

GRAFFITI

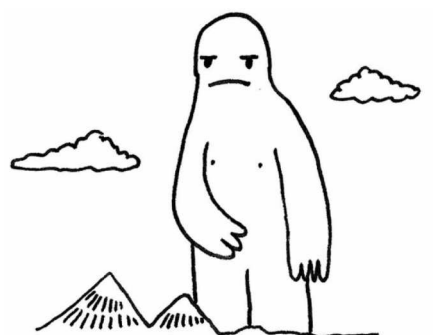
(and other poems.)

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for all of you who feel
like a visitor in your own skin

contents

preface...8

burgundy walls...15

an optimistic view of love...20

haunted...22

a poem just for me...24

organs...29

real estate...30

head space...34

i think this was the first time i felt like i was really living...35

after...37

glow worm...40

a cold journey home on a sunday morning...42

i'm coping...43

this city is alive (don't get too close or she'll break your heart)...44

dew-grass...48

mystifier...52

too quiet...53

moles don't think about space or small talk...56

i don't know much about kisses...62

angry about it...63

graffiti...64

i do not like the feeling...66

the only things i know to be true...70

clock tick or a time bomb...74

heirlooms...76

three things i have learned four thousand miles from home...78

words of gods...82
hum...84
no angels...86
a poem for ohio...88
worry dolls...90
i've woken up elsewhere...92
either...94
o.k.a.y....98

GRAFFITI

(and other poems.)

SAVANNAH BROWN

illustrated by ed stockham.

burgundy walls

i could see you, little person, in your little house
(those burgundy walls might be mine someday)
talking with all the other little people
who you love enough
to watch t.v. with on sunday night
and pour a coffee for on monday morning
and listen to them talk in their sleep
(through shut doors,
or only the layer of clothes
or no clothes
between you)
talk in their sleep, and cry, sometimes

your feet were up on the arm of your couch
(i couldn't see your face)
and you had socks on
that your grandma might have gotten for you—
the arm of a couch
through a sharp-cornered window
in a geometric room, like a honeycomb in a hive
(frequented by the worker bees)



there were other little people in the photographs
on your wall, which the chandelier illuminated
it looked expensive
(the chandelier, and the frames,
and the way the freshly-cleaned glass panes glistened)
and i thought about how that chandelier light
would look bouncing off my own
burgundy walls someday
licked by the steam from the coffee
that i bought
and i poured
for my people or person
on monday morning

there would be people in my photographs
who looked like the people in yours
(the young people smiling,
the old people stately—
the family's been traveling everywhere lately
i'll say with a smile, and
i do miss them so, but i have been traveling too)

and i can't quite see to the back of the den
but i'm sure you've got bookshelves packed to the brim
run a finger across, wait and say when
second-hand classics, again and again—
like you read in school
when things only reached as far as the foot of your bed
and you had no need to think about
the chandelier you might one day own
(when the wrinkles from a million seconds spent laughing
start to show)
no need to consider
the smell of freshly painted burgundy walls
or picture frames

i hope you have a nice rest of your life
in that little house,
or another little house
(but they're all the same—
coated in a fine layer of fingerprints
and sweat and whispers,
dinners and arguments and glances)
and i guess it's funny, because
if you hadn't had your living room
light on at dusk i wouldn't have ever known
you existed

i'm sorry for spying on you

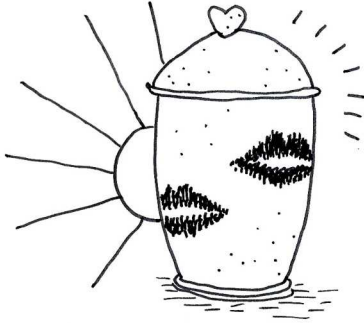


an optimistic view of love

i could use a million words
to describe your lips,
but what about when those same lips—
the same skin tugged tight over
your ribcage—
the same teeth i like to imagine being dug into my hip bones—
are rotting in the ground?
or are nothing but ashes?
what could be done then?
could they toss me in the same plot?
(or vice versa, i guess—
you never know who will be the first to go)

would you share an urn with me?
our particles could mingle for all eternity

(or at least until the sun burns out)



