

貴社いよいよご清祥のこととお慶び申し上げます。平素はひとかたならぬ御愛顧を賜り、厚く御礼申し上げます。

Velvet-hearted

2012/2013



1

If he was cutting down a tree

Severed from a storm

He'd expect me to be green, but I'd
snap

With yellow decay

2

Underneath the carbon

My insides are made of hollow hay

And in the summer,

They tend to go up in flames



You were too much

Speaking too soon, always making yourself too apparent

Open and available

And unfortunately

I'm all too familiar with insignificance

Affairs with fading ideals and lives unreal

Only receiving signal

From those barely on the

Radar

The Art of Being a Scarecrow 2/19/13

I

My bones are hollow and I easily go up in flame

I think I'd be a good scarecrow

I've mastered the art of watching the things I live for

Fly away

I just wish I wasn't so standstill when it happened

II

My bones are hollow and I wish I didn't

Go so easily up in flame, when the sun starts beating down

If the crows don't come, I'll rot instead

While the corn rises up out of what's found

III

My bones aren't hollow, the marrow is thick

And my skin blisters in the sun

I've mastered the art of watching the things I live for

Fly away

I went after them, with everything I had

They moved on, regardless

IIII

My bones are thick and I stay in the shade

While the crows pick the field dry

I don't try to go out there, because they might

Fly away

And when they do, tell them I tried

(But moved on, regardless)

How I felt on 1/22/13

Somewhere between loss and gain

Is self-indulgence

Because I want both, but can't

Quite condone it.

And I need to suffer enough,

To help me feel alive

But then again, I need to strive

And I need you to be attainable

Because somewhere in the gestures

And attractive lies and

(Truthful) whispers just below a sigh

Of all the things we want to make

Each feel-

Inside each other

And beside each other

Because you're gain, and I'm loss

And this is self-indulgence



Short Story: *Skylines*

"A certain darkness is needed to see the stars." – Osho

"A certain darkness is needed to see the stars." - Osho

The tall grass is camouflaging me in a sea of yellow green, and I am so aware of every insect taking grip on my exposed hair and bare legs. Every tick and mosquito latching on to drain me dry, all the ants trying to get by my enormous size, and the ladybugs and fireflies who swarm around me with the best intentions. I'm not unwanted, just an unexpected development in a foreign ecosystem. They never stop, not once, and question why I'm here.

While drowning in the minuscule, the stars above me offer some well-rounded juxtaposition. The cosmos dotted and swirled like sugar spilled over a black table cloth, the brightest of them making pictures and stories for us to decipher. I once heard that all the stars spelled out our great perhaps, our peradventure in a language unique to the reader, and that people spend their whole lives trying to make sense of what the stars tell them to do. "It's written in the stars", they say. It never quite clicked with me why people would waste all they were given, just to figure out why they were given it.

Compared to all this life, it amazes me that I still have to return to my own. But whether the creatures here know it or not, I'm unwelcome. A stationary being, observing the unique mobility of lives unlike mine. I brush myself off and turn to leave, knowing I'll be back again before I can help it.

I come to the end of the field and make my way over to the house across the street. It's right before dawn, my pants being wet from dew and the inked sky fraying with color. This is the perfect timing to tumble in unnoticed. Everyone is claiming their last bits of REM, hours before they wake up to drool stains and sandy eyes, but still partially daytime. I take off my shoes, and slip quietly in. My socks have soft conversions with the plastic tiles on the kitchen floor, and I shift under the radar of subdued, unconscious familiars.

In my room, I shut the door and turn on the light. Almost immediately, a hitchhiker from my jacket pops up from behind and swerves to it, bumping into the lamp over and over again. I lie on my bed and shimmy out of my clothes, pressed to my face, they still smell like an April morning. I watch the moth for a while. Quivering in and out of shadows and casting his own, addicted to the hot, glass surface of the light bulb.

