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PEARL NECKLACES

by

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for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing
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ABSTRACT

Pearl Necklaces aims to excavate raw moments of connection and find beauty in the depravity of self and situation. Set in the Deep South, this collection of poems thrives on lusty nights, hard love, and the twinge of memory. The voices within range from youthful to jaded as they speak across pages, flowing into one another to create a pain-body which ultimately seeks closure in relationships with objects, family, drugs, lovers, body parts, heroes, and setting. Tuned to the lyrical voices of poets Kim Addonizio, Lynn Emanuel, and Dorianne Laux, poems such as “Learning Shapes,” “Things that Make Me Feel Cool,” “Can’t Say Daddy, and “Don’t Miss Mississippi” seek out what makes up a person as the collection continues to practice manipulation with language, tradition, and context in works like “Pearl Necklaces” and “Golden Boy.” Faithfully and sarcastically, these collected poems drive to the fuzzy edges of attachment and never come back.

Special thanks to Terry Thaxton.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Learning Shapes.....	1
Hailstorm, October 1997.....	2
Conversation with My Tongue	3
Luke	4
My Summer Sentences	5
Strawberries	7
Six-Legged Hold.....	8
In the Backs of Boys' Trucks.....	9
All of February.....	10
Things that Make Me Feel Cool	11
Hell is a Fuck Buddy that Doesn't Feel the Same Way.....	14
in this bar on this night in this town.....	15
Making Love to a Book of Poems in One Hundred One Syllables	16
Pearl Necklaces	17
After a Smoke, Before Penetration	19
Can't Say Daddy	20
Golden Boy	21
BDSM	22
Uncomfortable	23
Cat and Cunt	24
I've Never Done This Before so I Have Some Questions	25
Magnolia Grandiflora.....	26
Death Finally Came to Me.....	27
He Fed Me.....	28
Oranges	29
List of Demands to the Cannibal	31
Destination Oblivion.....	32
The Smoke Detector in My Hotel Room is Broken.....	33
Getting High during Detox	34

I Woke Up Like This	36
If I Wrote a Real Poem about My Mother	37
Miss Thing	38
Parties with Prophets.....	39
Johnny	41
Day Off	42
Don't Miss Mississippi	44
READING LIST	46

Learning Shapes

Shame looks like a matriarch—
I suckled a gnawed nipple, thirsty
with upturned eyes and learned her looks.
My mother gave me one when she caught me
humping the couch, a distillation of *bad*,
stop that.

Dependence is a pumped stomach
with fingers trapped under itchy blankets
reaching for more medicine that could make me sing
like a believer.
They all said I need God.

Humiliation holds a wooden ruler
as I'm caught with my skirt up,
cream-filled undies around my ankles.
I screamed so loud.
Everyone wanted me to shut up.

Lust feels like a scrawny boy
thrown naked from my window
tumbling like Jenga pieces from my father's fists.
My sister told me only whores swallow.

Panic is bright green lush
with poison oak gnarled around ancient trunks.
Pointy twigs kept reaching for my clothes and ankles.
I got lost in my own backyard and knew
I was really stuck there.

Hailstorm, October 1997

They were round, white, and mean like my father,
breaking windows and screaming
louder than everybody else,
and with more bass
like thunk, boom, tick all around
all at once,
but their comedown made everything turn blue.

They were hard and sharp.
I was still barefooted and soft.
I stood in the living room aquarium back then,
back when I was safe from glass
and ice and wet and self-awareness.

They were hard tears hitting the earth,
sent special for me, destroying my BigWheel,
making my dog yelp.

They fell from the clouds like they had a plan,
torn away from the dark grey mother fluff,
ripping through, and I knew that I wanted to catch them.

Conversation with My Tongue

What is it like being a tongue?

Unfulfilling.

What do you do all day?

I count your teeth and wade in your spit.

I funnel laps of air into your needy throat.

I articulate every stupid thing you say.

I know you, and you don't know anything.

What the hell, Tongue?

Just saying—

I hope you have a pretty face.

You have nothing to say.

I can bite you.

Teeth can bite me, but we're quite close.

Fucking cut you off then.

I'll grow right back.

Is that true?

Does it matter?

Are you strong?

I could kill you right now.

Would you?

Well if I try and it doesn't work,

that's just embarrassing.

You know.

I don't know what to do with you.

Let's get some gum.