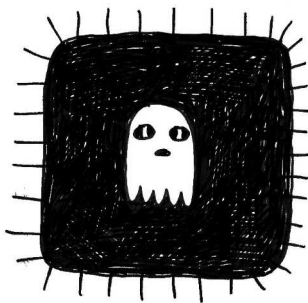
haunted

i can measure how sad i am
by how afraid i am of the dark
(rather, i mean, what's in the dark)
counting heart stops and stomach flops and
every stair creak, when everyone's asleep
(except me and my head and my shaky hands)

if i look down the basement stairs
and feel a twinge of terror,
urge to run from a nightmare,
i know that i'm doing okay

but if i feel nothing
or even, sometimes,
feel compelled to throw my body
into the void
it's a bad day

sometimes i am the one haunting the house



a poem just for me

this is a poem just for me
(to celebrate the year i will turn twenty)
from me, to you—
a person who doesn't really exist anymore
because i have enveloped you and now wear your skin—
and to her, a person
who (i've been told) will someday devour me:

skin doesn't die
it grows and moves and moulds,
and every day it lays a little differently.
heartache and pain pave distinct terrains on a chest
in the same way tears erode laugh lines,
branching like canyons, or lightning.
but apart from being able to reach a bit higher,
not much has changed;
gravity falls similarly on my back and brain

and still, there is sometimes nothing
and still, i can't help it
sometimes there's everything all at once and i can't help it
and sometimes i go from nothing to everything
over the course of a couple dreams and battered sheets
damp and heavy with memories,
and i can't help that either

you will be disappointed to know that
i haven't yet learned how to ride waves
but i have learned how to tie myself to them
and how to hold my breath
(long enough to let them wash over my nose)

i still have a small ribcage for inelastic lungs
and in times of lulling stability
i still find myself sleepy at noon
because i can only think in technicolor
with my eyes closed



but then i think about seconds
and the sound a year makes when it crumbles down around you
and the way old flavors will taste to an even older tongue
and suddenly i want nothing more than
to exist in this dull for eternity

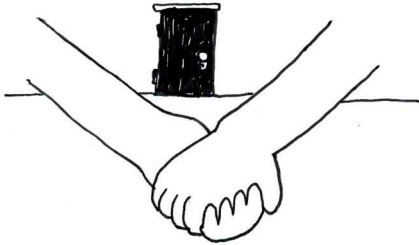
i can say now, and it's now,
but as soon as the sound evaporates
the mouth that spoke now isn't mine anymore
and i'm someone who has lived
one more breadth of a hair than before,
and sometimes i wonder how many hairs separate me from you

and if i could quantify the whole thing,
figure the percentage of change from
one blink to the next
from one connection to the next
from one picturesque sky to the next, then maybe
i wouldn't be so scared of her
because right now, i'm certain she's either
a myth or a monster or both
and though you are not me,
i think you are just as worried about her as i am
(though in a way this is her love letter;
she somehow survived the turmoil carried by both you, and me,
and likely another, and another, and another)
but if she is but half of our stubborn she'll be fine
(though if she is just half our critic, our compulsive, our nerve
she might not be)

and god i wonder how her hair feels, and where she sleeps
and what the last thing her lips touched was
i guess i wonder the same things about you
(even though i recall your first loose tooth
and talking to the family pets about dying
when you first understood what it meant)

because although all the answers are now sewn
into my veins, timeframes like eyelashes
i can't remember the words
so perhaps, in a way, all of those things
are somewhere underneath my fingernails,
or in the soles of my feet
and i'll just have to wait until her hair becomes mine
and my fingerprints match hers

