

© 2015, Lauren Cook
Cover photos by Lauren Cook

Mirror Girl

Lauren Nicole Cook

for Jenny



Lay in front of the moon and charge...
you are a crisp white sheet and I am a
stain so large you can not bleach out but
I love me and you love me and it doesn't
matter. Swallow the thick broth and pray for
forgiveness and betterment and cleanliness
and sobriety and peace and all the things
your mind won't let you make clean attempts
at because you're still uprooting and
propagating the parts you want to hold on to
always putting your hands above your eyes
like a visor so you can look at what is in front
of you without going blind always thinking of
a road that doesn't end but hoping it will end
somewhere the whole time you're driving on
it but you know deep down in your heart it
won't.

You may be other worldly but you have
worldly needs...treating you like a satin robe.
Something you put over your skin so you can

face the parts of the word that can't see you completely vulnerable, something you put over your skin to be a second better skin. To pretend your skin is not a skin. When you can not make your skin glisten a natural way.

I am not curtains to be drawn. I am not an invisible entity you bump in to while walking down a long, endless hallway. When my neck gets stiff from laying down too long I can not understand...she (my body) remembers more than I do. Sometimes voids are comforting because they are a space to fill something in...they are the truest potential. "I know" is the most powerful phrase...she admits no defeat. She is unapologetically present. She has processed what you are saying now long ago. She has had the same thought before she even ever met you that you only just had now.

If it's hurting you its real...part the seas. I am not stuffing anything inside because it won't work. Running from my

martyr complex but she always catches up to me. Wrap me up in myself, lower me into my coffin...I am happy knowing some people go covered in gold and I am happy knowing what is right for my soul.



You can tell I gave up because I am eating salad. I had a dream I never brushed my teeth, then it came true.

I am like an ant on a single peony. You are like a gnat on a pony. I used to wear French tipped press on nails because my mother never did, and I would borrow turtlenecks from a drawer that smelled like how her mother did. I used to put my ponytail through the back of my baseball cap because it was modern innovation. Feeling beautiful but afraid to look in a mirror because you might break the fourth wall and this isn't that kind of production. Squeezing tubes dry, the tube is now a pile. Don't touch it, you'll feel all the things you were never supposed to feel.

A text message that says, "Need something else besides u. I needed to see someone else 2." My favorite color is somewhere between a pink so sweet you feel

bad touching it (like you'd ruin it) and a blue like the sky that feels as if you couldn't touch it even if you tried (like its other worldly).



Your goals are to have people think you have goals. My goals are to stand up long enough to feel calluses grow strong on my feet and to not get a urinary tract infection. Last night I had a dream that a large man with glasses laid on top of me and made me feel him with his hand over my mouth to muffle my please. I could hear him breathe heavily through a smile when he walked away, leaving me on a pile of baby blue sheets like a kicking newborn. I will always remember to lick your wounds. I will always remember to think about you and look out car windows introspectively. I will always remember to kiss my own knees after I get carpet burn.

There is no one as boring as you. Riding in the back of a white van because you want to feel like the victim. Kissing babies and shaking hands because you want

to feel like a winner. I only know one person named Victor. He is covered in freckles and has probably kissed six girls and only thought about kissing one boy if I had to make a guess.



The opposite of romantic passion is a pair of dad sunglasses. The opposite of the human body is a septic tank. The opposite of a white piece of paper is feeling like you have thought about something too much. The opposite of a brick wall is a single gummy worm. The opposite of seeing the ocean for the first time is watching your childhood pet get hit by a car. The opposite of writing a poem is dancing in the rain.

I have never kissed a mouth that has never been kissed before. I don't like taking things from people you can't give back. My first kiss was with a girl and it was a dare but I loved the taste of something that felt forced and strange. I don't like feeling something I can't get back.

Circle all your flaws with a black marker and where they overlap cut the flesh until you are left with only the bad. I am the

least qualified preacher that ever existed, and the least qualified everything else. Multiply the flesh by thousands and you get a human, divide and you get emptiness.

I am the mother of nothing, the giver of everything. I have felt fire burn the bottom and danced with nobody.



I know you don't like me because I read an article in People magazine that said so. I was reading about body language on the red carpet and it told me you don't cross your feet in my direction when we go out to eat because I'm not where your attention is. You don't point your toes at me when we stand together.