Luke

That night I made you stop in the cold
and jumped out of the car,
stood on the frozen tracks,

you smiled at me
because I was cool.
I was the cool girl
with the cool attitude.

Never mind the drugs.
They were cool too.
They made me stay that way
out in the snow next to you.

You said I was all you wanted then,
but a train never came
so we got bored,
sat back against your hard seats
and left.

That's all I kept with me from that Spring Break,
from that snowy night with you.

My Summer Sentences

He comes when the world is supposed to be quiet,
when we want to be the loudest.

I wait outside with the dogs and the tiny, flying bugs,
listening for the rocks to move in the driveway.

I can't tell right now but I know the truck is green,
and I know that's him in the humming heat.

His lights are off and Faith Hill is just a mumble
as he glides up and sticks to me like mist in the fog.

I can smell him in the air now, and the bee
never wants to leave the garden.

Where to and I don't know,
so he takes me where he wants,
exactly where I want to go.

On backroads, he says fuck the *poh-leece*,
finds a hiding place worthy of youngsters
up to no good.

The moonlight is too bright.

We can see each other fumble with our buttons,
tug on the pant legs jammed at our heels,
adjust because I'm on his throwing arm
and *Ow, you're on my hair*.

Then his eyes are closed and his tongue,
soft as a lab's, tastes like spearmint and Grizzly.

His rough hands work over my fledgling pyres,
and I become his favorite Zippo –
opened and closed with the friction of his jeans.

He turns me over in his fingers like a nervous habit.
I become smudged all over.
He wipes me down with his white V-neck after.

I wish I could stay in his front pocket,
or maybe fall between the seats, or get lost on the floorboard.

He puts my panties in his dash with his wallet,
then turns the engine over without singing me another song.

He rips through my nights like this.

I assume romance isn't dead
and buy him some pancakes.

Strawberries

I graze my teeth over red flesh,
let my jaw relax into a seedy strawberry,
and remind myself not
to think about sex.

I handle each small heart,
one at a time,
in my tickling fingers—
maybe do some tongue-work
on the next two

because it's mostly liquid anyway
and over way too fast.
I swallow them down
with the rest of the soft core.

Mother would be so disappointed
with the light red drops spilling
from the corners of my pout,
from my chin to dress,
with my carelessness
to keep my mouth shut.

I have nine left.
I make a pig of myself.

Six-Legged Hold

I dug two spider legs out of my ear this morning and I knew they were my mother's because they were short and lean and bent into grasping and she would do something like that turning into a spider to crawl into my ear and she would rather I tear her legs off trying to dig her out as long as she ultimately comes out on her own time because that's what I would do and we're a lot alike in that spiteful selfish way and honestly who would think to look for her there but when I felt an itch in the wax of my dim canal and found those two perfect legs broken off in buildup against my chipped pinky nail I knew it was just my mother and her stubborn legs so I left her there for both our sakes and she made a quiet exit later that night limping out and across my pillow to the door

In the Backs of Boys' Trucks

They have long hair
stuck to sweaty foreheads
like I imagine their dads' had.

Their pants come off halfway.
Zippers grind into thighs.
They offer their jackets and polos
to pad my tailbone.

Tongues flick over gums and clits and tips.
They're eye level with the Vaseline containers
that rub up against hollow beer bottles and sour
leaf debris, rocking under their toolboxes.

The cicadas get off too, with their wobbling sound
to the flicks of crickets and the burps of frogs.

Hearts are in my eyes when I come
up to taste the fresh-sexed air:
grass, mud, sweat, aggression, boredom.
What can we get into next?

But they have women wondering where they are
and want their jackets back
so I jump off the side
with a little violence and cool

like they taught me to.

All of February

There's a frosty balcony where my cigarette ashes and beer foam linger with bloody, bitten cuticles and me licking self-inflicted wounds.

Hounds bark at me from sidewalks and I feel treed in community college suburbia, waiting for their hunter to mosey up with a beer can and a drowsy smile.

ROAH ROAH RRRRROOOOROAH

Dry fingers grip on bottlenecks and filters, and from this frigid deck chair it seems like tomorrow can't come. This balcony can keep me;

but it's getting too cold to stay outside with me. In this winter, there's a command ringing out from the breath of hounds:

Move away.

Things that Make Me Feel Cool

My Pleather

three studded biker jackets
button-fly trousers
one bra with zips
patent tights
Mad Max boots
multiple miniskirts with fringe
The black faux-hide rubs against
my frame and I have the tough skin
I need to pull off everything else.