you know i'm not very patient
but i also don't have much
of a choice

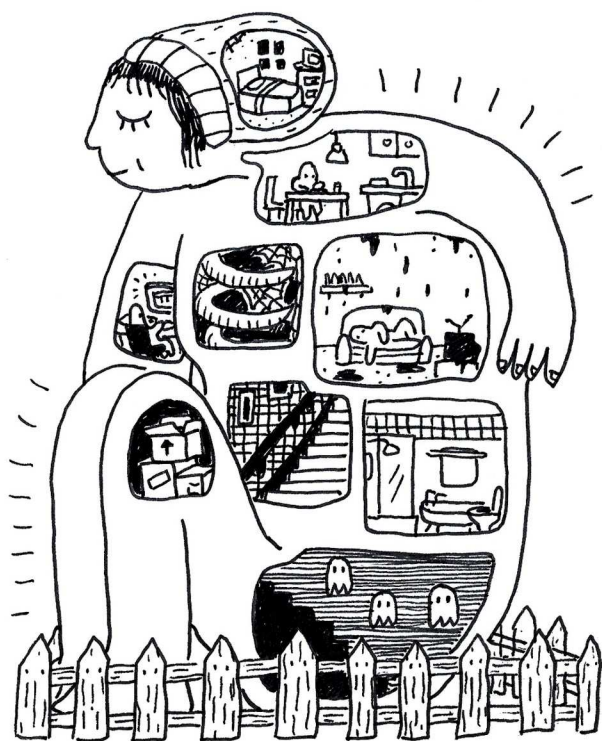


organs

i have never had my heart broken
but i have given it to you, full
in one piece
beating
and dripping with blood
i have passed it
straight into
your razor sharp nails
and the dry, calloused
skin on your hands
i am sure
you have a craving for
human flesh

but please, please, please
be careful
with me—
be kind
and gentle
and soft
with my insides

i have given you the power
to turn me inside out, my dear—
please do not use it



real estate

i am my own.

i have built myself a one bedroom,
single-bed home in my bones
with a garden and white picket fence
but if you had sense you'd look close to see
the paint curling off the planks so obviously—
i've never understood why i stain it so religiously
when it'll always be a mess
underneath the fake finesse,
but i digress

i keep my lawn manicured,
snipped short till i bite skin,
and if you ask nicely,
step through the land mines,
you can come in

we'll enter through the attic.
it's a topsy-turvy cluttered catastrophe
while some spiderweb-coated
corners and crannies cover the space,
other parts are pristine
sparkling, new, unused
but if only i knew what to do with the walls—
short sprawling verses envelop them all

the heart, i'd say, is the living room,
and if you don't mind the palpitations;
looming threat of infatuation;
occasional lack of motivation;
it's not a bad spot to spend your time,
while away hours, thinking up rhymes

the ceiling drips with blood, ink,
and something that,
when you run your fingers through it,
feels like nostalgia

the kitchen's too big for just me.
hallways too wide, too much space for echoes inside—
it gets lonely when you only
have conversations with your own voice

but i guess i have a choice.
i could go if i wanted,
share the floorboards with someone in a place less haunted,
but i like it here.
and i'm happy to stay in this mess on my own
in this home i have built for myself in my bones

head space

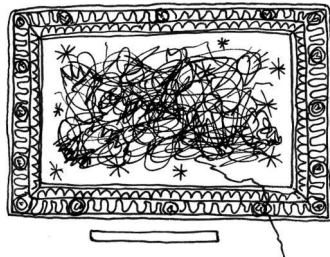
it's neither beautiful nor clean
far from landscape painter's dream
and all the roses, lilacs seem to scatter
few and far between

and in the distance you can see
the empty houses, light posts crowded
panic, panic, we're surrounded
ten and twenty, hundred thousand

people shouting, woes unfolding
children crying, lovers holding
lovers in their battered hands
asking, pleading, begging, scolding

what will come of all our plans?
no one seems to understand

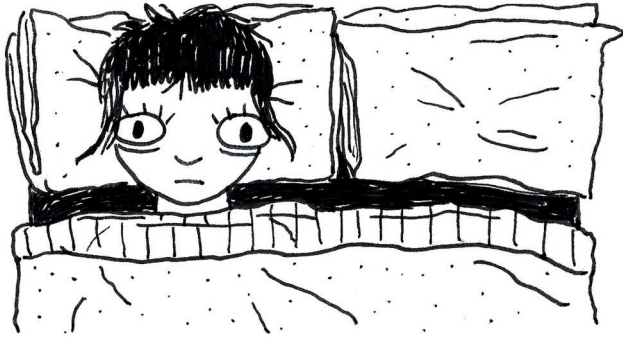
and when it ends, the streets are quiet
city torched amongst the riots
they've all gone to feed the giant
it begins again



