

Knock knock.
Who's there?
A chair.
A chair who?
A cherished individual
I adore and I worship you

Knock knock.
Who's there?
A bed.
A bed who?
A better version of me
Your gentleness stings

Knock knock.
Who's there?
A rug.
A rug who?
Our ugliness hidden, not in secret, but in sweetness
—swept, and kept, to soften our steps

There's a puddle of piss
in the middle of the fruit and vegetable aisle
A terrified mango must've wet itself

I tell you to lap it up
You crouch like a crab and lap it up

My boots need cleaning
I bark
Here, lick it clean

You fall on your side and gnash at the gum stuck to the
bottom
chomping and wrenching until it pulls loose
After softening it in your mouth you press the gum into a
crack in my wall to repair it

I wonder what else I can make you do
Finally, I begin flogging you with a scallion bulb
Say my name

Who's your master
Who's your master
Who's your master

You gasp, I have no master
And this is a strange first date

A neon sign clings to a dirty puddle moored by the curb

It rustles, disturbed, and grows dull and then serrated
before settling into a more perfect reflection

Barefoot in heels you kick a wet sheet of newsprint

It sticks comically to the stiletto like gristle on bone

Let's be intimate
No, a little intimated
Let me borrow your gun
Let me hold the warmth of your hip in my hand
Let me slide a pinky into the empty chamber up to the
second knuckle
I bet you two tickets to Belgrade that I can make you
feel like James Bond

I love your oxblood Burberry loafers
Leave them on while you stuff me like Stouffer's
Lean cuisine in skintight Hollywood jeans
Wait you need a blazer to get in this restaurant

Do you like the sexy dance I do
Does it make you as nervous as it makes me
Do you like the way I move
Like a dictionary for your mouth only

I love the judgement in your eyes
And your abstract charisma
Watch me unfold like an insert-city-here sunset
Watch me collapse like a bright, wild star

The blush is deep
And the nose is hooked
The stance is loose
And the room is booked

Bounce, bounce, bounce
Suffering by the ounce
Flick my hair tie on your wrist
C'mon, let's do the twist!

I'm happy and then I'm sad
I'm a pit after I'm fed
I turned ripe and then went bad
I'm blue and then I'm red

Riddle me this, what am I?
Riddle me that, who am I?

I'm in ecstasy, I said!
I'm livid, you're better off dead
I toss and turn like a salad in bed
I'm blue and then you left me on read

Riddle me this, what will I?
Riddle me that, who did I?

sweet and gentle like a spider
underwater but on fire
(o)pen mouth (a little wider)
strung up, slowed down to the wire
called you out on what transpired

If I'd only known you'd bide your time
and made of hope a suicide
With little license left to chide
I'd sunk my hopes in lower tide

salivating chimney smoke tongue
hot, pliable fly trap skin doughed
—i mean kneaded—
under a paper thin kiss pricking like a needle

warm Lexus

buzzing blood fly hound
toasted cumin freckle

this, a goofy portrait of sentimentality

Solitude stings
But a sour mood sings
Doe eyed with affection
Don't hide your erection

Out for a stroll
I see flies on a pole
Hides glisten like opal;
the absence of offal

A fly in a well
Won't break a spell
But a fly in a bell
Will sound like hell

And on this day
A maggot was borne
Onto a wind
From the eye of an eagle

And on its way
Was a sheep to be shorn
While the grub became pinned
To the jowls of a beagle

And as the deer fray
The velour from its horn
So have I sinned
In the pen of the legal

Let the whore into your life
Let the bore encounter strife
May the devil cause no quarrel
As I revel in your peril

Bulldoze through some rows
Go Bangkok with the Koch bros
Bang Bus with the stick shift
Slapped the chapstick off a stiff dick
Slap a page off of the magazine
Betty Page in a limousine
Pull the pin up out the avocado
Watch the sunset with the Bang Bros

U n l, party poem

Fang, gums
Dang gun
Keeps me bleeding
Bleeds me dry

Red wound
Wood bassoon
Superseding
Lips; pursed—dry

In my desperation I started with I
because in my ego I know nothing but I
And then I changed it to she
the clean sound of piss
And then I changed it to he
a sharp hiss of mirth
And then I changed it to her
the sound of birth

Don't chastise me, Yves!
The blue that I used, or rather misused,
Describing the blue of his eyes
or the veins staining his foot
or the aura of his mood
That you sorely accused me of taking taking in vain
Is simply another blue that exists in a man's name