He takes it off of me and throws it on his bedroom floor with a chuckle. Leather
isn't his thing.

My Cigarette Case

It holds ten American Spirits,
or five maxed out credit cards,
or two condoms,
or one hundred sixty dollars in twenties,
or a baggie of coke and xany—
I always keep a clove
cigarette next to the jays
for smell like sweet
and savory.
I pop it open and pick a joint from the clutter
and we smoke together.

He snaps it shut,
scratches the patina with his thumbnail,
and lobs it to the coffee table.
I wince at the landing.
The latch breaks.
All that's left inside now is a single smell-good stick,
caked white powder, and gray ashes.

My Zippo Lighter

It's trippy. I liberated it from my friend's dad's house years back. It was in the cushions of
a worn down couch in their garage, palm-sized and easy to lose. The snap and flick of

this old thing makes everything seem covert. Leaning against a wall and sparking this baby, nobody gets the vibe that I'm interested in helping them find the nearest restroom or taking their picture.

He says lighter fluid fumes are bad for your health. He grabs up my case and Zippo like they are his keys and wallet, but hands them both to me instead. I have to light everything for him so he can live longer and I can get the practice. He teaches me how to flick it open like the stoic kids do, strike it with all the tricks and friction against hot denim. I don't get it right away though, and he doesn't kiss my thumb when I tell him how much it hurts. I still reach for him and light his joint, my joint. We burn it all up and neither of us worry about my thumb.

My Lipstick

My mother used to tell me, "There's nothing another coat of lipstick can't fix."
Yes, ma'am, that's better than scripture. As long as my lips are painted bloody, or gothic, or sweet pea, I can take on the ugliness in and around the mirror.

He suggests I go without it next time so that it doesn't leave a mark.

My Kinky Sex

bloody, disillusioned asshole
bruised ribs arched in the shape of a bite
stiff thighs stretched almost too far
hips that ache in the cold
exhausted vagina
sore scalp
winded windpipe
dotted eyes

He recorded us in his living room and let me watch it once. Doesn't even look like me. In the recording, you can see him shoving slowly from behind and hear him say, "I feel your pain," to the back of my left ear. I don't remember hearing him.

My Strut

When I walk alone, I'm always thinking
of lyrics. Songs are on mental repeat.
I walk to a beat and see myself
as a fucking rock star, with cues
and pyrotechnics. If I'm alone,
then this works. Feet hit harder.

Shoulders become fluid.

He's never seen me walk this way.

Hell is a Fuck Buddy that Doesn't Feel the Same Way

how chilly his living room stays
when we get wild
with all the windows open

when he mounts again
for his finish this time

I have goosebumps on my shoulder blades
where he wipes his cool hairline

his sweat
my toes are tired on the hard wood

while my nipples salute
wobbling over the side of the white loveseat

where he does all his wet work and pulls my hair
until we're spine to sternum

heavy with tired beating organs inside
stretching us into something resembling together

and he plays around
with his grip on me

with handfuls of my flesh
careful not to get sucked into what more I want

as weed wine sex-tainted deodorant smells
wither in the living room with us

in this bar on this night in this town

i'm my own red-faced cupid
a complete hazard throwing my darts around
while he buys one more beer for that bitch

i'm not as pretty as he prefers but fuck it
he's a horny bastard
and we need a small slice off the livin' life

i expect he speculates there's no corner of my own
i haven't offered to a stranger
for nothing more than a glance and a drag

we smoke all night breathing like dragons
there's some cute qualities and wheezing
me bobbing to his philosophies around a cigarette filter

he winces at me because i'm a filler now too
and the things i say
he doesn't care so he backs up
like i've just shit my pants or something

we're left with each other at closing
don't ruin it with talk
we look for beauty in the crotch of my jeans
there is just stupid grunting

Making Love to a Book of Poems in One Hundred One Syllables

I put my face on the pages and rub my lips over the white grain.

I kiss my lipstick away to the only love that wears my shade well.

I wet the pages with dripping lashes, rub my cheek against the gray.

I mix the palette of the page within my pores and smear my profile
into the written grace of someone else's tinkling wisdom.

I rub until flecks tear apart and stick to cheek: the author crying with me.

Pearl Necklaces

I.