*i think this was the first time i felt like i was really
living*

i told you that
you can feel things better
with your eyes closed
right after i realized that
the back of your throat didn't
taste like booze
and i felt validated
in some strange way that
i'm guessing confused teenagers do

this is a lesson
i told myself after;
a lesson in forgetting
a lesson in disconnect
a lesson in their words are poison laced with sugar
a lesson in you will not have dreams about that smirk tonight
a lesson in sometimes you can feel it linger after it's gone
a lesson in i like myself better drunk
a lesson in is this what good times are
a lesson in well they were bound to start eventually

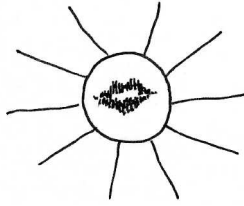


maybe i should just sleep on it

after

i think people are so infatuated with the afterlife
and so convinced it must exist
because surely, it had to be better than this.
surely, this can't be all there is

like we signed a divine contract
before entering the womb saying
“your consciousness will be painless,
exciting and smooth and light as feather
whether you put in the effort or not.
enjoy the ride,” it said,
and even in the fine print,
nothing could be found but blind joy
and promises of a future crafted meticulously,
with pleasantly warm days and
soft safe nights awaiting you
with each rotation of an earth
created for your comfort



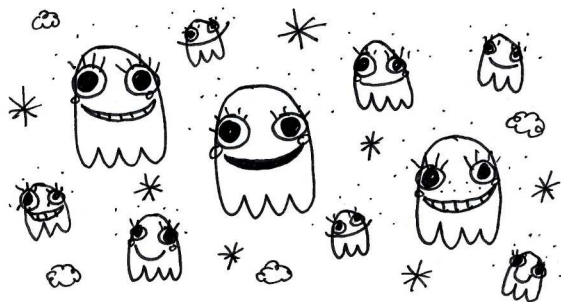
like there was a promise it had to be better than this

this can't be all there is, we said
when we were grieving,
depressed and jealous and suicidal, we said
this isn't it, this isn't final, we said
life's an illusion, death and hate too, we said
patience is key and soon we'll be free, we said

and every morning you'll dance on
the beach with someone you love

and in sunday school, i was told that
if you went to heaven but someone you
loved went to hell you'd forget about them,
because in heaven there's no longing
for what cannot be
so i thought, what if they all forgot about me?

couldn't even bother to
swallow hard and push it away
but thinking those things is what today's for,
i guess
we can be sad now because it'll get better,
i guess
but what happens when it doesn't?
what a waste

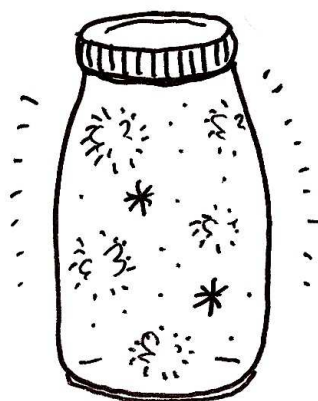


glow worm

i am cadescent girl,
luminescent girl
and i like how
your pink palm-skin
feels on my feet,
but only for a moment, please
admire from afar, please

the moment i spy
the other hand cupping over top,
finger cage, suffocate
i will go

didn't anyone ever tell you
that you're not supposed
to keep glow worms
in a jar



a cold journey home on a sunday morning

the ghost of your lips on mine
was the first thing to make
riding the train home
in yesterday's clothes
feel not so lonely

when i saw the pretty people kiss,
it didn't sting the same.
it wasn't an empty and painful and numb
punch to the gut,
but suddenly the need for oxygen
wasn't quite so urgent
and desperate
as the need to have your hand
wrapped in my hair