Smell of summer chives

Warm purple onions

Blackened toast

Plump wagyu beef

An octopus keeps its legs taut belly-up on my plate
like a pithy jester's hat

A berry brown '99 Plymouth Voyager dragged sweating
out across the fetid asphalt, unshod and encumbered
buffalo entombed in sapphire heat, the front dipping low
to the ground heavy with the weight of an amulet
fashioned out of a California license plate fixed to its
broad brow, scabbed over with rust

Misshapen and pale man saddled at the helm: he is
caught in a gunfire strobe of the western sun spreading
like an orphic revelation across his lips

The asphalt reeks as a sacrificial slab upon which had
lain a corpse slain at dawn left undisturbed until nightfall

An oracle apparates from a poof of gunsmoke peonies,
pauses, darts its tongue out in the dry wind for a taste

I'm playing war games, I smell like a child
(Sour) Of sunny spittle, wet crackers
I lean over my sister to look out the window
I imagine shooting down fishing boats on the Chicago
river with an explosive sniper rifle (pop pop... POW)
I pull on the clothes of a murderer over my head,
struggling with a t-shirt starched stiff with white
house paint
My flickering heart, and the smell of blood and thrush
fills the train car

Northbound, I watch migrant dust blowing off of China
shipping trucks
Red sedans by the underpass sweeten into candy
apple pink
I dip and swirl a finger on the velveteen hood of a
Jeep Cherokee
Bring my finger to your tongue and let you taste the
stale, exotic sweat shed by box trucks bearing Butcher
Boy slogans
We slap palms and bluster like bullfrogs in a China
shipping container

Styrofoam insects squeak in the dirt while grubs crawl
like butter through hot grass

The pavement is a primal haven with its sleek black
leopard gum tar pelt

Further away, gulls flock like strewn french fries

Further still, cars parked like empty Newport cartons

Pausing and dreaming always seems to end in throat
clenching and desperation and the fragility is infuriating
and the rhythm is inhuman

Untended frustration stacks like poker chips on the
edge of a table

The Devil leers from the Sears tower and His horns
glisten whitely with sweat

Glee shoots his horns through with blue and wrath sears
it red

And every direction I look I see the devil's head

He took two xannies back in January
Lifted himself out of a hot, damp mattress
And went for a jog
Clean, sweet, green fir trees
Bristled in a stiff breeze
And swung short, barbed armadillo tails on either side,
as he padded on unclipped toes that curled under in the
snout of his sneakers.

Low and yellow
The sky grappled with the horizon.
The road swelled to gather a sigh
And let it go with a hiss
Gray morning glories dotting the grass like mildew
Rattle their heads, in remiss

It was then when he saw
A red,
Red dog
In the black, morning road
Poised like a screaming, wet September leaf
cowering on the lip of a rich, slick charcoal pebbled
shore

He hitched his step to a walk.
Approached to flank it in a slow, cautious stalk.
Its head crackled and rolled to keep smeared red eyes
on his.
Churning, pungent red tongue between greenish teeth
flicked hog pink saliva around like carousel flies

And under its red body
Between lean, bald legs
Strung a hibiscus pink penis
Winking, in delight of discovery.

He flushed. Why? He couldn't quite pinpoint the feeling.
He pivoted around and jogged back home.
He climbed up a flight of airless stairs
And crawled into a preoccupied bed.
She reached over and pinched his god berry.
"POP," she exclaimed.

Off white sheets
Stale heart beat
Rough staccato on repeat
Five, seven, five
Downtempo block heels on tile
Five, three, five
Long black hair, pinched between two tiles, wiggles
 from a puff of abrupt footfall
Wild, so wild
Wild white hot star
Boiled the beer out of the tap
At the local union bar
Caught a stellar, nasty bad rap
For taking it too far
Five-o, five
Off white cop car
I'm ten, he's five
My cousin is twelve and he's wedged in between the
 bed and the wall to get away from the banging on
 the door
He doesn't speak English and so he pulls my brother
 and myself into his hiding place instead
Five, right, five
There were five knocks, right?

All of the pleasure and none of the pain
Just for adorning a little red rust stain
On off white sheets yellowed with sweat
And furrowed by disturbed sleep
Littered with little black hairs

I don't feel very well
I wheel two, three times around the aisle of the bus
Before collapsing, draping over an old man
This is it! I shriek. This is the end for me!