Titty fuck?
Yeah, just push your boobs together.
And that feels good?
Yeah, baby. So good.
So good.

II.

She lies on her back and holds the heavy cups of herself together. She watches the gleam of his bubbled loogie fall and patter onto her chest. He dips his wick in the thick spit and fucks the crack in her body closest to her dignity.

III.

The matriarch made it a rite of passage to give each of her daughters a necklace of real pearls the day of their high school graduation – considered adornment marking her blessing for aforementioned daughters to marry rich men, make babies as soon as time will allow, and always keep Jesus close.

IV.

Tyson died at twenty-seven.
His wife was in the car.
RIP Tyson & wife.

V.

Mom asks if I've heard about Tyson.
"Oh, isn't it just awful? He came over here a few times looking to date you, right?"
She thought that was him.
She shakes her head.
It's just so awful. And his wife was so beautiful.
"Just think, that could've been you."

VI.

I make the same list over and over again in my head
of all the people I've fucked,
the ones loved and not,
recounting fallen sweat drops on my face,
seeing the same twisted legs and arms and sheets
because it matters.
Sometimes I think I shouldn't, but I still
count Tyson.

VII.

On a scratchy couch, sophomore year, Tyson gave me a pearl necklace.

After a Smoke, Before Penetration

I stared at your forehead,
licked your salty belly.
You didn't seem to notice
that was my intimacy.
That was me worshiping you.

I put my cheek on your ivory thigh
next to your cock-n-balls.
You'd pat my hair like a pup,
and I was giddy.

I was on my knees,
then you wanted glassy crocodile eyes
to look up while my shins
ground into your carpet,
your belt buckle,
a sock.

I favored your grip on my throat,
my hair and elbows.
You snuck in some slaps.
My cheeks stayed red and hollow
in the bowl of your hips
until you pulled on my shoulders.

We burned up
just like that.

Can't Say Daddy

You taught me to crawl with a trail of Nilla Wafer cookies. You put me on the floor in the living room, facedown and immobile. Like an ant, I followed them back to you.

You taught me how to write in print at the breakfast bar, then you taught me how to write in cursive: my name, your name. I copied lines from your vintage Playboys next and you let me put on *Die Hard*, *Desperado*, and *Beauty and the Beast* for background noise.

You taught me to read *Hot Dog* in your lap from your noisy red recliner. "Not gonna help you. Sound it out. Read." I sang out to you every night in the haze of your Marlboro Lights.

You taught me how to ride a bike on the gravel driveway. Training wheels were for wimps and kids who took their feet off the pedals were pussies.

You taught me to sit still while you got the twine tied around the petals and my glittery pink shoes, the white and pink Ariel ones that you bought me for school. "Keep pedaling and you won't fall," you said to my shoes.

You taught me that tiny rocks and gravel pressed into flesh and blood looked cool, meant I was tough. You told me to rub some dirt on it.

You taught me how to hunt, how to work through the pain of ripping a squirrel's back flesh from the joint of the tail. Sometimes I was the one jerking on the skin. Sometimes I was the one holding the bloody head steady.

You taught me to cook like a single man: burnt steak with pepper, Vienna Sausages from the can, fried bologna with white bread and mayo.

You taught me the sweet manipulation of language in your dry humor, curse words, sarcasm.

You taught me how to drink whiskey when I came downstairs during your poker game. You put me in your lap and showed me your cards. Your friends wanted me gone but you put your hand on my belly and bobbed your knee. You let me hold your cup all night, told me to swallow fast and try not to look like I was in pain.

You taught me about the desire to run – yours and mine. "You're too much like me," you said, "Mississippi's not gonna satisfy you."

Golden Boy

When he calls for me,

my dignity doesn't make a sound.
I drive right over for the razorblades
and showers of lemonade.

He puts a mat down and everything.

He hates my taste in music.
That's okay. I hate his too,

but he makes a point to stop
every other song and ask me what's next –

We have that trashy love,
disgusting. Everyone can smell it on me
like kerosene, and I wear it.
I cultivated it.