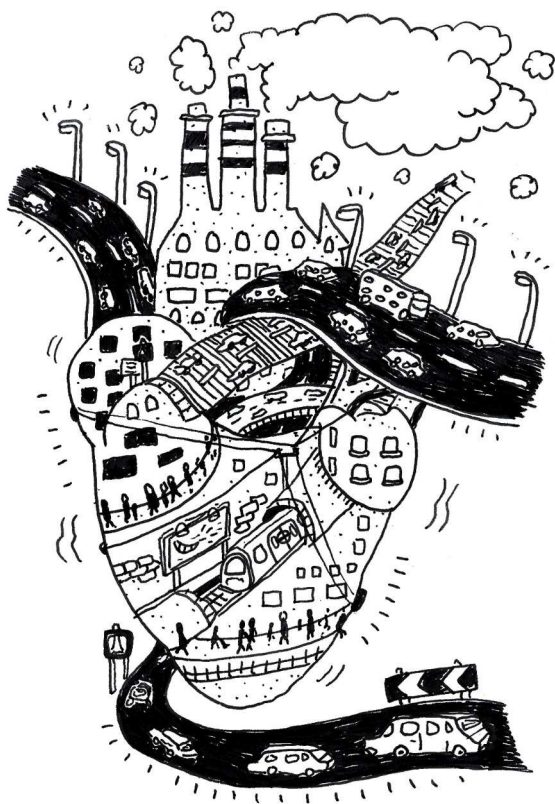


i'm coping

because i inhabit
the same earth
as you,
i must subsist
(though you are a craving to smother myself
in a scent that does not exist)

drown myself in air,
sinking heavy when
your name settles
in the canyons
in my lungs
experiencing a fleeting moment
with eyelids sewn shut

i could take a photograph
(but those just don't feel like skin,
do they)



*this city is alive (don't get too close or she'll break
your heart)*

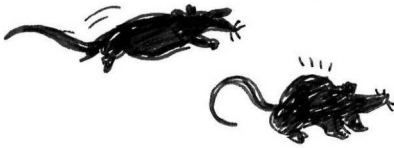
this city is alive
this city is alive
and if you don't believe it,
inhale and hug her to your chest
feel the reverberations of her
heartbeat in your stomach
she's a pulsing beating quivering thing
and with every footstep
that echoes through her hollowed alleyways,
cobblestoned hideaways,
she learns

this city makes no promises
and there's deceit in her mischievous eyes
but the pull of her paradise lips to your own is magnetic
she slams the strongest men
to their knees

she's not a crescendo.
she's a bittersweet beauty,
a heavy rumbling bass,
a numbing buzz,
every exhale like rolling thunder

this city is diseased
plagued with chronic loneliness and
the only cure is cigarettes and art

there's a reason spidery veins so closely
resemble aerial night lights,
and during the early hours of the morning,
the brick almost seems to sigh



dew-grass

there was this night last summer
that i hadn't mentally prepared myself for
(but the echoes that reverberate with relentless longevity
are not the ones formed before a shout began—
i never learn)
it might have been july—
i guess it doesn't matter,
i just remember it was hot.
my room was the hottest in the house
and the sound of sizzling tidal waves rolling in
is forever paired in my memory with
the crack of a just-opened window,
and the whistle of a just-shivered breeze
(it reminded me of a breath from someone
i hadn't met yet
even the scent of it felt foreign but also like
i was born in it)

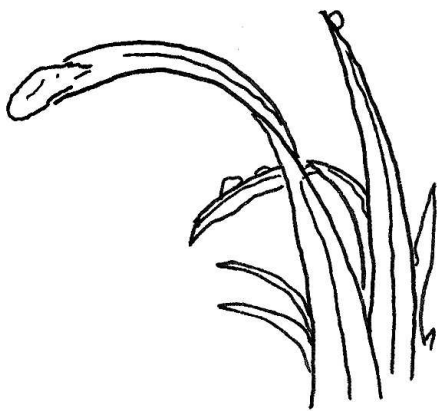


hot enough for tied up hair, and
to lay belly-up in parking lots
at four a.m.
(there were so many stars)
characterized by reverie so grand
(the world seemed so big and small all at once)
and then a sense of
awareness so precise,
i could, at that moment,
count the blood cells in my chest and the droplets
on my tongue and between my shoulder blades