But then it passes, in the next moment I'm fine and I
salsa-waltz click-clack off the bus at the next stop

Face so beat
Skin peeling like buckwheat
Green bean husks
Littering the sink cast long shadows at dusk
Shelling garlic on the floor
Off white skins flutter like moths on the tile every time a
door is opened or shut anywhere in the apartment

Face so beat
Glitter pink eyelids, mood lipstick
White hot heat
So hot, eyelashes singe off from the radiation
And in moment of elation
We reach across the shadow of a barkeep, clasp hands,
And shriek in celebration!

I want to cook you supper but
every pot and pan is being used
to collect an incessant trill of
water dripping from the ceiling and
on the stove sits a great, awful
briar crowned devil fiddling with the
oven light switching it on and off
—on and off—
to illuminate at intervals the roiling,
trellised bone-jelly casserole
baking deep within the grave—
No, not grave, I mean, hearth
Okay fine, I mean, heart
this foiled, stewed, simmering heart

Today i fantasized that i was covered in something so slimy that when you grabbed at me i slipped out of your grasp like i was a peeled grape and then i was cackling, absolutely hysterical, bounding away in leaps flicking gobs of slime in my wake

I reek of coffee i'm yowling in a hollow saffron gutter i'm laughing and screaming shrilly like a shipwrecked yuletide top

I trip over a naughty tree root and it feels almost definitely exactly like falling in love

The shadow of your boots playing across a ribbed backlit fence is the sound of a guiro at twilight

Plucked and soiled chrysanthemum nails that had been scabbling in the dirt for the hollow shells of a broken elastic bracelet lift up to my eyes, i close my eyes, breathy bovine eyelashes, you're amazing, yes, i'm amazing, i coo back to my reflection

My mouth is a brick
I wrap a sooty message around my tongue with twine
and just hurl it through the cool, calm glassy storefront
of your libido
This rubber wheel tongue
(That is, high impact, slow delivery, burdened with four
40-inch TVs stacked woefully)
Is truly cursed, and so I can't communicate anything
approaching genuine without touching my skin to yours

I mean, it doesn't take much skin
We rub forearm hairs lightly like flies and the resulting
electric shock almost kills me dead
How laughably cruel, warm, peaty and soft is this grave
I've dug myself
How can you possibly understand what I'm trying to say
without a playful flashing hint of the oil slick on my brow
as I tilt my head this way and that?

When you pun I can't contain my glee and a corner of
my mouth slips up like the wet sloughing skin of a liquor
store brown bag
I swallow a laugh and my jaw skids sideways comically
like moccasins on a patch of ice
How will you know me without judiciously studying
when my gaze sticks and grips and when it sags and
loosens, possibly on purpose to drive some affect, but
sometimes genuinely as well?

Absolutely not fucking possible with my impotent
dialogue. And so I miserably slide into the easy seat of
absurd wordplay like a monkey cigarette charging
wickedly on a veiny copper soap wire.

So, it's come to this. I stare at myself in horror as I look
you square in the eyes and gravely exclaim: oh my
fucking god, and: this shit is delicious, when what I
actually meant to say is

bathe me in potions
riverboat, rock me
you are an ocean
i am a moat, oh creme fraiche
whipped in penance
watch me pout
let's catch gout

and to really drive the point home
Warbling wet wren

It takes two days for me to remember who you are.
Afterwards, hot, sore love shoots out from the
overlooked parting of hair on the top of my head and
plaits the wiry wishbone rebar in the bottom of both feet
into a vibrato cramp.

Dozing in a scratchy hammock of breathless winter
starlight your scent pricks my nose and I tweak the
corner of my lips up to bare a few teeth in defense.
The whites of your eyes are pulsating wet, devil-pink
sea shells dredged and pried open under a lampshade
madly gyrating off-kilter.

They shimmer with the reflection of an insurmountable,
tender, lightly soaring happiness, hyper-tremulous, like
the plinking glint of a bouncing pin, or the silent gray
squiggle of fruit fly, wonderfully beyond firm grasp,
endemic and poised and tacked only to this very
moment and nothing more.

I never cry smoothly. It comes out guttural, hurt and
jagged every time like salt crystals circling the rim of a
sour lime despair.

I creak and I groan. This is what life living inside the
spine of a book is like. You must stop thumbing through
the pages every night. Leave me dogeared, but leave
me alone.

Terror arrives dry-mouthed and jet lagged upon
shooting across the moonlit meridian of my cheek. The
land I left behind is absolutely bankrupt with tangerine
hibiscus plumes trembling between erect lavender
whiplash tails and dove gray baby's breath baring
popcorn bosoms unabashed. Here and there, citrus
skin made green with dew drops.