BDSM

I think you don't give a shit.
I think I'm supposed to dance for you.
I think I want you to hit me.
I think you should fuck off about my nails.
I think me shaving everything means you should put out.
I think you've said nice things before: nice hair, nice tits, nice eyes.
I think I'm rotting my teeth with flavored condoms and cigarettes.
I think I'd smile for you if you showed more interest.
I think I'd smile for you if you weren't too beautiful.
I think smiles are risky.
I think my family knows too much about me already.
I think you're sick of sex.
I think I want more sex.
I think about your lean soccer legs.
I think my period shouldn't be an issue.
I *think* my asshole is clean.
I think I'm in a lot of pain.
I think you should stay the night.
I think I have a death wish.
I think love is a fight.
I think I'm sorry.
I think God is anywhere but here.

Uncomfortable

I had on my black, lacey bra;
the one that made my left nipple sore
and unclasped in the front.
You used to like running your thumb
over the areola spilling out of the cup.

There was light blue lace wedged
far into the crack of me.
They were your favorite pair –
a little ripped in the crotch
from that time in your friend's half bath.

Black and blue –
I stood there thinking about my nipple and my crack.
It didn't matter.

You had your hand on the door knob,
telling me that you couldn't love me anymore.

Cat and Cunt

She knows he'll never be by to pet her again,
so my touch will have to do from here.

She looks up from my lap with garish accusations,
but it's too late to give him more blowjobs,
to rub harder against his legs,
or get even higher with him,
play dead
naked in the sun.

She knows that now is the time of kneading pillows,
fewer baths and constant toying
with that green ribbon he tied to my gearshift.
For how long?

We are a portrait in my silent bed,
scowling about the lack of attention we're receiving.

I've Never Done This Before so I Have Some Questions

If I took out my heart,
actually took the motherfucker out
and put it on my wine-stained counter,

poked around it with a fork
while it rocked for balance,
would I find the soft spaces,
the tender ventricles?

How lean should it be?
How many servings could I get out of it?
Trim off the thwarted aorta
or leave it for flavor?

Is there a chic kitchen tool at Bed Bath & Beyond
created to remove all the bits of men
with dishwasher-safe ease?

Pull off all the teeth and legs,
cut around the bruises –
then do I get all the spit
and come and saltwater and piss
out of all the crevices?
Maybe leave it and pound everything together
for some tenderness?

Should I dig for sharp spines
wrapped with pearlescent veins and hair?
Do I finger at the narrow end
of my damaged,
ticking, gasping strawberry
for some shrapnel from retreat?

Is nuking it in the microwave possible?
Do hearts explode in the microwave?

What will finally make
the thing sizzle?
What can I do with the leftovers?

Magnolia Grandiflora

Grandma had one tree in her front yard.

Underneath it's green petticoats, brown pads of fallen
leaves sounded like loose shingles rubbing together
in my father's burn pile.

I hid inside the tree to play god,
broke off the toxic-looking cones and ripped the red seeds
out of each pocket as easily as buttons
from a teddy bear's nightshirt.

Buds were not safe. I used my nails
to peel the fuzzy green layer down
to the nub and I could see inside
to the tight, sleeping wings of a flower.

The blooms looked beautiful on the ground.
I popped off every petal,
each stained like a sweet tea smile
and dropped their naked receptacle on top.

The gnats could smell all the death.
I crawled out and washed my hands,
content with the massacre.

As the wind shuffled the skirts,
petals slowly tumbled out.
They were scooped up into trash bags
by her gardener before they browned
at the edges. They sat by the mailbox,
twenty yards away from their tree.

I was sad for that.
I had the smell under my nails for days,
in the air always.

Death Finally Came to Me

I decided it was a he

He sat on my bed
In black *Chanel*

His *Fuck Me* pumps squeaky
Against his moonlit ankles

Skinny jeans split
Showed me his hairless alabaster kneecaps

A dirty Newport wedged between
Fingers as long and sexy
As Jennifer Garner's

Limp from bent
Lazy unadorned wrists

He smelled like fucking magnolias

His bones were quiet
In that settled sort of way
Then his face was

Anything I feared
Wasps, splinters, abandonment, needles

I reached into the tension
Holding me up
Knowing I'd follow him anywhere

I wanted him
To be a lover

To take me
Brutally, at least

He Fed Me

Mango,
twice off his thumb.
I knew it was the sexiest.

Kiwi and bean sprouts
over the kitchen sink.
They were about honesty –
I didn't like them.

Crunchy seaweed with salt
from a clear baggie
followed by a pot brownie...
I liked the dope.

A few bites of his flavored ice.
The green syrup melted
like watermelon,
turned our tongues cold.

A bit of his vegan wrap
while he held it at his belly button.
It was phallic –
tasted like a BigMac.

