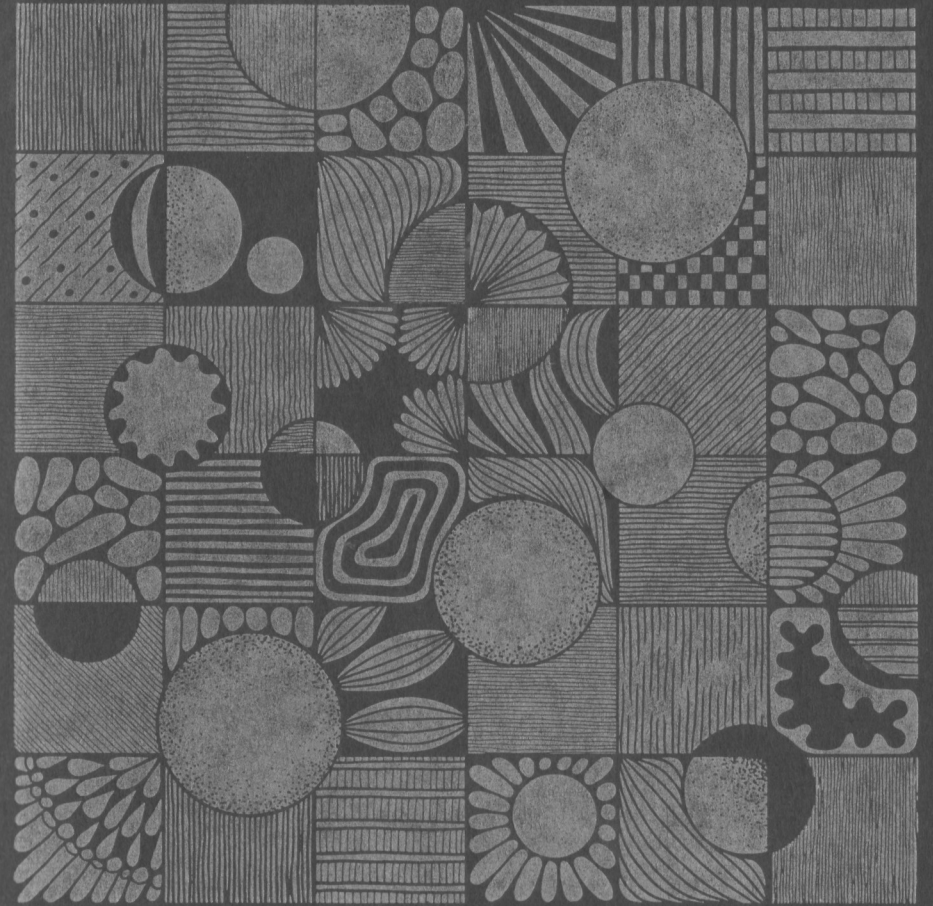


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No, Dear
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POSITION

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PROUD MEMBER
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Confession

The evening feels like animals.
Waterlogged gray trees. Mint lake cold as ice cream.
I'm crying again over my powers of description.
Blackbirds disappear into the sour cream of fog.
I am the white milk standing in the back of your throat.

Just Part

Loose white tee. Silhouettes printed three times: cacti, crescent moon,
Howling wolf. Deep rainbow, like oil slick. Paired with pinstripe capris.
Wearing metal (silver) & stone (malachite).

All these contradictions.

Oversized cable-knit sweater. Skinny leather pants. Wide-leg cargos
& cropped cream undershirt. Loud like a heartbeat,

automatic dress watch.

Whether I like it (& I don't), I'm connected to anything I mutter.

Don't know any object until I feel its texture.

This process is velour.

Wear all neutrals so my burnt sienna accents pop. Researching French

Chore coats, so pretty. When I'm most depressed & fighting myself,

I work the foundation. Dress distinctly,

with care. Vivacious, will

Exaltation. Finding a love match between the world & me. Years

& years of it. I build an outfit: the thesis is a cocksure

self. It gets me

Outside, strutting around svelte. Incarnate my design decisions.

Part of the whole, just part. Especially while shifting

along disability's

Spectrum. As eczema or rod-fortified femur flares. Softens the mirror

Of each interaction. *Bold*, I imply, before uttering. Three buttons undone.

Chest hair gleaming. Fighting, all the time, in my weighty armor.

