

# The Silver Slips of Daylight

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Poetry and Prose of Zachary Shaw

# Counting Ceiling Tiles

There are 42 white tiles in the ceiling  
A television placed on a makeshift table  
Made of a keyboard stand and an empty  
guitar case  
I think about the alphabet backwards and  
heliophobia  
I think about osteoporosis and growing old  
I start to cherish little moments  
Somewhat willing and degenerate  
I gave into death's friendly gaze and we  
were companions through my late teens  
and early twenties  
I stumbled through bars and poor college  
students' sublet rooms  
In debt to the glow of neon signs  
I was open and vagrant  
Sick to my stomach from butterflies and  
cheap booze  
Stolen youth with trauma dust (now for 4  
easy payments of \$24.99) sprinkled over  
my dreams  
I can't tell if I should take a hint and realize  
I am invisible  
What matters is the whole  
I should just shut the fuck up and stop  
isolating myself  
I think about Paul Gauguin  
No one gives a fuck until you're gone

I want to enjoy the fruits of my labor but  
the branches are growing so quickly the  
fruit cant keep up (it won't be ripe for at  
least another 10 years) and I just keep  
climbing higher  
I know that this collection of work is more  
than just vapid trash  
I want a private billionaire  
At the very least free health insurance  
I don't want to be a leader  
I just want to know I'm not alone  
I see a swarm of bees, I don't think they  
shouldn't exist I just don't want them to  
bully me  
I was always so self assured until I got  
what I wanted and felt like an imposter in  
my own skin  
I remember one night driving into Phoenix  
my best friend and I listened to Upside  
Down Mountain while everyone else was  
asleep  
The desert was so beautiful, even though  
we couldn't see it, it was present  
I've always wanted someone to have that  
experience with my art  
Some level of intimacy, though we're  
strangers  
If I could be useful, profound, and  
compensated I would be happy  
you can't have all three

I will always be a servant to Maslow's  
hierarchy of needs  
Locked in a perpetual attempt at meeting  
my esteem needs  
There have been brief moments of self  
actualization but I always recede back into  
my safety needs  
I feel it all changing

I've found my life partner  
She's gonna be my wife  
I know it more than I know anything  
I know it because I asked her and she  
agreed  
There were nights I prayed to god for  
someone to love and to love me  
I remember early adolescence and craving  
intimacy, true intimacy  
It took me 24 years  
Beyond all my self absorption and vanity  
I love her with everything in me  
We can share our cake and eat it too

# On The Day I Build My Time Machine

When the ocean rises high enough  
I will construct my time machine  
From memories and pieces of a broken  
Motorola Razr  
We will nail the president to a levee in New  
Orleans  
We will serve cold beer to the workers in  
the avocado fields  
They will no longer sell me good health  
We will practice our faith instead of  
copying and pasting it on our timelines  
The right wing extremists down the street  
will shout for their holy war but we'll trap  
them in a gun range that used to be a  
movie theater  
The reels of film will tangle them in truth  
and their imaginations will be contained  
No more reptilian bipeds to haunt their little  
dreams  
They will only focus on the present threat  
and maybe learn to appreciate symbolism  
The coke dealers in heaven will all rush  
back to save their mothers  
The utilitarian artists will all strum more  
than two chords and paint murals with  
more than just greyscale pallets

I will sleep for whole years in my time  
machine  
Suspended in lazy mediocrity  
Still making a wish at 11:11 when my alarm  
Goes off  
Superstitious and dependent on luck  
I will flip a coin to decide where I will go  
next  
I will leave my future up to chance  
I could have just let go and become a  
recluse  
But instead I built a damn time machine

# Populated and Forgotten

There's an elderly woman making her way down the sidewalk. She mutters something under her breath as she passes by a group of schoolchildren. She thinks about her sister and when they would walk themselves home after school. They didn't have cell phones. They played outside all day until their mother would let them at dusk. Her thoughts shift to the concrete under her feet and how her shoes are getting worn out. Considering she's had them for a decade, they've lasted a while. They don't make them like they used to. She's pushing a shopping cart and in it are a few blankets and a backpack full of clothes and empty nips of vodka. Something about the scent that the bottles give the bag brings her comfort. She remembers the scent of her father's pipe tobacco. He would smoke cigars while Hank Williams played over the stereo. If there were a time machine she would take it there. "Cold, Cold, Heart" gets stuck in her head as she makes her way to her camp. She found a spot at the base of an underpass. She likes it here because the sound of the highway lulls her to sleep and it's tucked away near the woods, where

nobody can bother her. That seems to be the criterion, isolation. No one to push her around or judge her for the trajectory of her life. She wasn't stupid. She wasn't poor, she was broke. See there's a huge difference that they don't tell you about in school. On paper, zero is always zero. It's not the thrashing of life's cruel lessons and the sound of your sisters last breath. It's not the feeling of your worn out soul in the clutches of a service job. 50 hours a week to keep your lights on and food in your sons mouth.



# I Washed Your Dishes

I washed your dishes  
I slept down the hall  
We ate off the same plates  
I drank my wine and some of yours too

I was quiet  
Unless I was singing  
I felt like I took up much less space than I  
did  
Sometimes I felt like I took up no space at  
all

I was a flightless magpie  
I only wondered how absent I could be  
Without falling from my nest  
With only my voice

I swept the bathroom and piles of hair  
I coddled your bad habits with care  
One day I found you sleeping on the couch  
I held a mirror to your nose

And you were gone

# **You Can't Build a Swing From the Moon**

I wanted to knock the pickle jar filled with  
water from your hands  
I thought about stealing your guitar like you  
stole mine  
That note I was writing was a mock up of a  
suicide note  
I left school and followed you around like a  
dog  
I think you thought of me as an experiment  
Someone so obviously lost and  
impressionable  
Were we every really brothers  
I dealt with untreated bipolar disorder,  
addiction, and abandonment issues while  
you read Marx and Zinn  
I was worried about how my hair looked  
while you made friends with privileged  
home schooled teenagers  
I know I was in the wrong sometimes  
But you never held yourself accountable  
Because you are a god  
And no one can hurt you  
You died and were reborn  
How could you possibly understand the  
scope and complexity of the life I've lived