Daddy doesn't cry because Daddy just watches people cry. Mommy cries because Daddy doesn't want to watch her cry anymore. Have you ever tasted your own tears? Have you ever tasted someone else's tears? Be good. For the love of God, please be good."

I can feel what you'd feel like inside me by combining the touches of many others. I can feel something from my memory long ago. Putting a mattress on the floor because you don't want anything hiding under your

bed. Letting someone slap you across the face if it results in throbbing.



“I love you because you have tiny hands,” I say to a baby because I like how the baby has tiny hands...It reminds me where I came from and where I can go. Babies become measuring tape when other people watch a baby’s hands grow from tiny to regular. Babies see photographs of themselves as babies and say to themselves one day when they are no longer babies, “my hands are not tiny anymore.”

“I love you because you have small hands,” I say to a girl with long eyelashes and dimples. She is not nice to me but I love her small hands and she loves me too and I hold her small hands in my regular sized hands and think about how we both once had tiny hands but somehow they did not take the same path and somewhere along the way they both decided they had to be what they had to be and that’s what we decided too

that although it felt nice for her tiny hand to rest in the warmth of my regular sized hands her small hands did not reciprocate so she became a tape measure too.



The scene opens on a young man, sitting at a table with two chairs. The spotlight is on, the audience is silent, the performer does not blink. I enter stage right and pause, waiting for the man to acknowledge me. He turns to me, slowly, and says with intent,

“If you want to sit with me you have to learn to love yourself first.”

I think for a second, take a deep breath,

“I can’t do much for you except smile when you look at me like I’m yours to own and make our interactions playful enough for it to feel like a game because we all want things that make life easier but no one feels satisfied after solving a four piece puzzle. I can make you feel how it felt when you were 5 to sit on the hot sidewalk and poke bugs with sticks: Fucked up, but satisfied.”

He switches his gaze back to the audience. I continue walking and exit stage

left. The production ends. The audience gives a standing ovation. I love to eat apples in my bed. I love to smoke in my bed. But now my teeth hurt from the acid and I've burned holes in my sheets.



I move to a place. I wait for a year. I leave that place and then I go into hiding. I wait a year. I come out of hiding then I move to another place. When I was 7 I tried to run away from home. I was wearing a one piece bathing suit and no shoes because I made this plan while hopping back and forth through a sprinkler on a hot summer day but couldn't wait another minute to follow through. In between the sounds of the screen door smacking shut I ran as fast as I could through fields of long grass, behind farmland about 10-15 acres from anyone's homes until, with all my body weight, my right foot fell hard on a stinging nettle plant. Face first I tumbled, grabbing on to my sole like a baby I just dropped and wailing mercilessly like an animal caught in a trap. I cried until it started to get dark and my fear of the dark overpowered the pain in my foot and I limped

home. When my fear of the dark overpowers the pain in me, I limp home.

Can't keep anything for too long because it makes my head feel too light to have my back feel so heavy. Would they call Sisyphus crazy if he was pushing a pebble on flat ground his whole life instead of a giant boulder up a steep hill if he still struggled the same?

*

I am at the beach watching the way the water is constantly moving side to side due to forces it can not control. Does it want that control?

I am sitting next to a cup of water you poured yourself the other day and didn't finish drinking. I feel like a cup of water you poured yourself the other day and didn't finish drinking.

I spit on the sidewalk and daydream about someone doing a DNA test on the small puddle. Some things are not one thing or another, they can be many things at once.

Sticking my head slightly out of my car window while I drive to dry my hair. I end up having the wind blow down my throat, momentarily suffocating me, she forces breathe into me too hard like a familiar angry, penetrative seizure...

Do I want that control? Some things are not one thing or another, they can be many things at once.

I hear a fish jump from the water, but can not turn fast enough to find the source and it makes me think of the moments in which physicalities become the defining aspects of our beings...someone hurting you. You hurting yourself. Someone hurting someone else. An image most people must imagine all the time when they close their eyes (I assume). Paranoia as a hobby. Paranoia as a way of life. When I come close to a border I have no name for, but only look over like looking into the water, seeing it move side to side due to forces it can not control...feet almost touching the line, almost wet and feeling like I will slowly lean forward like a timbering tree...face first, fully dressed, moving side to side due to forces I can not control.