Scalp

Message in a bottle
when I die take my wig off
my feet are made of wood
smoke falls from my heels
as my toes latch to bark
there's a nipple in this hollow
full of sap and gris gris
pigs gather under
pearl and tuck
a navy quilt along the city
thank you for reminding me it's Spring
my hair will be arched -
hovering - a scalp bound heron
my dress loose and beige -
a city dove ten toes down
electricity will bat rain water off my skin
I was propagated in a cognac bottle
and there is a forest growing underneath my waist

Surviving

Heat like this, where everything swells,
where it becomes a choiceless choice, moving slower.

The neighbors open the fire hydrant on 54th st & the concrete steams.
I want to shriek & play in the arc of children's laughter, but I'm too tired.

Not minding that my bag & hair get wet, I walk back & forth instead, through
the rainbow spray, smiling. Returning hours later, when it is night, I enter

a familiar smell: clean laundry, tacos & mop water, limes. Tank tops & bachata
in the damp night, plastic cups of sticky liquor & soda, the tang of cooking meat

hanging low. A dropped watermelon split open on the sidewalk, hot pink & seedless.
Reggaeton base, gravely & thick. Heaving families splayed out on stoops,

spilling over their plastic chairs & out into the street. Children soaked, shouting,
weaving between legs, clutching tiny yellow water guns. On 6th avenue,

I pass two men helping another man towards an ambulance. He is stooped over &
stumbling, his eyes completely closed. Beneath red flashing, the graying paramedic,

snapping gum & tilted forward by his heavy, muscled shoulders. "How much
did he have to drink today?" There is a sudden tenderness then, in the quiet pause after

he asks. Not politeness, exactly, but humility. Three men gathered around a fourth, who
is barely standing, leaning against them with his full, human

weight. On all of their faces, the sting of a life. Their stillness is cut, soon &
suddenly, by the high, picante whistle of a child's yell, a child tugging at their mother's

long braid as she thrusts a cart forward, piled full with cans for deposit. Moving from
beneath the street lamps, shimmering, another child runs ahead of them, fat & jubilant.

A man is trailing him, calling out playfully while pushing a stack of boxes on wheels,
running past us, rattling, filling the street with new sound. I follow them until the mural

of the uprising, then turn down 54th st. again. The pavement is still wet from the open
fire hydrant & I can still feel heat through my sandals. Hot & wet & tingle & night,

through the street & dirty water, crossing it slowly as if it's a river, lifting my dress above
my knees & peering into the lit, open windows of other people's apartments,

delighted by glimpses of their inside lives.

So this is the world, I think. So this is the world, as if I am not in it.

How beautiful it is,
& yet, how good —

to still be here,
to have survived.

MAMAN 1999

In the hospital I turn away while you place a sock
over the fire alarm. I hear intravenous muttered
somewhere over my right shoulder. It's February.
We are learning the language of benign and malignant.
Outside, snow is not enough to cover the grass
and birches are flaking.

I think about irrelevant things: the buoyancy of your round body
in waistcoats and double denims, coagulated purple lip liner
— a distraction from your pocked teeth,
a ravenous swearing at your sister and her cards in Burraco.
Even the time I stalled the car by the Louise Bourgeois spider,
when you told me about casting silver nitrate, recognising
the loss of your own mother in the folds of its leg.

Brutalism

When we're sober
A sentimental side emerges

If I'm honest I prefer trees
Arranged in sculpted concrete

Ziggurats performing handless headstands
Clouds with nacreous names

Against this backdrop skyscrapers
Birth from the ocean floor

We toe the line
Between martial & ambient

The streetcar is dead
We're all into light rail now

Each time we find our culture
Deep fried in cornmeal

A hot tar winter coat
On the tongue

We remember why we drive
Three hours away to breathe

This air's a little too clean
But it's fine

Suburban Hell

In the swelter of July's open mouth, I gaze
at the sun through the windshield.

Four letter word for "warm place." Mom turns
up the air conditioning, I lean back. *Womb?*

I lift my foot off the break, tracking white
light before me. *No.* We roll forward.

When UV light continuously passes through
the eye, free radicals singe the retina.

The external temperature is 92 degrees Fahrenheit.
I think we are allotted a handful of minutes

to look at the sun before we burn completely. Highway
mirage, highway mirage, truck rubble,

something sulfuric, sudden stop. Mom
phantom breaks, braces for impact.