have you ever felt bare feet on dew-grass?
bare feet on slippery suspended log
bare feet on bicycle pedal
(on riverbank, spiderweb, tomorrow)

we crept into the woods
like i imagined goblins would
(ohio is dark,
dark,
dark at night
as dark as deep space if you're sleepy
and believe it enough)
and firefly-constellations lit a serpentine
stretch of muddy canyons
that fit just right
between your toes

looking back on it now,
i wish i wasn't too scared to improvise
(i just couldn't force a verse that didn't
leap, i guess)
but i did keep up with them,
those wistful mysteries
(i think they might have actually been goblins)
sometimes i still feel
like i'm treading on pebbles



mystifier

i.

i want you to be my mystifier
spun from sugar and barbed wire,
sweet to taste but sharp to touch—
oh pretty face, you're too much
for me today—i don't believe
there's any way you're that naive.
(give until i count to three to
guess the things you do to me)

ii.

i've been having these dreams lately
that i think are too real;
in them, i can
feel the give of my skin and
the firecrackers in yours
when you grab me,
and i swear when i woke up, i felt
soft hands around my throat
i have the careful bruises
left to prove it

too quiet

i can't even scream to the universe
at the top of my lungs
to ask her what the hell is going on here—
i was told sound can't travel in space.
do you think the universe
did that as a joke?
and she's right up there ready to listen,
but once we get smart enough
to think to enquire
how the existence of earth has transpired,
we'll learn science said no,
shouts can't reach any higher
than atmosphere level down here

so we'll fire a rocket! brilliant plan
with an offering and list of questions in hand
“hello!” we exclaim at the top of our lungs
to the universe, but she can't hear



so we try again, little louder this time
“excuse me!” we shriek
“i think you’ll find this is
as important to you as it is to me”
but the universe can’t hear you—
she’s sound asleep

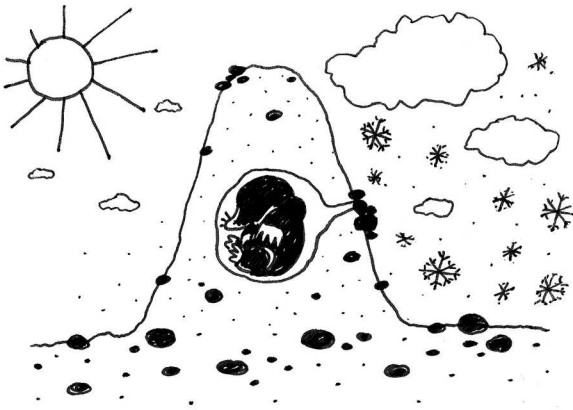
she couldn’t have done it on purpose, you see
because with no sound,
she’s as lonely as you, even me
who would wish upon themselves such a destiny
when anything in the universe could be done?

so we're alone, i conclude from the lack of reply
it's up to us, i suppose
to find truth in the sky



moles don't think about space or small talk

i would like very much to
live in a small hole in the ground,
like a mole.
a small hole,
for an even smaller mole,
maybe dug into the side of a hill,
and i will close off the entrance
to keep out the chill of the winters,
heat of the summers,
no one would know, but please tell my mother
i'm sorry, i'm sorry,
but it had to be done



when you can't run from the
invisible weight of the world
teetering on your shoulder blades,
just smother yourself with dirt,
bury yourself alive,
so at least then you know where the
suffocation is coming from

because when i can feel my stomach
being pulled out through my lips
and forced back down again
whenever it's decided so,
i'd at least like to know
who's responsible

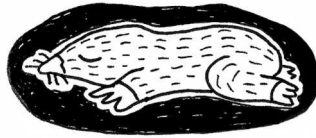
so i can thank them,
for giving me a gag reflex crafted from steel
and the artistry to construct a
creative, well-rounded list
of a thousand and one ways i could die

i've learned that when fire and ice combine,
they don't divide, they multiply—
two extremes don't cancel, they intensify—
and yes, there's something bringing the cold
but oh, i bring the burn

if i was a mole
in the side of a hill i wouldn't
seek that same masochistic thrill that
keeps my human heart humming,
human mind numbing,
someone please help me, i think i'm becoming
insignificant again—
that's the third time today.
a mole wouldn't cry when asked of its day

when i was little, i was told
i had an excellent imagination—
who ever would have guessed
i'd use it in the creation
of my own personal hell
where everything's my fault,
and no matter how small i get
i always take up too much space,
while, at the same time, taking up no space
because have you ever thought about
how big space is?