Do I want that control? I am not one thing or another, I can be many things at once.



Putting a message in a bottle,
smashing it with a baseball bat, throwing the
shards and paper scraps in the ocean then
getting mad at you for not responding... You
should be sifting through this world everyday
for me in everything you see. If it is overcast
it's God telling you to contact me. If it isn't
overcast it's God telling you to contact me

Making sorrow into a joke because
you believe in the sincerity of gestures and
sharing these gestures but want to maintain
room to wiggle in case someone calls you
too much.

I like to stare at people in the eyes for a long
time after they say goodbye so they ask me,
"what?" and I can say "nothing" because I
want them to know I'm thinking something
about them that they can't know. And I like
to watch you disappear over the horizon
because seeing is believing and I don't trust

anything but myself.

I picked a rose off a bush in someone's garden on the way here and I brought it to you in your bed because I'm too shy to do what I really want to do. If it were up to me I would hold your face in between my two hands and we could press our foreheads against each others for awhile and try to make your energy into one. Like if you threw two puzzles into the same box, shook them up, and separated them again without looking. I'm afraid it would only work one way though and I'd absorb everything in your head into mine and it would be too much for me an I'd overflow and leave you empty because that has happened before. So instead I looked hard at flowers as each block passed and tried to surgically remove the most picture perfect one to present to you casually like it was just an after thought. Like I didn't feel like I was on a mission.

We can pretend like I didn't climb over a fence and put a hole in my tights. We can pretend like I didn't cut my thumb by grabbing a stem and not calculating for the thorns. We can pretend like I didn't risk the chance of someone yelling at me through the screen of their window for me to get off their lawn. We can pretend like everything means nothing but if you look at me in the eyes it will discount all the hard work we have done to keep things on this lonely plateau.



I want to go somewhere you can hear no cars but even when I do the hum of the wind through the trees is always reminding me that I have to go back. I do not trust three hot days, that means rain.

We are sitting in the woods...two friends on a log. The sky is a deep grey but it is holding out, waiting to release when the heat finally becomes too much. We know our time is limited but we also know what to expect...we've both been caught in a downpour before.

“Why does it always rain on the days we decide to meet?” you say in jest...ha ha... releasing a small giggle that comes across as authentic regardless of the performative dance we are both doing. I'm offended because I'm always offended. This is my world, I designed it...for you and you are unhappy.

“Yea,” I am monotone.

It is not your fault I take responsibility for the clouds. It is all in my head but I’d like to think I illuminate enough for you not to notice the darkness above.

“I think we still have fun though”

“mmm,” you respond while shuffling the dry pine needles on the ground surrounding us with your hands. It is busy work, you went to church, your mother told you about Idle hands. Your mother would think I was The Devil’s Play Thing. There is a pause. You breathe in the wind and sigh,

“So how is your writing going?”

“Good but I’m running out of ideas.”

You laugh again probably at my frankness because you know my honesty will get me somewhere as long as my romantic ideas don’t hold me back.

It starts to rain and we don’t move. We both don’t want to look weak to each other...I used to play handball with the boys at recess.

I liked the sound the rubber made hitting the concrete and I liked the back and forth. Now I get the same excitement from conversation... back and forth with the boys.

*

There is something nice about how a poem can occupy so little space on a page and say so much and I hope that's what people say about me when they see me sitting on a busy train, with my legs squeezed tightly inward, and my bag in my lap scrawling into a notebook, "That person can occupy so little space and say so much."



When my mother looks at the type of person I've become, the type of person she created, does she get the same feeling you get when you wake up in the middle of the night to write down a genius idea only to wake up the next day and realize it's total and utter nonsense?

Growing up my mother would bathe me and then afterwards make me sit on a chair and brush my long hair with lavender. Sprinkle a few drops on the comb, and run it through until the ends until it felt right. My mother was lavender. It was the solution for all her problems. The drops on her pillows were from the moisture of her own face, the salty brine that is a byproduct of standing in the cross-fire, and the oil of lavender.

When she groomed me I felt a warmth I still have never felt again to this day. We were both tunneling together towards a light

we didn't know existed, stepping over things to get to our true selves where together we could be honest and laugh and not exist in the gaze of people who can not offer us anything but pain.