We're okay! I yell. She relaxes. *I didn't
expect that.* The thing about traffic is

we're just sitting here. In the dimension of living
objects we are placed side by side.

Passengers, suspended, sectioned off arbitrarily.
There is, perhaps, a dog, three cows facing west,

an incalculable cloud of chickens
in transit to a farm town

or slaughter. The highway is the brightest
place on Earth. Faded asphalt blurs to concrete

divider blurs to gravel shoulder to heat through
breezblocks. A driver in the next lane

blares his horn in vain. Our long procession.

A day in Sheep Meadow

There are people who think
everyone is watching them
and people who think nobody is.
Then there are the young mothers
who simply do what they need, sharing space.
I share space with lone women in the shade.
The sun shares space with the moon
who-shaped like a call sign-
rings in the night-
stamping the sky
with the skulls of the dead.
An empire of ancestors rises
from the blades at my feet.

Take your time
is what they tell me
in this insistent greening of life.
And so I do.

I press raspberries against my tongue
bloodletting an endless altar.
Before me are two boys trying hard
to fall in love.
Behind me lies a tangled place
where the point
is to get lost
and you'll walk for as long as it takes
to get found which is as long as it takes
to see past your own suffering-
past the big track, too,
that surrounds all of this
where the serious among us cycle by
or run fast.
Others just walk, together or alone.
But everybody moves in the same direction.
They have to, that's the rule.

well coming

the shades of transition seep wanton across your back, the skyline parting lips tonight, everything we've been wanting buoying up on the shores to our liking, but are we ready to welcome it, usher it into yearning belly? buttons pop, jaw shock as the harvest comes, like those magic globes that pulsed with magnetic light, witches in the prank shop + you put your finger to it, questioning dogma, anxious for your future like it were a crystal ball + not another way to get zapped. conditioned to your core to avoid hunger, are you willing to lick transformation down its impossible spine, withstand the brassy heat on its way out of you, amidst your panting?

JOYRIDE SONNET

I have no interest in folk who can't find peace in the desert. who disagree about the scenic route.
Hey lil' lady — *JEWEL OF THE VALLEY* — *little pioneer town*, you light up the flat pan
 like a precious vein! Yr crown of coral and gold: constellations
 of tarped-up RVs and junked service stations. Even the North American wind is saying it:
Give a boy yr heart, and he'll look at you like the animal you pulled it from.

How many of us stand out in the cold, waiting for a rose?

Wanting to find something for keeps or the keepers of the myth where saviors don't exist?

With my thumb out, I'll trust whoever slows down: Witch of The Canyon, Pan of The Junkyard;
 every trail angel I've ever met knew exaggeration as a form of prayer:
In this town, you might as well be a firefly balancing in the vacuum of space! Narrowly,
 my grandmother made her point: "second sight delights
 only in the impossibility of the imagination." Which is to say, *I knew you'd come back, just not how.*

Joshua Garcia

Female Model on Brocade Sofa, 1975

after Philip Pearlstein

What is this discontent? The morning before you and nearly gone. You will not rest until everything has been taken. The furniture, the bedding, the few eggs left in the carton. Leave nothing behind but the mice droppings and a hornet making love to the glass. No shadows cast except those on your body—its waterfalls and gardens, buttercups, bluebells, the grasses braided down your back, and the birds' greedy beaks. You bend to accommodate this space, to fill what time is left. Pleasure wrung from self-containment. *Why don't they make buildings like this anymore? Made to leave a mark.* When they arrive, they will find you exposed, your back turned to a wide room.

Two Figures, 1963

after Philip Pearlstein

Casual, the classical arrangements, one seated on a column, a pillow under her buttocks, and the other standing, contrapposto, again, looking at her from his superior advantage. They are in a room of course. We, our muscles falling like drapery, are always in rooms. I am not in the mood this time to reveal myself, threadbare as my inflections may be. Measure the molding, the hardening lines. There is nearly always a perspective shift. I love you this time. This time I don't. It's a balancing act, but this isn't about that, depending, at least, on where you're standing.

again

at the museum the rust-furred calf,
 stuffed—twin heads blooming
 from the neck, glass eye
 in each socket. I can't look away.
 I read an article: the reporter
 went to the rally & asked.
 the people wanted the air burning.
 one head believes he is only,
 he is always. I want to know what
 was so great about America before:
 in 1934 Ridgewood my grandmother
 peers through the curtains—the neighbors
 in their new uniforms, their swastikas
 outside her father's store.