You were floating above me and I crept like  
a shadow that was too bitter to stay  
attached

It's been almost a decade and I'm fine but  
there was never closure

Now I think of the time you told me you  
wanted to build a swing that was attached  
to the moon

You were so full of shit

## 08/11/20 (Rant)

I know now that I am nothing if not a  
consumer

Not the salt of the earth

Not the trees, the grass, or the scent of  
pine

There's nothing natural in the way that I  
miss sitting in a movie theater or a  
crowded restaurant

I don't mind wearing a mask it's just my  
family and loved ones that I worry for

I sleepwalk through the plague and pray for  
the president to die

Slow and painful or fast and easy

I don't care as long as he's gone

I pray for all his worshippers to weep and  
feel every ounce of the pain they have  
caused

There's still a piece of me that is suicidal

Wanting to die to spite the world

Then I realize I would only hurt the people  
who love me

For what, at what cost?

My art could never be a vessel for  
validation or value, it's vacancy not  
vocation

It's like I've become a PhD in hopelessness  
and self examination, apparently alliteration  
as well

Lived a cliché and failed yet it's still driving  
me

It's the only place to put my thoughts

The crowd sighs

My friends were all pushed away

My success a sick joke played on me by a  
predatory industry

They threw me to the wolves and I was too  
drunk to realize what was happening

I didn't drink for fun

I didn't want to fucking party

I drank because I was mentally ill and  
trying to fill a void

They could have at least offered therapy

That means money

Revenue I'm not generating

I have bipolar disorder

It was all a delusion of grandeur

Every ounce of this is

I wish I could kill that part of me and laugh  
it off but the point is that I'm not fucking  
joking and I'm giving you all my soul for  
free

Am I so insane to expect I'll be able to  
support myself after working at something  
for 15 years

Does that make me presumptuous and  
entitled?

If one of my songs has ever helped you I'm  
happy you could relate but I'm fucking  
broke

I am a healing animal and I have the scars  
to show it

Capitalism wants artists to starve yet still  
wants us to dance and contemplate  
It's romantic

Capitalism takes your first born and every  
child that follows

With a 3,000 dollar deductible

Capitalism I've given you everything and I  
am nothing

I have receipts

Capitalism, I make your economy fluid with  
my day job and I pay my taxes and I still  
can't afford a place to live

You promised so much and nothing came  
true

You lied to me my whole life and I'm still  
running around in circles searching for the  
dotted line to sign my life away

# Pepper

I once had a friend who called me, Pepper,  
of all things.

I never understood why, until recently.  
We would roam around our little town and  
pretend that we were archaeologists.  
We would dig up dinosaur bones (rotting  
sticks) and hunt for artifacts (stones  
shaped like hearts)

One day my friend got sick and I had to  
play alone.

I wandered through the woods and talked  
to myself as I held tight my toy gun.

I would occasionally stray from the path,  
checking the bushes for rival  
expeditionaries.

They always hid when they saw me.

I was about a quarter mile from home  
when

I came upon a car that was half buried in  
the dirt.

It was rusted and the roof was riddled with  
bullet holes.

I approached the car carefully, but not  
before I surveyed the area for potential  
threats.

Once the coast was clear, I crept through  
the passenger side window and marveled  
at my new discovery.

After about 5 minutes of poking around, I crawled back out to the open forest. I started to make my way back home when I heard a voice.

Faint and brittle it muttered,

“Pp..pp...pe...e..p..pp.er”

I started to run back to my house, I tripped and it knocked the wind out of me.

I started to get up slowly, when the same voice rang in my ears, this time closer and with more enthusiasm.

“Pepper! Don’t you dare move you poor little soul!”

I look over in terror and there’s a demon looking creature looking at me with its head tilted and it’s beady yellow eyes gazing into mine.

Its grey skin looked like in had been soaking in formaldehyde for months.

“Do you know why they call you Pepper?”

The creature asked.

“What are you! Don’t come near me!”

I yelled, backing away.

“They call you, Pepper, because on one lovely day in the spring, you would stumble upon little old me... You found the entrance to my home and any who enter will be greeted with hospitality! What kind of a host would I be if I didn’t welcome you with open arms?”



"I'm confused... you can't be real! Stay away!" I back into a tree, shaking out of my skin

"I'm not going to hurt you, dear boy! Now I was about to tell you where your little friend came up with that name! Don't be afraid, come sit by me and I'll tell you the tale."

This couldn't be real, I must have bumped my head when I tripped.

"Long ago there was a poet who wrote a letter to God. In the letter he asked for three things, a fountain pen that would never run dry, an endless scroll of parchment, and a muse to write his sonnets for. God was a fair but clever mistress so she sent him a fountain pen that never stopped pouring out ink, a scroll of parchment paper that wouldn't stop expanding, and for the muse... you guessed it! Me! At the sight of me the poet was repulsed. I tried as hard as I could to show him that he was wrong and I was a fair suitor, with great knowledge and insight for him to access, but he would not hear it. No matter how I would prove my worth, the deception that is flesh kept him from my powers. I started to play games to trick the poet. First I conjured spirits to frighten him every time he looked into a mirror; which was quite often, for he was a vain creature.