When I went to school a tall girl who was friends with boys and I could tell lived by other young children where she rode bikes all day instead of on a farm (alone) told me I smelled "weird" after I skipped past her and my hair flew in the wind...

"Weird?"

"Yea...weird! Like plant!" She smelled like fake vanilla...the type of smell a lot of cool girls smelled like and still smell like to this day.

So when I came home and bathed I told my mother "NO!" afterwards and it is the first time I can remember letting my shame hurt somebody else for my own benefit. The next day I let the tall girl with friends sniff my scalp.

“That’s much better!” she said but she still did not want to be my friend. I still ate alone but without the presence of my mother in my hair to remind me that when I return later she will be there and we will be there for each other so she can brush lavender into my hair because her brushing lavender into my hair is what kept the world turning for all those years.



I am always afraid of seeing a ghost but what if I'm the ghost? I've been trying to pinpoint the exact moment, the pivotal turn of events, that has lead me to neglect myself that way that I do because I feel like if I can figure that out everything else will fall into place but that's not true.

I feel very alone but in a good way like when you leave the house with no bag and it's warm enough to not wear a jacket and you just got keys because that's all you need but at the same time it feels strange because you're used to so much weight, carrying so many things, so it feels like you're forgetting something but you didn't...you're fine.

The only time I ever feel the emptiness I'm supposed to feel when nobody loves you and/or wants to marry you is when I'm trying to put lotion on my back and no matter what angle I approach it there is one spot right in

the middle, in between my shoulder blades,
that I can never get to my satisfaction and I
start to worry that I'll stay dry forever.



I can't stop shoving things in my mouth. It's been so long that at the first sight of permanent nutrition I am somebody else in a place of too much...I am somewhere I can walk alone at night...

People fought wars for salt and it is 3 am and I am eating potato chips and you can see why I feel very guilty for taking what is mine even if I earned it.

I want to be in love but I'm not so I'll just think everything is a sign from God cuz I got a magnifying glass, wanting to actively be in love, searching for it, makes everything a mystery you're trying to solve. Describe me how you describe good meat: so tender that I fall apart...

And what exactly about me makes me so aggressively difficult to love? People only love me from far away...looking at me with binoculars...please come close!

I am lonely on this island and you turn away when I blow you kisses! but you laugh at my jokes! I am not ugly! you can learn to think anything is beautiful if you are around it enough and understand its complexities! you've been around me enough to think I am beautiful! you have been around me enough to love the parts of me strangers can not consume! their palettes have not adjusted yet! is it because there is no censorship! because I will show it all to you now! instead of waiting! is it because I break the fourth wall over and over again!

I am the sun! too bright! always there! too sharp! you are squinting your eyes while wearing sunglasses but that isn't enough it still hurts! you want to feel the ease and softness of something sweeter! something that doesn't tell you how it feels! you want to sip a room temperature glass of water and I'm the boiling ocean! You want a massage and I'm a bed of nails..both have their own

benefits but you want to learn through carefully crafted experiences not through chaotic torture! You want to crawl inside and collect, you don't want to sweat!

Maybe you like me now but don't want to be near me when my eyes are shut! maybe I have shiny white eyeballs you can see yourself in and that's enough to get you high but when we are lying side by side drifting away it seems pointless because what can I offer you then! mirrors are pointless in a pitch black room! maybe you have enough on your plate and I'm a buffet! an endless harvest that lives in excess! a bowl of rotting fruit! you are a monk and I am pouring you more and more! we have too much! so tender that I fall apart!

Not sure if my hair grows quickly or if I am bad at keeping time...every time I walk on a roof I feel like it might collapse under me. It's all too much...that's why I never want to crawl in bed with you. Because the

cumulative weight we both carry is too heavy together that it will all collapse under us and the frame will fall through the floor and we will fall together forever to the other side of Earth for the rest of eternity...miserable, stuck in the same bed. I will blame it on you and you will blame it on me and it will only make us more asleep until we are barely breathing, barely needing or exerting energy to stay alive.

Every time I've "been in love" I've forgotten myself. Sluggish, walking slower, so you can catch up...Do you need to take a break? We both don't care. Alone, I love myself. No audience, sometimes I fall into the valley. Do I need to take a break? Maybe I've never been in the right kind of love because no one has ever offered me a glass of water.