This bothers me, I don't know why. The welfare of flying insects doesn't really top the list of priorities, but I feel like for this one I can make an exception. I open a window and the warm violet color of the sky and the smell of wet grass infiltrate the room. I shut off the switch, and watch the

moth waver for a half a minute, before knitting its way into the morning air. It dawns on me, that I could do the same. Stockholm brings my nervous beating to life, whereas the rush of knowing I could leave has brushed off any fogginess from the morning. I am suddenly very aware, of the fact I don't need to be here.

Calmly but quickly, my arms and hands seem to come to life before a plan is formed. Grabbing clothes from the oak drawers with broken handles, counting money from under the mattress, and packing food from almost empty cupboards. The house is so still and so hollow, it's the perfect time to leave it. As a monument of my incoming past. It's a sacrifice to good luck, complete with the half lives of others, still wearing down it's beds and doors. I writhe through the florescent lights, and I have begun the art of casting shadows. The sun is hardly in view yet, but the night has faded.

The truck has come alive underneath me, my accomplice, and my partner in crime. I feel suddenly closer to the beat up machinery, impressed with its resilience with the situation. Carrying me mile after mile, like the steed to a protagonist. Maps are sprawled next to me on the holey cloth seats, and the radio is gaining more and more stations as we climb down every stretch of road and highway. Every few hours I turn on the scanner, and am suddenly ecstatic as I reach the markers. As the stations climb so does the sun. At first, the only thing you can find is NPR and country rock, but after the first few hours the top 40 station started climbing through the speakers. A little while later, I gained alternative and Latino stations. Imagine my pride, when I've finally dug myself deep enough, where not only did I only discover the R&B stations, but college radio.

I've stopped knowing where I am, but the day is wasted, and the clouds are breathing in pastel colors and distorting them across the sky. It seems like the time from when I left was absorbed in the road behind me. As I draw closer to my destination, dimness begins to take over. Getting deeper and darker as I continue. The moon glares on my windshield, but there are no stars. Deep inside, this turns me. It's a sickening black sky, swallowing me whole, vitiating my day with darkness. This is not the same night sky I was watching from a field the day before, this is uncharted territory.

The highway has gained exponentially since I hooked on, nighttime commuters to unknown destinations. The buildings have come quicker as well, I can't seem to turn my head without seeing five more, and then suddenly, right in front of me, there are hundreds. Increasing and plateauing, businesses and homes. Inside them, people walk down halls, work on desks, have sex in beds, and sing in showers. It's an ecosystem, not minuscule or massive but to scale. A place designed for people to live, meet, and spend their lives.

The sky is pitch-black, but the stars have moved into the landscape. I think I finally understand what they're trying to say.

Providence

I'm being bleached out by the lights
When I first assumed to be
bioluminescent
But then by rituals of day and night
Outside forces were the only shine
present
And in the dark
I become aware
Of who I am
And how I'm really there
I'm being bleached out by the sun
As I go out and leave myself behind
And when I get my errands done
My individual is hard to find



Empty air is dew and small inclinations
With residue of working thoughts
While silences drips off your skin
It's a comfort to a brain in knots
So while I unwind all that I am
Beauty seeps out of pores we don't cover
Don't feel the need to move from where the still stands
Because interest comes in things yet discovered
I know those syllables you want to chime
All those stories you forgot you knew
I want to hear them all sometime
But for now just let the quiet hang over you





For Evan

By the pond, and everyone
In our suburban town
Is speaking Spanish
I feel as fluent as ever
Arms stretched out and backstroking
With all my clothes on
While you watched from the grass
You said I'm an inch off
From what I'm supposed to do
You said I'm unexpected
I just can't tell if it's a compliment or true



Short Story: *Claremont Ave*

Kristen's house burned down in 2011, and ever since it's been a solemn watermark on Claremont Avenue. The once light blue paint was now stained and dirty, the roof caved inward—a soggy membrane draped over the charred wood framework. The windows are decorated with warning papers and government documents that act as welcome signs to the few who knew her. They're unpleasant indicators, evidence of anguish, and oh-so inviting for my own nostalgia.