He became so frightened he gave up looking at himself all together, if he were to judge me for my appearance he would be haunted by his own gaze. Secondly I buried his pen in a ditch in these very woods, for if I took away his words he couldn't use his cunning and charm to plea for mercy. Thirdly I poured water all over the endless scroll of parchment and wrapped him up in it and buried him under the very log you sit upon." I sprung to my feet, ready to make a break for it, but the demon laughed. "A wise man never runs from the devil, if the devil has a story to tell! Remember that Pepper, my boy, because I came to your friend in a dream... or was it a nightmare? And told him to call you Pepper because one day I will grow hungry, and I DO love the aroma of fresh pepper." I tried to run away but all of the sudden I was floating above the trees and the wind was blasting against my face and I had the sensation of being pulled through dirt and tree branches. That's when I opened my eyes and there I was, in a pepper grinder, the devil staring at me with a smirking smile.

The End

# In a Plume of Smoke

An angel spoke to me  
Dressed my wounds with silk and drops of rain  
Sent me as a missionary across a nation  
With a Christmas carol stuck in my head  
Blaring through the emergency broadcast system  
Glory to the newborn shareholder  
Profits to the stillborn king  
In a trance, out of step with checks and balances

I sold my soul to the demons that possess me  
Catatonic sweat beads up on my forehead  
Blinded by the sun in my eyes and the aftertaste of salt  
I miss the opportunity for retribution  
Longing for divine intervention  
I tilt my head towards the heavens  
This is a sprint towards complacency  
In their comfortable shell, run on sentences lose their stamina

The angel asks me for a donation  
They gift me one boon so I will hold up my end of the bargain  
It's too late for that now

Spiderwebs are already spun over my  
good nature  
Elegies of benediction are sifted through a  
rusty pan  
Like sediment the request for truth is  
dismissed  
“I can talk to god myself,” I say  
No longer an object of existential  
commerce

Though the corridor is narrow  
I move through the catacombs with burnt  
sage and lavender  
Moisture permeating, a vestige of  
overgrown masculinity  
Choose the path of ten thousand  
daydreams  
A half a million nightmares  
Or a moment in limbo  
If you're struck by lightning it was all up to  
chance  
It's easy to believe in what scares you

Its harder to follow bliss

# Cauldron

If I could be anything in this world I'd be a  
cauldron  
Or a pinwheel spinning in a water fountain  
I'd something predictable and sweet  
Brimming with life and spiritually complete

Not a shell of something beautiful  
Not a ghost inside your mind

If I could hold that molten candle  
And embrace what I can't handle  
I think one day I could learn to feel alright

If I could unlearn anything it would be your  
illusion  
Or how you run and hide at the whim of  
your delusions

A penance engraved in the golden sky  
A wishful and timely lullaby

Sifting softly through the wreckage  
Deliver us your message  
And you can save the day and tell me I'll  
be fine

One day I'll see this place in a way I can't  
remember

And all of my memories will linger lost in  
terror  
I don't know if I can stay around  
with all of that anguish left in it's lingering  
cloud

Don't come down

# The Static

Indolent with pause  
See the fireworks dissolve  
I begin to gather words with no material  
resolve

Plasticine you play  
With your halo on display  
In motion for the sake of moving forward  
one more day

See the sky  
how it calls to you at night  
See the faces staring up with all that  
wonder in their eyes

And I hear your name  
Every syllable sustained  
Every answer to the questions I've been  
hanging on in vain

You fold your hand in mine  
Sometimes I feel alive

I turn and see your face  
See the future still in place

And the static in my head fades on its own,  
but i feel you inside me

How will we learn to stop stalling  
When all our time is taken away  
How does it feel when you're sober,  
up all night long cause the tv talks to you

When will my hands cease to tremor  
How will the comfort crawl through my  
veins  
How can I learn to be better,  
I'm alright but it feels impossible

And when the world gets too heavy  
Can I hide with you for a while  
I know I'm already ready, heads on fire and  
the house is burning down

I see you standing here  
the answer rings so clear

I'd wander through my days  
If only you would stay

And the static in my head fades on it's own

The static in my head fades



# Glass House

In a glass house you wish for the windows  
to break you'd be free from the tension of  
living this way

Though the day won't equate to the  
comfort within and the world that's outside  
only takes and won't give

In the natural light it is all you can see  
somewhere you must fit in and that's  
something to be

The only thing worse than the frostbitten  
air is the way you found out that I just  
wasn't there

And the warning that called from your own  
monologue was the same as tv that  
wouldn't turn off

Cover me up, turn me around and make  
sure I can overcome anything

Now it's all that I want

A miracle aid

Slam on the breaks so you feel safe

In the strangest of ways it all seems like a  
dream now you know what you should and  
you should not believe

Now the foundation shakes and your  
brother still cries though it's silent you see  
the tears well in his eyes  
And the face in the mirror is a shell of what  
was and the time just flew by like a calm  
morning dove  
The power that comes from the weight of  
your pain is a sudden reminder of that sad  
refrain

Will you cover me up  
Turn me around and make sure I can  
overcome anything  
Now it's all that I want  
A miracle aid  
Slam on the brakes so you feel safe

block out the sun from my eyes  
Hold me down so I'll sleep sound at night  
How you glow like the stars in the sky  
How they burn out when they burn too  
bright

Block out the sun from my eyes  
And I promise you will be alright  
You glow like the stars in the sky  
I just hope you don't burn out too bright

## 05/10/20 (For My Father To Overlook)

People are so violent  
Humanity is violent  
I lay in bed and curse in my mind  
Am I at peace?  
Am I a pillar of strength?  
I spend too much time thinking of myself  
I wish I could save them from themselves  
Their mournful whimpers  
My pathetic bitterness  
I picture my father in tears  
I wonder if he thinks of me lifeless  
Do I turn blue?  
Who goes first?  
When will I know what I'm supposed to  
be?  
The world is a mess of vultures and mice  
Bacteria and spit  
Saliva covering this fleshy wreckage  
My slouched back in pain from laying  
around all day  
I should burn a mark on my arm every time  
I don't know where to turn  
Why do they pray on us?  
Why do we have to march and stomp?  
One by one  
Two by two

Why did they kill my brother?  
On the street with no dignity, the tar in his  
teeth  
In a high tower they make their brooding  
eternal  
They breathe fire and carbon monoxide  
Trap our mother in her misery  
She watches from the edge of the forest  
with supernovas burning out in her eyes  
Glass slippers on hot lava  
I stare into the embers of still smoldering  
ash  
Soot gets stuck under my fingernails when  
I try to pick up the embers  
Another mark for my arm

Why do the tired get to escape  
Whilst I am restless?