I am practicing on myself taking it slow so the next time it won't be one sided. Brushing my own face against my own shoulder so I can feel warmth on my cheek... imagining what my skin will feel like to

someone else. No audience...So tender that I
fall apart!



I am already tired of the language we have created. I hear the word nail polish and I yawn. I'm tired...rubbing my eyes. Kissing the ground you walk on without realizing it's the ground I walk on too. It's the ground we all walk on.

You slipped a rock in my shoe and I forgot so now I am taking steps somewhere else and the smooth pebble jumps with me and with each pulse of my own purposeful beat I am reminded that the possibility of being washed over again is still there and that being hyperaware of a metronome is better than shutting down...sensory deprivation. I am on my knees, begging, ready to be taken up in something else like tall grass in an empty field blowing in a long awaited heavy, hot, summer breeze wondering when someone will notice enough to decide it is enough...to chop it down and

make it into another thing they can use, sell, enjoy.

The only thing I had to eat today was your saliva...we are throwing without looking. I just like the way it feels to let something go. Sometimes when you touch me I don't bathe for days. I just like the way it feels to not let something go.



A white vase with a chip on the rim...a jar of honey dropped on the floor...wasted golden sweetness impossible to clean. Do not bother taking a photograph of me if you're only going to run a campaign against me later. The corner of a room where three crisp white points meet...that's where you can find me...boiling my brain water. Put sunflowers in the chipped vase, lick the honey and glass off the floor, watch your tongue sparkles from your own perspective...blurry circular beads on a pink mound, orange eyelashes. We are not in a position to waste but I also don't want to collect supplies for winter. A chamomile flower growing from in between the cracks of the sidewalk. That's me...

Why do I think it is crude to be comfortable? I feel guilty for lying down, taking a sip of water...too afraid to gulp. Excitement is not weakness...

I dump the glass over my head.
Picking the knots from my hair in the back
that you only get from extended periods
of being horizontal...you watch me pick at
the pimples on my shoulders not because
you want to see me destroy my flesh but
because you want to see how I treat myself...
something you forget when you can only see
me as you.

We have full bellies and hold each
other's spoons trying to not let the cold metal
send a charge through each other's teeth.
When we shower and your flesh becomes
wet and malleable and I imagine rearranging
it like clay into the person you tell me you
want to be to save you the trouble...last
night we were both so anxious we just laid in
silence, half asleep, shaking and I could hear
your mind grinding even over the sound of
my mind grinding. Is that what love is? The
apples we pick from the trees outside are
pure white on the inside and turn yellow to

the air within a matter of five minutes and I can relate.



It is important to have somewhere to store your secrets as long as that place isn't your mind...the girl with the butterfly tattoo smiles but you don't want to meet her gaze... all night you dream about plucking the wings off somebody that can fly...she is smiling because she knows. How dedicated are you to fighting evil?? I'm smiling, don't touch me...let me lay down first before you grow your vines on me.

Open up to the page in my notebook I keep with my red pen (you must use a red pen, like a teacher, because when you write in a notebook you are making marks in the margin of your life) and it says,

“lilac & garbage
hard boiled egg
invisible hands
around my throat”

I am the lilac and the garbage and the hard boiled egg and the invisible hands

around my throat.

When you are the first one to lead the way in a path through the woods you are the one who must walk through the spiderwebs but you're also the one who sets the pace...I didn't know I had knots in my back until you tried to massage me...I wear a red dress so I can bleed out and you won't notice. When we are both feeling cold you lay on top of me...stone on stone. I hold my breath and dip my face into a bowl of rose water...it has no real benefits but it's the closest I'll ever get to feeling like a flower in a rain storm.



She is chained...unchanged. She sits in her room, on the floor on her knees, watching a tall candle burn until it puts itself out on the holder. She grabs another candle and starts over. At night, when sleeping in the woods, you must start a fire to ward off large predators.

When she lets it get too dark her mind wanders. She sees a man. About six feet tall with blonde hair and blue eyes. He walks into her space without hesitation, without announcing his presence. Only to be noticed in the corner of her eye, he radiates his own light reflected off his pale skin. He is seemingly handsome and normal. They stare at each other for awhile until he smiles. His smile is large, grotesque...he exposes large sharp pointed teeth...that of a shark...dripping with saliva. He is hungry. He does not want to eat her, she knows this. The

fear does not come from that. She is scared because he will eat everything around her. She will try to get rid of him, throwing whatever she can at him because he invaded her space, and he will eat her weapons. He gets nutrition from her attempt to free herself of his gaze.