Acid
one time.
He won't take that trip with me again.

Bullshit
often.
I choked it all
down with muggy nights
and watered down beer.

Oranges

I was sitting on a picnic table and hot Seminole wind blew her direction. Friends introduced us but our connection didn't make sense.

I liked her denim jacket. Then I noticed the usual stuff: perky tits in a tight top, the ends of her dishwater blonde hair dripping over

and resting on her nipples like a licked spoon, no bra, cute shoes, cuter face unencumbered by androgyny – delightfully delicate.

She became my queen of follow up and fallen straight women like me. Smoking herb and spinning together with her vinyl led us places

darker, brighter than a new city. Flowers made sense to me and I wanted them everywhere.

She made me laugh when she told me she loved me. I couldn't take her home at Christmas, and I couldn't figure out who should get the door

first. She once placed an orange on the coffee table in front of me and went digging into her own over her tight crossed legs.

I'd never had an orange before. I'd never wanted one outside of a glass. I didn't know how to open it.

She showed me – stuck a nail in my citrus and pulled back. It sounded like hair ripping.

Juice gathered around her cuticle, then knuckle. My tongue moved behind my teeth.

She put her proud, veiny mutilation in my hand. I noticed how naked we were.

I caught a glimpse of her belly-button under the shadow of her crop top and I thought about sticking my thumb deep into her

naval. Would it make the same tearing sound if I search for more juicy morsels of her?

She asked why I'd never given oranges a chance before. I told her that I never felt like it, I guess.

She's a poet too. She told me that she'd always wanted to successfully use orange in a sonnet because *it just can't be taken seriously*.

List of Demands to the Cannibal

Tape my hands, then give me a knife.
Adore my hair and hand me scissors.
Wonder what I'm thinking, please,
then give me a chance to never think of you.
Look towards the stove, where I cook
inside your gruesome eye.
Consider keeping pieces of me for leftovers.
Try to tuck some away in your nose,
under your tongue, and below the sack of your brain.
My perfume has a hint of vanilla so grate
my wrists and cleavage over the dish.
I'm telling you, my frontal lobe is tender, soft as raspberries.
Chew on the organs you've seized:
my throat, my lungs, my ticker.
Plate them with a garnish of my desperation –
my ten digits on the side.
When you're done with your meal,
as I pass through you,
tell me it was the best you've ever had.

Destination Oblivion

My nose steams with the cigarette I keep close to my face.
Kissed filters, tongued bottle necks, and undulating smoke
make the bathroom tile more comforting as I sit myself without a cushion,
looking for the sting of flowing ferocity to ebb away.

The Jameson I keep tight to chest whispers to my hair,
“It’s OK. There, there.”

The day doesn’t matter. Particulars are undesirables,
like the shreds of toilet paper that won’t let go of a used up roll.
Dearest bottles and bones, take me to some quiet
in this echoing hall.

My back is to the wall and I can see a pattern to life
and the cliché of me.
Oh, alter of hygiene, I bow to you.

Here, I can put my butts out on the floor
and watch the popcorn ceiling shift like a lava lamp
while the ants passively work
over my dried rice vomit and coconut sugar scrub.

The Smoke Detector in My Hotel Room is Broken

Summer's wet breath in my mouth

POP goes the knuckle

The tongue will soon split in you

Thighs touch and rub and roll like thunder

Sing long for the past to hear

Tusks tear at the tapestries

Words fall from a spitting spigot

Bottles are topless

Hair crunches in your ears and you think

Getting High during Detox

Light it. Light it up.
You lit me up.
Nope. Stop.

dontthinkaboutit

Not ready.
Can't let anything go.
All of our moments are mine.
 What's mine can be yours if you're you.

I'd never call you mine.
Inhale. Deep.

dontfeelit

Cough.
I did though.

Over can't eat, can't sleep nonsense.
I'll overdose on tacos and chocolate 'cause it's savory and your love
isn't deep-dish enough.

I'll sleep 'til you light my phone up.

Someone I trust told me you were cancer.
If you were mine, you'd be pancreatic.
You're not mine;
and that's cool 'cause it's Thursday night and nothing would feel like home.
Don't think about it.

You have sheets of acid. Sheets. Sheets you won't do with me in the woods.
 No sheets on my bed
so you get my pillow-top wet with sweat.
Teach me. Learn me. Dismiss me already!
I guess I'll smoke on the bed with no sheets and make a bet
on how many nights I have left to
 feel it.