I don't want to go to the hospital  
I don't want a nurse to risk their time on my  
sovereignty  
I call on a breeze to blow away my  
emotions  
The medicine is all gone  
It was never really here  
It's a time trap  
Ticking away as we see space  
A storm of amoeba's  
Milking my immunity

Born with a silver spoon, gifted from two  
pairs of calloused hands  
Stuffed into a cannon and shot across  
oblivion  
When their misplaced rage ricochets into  
the mirror  
It's singular, it doesn't extend an olive  
branch  
It hates, hateful  
It lodges slivers in my sunken brow  
They laugh and yell and wave their guns  
They fuck in their bread baskets and wipe  
the cum over their eyes  
I wish I could spit on them in their house of  
cards and scream  
Scream so loud until they can't hear  
anymore  
Until I can cower because I miss the  
opposition  
I wish they would go away  
Every bit of absence in my life  
I wish it would be replaced with their  
completion

I feel my blood pressure rise, pouring over  
Wall Street  
It crashes in a sad display of apathy  
A billowing angry steam spilling from my  
ears  
I kept it inside and it festered  
I wheeze in the key of b flat

A stock market for my cells  
I sell every share  
Organ by failing organ  
I cry  
I cry  
I cry  
I can't even cry  
I want to believe in my sadness  
I want to believe in anything

Why do the tired get to escape  
Whilst I am restless?

# Check In

I'm gonna release another album tomorrow  
I'm sitting at my day job listening to Nina  
Simone sing a Leonard Cohen song  
I think of ways I could possibly level with  
any of you further

There are hordes of frustrated twenty  
something's who are their own prolific  
icons

We flock to the static and a few of us are  
clever enough to find fame on Twitter  
I imagine Leonard Cohen or Nina Simone  
Tweeting and giggle

I guess all of the hard work and sleepless  
nights, the thousands of hours spent  
digging through myself have all added up  
to 3 heart reacts on a link to me fucking  
pouring my soul out

God help me

Elliott Smith once said "I could tell you a  
dream I had, besides that I couldn't be any  
more fucking for real with you" in response  
to someone telling him to "get a  
backbone" and I felt that in my fucking  
core.

It seems that stamps of approval and a  
literal validation check mark are what give  
you artistic license in 2020.

This internal monologue could feed my family if only I had the right words to offer at the right time.  
Luck has everything to do with it.



# To the Bone

We walked around the neighborhood while  
it was fast asleep  
My hoodie pulled over my head to shield  
me from the breeze  
We shared our cigarettes and stole a bottle  
of malt whiskey  
Stumbled underneath the stars and  
blacked out way too soon

You were some old rockstars on college  
radio  
I saw you from a distance making angels in  
the snow  
A drink to wash the day down and an  
awkward silhouette  
I watched you spiral out and now I know  
that

You couldn't see me if you wanted to  
And I got too high to catch the time  
It's all you ever really needed  
A home, somewhere you felt dignified

You tried to talk to god but she just hung  
up the phone  
Now you're just an artifact in your famous  
childhood home

We were characters and clowns with our  
notebooks missing pages  
I've never felt so old and now I see that

I couldn't be you if I wanted to  
So spread thin beside the monsters under  
your bed  
I couldn't see you if I needed to  
Young again, with a halo above your head

You couldn't see me if you wanted to  
If I were the moon the sun would erase me  
from your sky  
some nights you sleep with all the lights on  
Hollow enough to know that the glow  
won't reach your eyes

We walked around the neighborhood while  
everyone was safe and sound asleep

# Villain

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On the next few pages are an excerpt from a story that takes place in the late nineties in the United States. It's the story of a family that is at odds with themselves and with each other. There is a father, Lloyd; a greedy businessman who has lost touch with himself and his family. A mother, Penelope; a writer who has lost touch with her stories and forfeit her creativity to love and care for her children. Autumn, a young woman who is in the depths of self discovery and finding her own voice; and the youngest Jack, who is just old enough to understand, but young enough to not write about it.



# Fortune Builder (Meet Lloyd)

It split like an ice pick through untempered  
glass  
The push and pull of my conscience reeling  
me in towards certainty  
It took me 25 years to purchase this  
standing  
I sit cowering at the fool across from me  
Avoiding any real eye contact and  
managing to evade explanation  
Whether or not I made the right decision is  
out of my hands  
Its up to the consumer now  
An abridged version of this would end with  
me in a penthouse suite overlooking  
Manhattan  
The swill gather in the streets  
Whining about the dirty air and their bodies  
I imagine the bottom line giving out and the  
infrastructure shattering  
With a steady hand and some help from  
my private pharmacy I dream of an exit

## Baggage

There's a car waiting  
At the end of our driveway I start to see the  
glow of headlights  
The tar is wet and I move slow enough as  
to not make it seem like I'm anxious to  
leave  
The mist in the air is a reminder that you're  
all around me  
The warm embrace of comfort and routine  
The leather of the car seat is cold as I  
expected it to be  
The driver asks where I'm headed as if it's  
any of his business  
I respond to remind myself I'll return in a  
week  
I sort through paperwork as we exit on to  
the highway  
My loyalty is reserved to whoever can pay  
for my mortgage and lost sense of self  
Camouflaged by the blazer I wear to blend  
in and the uncomfortable loafers on my  
feet  
We stay on course for nearly an hour and I  
get this feeling in my stomach  
I think of dinner on the table and jack  
running around in the living room  
pretending to be a superhero