Straight Friend Buys a House

You show me your garden:
 zucchini, garlic,
 tomatoes, and rain.
 You complain about deer.
 You point: "the property line."
 Why can't the neighbors just
treat their carpenter bees?
 I don't know. I'm sorry.
 Don't they know?
 Soon this could be your
 problem. Your house
 might be eaten by bees.
 I'm sorry. That'd be more
 money. That'd be bad.
 Actually. The bees
 won't *eat* your home, just
 drill its wood, claim holes
 for life. Loners. No hive.
 No honey. I'm sorry:
 lately all I do is buzz. Just
treat the bees. If only you
 meant *reward*. I'd like a treat.
 Something. 15 years
 as friends. Drunk like
 that, we shot past buzz.
 Sharing that shitbox
 we loved to blackout.
 Not once did you
 question my life.
 How could you. Not once
 did you question my lie.
 You were kind. You are kind.
 A woman loves you. I buzz.
 You hear me.
 You're killing me now.

Marriage Dream

It is half over and we can hardly believe it.
 It is beginning and we are already tired.
 I am breaking through drywall,
 splintering beams, looking for the room
 I found inside my dream.
 Behind one wall, nothing.
 Behind another, something.
 It is like a magic trick except very bad
 and the thing that disappears is the floor.
 I see a table and a pack of Merit Gold 100's.
 I see a rocks glass filled with cigarette filters.
 I see my grandparents, young, startled,
 drinks halfway to their lips.
 I do not stop until I find a sub-basement.
 A sub-sub-basement. An attic under the basement
 that unfolds forever like a Jacob's ladder.
 It is not nice to discover things.
 Many people have no limits.
 Many hells have no bottom.
 Many dreams have no end.
 I find 1996. The phone in the pantry
 rings and rings and rings and rings.
 The long cord stretches all the way
 through the hole I have made in the dream,
 all the way to a mudroom in a wintertime.
 Everything is asleep. Snow shoes.
 Canned pears. Spiders and their mothers.
 All at once, I know everything.
 Being a wife is unbecoming.
 Love exists and it is an ice storm.
 If poetry is a metaphor for whatever,
 then this is a poem.
 If my husband asks what it is about,
 then it is about nothing.
 I will forget everything
 about this except how hard
 I ran past the basement door
 as though something wicked was chasing me.

Midnight Snack as an A24 Body Horror Film

i.
 While the half and half slept
 in its squat carton, I couldn't —
 so crept through the ceaseless cry
 of coquí frogs to the kitchen where
 my father reared backlit naked before
 the open fridge his frame
 fraying in the papaya seed dark
 a narrow cage of flesh barely
 hung in the blue light orange
 juice gallon upside down
 the gullet gasping it in spilling
 over his shoulder the jug
 glugging air the man
 choked for sugar-water
 in animal stifled sounds.
 I knew if I kept watching
 the brown mole halfway
 up his spine would split
 open like an eye
 and stare back.

ii.
 73 and wrapped in a crepe cocoon
 on my couch, my father's monoxide
 snore spilled across the floorboards.
 Creeping past his sleeping form,
 what scared me most was the promise
 his body made — the winter
 torso I'd inherit, the skin that caught
 and tore like tissue. I pulled apart
 the paper carton's mouth, poured
 the cream past my teeth.
 A tang: holding close to my eye
 the sell-by date, I swear
 I heard the agéd pelvis coo;
 I heard the wizened penis whine.

iii.

Milk in, milk out.
My son's eye oozes, a colony
of teeth roost in his skull.
He splurts and growls as milk
curdles in the canals
of his neck and arms. Love is
only his eye's black aperture
blooming as he eats, the way
the synthetic nipple glues
and unglues his gums.
I am what hunches
over him, fingernails
dragging on the rug, nameless
aberration slumping
from room to darkened room
that hardly lives —
that lives only for his life.

SPACE AGE

You're the age
of a mound of sand
M told me on line at the C Town
I find your drawing
a bird in flight
Hawkform written delicately below
Sandwiched between pages
attesting to failures
of organizing space and time
lists, notes, numbers
flowers, profiles, illegible hands
when was the last time you felt connected?
planted firmly in the soil among others
of your genus species / family / kingdom?

