANING  
BEHIND WHY I LOVED YOU, BUT IT'S STILL NOT WRONG.  
LET'S INSTEAD SAY 'WHERE DID IT GO?'  
THEN WE CAN FIND IT AGAIN. IT'S HARD TO MAKE WRONG  
THINGS RIGHT. SOMETIMES IT'S EASIER TO FIND WHERE  
THINGS HAVE GONE INSTEAD.  
FOR EXAMPLE, I THINK YOUR HEART LEFT  
A TRAIL OF BREAD CRUMBS LACED WITH METHAMPHETAMINE.  
I THINK I'VE BECOME AN ADDICT, CHASING YOU  
THROUGH A CITY THAT DOESN'T CARE ANYMORE.  
I THINK MAYBE THIS IS WRONG.  
I THINK I KNOW THIS IS WRONG.  
I USED TO LOVE THE SKY. WE USED TO LOVE THE STARS.

YOU MADE ME LOOK AT THEM EVERY NIGHT  
INSTEAD OF AT YOUR FACE.  
NOW I WANT TO SKIN THE NIGHT.  
I WANT TO PUT THE CONSTELLATIONS ON A SPIT FIRE.

XO

THERE ARE THINGS MY BODY  
COULD NEVER GRASP BEFORE YOU.  
TOUCH ME—  
I SHRED.  
I SHED.

## A lesson in contrast

ON A TRIP TO THE DRUGSTORE, A YOUNG GIRL'S EYES  
SCAN THE SHELVES LIKE A WORLD WAR 2 SNIPER.  
SHE IS SEARCHING FOR THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT TO STORM NORMANDY  
AND GUT IT LIKE A WATERMELON.  
EXCEPT IT IS HERSELF SHE IS STORMING. IT IS HERSELF SHE IS GUTTING.  
HERE IS A QUESTION—WHAT KIND OF SOLDIER INVADES THEMSELVES?  
A GIRL DOES.  
AT BOOTCAMP, THAT IS ALL SHE HAS BEEN TAUGHT.  
REMOVE THOSE HAIRS. REMOVE THAT MOLE, REMOVE THAT BEAMING SELF-  
CONFIDENCE. YOU WON'T NEED IT IN A WORLD LIKE THIS.  
BUT DO NOT WORRY. YOU WON'T HAVE TO DO EVERYTHING YOURSELF.  
MEN WILL REMOVE YOUR INNOCENCE FOR YOU.  
SO SHE GOES TO THE DRUGSTORE TO FIND WHAT SHE CAN.  
TODAY, SHE IS TRYING TO MAKE HER BODY LIGHTER--  
HER SKIN LIGHTER, TOO.  
BUT I WANT TO ASK HER, WHAT IS WRONG WITH BEING DARK AND HEAVY  
WITH YOUR FEET FIRMLY ON SOIL?  
TELL ME, I SAY TO HER.  
HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL BE ABLE TO BLEND IN  
WITH THE DARK DEEP NIGHT LIKE YOU CAN?  
TELL ME, I SAY SADLY.

AFTER YOU DO THIS, HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL EVER BE AS HEAVY WITH LOSS AS YOU ARE?

## Letters to Kafka

AT 2AM, A GHOST WANDERS AROUND PRAGUE AND FINDS  
ITSELF IN THE ROOM OF FRANZ KAFKA.  
WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN, KAFKA? IT ASKS.  
WHY HAVE YOU BEEN SO LONELY?  
'I HAVE METAMORPHOSED INTO A MONSTER.' KAFKA MUMBLES.  
'WHAT IS A MONSTER?' THE GHOST ASKS.  
'A MONSTER IS A THING THAT LOVES EVERYTHING TOO MUCH.  
A MONSTER IS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A PERSON IS STARVED  
AND THEN FED THE WORLD.'  
HERE IS KAFKA, FULL OF WISDOM AND MELANCHOLY.  
HERE IS KAFKA, A BRILLIANTLY TROUBLED MOON-EYED BOY WHO CARRIES  
AROUND HIS WRETCHEDNESS LIKE A BACKPACK FULL OF  
PROVISIONS IN CASE HE FINDS HIMSELF TRAPPED ON A MOUNTAIN  
AND ISN'T SURE WHETHER HE SHOULD KILL HIMSELF.  
IT'S HIS SADNESS HE REALLY WANTS TO KILL.  
(I WANT TO KILL MY SADNESS TOO, KAFKA. I WANT TO DROWN IT)  
WHAT KAFKA DOESN'T KNOW IS THAT HIS HANDS HAVE HELD  
A THOUSAND PEOPLE IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY.  
THEIR EYES ONLY OPEN WHEN THEY ARE WITH HIM.