I divert quickly and remember its strictly  
business  
When I end up in the airport bar and pay  
10.50 for a glass of beer  
I should have had gin  
The flight feels like a lifetime and there's  
children screaming all around me as I sip  
my Bloody Mary  
Always stuck in business class  
I land and pick up my rental car, the sun is  
still up and I get stuck in traffic for a half an  
hour  
I meet with my business partners at some  
restaurant I can't pronounce the name of  
The cocktails were strong  
She gives me a glance and it feels like I'm  
16 again  
I remember my old Camaro and that  
summer  
I pretend it was with her and it makes me  
nauseous  
I end up falling asleep alone and I toss and  
turn in the foreign hotel bed  
I think of when I get back and the endless  
list of things to get done  
Penelope's disappointed look when we sift  
through the stack of bills sitting on the  
kitchen table  
Jacks face as he asks me to go for a hike  
Autumns smugness and sarcasm  
The debt I'll incur after The holidays

I wanted stability but in this distance  
anything's possible  
My wake up call sounds like nails on a  
chalkboard and I wipe the sweat from the  
my brow  
We meet for breakfast and she tells me  
about her children  
Michael plays basketball and Carrie plays  
soccer  
Her deadbeat husband doesn't care and  
she wants to be saved  
I ask if there's anything I can do and there's  
silence  
I tell myself I'll run away  
My father won't be proud but who can love  
for a hundred years  
There's opportunity and how can I live  
unhappy  
But jack calls and tells me about how he  
loves the model airplane I got him on my  
last trip  
He wants to show me the jump he built for  
his bicycle in the woods  
If I could be as strong as that ground I  
would  
My ears ring as I hang up the phone and  
tell him I'll be home soon



# Autumn's Dissertation

I can't find my fucking weed  
I swear if mom's been in my room I'm  
gonna lose my mind  
I need to move out.

Big brother is watching

Hell is this domestic kingdom

Lloyd,  
fucking diet Pablo Escobar reigns supreme

Cover me in flowers  
I spill my guts out to the ether  
Open the door to my ending  
Privatized privilege owns my body

I didn't ask to be born on a rainy day in  
September

Why does the grass grow at all  
Why do my hands have to tremble

I see a woman's creativity  
I see the stars in her eyes  
He swallows her whole  
His belly is infinite  
His truth is crass  
Consume

Miseducated

White power and a promise of protection

Their chasm is built on bricks of spiritual  
depravity

Sinister

With wings on my back as a burden

I take to the sky and smite their phallic  
instruction

Soft power

# Penelope's First Email

Lloyd,

I know you would rather just discuss this when you get home but I wanted to try using this new email. I found something in our daughters room today that's a little concerning. I don't want you to worry too much but I thought I should bring it up. We can talk about it when you're home. Is there anyway you could get Jack a souvenir or something small while you're traveling? He was telling me how he loved that model airplane you got him when you went to Portland. I started the first draft of my novel today, I know you think it's silly but I really think this will be the one!

Anyway,

Can't wait to see you in a few days

Love you,  
Penelope

# Bargain

I spent a million dollars today  
I wrote the check and handed it off  
It felt like the first real recognition I've  
received in years  
There was a shit eating grin on my face  
and a sense of bliss as we closed the deal  
A fiscal orgasm  
I think of you laying on a bed covered in  
hundred dollar bills  
Your figure like an hourglass and a twinkle  
in your eye as you call me towards you  
About to wrap me up in your sex  
I wake up  
Time to go home  
The alarm clock once again blaring in my  
ear  
Why couldn't I just dream a little longer  
I sit on the side of the bed as I wipe the  
sleep from my eyes  
I shower and notice a few pounds to my  
gut  
I should hit the gym when I'm home  
Penelope won't care  
Nobody will  
I remember the talk I'm going to have with  
Autumn  
She's acting out with her head stuck in the  
clouds

She should be focused on college  
I told her to cut it out and get in line  
it seems she's acting like this to spite me  
What did I do to deserve this life?  
Constant disobedience and inconsistency  
Besides, who puts food on the table?  
Not their flippant mother whose only  
concern is to be the next Agatha Christie  
She should be keeping a better handle on  
things while I'm out here providing  
Jack's my only hope for this family  
At least he acts like a normal boy  
Rides his bike and gets scrapes on his  
knees  
As long as we can keep him tough and in  
line he'll turn out fine  
I think it's time I took him to the range  
He needs to learn the advantages of power  
For now it's another airport bar and a six  
hour flight  
Back to my nightmare

# Autumn's Awakening

October 5th, 1998

It's Friday night but it's finally *this* Friday  
night

I don't know how he does it

He sings with such a quiet, strong beauty  
I feel like he knows me better than my best  
friend

I turn on Roman Candle and I feel like I'm  
transported to another world where  
someone understands me

I never thought I would get to see him but  
Claire got us tickets

She just got her license so we're going to  
go into Boston to the Paradise to see him  
I heard he went to Hampshire college  
which isn't that far away and honestly  
that's the only place I could picture myself  
going

Maybe Smith

Claire got some Adderal from our friend  
James at school and we're gonna take  
some before the show

I haven't tried it before but I'm sure it's  
going to be great

We also managed to get a pack of L&M's  
and a pint of Jack Daniels

Needless to say I cannot wait  
I'm pretty excited to see Quasi, too

# Caught You

This morning I found Autumn on the couch  
Wide awake and humming to herself  
She smelled like bourbon and cigarettes  
Though I'm sure she tried her best to wash  
off the scent  
I turned the lights on and I didn't see my  
daughter  
She was somewhere else  
Lost  
I know she's growing up but I wasn't quite  
prepared for this  
What did I do wrong?  
I know she's impressionable and her friend  
Claire makes me nervous  
She's such a sweetheart though  
Surely they aren't this reckless  
Oh my god, did Claire drive like this?  
I ran a shower for Autumn and made her  
some sleepy time tea  
Regardless of what happened last night I  
still love her  
She has so much talent and I just want her  
to follow her dreams  
Not get caught up in a cliché  
I hope she realizes this and is able to  
recognize that what I'm doing is difficult for  
me to do without lashing out  
I can't tell Lloyd about this



