

MORE OFTEN THAN SOMETIMES – SHANE KOYCZAN

If I knew what I know now then, way back when we first met, I'd point to the sunset and say, "I drew that for you. Every now and then you can catch it wrinkling in the rain." See I can talk a good game from the stage, but if you want to gage a romantic thing said when we were messing up the bed the best I can give you is, "Oh my God we're totally humping." Regardless, there's something beautiful about stating the obvious. All of us do it. In the moments when we can't believe it we have to say it. It's like pinching yourself to make sure you're awake. Take, for example, something as simple as touching someone. We so often say, "You're so soft." And the last person to touch them may have said it for the twenty-eighth time but today, I'm number twenty-nine and I'm not saying it for her benefit, I'm saying it for mine. Because there's almost 7 billion people in the world, half of which are men, and when the number of them is 3.5 billion it's pretty fuckin' cool that I was number twenty-nine. And once upon a time I was first in line for a girl with freckles and strawberry blonde hair. We loved like an electric chair hooked up to a nuclear power plant and plugged into the sun, and everything we did had never been done. I woke up the next morning with a smile that told the world, "I'm number one."

I think of her, more often than sometimes, and if she ever hears this I want her to know that our first kiss tasted like pepper. I met her on June 27th. That year it was Yellowknife's first day of continual light and, despite the sun not setting that night we each went home alone, even though our parents told us, "Be home before dark." We could've stayed out for weeks, could've watched the way the sun leaks like liquid over the horizon, casting shadows over all the right places of a bargain bin where love was 75% off, and we were collectively 25¢ away from forever.

There are times in the North when the sun never sets. And it gets confusing when we ask ourselves questions like, "Is it too late, or too early?" More often than sometimes we didn't care. We lived like two games of solitaire waiting to be played by one another. Her mother once asked me, "Do you love her?" And I said if there were 1 million teachers breathing down my neck telling me that the answer is no, I would say yes. I guess that was enough for her, because that girl's father palmed me a condom and wished me a happy birthday. Even now there's no way to tell, was that awkward or creepy?

We loved like two hit-men hellbent on assassinating regret. Her orgasm was a wet gremlin multiplying itself into another. Her younger brother knocked on the bedroom door asking, "What are you guys doing in there?" And somewhere amid the awesome and all of the in between we replied in unison, "Studying." And we were. I wrote notes on her skin in flesh toned permanent ink that would sink and sit inside as I tried to underline the important parts of her: bellybutton, birthmark, collarbone. And I wrote notes explaining that hers felt like silk stretched over stone. I told her, "You're so soft." She smiled and said, "Duh." followed by, "My bellybutton is not an erogenous zone." And I said, "I hate that word," and she asked, "Which one?" and I said, "Erogenous." I told her, "There's beauty in the obvious, and your bellybutton is where you started, it's where cells divided and grew into you so let me do what students do best, you can test me later but right now let me study." She said, "You're lucky this is a take home test, boy." I highlighted and double underlined. Lips.

I think of the beauty in the obvious, the way it forces us to admit how it exists, the way it insists on being pointed out like a bloody nose, or how every time it snows there is always someone around to say, "It's snowing." But the obvious isn't showing off, it's only reminding us that time passes, and that somewhere along the way we grow up. Not perfect, but up and out. It teaches us something about time, that we are all ticking and tocking, walking the fine line between days and weeks as if each second speaks of years and each month has years listening to forever but never hearing anything beyond centuries swallowed up by millennia, as if time was calculating the sums needed to fill the empty belly of eternity. We so seldom understand each other. But if understanding is neither here nor there, and the universe is infinite, then understand that no matter where we go we will always be smack dab in the middle of nowhere. All we can do is share some piece of ourselves, and hope that it's remembered. Hope that we meant something to someone.

My chest is a cannon that I have used to take aim and shoot my heart upon this world. I love the way an uncurled fist becomes a hand again, because when I take notes, I need it to underline the important parts of you: happy, sad, lovely. Battle cry ballistic like a disaster or a lipstick earthquaking and taking out the monuments of all my hollow yesterdays. We'll always have the obvious. It reminds us who and where we are, it lives like a heart shape, like a jar that we hand to others and ask, "Can you open this for me?" We always get the same answer: "Not without breaking it." More often than sometimes, I say go for it.