Darren and I are parked across the street, watching it carefully, as if any minute, a gust of wind will blow it over. Instead, I guess it would only be appropriate for the universe to let the leftovers disintegrate before our eyes, just as everything else had. I try to catch Darren's eye, but his gaze is fixed on the radio, turning the volume up one notch at a time, carefully rocking the small Oldsmobile with some ambiguous Pearl Jam song. I make a bold move by reaching over and switching it off, abruptly testing the waters between us. Without acknowledging me once, he gets out and I hear that rhythmic snow-against-leather sound. I watch him cross over to the dilapidated suburban ranch. It's almost twenty degrees and he's wearing nothing but a thin, black and white plaid shirt, impressively monochromatic in the winter landscape. I wait until he disappears into the dark behind the building, count to ten, and then follow. I'm barely at the lawn before I see headlights coming in from behind me. I stand against the frame of the house until I feel her fingers lacing through my own.

"Hey" I hear the soft voice right by my ear. She doesn't really need to whisper, but it feels appropriate.

I know I shouldn't leave Darren alone in there by himself for long, knowing that he has it so much harder than the rest of us. I can't help myself though, and bury my face in Emma's neck. My chest rips open and I let out an ugly, dry sob, which seems to echo into the night. I watch the condensation color my mangled breaths and feel her arms snake around my waist, inside of my coat. I rest there

for a moment, even though my body is trembling, between some mix of desperation and cold. We head down into the basement, Kristen's basement, the only part of the house still fully intact.

The basement used to be a place of refuge, a place away from our own chaotic lives that provided a sense of normality. The contrast to the present reality is almost nauseating. The basement, as I remembered it, was whitewashed and filled to the brim with random, useless possessions. Her parents were border line hoarders, so sometimes you could find something really interesting under the piles of old books and VHS films. There was always a Playstation, some overstuffed armchairs, and enough junk food to keep us satisfied for days. And every now and then, we did stay for days, because our families never really cared where we ended up.

The basement was empty and gray now, the concrete floor was slick from melted snow, dripping in from the floorboards above. The only thing left inside were piles of wet cardboard, a few broken electronics, and an old futon. I walk through carefully, inspecting every corner and crevice of the seemingly unfamiliar tomb, and my voice catches out of fear when I hear the sound of an aerosol can behind me. Emma catches me on the small of my back, and guides me over to the damp futon mattress, dark green with Asian lettering designed down the front.

My eyes are adjusted to the pitch blackness, and now I can see Darren, spray can in each palm. He looks like the protagonist in an early western, and the look on his face is one just as concentrated, and anxious. His backpack is fully open on the ground, cans of different brands and colors are pouring out, rolling around his feet. What he's doing isn't graffiti, or vandalism: it's art. Everything Darren has ever done is art, and within these past three years, it's all been for Kristen. They had a relationship that was routed deep, a groove so embedded that they could've known each other in a past life and I wouldn't be fazed. We've all known each other for so long, that our emotions and stories are no longer conveyed through words. We can translate any message through small actions and sideward glances. And now as we sit in the quiet, and the dark, the only

sound is compressed air. The truth hangs front of us like billboards on the highway, each advertising the same dismal thing.

Emma puts her head in my lap, and I run my hands through her hair, and tracing the frame of her face. She takes my finger tips and brushes them against her lips, her lashes fluttering around large brown eyes. It's a strangely intimate moment, interrupted quickly by Darren, "Are you guys about to start making out? I don't want to turn into a third wheel."

Emma responds playfully, "We were feeling like second and third wheels to your one man show over there!" Cracking a smile, it seems that Darren has forgiven and forgotten the original tense infrastructure of our evening. On a roll, she unzips her backpack and reveals a variety of snacks, laying them out around us like a buffet. It really makes me think sometimes, the way that Emma deals with things. Everyone has their issues and baggage, so why not provide snacks and tell good jokes? Maybe she's onto something.

I laugh, shaking my head in disbelief at this girl. All she does in return is reach in my pocket, and pull out my iPhone. "Darren!" she calls, "Which playlist of Noelle's should I pick? This angsty one, or this sad one, or this angsty sad one?" Darren sets down his spray cans, having just noticed the unopened bottle of Mountain Dew sitting to my left.