She'll be on her way to boarding school as  
soon as he's home  
Shit  
He'll be home soon  
I get her out of the bath and take her to  
bed  
Today should be interesting  
I'll let her deal with that headache when  
she wakes up  
As I close the door behind me I hear  
shuffling  
I press my ear to the door and the sound  
coming through the door is beautiful  
Her fingers dance over the keys and she  
plays what I've been hearing her work on  
this last week but it feels new and realized  
Then she starts to sing

*"I felt small while you slept still with the  
windows wide open  
How the cold kept me awake and I couldn't  
feel you there  
Now I wrestle in my skin  
I was flattened by the weight of fading time*

*Show me a blank white page  
I could cross out my eyes  
I could wonder how I ended up this way  
Now I'm a ghost that moves  
Through the damp morning dew*

*How my voice would shift and how I  
wished you'd stay"*

My knees go weak in the hallway by the  
stairs and I weep  
I try my best to not make a sound but I'm  
struggling  
She is my child and her voice is like a  
warm bath  
Her words cut through me like a dagger  
I don't want her to feel an ounce of pain  
Whoever hurts her is my mortal enemy  
There is nothing I won't do to protect her  
I just want her to know that I understand  
how she is feeling  
Besides, that part of her comes from me

# Lloyd's Kingdom

I walk through the door and Penelope's in  
the kitchen preparing lunch for Jack  
She walks over and kisses me on the  
cheek and I turn away just enough so she  
notices

There's not much love left in me and I  
picture her standing in Penelope's place  
I immediately walk over to Jack and give  
him a hug to bring myself back to earth  
Where's Autumn?

It's almost noon and she's still sleeping  
Ridiculous

I'll wait a little longer before I knock on her  
door

She'd be here now if she was anxious to  
see me

Penelope immediately starts rattling off  
requests

"Can you just take out the trash? I left the  
bag on the steps."

Jack doesn't ask if I got him anything but  
he follows me upstairs reminding me all I  
have is the toiletry bag they gave me on  
the plane

I hand it to him and he looks disappointed  
I'll make it up to him by promising him I'll  
take him to the range tomorrow  
He hasn't gone shooting with me before

Mostly because Penelope would rather not  
have her son wielding a pistol  
She always gets in the way with her liberal  
ideologies but he's my son  
He's ready  
What 9 year old boy doesn't want to play  
with guns?  
I head back downstairs, take out the trash,  
and finally sit down on the couch  
I rarely get to relax and I know that this is  
just a fleeting moment  
I turn on the television and FOX is reporting  
on the preparations for the impeachment  
inquiry of Clinton  
That fucker ought to be removed from  
office  
What kind of man gets his dick sucked in  
the White House?  
Scratch that, Nixon could've done it  
What kind of man gets caught?  
I can tell by the sound of the dishes being  
done in the kitchen that Penelope is getting  
frustrated and she's in her own head  
She hates when I watch FOX news  
It just feels like a small victory  
Maybe she'll get fed up enough and want  
to divorce me  
No, how the hell would she provide for  
these kids without draining me for child  
support  
I have to take initiative here

She can't have that liberation  
Now I start to count down the days till I  
can leave again  
Autumn stumbles down the stairs  
She looks like hell and this has me  
questioning what she was up to last night  
What was Penelope hiding from me?  
I need answers and I plan on getting them

## **A Dialogue Pt. 1**

"Good morning sunshine," Lloyd, sarcastically gestures at Autumn, "rough night?" Autumn swells up with rage but is too tired to react with any emotion. "Did you miss me?" Lloyd continues rhetorically. "Nice to see you too, Dad." Penelope is shaking, knowing that Lloyd is about to dig into her daughter's psyche like a polygraph. "What's new, kid?" "Got a few more willing patients addicted to oxy's on your trip?" Autumn cuts to the chase, knowing a fight is inevitable. "What the hell did you say to me?" Lloyd is beet red and Penelope intervenes "Can we please not do this right now, Jack doesn't need to hear this." Jack is sitting on the couch watching the tv in the parlor, anxious to not interrupt or make a sound. "She isn't going to disrespect me in my own home," Lloyd's

voice elevates, “she should be working, how else is she going to pay for college?” Autumn grinds her teeth, about to implode, “How the fuck do you expect me to get good grades, work on my music, and take care of my chores? I don’t have the time or the energy to keep up with all of that! Oh right, you wouldn’t know what it’s like to have depression because you have no soul!” “Don’t speak to your father like that!” Penelope intervened. Lloyd stood there dreaming up ways to crush her spirit into pieces but could only utter two words, “You’re done.” He moved closer to her, so close she could smell his breath. Sweat was beading on his forehead and he pointed at her and spoke another two words, “Get out.” Penelope sobbed as Autumn stormed out of the front door and Jack sat up on the couch kicking his feet anxiously.

# Claire's Grace

Claire pick me up from the creek down the  
street

She had a joint ready and Roman Candle  
playing

She always knows what to do

Her thoughtful disposition grounds me  
when I need it

She resonates in me

Wild

Like an echo through canyon walls

A violent wave crashes over my head and  
I'm drowning in her erratic sea

Our oath is sacred

Beyond our blood and blended in the  
greenery

I slip into the shade of her willow tree and  
weep

The pains of being pure

She soothes the cuts that burn when I  
tremble

She holds a mirror up to my pain as I  
shuffle through poison ivy

The glass over my eyes is a reminder of  
home

A threat to my womanhood

Maybe one day she'll see me as I see her

The shit at home feels unimportant when  
we're together



# A Humble Beginning

Written by P.S Whitcomb

It was the summer of 1989 and we met at a party. A friend of my sister introduced us. I first noticed your starry eyes, looking around you as though you were ready to be found. You asked me if I believed in love. I told you to follow me to the porch so we could talk without interruption. The gesture grabbed your attention and we talked all night. Most men would just rush into sex but you were patient. I liked that about you. Someone I could trust and be honest with. You didn't fumble for your words either. You were confident and when you spoke it was with conviction.