Wine in the fridge. Get the wine from the fridge.
I whine alone on the bed with no sheets.
Meanwhile, I try to figure out how many more nights under you I can handle
without rotting from the inside.

How many cookies can I eat before I die?

How many orgasms can I fake before you feel it too?

dontthinkaboutitgoddammit

no love

No, love.

You lit me up when it was dark.

Come switch me on again.

Here, piggy, pig, pig.

Your guts can mesh with mine.

Aw, you played with this lighter.

I'm in the sweater you don't really give a shit about.

Deep pull. Pulls – pulls in the fucking sweater too!

Now this equals bliss alone on a bed with no sheets that smells like salty mist.

Don't think about it.

pullpullpull

Call me out when I feel good. Send me home when you feel good.

You're so bad. This is bad.

I can totally ride this out.

Make me right tonight. Take a bite.

Ok, take it all.

I'll sweat it all out later.

I have a one subject notebook and it's you.

It's all for you.

Don't think about it.

pullpullpull

Don't be so gentle with me next time.

I Woke Up Like This

All the filters in the ashtray have lipstick stains
and it looks like I cried mascara on my rosy pillow.

The clock still looks right
next to the dainty painted ashtray.
Yes, roaches are for sucking this morning –
tiny roaches burning my lips.

My first three fingers smell like pussy and paper.
There's semen and lip gloss everywhere but my mouth
and yet I'm alone.

I can't get up there fast enough
with these miniscule joint remnants
keeping me below sea level.

Swallow five pills with the sour wine
that's been out since two:
three migraine, two birth control
individually popped out of their
punctured aluminum packaging.

The open backpack, the wrinkled party dress,
and smelly trashcan win the staring contest.
Yes, I see you. I'll deal with you later.

There's much to roll in,
wash off.

Lana Del Rey sings blues from a small speaker on the floor.
She gets it.

If I Wrote a Real Poem about My Mother

Tip: Write as if she were dead,
and I try.
I think if I lost her—
what ugly freedom that would bring.

I sit with my blank page, send Death
all the way out there
to county road fourteen fifty-three.
Her shiny forehead and wet mouth relaxed, open
beside the nightstand,
and I have to call it off last minute.

I can't kill her.
I am made of her:
a storm brewed from her gut-blood
with screaming and hugs
and our chubby cheeks tightening for each other.

No, she'll have to stay alive in the poem.
What to leave out about her?
What to add in?
I'm stuck on her face.

I know I would never want her to read the poem.
It would end up being about me anyway.

Miss Thing

I want to keep my uterus in a plastic shoebox under my bed.

I feel a fuzzy urge to bedazzle the opaque container with bubbled glitter glue and foam stick-on hearts – make it girly. I could keep the organ there amongst my old cellphone covers and evaporated perfume samples and tarnished costume jewelry, shrug my shoulders when my family tells me *hush*, that I'll get bitten by the baby-bug soon enough.

I don't have to keep little *missy* on me always, right? If I feel like we've drifted too far apart, I'll start to question it.

I could whip it out and use it as a sopping pillow when someone's done me wrong.

Then again, maybe I could make the hysterical, glowering thing an alarm clock, and start giving a shit about running late.

I could keep business cards on me instead

with bloody print reading: *miss thing*, my phone number, with my menstrual calendar and apology on back. I'd wedge my cardstock sensitivities in the closed doorways I frequent; especially the ones that aren't pulled open for me nowadays.

A card seems more reasonable too. It'd be good to wave a crumpled one in the air, a flashing white surrender screaming in the wind if I'm too scared to walk to my car alone that night, or when I run up on the curb, or those times I snap at pets/children;

it'd be perfect to leave in the sticky place of the last chocolate glazed doughnut at work.

Parties with Prophets

I rolled a joint with Jesus.
That was painful.
Thomas Harris and I got beef-tongue tacos a few times.
I smoked out with Sylvia Plath.
She dipped out as soon as she finished though.
I did body shots with Jane Austen and green apple vodka.
We got sick all over the Elvis's hoodie.
And that Freud was one bad motherfucker.
He kicked Walt Disney's ass outside of Alabama,
just left him in the hills. That one made me cry.