I clear the patch in the corner
tricky weeds know I am a poor gardener
L says I have to be ruthless
I'm hung up
afraid to miss a flower
the surprise ending of every weed
all umbrella'd in aster allium agave
I pull to clear a path for the sun
to reach your bell shaped bloom
E said plant the flowers 12 inches apart
and the summer squash 18

now the squash is too crowded and the flowers
look alienated
When I look down at my cheap nails
I see the cuts on his hands, scabs on his arms
My father's missing toe
A milky water line collapsed floating along your chest

a curtainous shadow fluttering
on the surface of the water
chestnut,
When two animals meet in a crowd and neither has a message
the heads of flowers bow

Rodlyn-mae Banting

LOVER IN DOWNWARD DOG, EARLY MORNING

Your bony bottom rising, morning ritual second heaven the
summit to which I pray just like this: ass to God, while being an
ass to God, I ask my God that she spare me from being your prey as
if you are not the one with your defenses down ass up doe in the
cemetery wood staring unmoving ogling the barrel of the gun as
if a lover your ass Godding its way into the soft light obedient as a
puppy that slight shimmy that slight refraction that breaks every
sunlight into shapes unholy, and yet still—in this New England
winter we will only know once—is divine.

Leopoldine Core

WINTERS

What person

leaning on the
broken wall

sliding off it

Drunk on
something

a found feeling
a done feeling
a permanent feeling

All eyes on the medallion
its ribbon necklace—

Juventus

You won the lottery
four times

no one seemed to notice

Bird after feathers

Sleep tried
silent words

Murano folded into futures
taken

Tobacco lift ruckus
for winners only

Umbrella from England
where they don't break

Doing a parallel dance
that people called
stallion.

Bird after work
Sleep jobs

Silent prayers
unbridled into the air

proof

Envious before the loss
Already spilled the dirt

Aggressive flip flops
lapping the property

A cucumber in the snow

Pushing a button—
every day your
birthday

Chunk
of froth
goes crying
with their diary

Plan A: Getting going
Plan B: I need glasses

So I can see
a plate forever in
your room.

Seeks
revenge only
to end up gooey
with grasshoppers
jumping to get away
from you.

Jaye Chen

jasmynes for Jasmine

I called every florist in your city
& they told me that nothing grows on a vine
in Missouri. Not pale & stricken petals
that slept on my wrists, walked through worlds
drunken & airy with me, & so many years

since. The same flowers dried, pressed into tea
above the canals where I scrubbed my skin,
they've taught little girls like me
to sing your chosen name, for ages upon ages.
And they bloom southwards too, in a land as
hot as your own. I've been there on foot
and the girls wore it in garlands, on every wall
and watchful roof.

they joked that they'd run away
from that city, those houses,

and all these pesky brothers
the chores, the exams, the heat
while they braided the flowers

I called every florist in your city
and a blind woman, who sold lilies
to girls like us, left her tap running –
weddings, funerals, birthdays. the voice winces
into a crow-song. *we deliver everywhere, daughter*

*& it'll be ready
when you come*

home

August 2023

James Kelly Quigley

Klaus, Werner, Frank, You, and Tom

Klaus Kinski shot a crew member's finger off, and Werner Herzog impersonated a veterinarian to obtain 400 monkeys. These are just the facts. You know how sometimes you hold in a piss just because? Tell yourself *this is not my piss*. Hillside of pink gramophones. Every home should have, at a minimum, one precious rock. The reason I want to talk to you about The Wrath of God is because I, too, wonder about canoes dangling from the tops of trees. (What Frank Lima might refer to as the ecclesiastical attack of libidinal repentance.) A place called Nowheresville that's been sung about like a gajillion times. Tom DeLonge should get credit for writing the lyric *she makes me feel like it's raining outside*. I want to get a glass of wine and hang out with you. Chocolate moonstones in your ears! And your nose is just like that movie Fire of Love, in terms of its zittiness. Zittiness makes me think of zinnias. Pretty zinnias for sale in a green bucket. Oh what would the world be without zinnias, birds, stones, crew members.

Dear Warren Frank, Joe and Tom

I want to talk to you about the future of the organization. I want to talk to you about the future of the organization. I want to talk to you about the future of the organization.

Dear Warren Frank, Joe and Tom

I want to talk to you about the future of the organization. I want to talk to you about the future of the organization. I want to talk to you about the future of the organization.

When you can

August 2011

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