A year later and we were to be married. You looked terrified standing at the alter. Terrified but happy. Your brother had that grin on his face as my father walked me down the aisle, asking me if I was sure I wanted to do this. He offered to pull the car from the parking lot and drive me away if I wasn't prepared for the commitment. I was young but I was ready. I knew you would take care of me. We had enough money from your job as an architect and I

was totally in love with you. Ready to take on the world together, start a family.

We didn't get pregnant right away and I'm happy we didn't rush into it. You were busy with your work and it allowed us to travel. I always wanted to travel, since I was a young girl. I would read National Geographic and think of all the places I wanted to see. The tropical serenity of Hawaii, Europe and the feeling of a kiss in front of the Eiffel Tower, the bazaar's of Morocco. The adventures I could have with nothing holding me back. It seemed my whole life had come full circle and it swept me off of my feet.

We were somewhere off the coast of Athens. It was the summer and we were swimming, playing in the amethyst blue water. You seemed to be elsewhere. It seemed as if your mind was farther away than I could reach. My concern was easy to address, we were always open with one another. My words came out with tenderness, careful not to strike a nerve though you never gave me a reason to fear you. You got irritated and waded towards the boat. As you pulled yourself up I noticed a bruise on your back. I didn't say anything, I just wanted to enjoy our time

together in this beautiful place. I couldn't let go of this image of you sweating and passionately fucking the beautiful waitress at our hotel. My anger was welling, it left me self conscious and bitter. You wouldn't do that... would you?

A few minutes past and I told myself I must have just grabbed your back too hard in the water. It could have been me the night before when you made love to me. We were passionate, weren't we?

The End,

For now

# The Last Few Poems

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# Spittle

We're gonna get married and have a baby  
We're gonna but a big house in the  
suburbs  
We're gonna raise our children right and  
eat 3 balanced meals a day

We're gonna buy stock and give to charity  
We're gonna recycle and vote blue  
We're gonna have two Subaru's  
A puppy for each one

We're gonna vacation in national parks  
Maybe one day we'll go to Europe  
We'll have photo albums full of life  
Our grandchildren will love us

We're gonna own a farm  
One day I'm gonna win an award for my  
poetry  
One day we'll be at peace  
And we'll clean the spittle off each others  
shirts

# Lost in the Ever Present Distance

Serve you up a bonnet  
A bottle for my son  
It's gravity in the middle  
It's only just begun

Time as it was presented  
Sugar and watered down beans  
Strawberry covered likeness  
I know what you want me to mean

Pretty and posted up smiling  
By the chain mail fence at the pool  
Somebody have some mercy  
On this headless horsemen like fool

Coughing up chocolate and bitters  
A fool in a foil photograph

# Parking Lot

They pulled the car around to pick you up  
You sat on the sidewalk by the grass  
Held your cigarette up to your mouth  
It took forever for the feeling to pass

A little shaky from the alcohol  
Or from the lack of it's warming bath  
You want to wake up feeling normal  
Is that too much to ask

You were sick the other day  
And you were sick the day before  
I want to meet you on the promenade  
But I think that I'll stay in my room and  
pray

You called your mother from the waiting  
room  
You dial 9 before the tone  
You wonder if they will remember you  
Or if you'll still feel all alone

It's all the little things you tell yourself  
It's the gas station across the street  
You wait around for something happening  
You wait around as you retreat

You got high the other day

You were high the day before  
I want to meet you in the parking lot  
Can you drive me home where I feel safe



# Studied Psychology

You should've gone to Burklee  
Or studied psychology  
You should have moved to Paris  
But you got your ged

You should allow yourself some patience  
Instead you're just our favorite patient  
Should have kept your paychecks  
And been better to your wife

You should think about investing  
Listen to who you're addressing  
Stop expecting roses  
when you deconstruct your life

You could've worked a little harder  
You could've been a little smarter  
You could have made an impact but you  
lived your life asleep

The overlords all make their money  
Everyone hates everybody  
Another day in paradise  
Now collectively let's weep

# Daylight

I can put my best foot forward  
And be on my way  
But I stumble on my shoelaces untied

And the silver slips of daylight  
Give me a headache  
Though quiet autumn air still feels alright

I want to be the raging river that feeds the  
ocean  
I want to be the woman you need to feel  
safe  
I want to be able to make it through a day  
shift  
But I'm crying in the bathtub and I don't  
know when I'll get out of this place

I can wear a little wire  
Can you hear me  
I thought I saw somebody standing there

At the clinic they remind you  
take your medicine  
If you're lucky you'll be asleep in your  
rocking chair

I want to be a blueprint laid out by DaVinci

I want to be every letter in the god damn  
abc's

I want to tear apart the distortion of all  
creation

But I'm crying in the bathtub trying to  
manage this fucking disease

# Was is Trauma or Healing

I don't want to relive all my trauma again  
A wave of white washes the blue box on  
the red  
I know I'm settled and in tune with my  
reserve  
Don't cut me open or I'll morph into a bird

It's September the sun is warm on my head  
Mom's washing clothes and dad is working  
on the shed  
Something floating through my infant  
docile mind  
Just a picture and an insect in my eye

Summer's over there's a playlist on repeat  
Read Allen Ginsberg and I forgot how to  
speak  
My friend stole me a box of books one  
time  
like a shaman from another life

But I felt so left out for some fucking  
reason  
And I can see where I went wrong  
I spent so long trying to get lost  
Just a dollar sign to produce and move  
along

And I thought drugs would make me happy  
I guess they did for a little while  
But I'd burn and crash with no time and no  
cash  
I found out what I wanted and what I really  
fucking wanted was alcohol