The land I left you for is so dry and cold my tongue
immediately turns bald as blue ash and crumbles frozen
after I poke it out.

We clap our hands cordially in celebration, but only to
disguise the loud and sudden shudder that runs through
the entire congregation — did a hundred people just
consent to violently slap flesh against flesh to
consummate our pure, absolutely and desperately pure,
true, golden, frothy crystal hot union?

Love a little wilder
V8 engine, Silverado

Kiss a little milder
We hate friendship
That's the motto

Suck a throat
Fuck a goat
It won't matter
When you splatter

Jimmy Buffet
Let's just rough it
Lay still, shh, I don't mind her—
But outside,
The crickets sound like a pepper grinder

The twist of taillights around 290 is so sexy
It makes me want to scream! tear my hair out—don't
tempt me
Red eyed, fried hair, white knuckled woolly, missed exit
So I scream! alas, but a grainy gurgle, sugar in the gas
tank, crippled Bentley

Blessed be little ole me with five stars circling like thorns
around my head
Twisted eyes, look at my nose, look! look how it knows
to keep out of sight even when—

Billy the Kid found three quid on an acid washed runway
overgrown, or overthrown,
with clever little patches of thorny brush
native to Illinois

Daring pilots used to land here for the World's Fair
Now, the end of the tarmac that flirted with the lake
Is pockmarked and torn up by jealous, impotent
jackhammers
The end of the tarmac that shirked the lake
Warms its fingers under the foundation of what used to
be a candy box air control station
The moral of the story, is flow away from the lake
You can follow the cottonwood seeds
Gathering in eastward corners like runny soap suds
spanked into frenzied weeping by a broom on the
sidewalk for the whole world to see

Billy the Kid used three quid to buy a paint marker
And a bottle of Henny to take with Jenny the Whiz
To the edge of lake when it got darker
Side stepping deep burrows left by yellow Cat claw
furrows

That gathered cottonwood seeds, mosquito minnows
like mother-of-pearl beads,
That fathered bent bottle caps, dead leaves, scraps of
gray plastic—all bad kids!

He wrote on a raised grosgrain altar:

An eye for an eye
I watch the sun set as I die
I am a god
I am a god

I give what you take
I watch the tide rise as I wake
I am your God
I am your God

And Jenny with the spray paint she got for a penny
In erratic cursive by the shore:

Eclipse
Pink lips
Chitown
Bite down

God burns
God hurts
My God
Is a righteous god

A winding road
Spit down a throat
Enough to keep our love afloat

And so on borrowed time I press rewind

And play again the moment when—

Damn! I missed another exit

I torque the steering wheel like peeling a banana

I scream my name into the void and the void replies—

ssUAA, Uuaaa, oooaaaaa...

Suddenly, I became obsessed with men. I became obsessed with men around the same time I became obsessed with myself. I found myself observing my own self all the time. I watched the way I moved. I crossed the room briskly to flank myself and watch as I finished loving or began to love. I watched my leg swing up to mount and straddle a man's chest and my knees inching further apart as if I were more flexible than I actually am. My groin muscles ache because I had been out drinking with him the night before instead of stretching. I try to do side splits over a steaming cup of tea. If I'm naked it's hilarious to do this in front of a low mirror and watch my labia unfold like french doors fogging over in the cold. I was embarrassed about my acne and I observe the way I dipped my cheek into my jacket collar to downplay an overgrown patch when he leans in. When I drink red wine I watch little red spots bubble up to the surface that I hadn't noticed when attending to my makeup.

I'm growing shy. In my early twenties I would stick my tongue without abandon into any man's asshole. I was clearly delighting in my perceived sexual maturity. Oh, you're thirty-something and no one's ever done this for you before? I say smugly, peeking out surreptitiously from behind his roman pillar like Tillius Cimber, clutching a sweaty dagger. As I grow older I grow apprehensive of how he'd reply. Et tu, he might sneer, you're thirty and you haven't smoked crack yet?

Short men love me, because I'm a little shorter than them. That's fine, because tall men scare me. I'm afraid for them when they stand too close to a railing and it only comes up to their thigh. I'm anxious when they walk up the stairs of an old two-flat and I see the

low dip in the ceiling approaching. If they hit their giant heads they'll lose their marbles and scream so loud, I'll cover my eyes, they'll bleed out of their big, cavernous pussy ears.

Your pussy is amazing, he said. I thought, how can I turn that into a poem. I said, How can I turn that into a poem. He thinks. Your pussy is a sure bet. It's always wet. Not one that rhymes, I say.