"I think" He says, as he reaches around me to grab the bottle "We should choose the sad angsty one, and switch it up." He takes a large swig, and grins. "Excellent choice!" Emma beams as she cranks up the volume to let Morrissey's wistful, lo-fi vocals take over the mood of the room. "The Smiths? That's original!" He teases while going back to healing the scarred concrete. I watch as Darren stacks color after color on the wall, so intentional in every swing of his arm and twist of the wrist. It's Emma who first hears the car door slam; she bolts up to quickly turn off the music. We wait and listen for any other sounds. For almost a minute, there's nothing, but Darren still makes a move to push his cans to a back corner, behind a crate. I take Emma's hand, guiding to her to sit by me, and squeeze it. "It could just be a neighbor" I say in a hushed tone, but she shakes her

head. I know it as well, it's too close. The question is, do we try and leave, or do we wait to see what happens next?

We're deer in headlights. Suddenly, there are footsteps crunching in the snow, sounding off an alarm. Darren seems to make his decision, and steadily moves toward the steel door. "Darren" I say, although my voice is low enough where I'm sure he couldn't hear me. From my angle, I can only see the tops of a blue-gray uniform and hear the vocal residue of an authoritative voice. It's so anti-climactic, he just leaves. No handcuffs, body slams, or bullets. I can trace their motions across the property, and when I hear the car door slam again, I pull Emma toward the exit.

Everything at once is sped up and slowed down, we are half jumping and half falling over picket fences and hedges, all the while thoughts are pulsing through my mind. They're about my friends and their well-being, about the voice directly behind us but not attempting to follow, about wanting it to be three years ago when everything was easy. About being grateful it's not two years ago, and that things are getting easier. We're running as always, but our bodies are adjusting to the impact of our falls and the shortage of breath. We can't see where we're going, but our eyes are slowly adjusting to the lack of light.

Outside a large empty warehouse, we rest, not saying anything to each other. In the distance, there are sirens. There's Darren sitting in the police car, probably smug with sacrifice and loyalty, because the cop had gotten there too late to disturb his high. Inside that empty shell of a home, his mark was stained internally. Maybe he had expected this, and Emma and I were only collateral damage he deemed worth saving. I wonder if he found resolution in this night, Emma and I's shared glances are sick all at once with concern and our own preservation. We don't know where to go from here.

I

I don't really believe in fate,
but circumstance
seems to be egging me on quite a bit
And I used to believe in a god,
now I have theories
about truth, and it's relativity/absoluteness

II

No, I don't really believe in
true love, like romcoms you can buy on HBO
with kisses in the rain, and quirky female leads
but I do believe in the rain
and kissing you

and females leading me into
love that is absolutely truthful

III

I get a rush
from knowing, it's not preconceived
knowing that I could always stay
or I could choose to leave
or I could see the most intimate corners
of strangers on the streets

IIII

I don't really believe in
(fate/truth/lies/god/love)
anything
until I see these things
laid out, mapped
along the creases in your skin
and the quiver in your lip



I am lacking sustenance

like diet, off-brand, synthetic

To someone who's already out of rehab

I am here, only to fill the spaces in-
between

a bad habit,

a routine



(addressing the subject)

I know I'm melodramatic, you've told me
before

Because I'm fresh meat, and the butcher

Keeps pounding on me, tongue and liver

(Why does he do it when I'm already so
tender?)

I'm sorry I yelled at you, and cursed

I'm sorry I hurt my throat and that I hurt your
pride worse

And I'm sorry the shade of your eyes makes
my stomach turn

The sea just always seemed so unforgiving

I know I'm over-dramatic

It's because everything is happening at once

And I fell in love with that butcher,

(Even though I'm a vegetarian)

Because those dark eyes seemed so warm
and apologetic



1

The option of people is a smoke I'm
surrounded with

A slow addiction of second hand
company

And when I get the freedom I consider

It to be fresh air

But it's something that still

My lungs find hard to adjust to

I consider giving in, and starting the
habit as well

At least then, the tar in my lungs
would be my own brand

All I know is that I can not keep the
way things are now

Or I need a way out

2

Wanting to sink

Because the strain is aching

Wanting to float

Because my lungs are quaking