Allen and I did a line on more than one occasion.
He didn't like to be called Guinnessberg.
There was that night in with Kerouac too.
He knew every word to every song and it got old fast.
Picasso promised that we'd do mushrooms together,
but he never returned my calls.

Bas Luhrmann and I bedazzled my backpack:
BEST SLEEPOVER EVA '01.
I burned my finger with the glue gun and he kissed it.
Frost came over a couple of times.
We got matching icicle tattoos along our left collarbone.
He thinks it looks more like a heartbeat.

Jim Morrison took me to down a county road once.
We went out for more smokes but he turned somewhere,
and we steamed up the windows for an hour.
Taylor Swift was there that night to pick up the pieces.

Lynn Emanuel didn't like any of my beer
but she bummed my cigarettes all night.
Shakespeare brought the peyote,
but he was hard to follow after a while.
I think he left with Jesus
(from the gas station, not Christ).

Charles Bukowski got me off once, then we cuddled.
I was the big spoon. Sort of.
I found Kim Addonizio in my bathroom.
She got my razor and cut our pointer fingers,

made us blood brothers. I cried again.

I know that I can live a thousand years and never forget
the way Brandon Flowers leaned in my doorway like a cowboy.
He said: We need each other, baby. *Yesssss*
Oscar Wilde then came out of the bathroom
with his hand down his skirt.

Johnny

I never think of you,

but I have a memory of you and I sitting together.
Our air was dirty, I think

because you got to talking about that computer
you opened up once,

the one that belonged to a smoker.
The insides looked like dirty artifacts, you said.

All the boards and wires
mingling with cat hair and skin flakes

and this caked waste.
It was so gross, you said.

I'm sitting here blowing smoke at my laptop keys
and I never think of you,
but I'm worried about fucking up the inside of my computer.

Day Off

I open the blinds so that I can see what I'm missing.
Headache starts the morning
with an urgency not to wet the bed.
Half of last night's joint
plus a swallow of red wine,
get the morning behind me.

My bed becomes desk/smoking section/dining room table.
I get enough done to reward myself
with the rest of that joint.
I take sweet care to keep it wet between my lips,
between long pulls and hot throat,
I roll another over a blank legal pad
and listen to music tell me all about pain.

Avoid work by jumping on the bed.
I settle for hovering over my notes
with a spoonful of fudge icing
dissolving in my mouth like seconds.
I have to breathe through my nose and lock my lips
around the thin handle so that I don't drool on anything.

I pour a tumbler of Pinot because:
I'm an artist and I need it,
I have an addictive personality,
missing my ex hurts,
I nap uneasily.
I lie down because days like this are long
and unproductive.

I wake up in my sweaty silhouette.
There was a nap and now there's a headache,
and there's still a swallow or two of wine left.
I adjust the pillows on my bed and arrange some books
so that it looks more crowded.

There's more wine in the fridge and that's exciting.
I have Chinese delivery on the way
and that's exciting.

I set the TV to blood and sex with low volume,

music videos move around on my laptop,
and I take up reading against my body pillow because:
I can multi-task,
I need the noise,
I don't want to miss out on anything.

Don't Miss Mississippi

Remember

pulling my white panties down for the neighbor
cutting my sister's thigh open with a broken light bulb
the cries of the kittens I held belly-up under gutters when it rained
that boyfriend I loved to make cry
puking red wine and white rum
my public masturbation
my chronic masturbation
my shameful masturbation
rubbing myself raw
dropping a puppy
dropping Mom's coffee
taking an ax to my stepdad's favorite trees
getting "saved" to get Mom's love back
going to church to get Jesus back
the teacher thinking I was slow
lying about where the money came from
swinging Outside-Cat around by her tail
playing tennis with frogs instead of balls
faking orgasms
drinking with the dogs
fucking up memory lane with mary jane

Forget

the sweet promises I've heard
the love I still have for every man that's entered and left
the time given away
the way everyone knew me
eating pussy and sucking tit at Elvis Presley Lake
the sticky sex that inspired the lipstick note on the mirror
the way I used to let people talk to me
the way I always found something to destroy
Dad
everything Troy and I did upstairs
that Dad heard everything that went on upstairs
daydreams of waterfalls and mermaids
dancing with Grandma in the living room
T – A – N – G – O
pulling that poor boy's khakis down in the pews

going down on my knees in the pews
running around naked
laughing about it
swallowing in the backseat
laying on the hearth like an offering
walking barefoot on the splintered floors of nostalgia

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