I've always considered myself a great kisser. I'm patiently waiting for someone to give me verbal confirmation. Once, a man told me I was a sloppy kisser, and upon consideration, I've resigned myself to this temporary endorsement.

I can't become who you want if you don't tell me what you like, I said to him, baffled. Can't you tell that my entire persona is derived from making myself as lovable as possible to the men that I've loved? If I act schizophrenically it's because I love more than one at once. He doesn't like this, it makes him uncomfortable. I see something like the shadow of a spider dart between his eyes. I soothe him with tiny baby coos, but it's a lost cause—in his mind I'm already receding, becoming featureless, I'm a ransom note cut out from past lovers, childish and weakly threatening; unstable, without being interesting, maybe cajoling, even. I want to convince him, But I'm strong, this is what feeds my greatest strength, my grand curtain closer! My ability to extract and extort veracity out of the safest portion of life—*your* life— tucked way in the low-yield savings account of self preservation—I notice things about you that you've barely come to notice yet—I use humor to nurture what you consider the most mundane parts of

yourself into the potentially most sublime—the beautifully clippable, gluable, whole-completing part of you, your anonymous alphabet into a loud, screaming, bold orange-against-blue unmistakable letter ___!

You notice things nobody else does, a man tells me plainly. I slowly lower my finger that's brought to attention a smashed gate latch that looks like a laughing goat, marking the entrance of some dim, secret, litter-less path. The first time a man told me this, I flushed with creeping pride. When a second man told me this, I smiled serenely with affirmation. One day, I read a short story in which a woman is told these exact words by her husband during their courtship. As their marriage proceeds, the words take on a tinge of derision and infantilization. Their marriage dissolves. And so this third time no longer feels like it belongs to me. I've been defeated. The noticer has been handed a notice: DO NOT BE NOTICED NOTICING.

I haven't even told you about all the men I've killed yet. I won't divulge their names but I can tell you that in order of most gruesome death to least, the first letter of their names spell out HELLO THER. And if you lay each down heel-to-head you'd be able to reach the moon at low tide.

Winter approaches and I lovingly tape plastic over my windows. A draft hums across the plastic like a kazoo. I pick up my kazoo and join in symphony—I mean, sympathy. Yes, I know what it feels like to beat relentlessly against thin plastic.

Am I filling the narrative void as the other woman? I'm local yet periphery. I'm anxious, petite and dark-haired.

I slowly realize my lack of childbearing features is translated into flagrant audacity as time goes on. I start to realize that the way some men obsess over me is not the same way they obsess over other women. If I appear even slightly unavailable, they rarely call me first. When I do call, they say in genuine bewilderment, I've been thinking about you all year. To that I plead, make yourself vulnerable and available to me. I want to suck you up with a straw. If you mush up just a tiny bit of you into goo, I'll just suck that part up gently and won't disturb the skin curdled around the soft bit, and in turn I will be utterly devoted to that part of you that I slurped up. You don't believe me? Do I intimidate you? I know I don't bore you. Are you afraid I'll write about you? Do I seem obsessive? Do I not have enough friends? Do I make too much money? Am I more accessible to you once I tell you I sucked dick to get through college? I say this, to no one in particular.

The upper right side side of the bed is soaked in lube. We scrunch and pleat ourselves into the catty corner like the inverted nook of a yanked fitted sheet. A fat corner of the duvet is draped over his chest like the dogeared page of a book. Let me flip through you. Here, I found your appendix. It's quite useless, it's been no help in understanding our intimacy, you should really get it taken out.

I accidentally told three men in the span of three months that I loved them. The accident I'm referring to is that I fell in love at all, not that I told them.

I started making money because I wanted to see if I can match what my boyfriend made, or more. It was also a way of exonerating myself from any dividends when I

secede. Now I'm tired of making money. But I'm even more exhausted by men without money.

I started watching *Sex and the City*. Watching it made me forget that I love women, too, when they let me. The show triggers my obsession with men, thus this story. If I believed men deserved nothing before, now I believe they deserve to inherit the world.

Ouch! I yell, then look at him like a baby that yells ouch, looks at you, and yells louder. Ouch! I thought I saw him one day in a piano bar and I froze in pain. I felt like a straw plunged through the gaping maw of a Frappuccino dome. The city has banned plastic straws. I feel like the plastic straw. You are the city. OUCH! The pianist bangs on a crooked key.

If you took out all the words in the story except, He, he, you'd be left with He he he he he he he he he he. But tell me, did the joke even land?

Hollow
Saffron
Gutter

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