So she does not let it get dark. She does not look away from the candle. The fire is her pet and her lover and all she needs to keep evil away. The pools of wax on the floor are indicators of time passed. Once a week a package of new candles comes, ordered and shipped promptly.

She is an old piece of paper...she is a patina brass plate...she is your mother's pearls...she is the one who made this all but it is a secret...she is burdock and stinging nettle and lambs ear and foxglove and queen anne's lace...she is a piece of red coral, she is the yawn of a cat...she is a worn in satin nightgown...she makes muffins and prays

for everyone who is trapped in the prisons they've created for themselves.

She is lonely and powerful...she walks freely! She is me and she is bored and she is hungry and wants sharp open eyes not the eyes of someone who is full...half closed, dreamy eyes...the eyes that someone wears when they are going down a street they go down everyday...sharp...fire eyes...she is lonely and powerful!

"I wish you got to meet me before I died." She holds a weight unmeasurable and unable to be seen by anyone who has not had to hold the weight themselves. We live in a secret community of people who hold weight.

"I love you because you've also held the weight." I think about all the rooms she has ever lived in. Turning on a light instead of opening the blinds. She is beautiful and all the things people want something beautiful to be. Sharp tongue when it makes sense, soft

tongue when it makes sense. She is pressed for time. Passing through like a snake. She is the gift and the curse but she is not evil. She must go run somewhere to patch something up, she must go run somewhere to keep us all together. She sleeps in the fetal position. She is cold-blooded and locked up. She lives in a shell. Can't stop thinking about the snake in water...she makes a potion. Can't stop thinking about the snake in high grass... she makes a weaving. Women are always working...

When she sees heaven, when she feels safest, she sees herself as a giant hill. She is not a mountain. She is smooth and covered in green grass. She is something out a dream. She is erect, ready for me. I am running. You are somewhere behind me. I know because we started together but I do not look back. I can hear your footsteps in between my footsteps, the sound of pulsing ground. I am comforted by this. I feel no

need to slow down and you feel no need to speed up. She likes the way we feel on her face. She feels bliss when she provides a place to play. She is the honey moon after a long period of starving moons. She is a night table. She is a single flower and a hair tie and a bobby pin all laid out next to you, protecting you while you sleep.



Listening to what you need is the hardest and easiest things to do.

Lubrication is essential for a machine to run. I walked by a construction zone the other day and saw two men cut into the hard asphalt. One operated the saw and the other one poured water on the area of contact. This is essential to keep the blade cool, to ward away combustion. If you don't let your face grow wet from feeling, if you don't let your skin get salty from moving, you will spark violently and combust. The only way to get to the other side is to slip through the cracks.

The demon still follows me everywhere I go but my insides aren't rotting anymore so I made some progress (I think this is called being healthy). I've been unhinged before but only in a bad way. I am unhinged in a good way, like I am free to pass through wherever I please. A doorway is no longer a marker of

death.

The mirror creates a paradox. Seeing myself in something else is my favorite thing. I am mirror girl. I watch one animal consume another and I relate it back to my hunger. I watch a leaf blow in the wind and relate it to my loneliness, my lack of control. I watch a child cry and think about my own spontaneity...my own desire to express myself all the time with no self-control. In a dark room it is hard to tell the difference between a rose and barbed wire. The road is paved but she could lead us right off a cliff. We are both on different pages of the same book and I can feel them turning. I rock back and forth ripping grass from a soft fleshy Earth. I see little possibility for a grand scheme shift. I drink the drips. I am thirsty but I am somewhere only salt exists, rubbing the dirt that has caked on my eyelids. I am both the mud brick and the sun. I am sweating and I drink the drips. I am hot and I am bearing

down on everyone just for fun.

The mirror creates a paradox because I love to see myself reflecting back, twisted for my own desires. I love to read the signs but I do not love the movement from one marker to the next and I do not love the destination. An endless amount of clues with nothing to solve. I just need busy work. When I actually see myself, feel myself, I am disgusted by the reality.