But I am learning  
To be happy  
And trying to be healthy

(Eat your fruits and veggies)

Don't you know the shows this evening  
Walk towards the stage and sit on the  
couch  
There are angels all around me now  
They are complete and it lulls me to sleep

# In My Keep

I am in my castle  
And you tell me not to be  
So hard on myself  
So I can find some sense of peace

Can you transfer me some change  
I'm taking every step to change  
I could offer you a future  
If I could just let go the pain

Get the sticker on your car  
Tell me who you really are  
I am cold in my division  
I am callous on your heart

Seventeen again  
This time it's not pretend  
Nobody's waiting for you  
Nobody is your friend

What the fuck should I believe  
If I can't even seem to grieve  
Cause the money in my pocket  
Won't sustain my family

How the fuck will I get by  
If I can't handle what's inside  
Will I give into that daydream

Will I finally arrive

Father figure time  
You never got it right  
You always kept me waiting  
And this all ends

# Cradle

You fumble through your pocketbook  
Past your cell phone and receipts  
And no one stops to let you pass  
When you brave the frozen street

I saw you in a movie  
A vignette by Ramin Bahrani  
Floating along in a parking lot  
While bupropion whispers to me

It's Christmas Eve in February

I'll buy you a cradle and sing lullabies  
The night is no stranger and I will burn out  
like an old satellite

Maybe when I get back to earth I'll land

You raise your head to Jesus  
As you scroll through three apps on your  
phone  
You gaze into the future  
Where you're estranged and all alone

You draw a perfect circle  
Picking pain out of your heart  
It's all those empty notebooks  
That will turn you into art



It's Halloween or whatever you need  
You were on a ledge and buried down  
deep

I'll light you a candle wipe the tears from  
your eyes  
I'll love you forever till all of those satellites  
fall from the sky

# **Song About Being Abducted By a Cult**

We all adapt and maintain the best that we  
know how

Some days your heart is steady and some  
days it won't slow down

You find a place to hide deep in the  
caverns of your mind  
While the radiator screams in an ensemble  
with the pipes

When you feel your last nerve ticking tuck  
the tension back inside  
When you want to let it out just make sure  
that you get it right

Get it right

You wake up tired and afraid  
You wish for words to tumble out

Got too high to sober up  
And now you're never coming down

They sang a song for you on Labor Day  
And wrapped you up in clean white clothes

They poured you out a glass of lemonade  
And now you're never going home

# Walk Me Home

They would push you around and pick you  
out

Make a habit of control  
It's all they ever know

It's only the shitty part of winter  
No one really knows if you are sticking  
around

I really hope you find the courage in you to  
dig yourself out of that hole in the ground  
and don't forget about yourself or all the  
times when you would pray  
For all that prying pain to go away

I've exhausted all my resources  
All expenses waived away  
I toss and turn indebted to  
The will of yesterday

When they raise their banners  
When they fly their tarnished flags  
I can't deny the echo  
That resounds and answers back

You can be a picture postcard  
I can be a satellite  
When the bombs start falling  
You can stay with me the night

I can do the long division  
I can hear the metronome  
I can offer reassurance  
Maybe you could walk me home

# When I Wish Upon a Scar

I walk through walls decorated and lavish  
Where I appear as a specter  
Haunting and inhabiting it's residents  
Wilted roses where my eyes once were  
I come upon a picture frame vacant and  
missing memories  
Left over from decades past, a gift from my  
parents  
Stagnant as roots buried in the cold  
ground  
Pressure from the earth and it's pull  
A layer of mist that impairs my sense of  
direction  
Everything was laid out in front of me but it  
seems insensitive to embrace that reality  
Upward mobility, a rented room, and clean  
clothes  
Never owning up and tied to what I owe  
It's not so bad considering all that I could  
be

When I wish upon a Star  
I see your love and all you are  
Everything my heart desires  
Has led to you  
Up above the clouds so high  
Like a diamond in your eyes

Hours pass until the day my dreams come  
true

# Dissonance

I'm a speck of dust  
In this modern world  
Met by disdain  
Covered in your curls  
There's a thief in power  
a thief that pays me  
Assigned his dirty work  
While I read the giving tree

There's an institution  
There's a living will  
Two packs of cigarettes  
And a rolled up bill  
Close to the chest  
Cuffed like my jeans  
They tie me up  
And watch me bleed

Start to run there's nowhere to go  
You try but nothings happening here  
You're home alone  
they've got you pinned down by the throat  
The mirror breaks  
Every time you try to face yourself  
It goes on and on  
They won't miss me when I am gone

Medical villain



Healthcare robbery  
Watch a private prison  
Profit from slavery  
Personal division  
Personal space  
Push pills for millions  
March standing in place  
Softcore pornography  
They cc me  
white men with influence  
Steal her iud  
Wasted dirty energy  
Headlines the bill  
Liars dismember me  
As I sit by the window sill

When the floor gives in under your feet  
You'll know exactly what was the source  
Your aching hands  
Can't hold on or feel around anymore  
You want some truth  
You're tired of them lying to you  
You try to move  
It seems like there's nothing you can do

No education  
Educated still  
Pay me in marigolds  
Taught my brother to kill  
White flag over my door  
Become the living dead

While peaceful ideologies  
Circle round my head  
Truthful solutions  
Waived by the state  
Class war machinist  
All covered in hate  
Couch locked revolution  
Televised defeat  
Reminds me of my heritage  
Man it can't be beat

It's all over now baby blue  
There's always something wrong with you  
you're as free as a bird  
can't understand or know what you're  
worth  
When the money's gone  
It was never there all along  
It's the same old song  
And you're tired of singing along

# Alright

We'll be alright  
When it comes down to it all  
When the air seems heavy  
When the engine has stalled

We'll be ok  
When the money is tight  
When the table is overflowing  
When we can't remember at all

It's ok

**The End**