*AT 2AM IN PRAGUE, CIRCA 1918, KAFKA WAKES UP, COUGHING.  
TUBERCULOSIS HAS RAVAGED THIS BOY FROM THE INSIDE OUT,  
HE TRIES TO COUGH OUT HIS LONELINESS.  
HE WILL BE COUGHING ON LONELINESS FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE.*

## **THE STORM BEFORE THE STORM**

*AT A MARRIAGE MEETING, MEDEA SITS CROSS LEGGED ON THE TABLE AND  
STARES DOLEFULLY INTO THE EYES OF THE MAN WHO WANTS HER.  
'TELL ME SOME FACTS ABOUT YOURSELF,' HE ASKS.  
'SURE,' SHE SAYS.  
SHE KNOWS HE DOESN'T REALLY WANT TO KNOW ABOUT HER.  
NOT MENTALLY, ANYWAY.  
SO SHE GIVES HIM WHAT HE WANTS.  
'I HAVE MANY FACTS,' SHE TELLS HIM.  
'HERE ARE SOME—  
'MY FATHER LOVED MY BROTHER MORE THAN HE LOVED ME.  
MY FATHER LOVED USING HIS FISTS MORE THAN HE LOVED USING HIS MOUTH.  
HERE IS ANOTHER FACT—  
MY BROTHER IS NOW DEAD, AND  
MY FATHER HAS NO HANDS.'  
THE MAN LISTENS CAREFULLY.  
HE NODS.  
HE SITS ON HIS HANDS.*

HE GIVES HER A FACT IN RETURN—  
'MY NAME IS JASON,' HE SAYS.  
AND HE STAYS TO HEAR THE REST.

We won't pray tonight

MY HAND IS TOUCHING YOUR CHIN.  
I AM STROKING YOUR CHEEK WITH MY MOUTH.  
I AM TRYING TO NARRATE LOVE BUT FAILING.  
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO BE INNOCENT.  
PERHAPS THIS IS NOT INNOCENT (PERHAPS IT IS HARAM)  
PUT IT THIS WAY:  
YOU ARE A FEVER THAT WON'T BREAK.  
I HAVE PLANNED TO BLASPHEME INSIDE YOU FOREVER.

## A girl makes a decision: part 1

*TO SHRIEK AND RUN ACROSS FIELDS LIKE THE GIRL I AM—  
THIS IS WHAT I LIVE FOR:  
TO SCREAM LOVE. TO DARE LOVE.  
BUT I AM TOLD THAT A GIRL DOES NOT OFFER MARRIAGE FIRST.  
SHE WAITS.  
THIS IS WHAT WOMEN DO.  
WE WAIT. WE WAIT.  
WE'RE PREGNANT—WE WAIT.  
THE WORLD SPLITS IN TWO—WE WAIT.  
HEAVEN EMPTIES—WE WAIT.  
HE COMES HOME ANGRY—WE WAIT.  
BUT I DON'T CARE FOR WAITING.  
KHADIJA DID NOT WAIT FOR MUHAMMAD.  
DELILAH DID NOT WAIT FOR SAMSON.  
I LOVE A BOY WHO KISSES ME SO STRONG  
I CAN'T STAND UP AFTER.  
I'M NOT GOING TO WAIT.  
I'M GOING TO SINK INTO HIM THE FIRST CHANCE I GET.*

## A girl makes a decision: part 2

*I WANT TO DISCOVER MYSELF.*

*I WANT TO DESTROY MYSELF.*

*I WANT TO BE A SECRET THAT NOBODY BUT ME CAN RUIN—*

*I DON'T CARE FOR BEING MARRIED.*

*I WANT TO BE THE EARTH'S MOUTHPIECE.*