*

People don't win awards for touching. People don't bring home medals because they were able to kiss the most tenderly. I still feel like I'm fighting everyday. A soldier that was given orders to walk around aimlessly at night and take flash photographs of my hands touching beautiful piles of trash. I do the things I do because I'm obligated.

I feel obligated to take care of the things I cherish because if no one else did they would disappear.



She rules the land that she claims.
She never says out loud that she claims
it, she wants to be the first person to own
something without trying to own every
aspect of it, that is where her magic comes
from but what she thinks becomes the truth.
Truth is always attempting to fight shame.
Shame is the truest, purest lie. Shame is
like swallowing glue. Polite conversation is
constantly climbing up steps. I am reaching
to meet your needs and you're following.
We take turns back and forth stepping first,
moving towards our collective destination.
We are all each other's saviors. We all
look at each other that way but sometimes
you have to protect your own angels and
sometimes your angels can't protect you.

Addicted to having my cards on the
table. My life is an open book. Do you know
what happens to open books when it rains?

They melt into piles of pulp. Addicted to confronting the things that hold me back. Addicting to digging holes and finding nothing at the bottom. Addicted to deciding to refill them at a later date. Addicted to falling into the holes I forgot I dug. Do not creep up behind me, even if you are just playfully trying to arouse me...I will think you're somebody coming to drag me back to hell. I am running from masturbatory misery. I am scared of circles because I can not come around again. A bouquet of baby's breath still isn't sweeter than my baby's breath.



In elementary school during recess all the girls would gather under a large oak tree. The oak tree had history. On her was the carvings of years before: the initials of people who were now adults, hearts and smiley faces. Her flesh was manipulated for memory. We would gather under her and collect rocks. The gravel that covered the grounds were red and white. The red rocks could rub against the white rocks and create a blushing powdery residue. Underneath the oak tree was a giant grey stone. We would rotate, taking turns...one girl would be the rubber. We would hand her the red stones that we shoved in our pockets and she would obliterate them on the grey stone with friction. We would all sit and watch until the pile became large enough for us all. She would then take the powdery substance in between her fingers and we would line up...she would

take turns rubbing them on our eyelids, on our cheeks, until we were rouged enough for the rest of the day.

I watched a young boy stick his finger in the mouth of every single venus fly trap at a nursery today. When a venus fly trap closes its mouth without any prey being inside it exerts far more energy than it can handle and will die. He hopped from plant to plant, his mother seemed unamused but unaffected, her mind somewhere else. When she had enough she half-smiled, grabbed his hand, and they moved on.

“Ha ha mom! I just killed all those venus fly traps!” Examining all the carcasses, I couldn’t stop thinking about how he will only get older and continue destroying things for his own pleasure like most men do.



How do we save the baby? Black spiders crawling on my beige hat...

I see my flaws in you and you see your flaws in me. We are both holding up mirrors to each other and holding up mirrors to a mirror. Reflecting each other's gazes and the gaze of others, until we are all blinded by infinite light, the forever back and forth.

We can not move, we can not speak, we can not decipher our next plan of attack. We are frozen by the sense of impending doom we have created in our own heads. We are all watching each other watch each other. I am watching myself watch myself. I am watching you watch me. I am watching you watch yourself. My own face, my own mind, is a thick cloud of smoke and I am making futile attempts to fan it with my hands. You are standing on the other side and you think you started the fire. We all think we started

the fire. We all see our own faces. That's why we are all so desperately trying to put it out, so we can quickly begin to cover our tracks.

We spend our time crawling on the ground, searching for clean air, thinking about how we can explain our previous actions. Thinking about how when there is nothing left to burn and the fire smothers itself someone will point a finger. The fire will burn forever though.

Every time a man calls a woman a goddess as a compliment he shows himself to be a fool. Goddess implies second best. Goddess implies looking but no touching. God lives among us. God touches you and you touch back. Gods start fires and laugh. Goddesses hide in an in between state, kept in boxes. I am god and I started this all a long time ago, I forgot for awhile and lost myself in the struggle I created, but I just remembered.



The moment you crave purity is the moment you know it's all over. Purity can only exist when you don't know that you can be any other way. Any interest in purity is perverse.

The world doesn't need another photograph of a woman look frail but the world also doesn't need another photograph of a woman pretending to be someone else for the greater good of everyone else so I guess I won't take any photographs at all.