everyone's so small,
but i'm the biggest small of them all



not if i was a mole in the side of a hill
with neither the heat nor the chill
it's quiet and cozy
but really, that's silly and i don't suppose we
could come to some sort of agreement
for there's lives to be lived
business to conduct
there's moments to experience
and there's nothing to discuss
things to think too much
everything to think too much
i always think too much

i don't know much about kisses

but i know they come from all sorts of places.

some are birthed from passion and thirst

some from tenderness

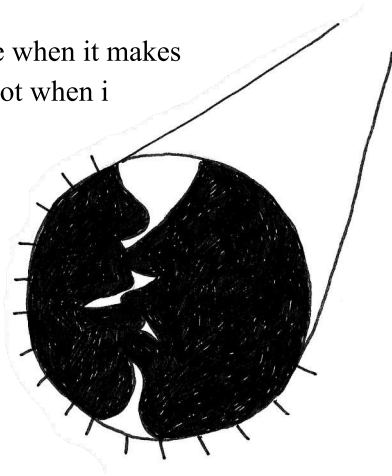
even here, in the in-between,
they can be untainted and fine

this one, however
was a punch line

i wasn't informed before
and certainly not during
but two girls cannot fit
together like they can with
boys, so instead of loving,
it is funny
a joke
ha, ha



(we can only be close when it makes
everyone else look, not when i
want to look at you)



angry about it

don't ask me what the hell
is happening, because
i don't have a clue—
all i know is
the bitter taste in my mouth
goes away when
your name gets
bounced around in it
(acidic lisps, smacking lips
they feel better raw)

i love you so much
i could cut off your nose!
scoop out your eyeballs
and lop off your toes!

i need to tell
you something
very important!
but jesus, what
were the words

graffiti

maybe if i covered myself with tattoos, or just paint
shot myself with guns filled with ink,
and lipstick, and perfume,
and moved to the city, dressed in graffiti
(both me, and the city)—
i could camouflage myself
amongst the grit and the dirt
and i could hide
and then nobody would ever
have to see me again as savannah,
but a work of art, they would call me
is that a banksy? they'd inquire
because they would think i was made of bricks
or concrete
or bicycle tires

but since i'm made of skin,
and not bricks
(although they're both equally beaten,
bruised and
crumbling
marked with initials inside hearts
and scars from what's hit hard
enough to break skin in the past),
no one really calls those things art.
they all say i should try and cover
the marks



i do not like the feeling

i do not like the feeling of being shaken

i do not like the feeling of my brain
banging against the walls of my skull,
heart flattened in the pit of my stomach

i do not like you

i do not like you because you are a steel tectonic plate;
you are disaster waiting to happen, and there is nothing
natural about you

i do not like you because your laugh is like
feather stems forced through my temples

i do not like the feeling of falling ten stories,
my organs escaping out through my mouth
i do not like the feeling of weightlessness
i am not in the business of taking bullets
so i do not like the feeling of desperation,
begging to hear gunfire,
because you would not forget me then

i do not like the feeling of hollow wrists
fastened to strings, marionette
raising the crushed velvet curtain discovering
silhouettes whispering, like wind chimes
depicting all the times i could have told you
something, i am feeling something!

i do not like the feeling of look at me

i do not like the feeling of almost
of almost beds and almost nights
that you would remember as belonging to me,
the nights i won, the nights i was
running from you just so i could feel
your labored breaths on the back of my neck

of almost eye locks, i'll shove a key through your socket
i'll crush you, i'll stuff you inside of a locket

i do not like the feeling of irrelevance

i do not like the feeling of smarter than me,
of better than me,
i do not like the feeling of no longer queen,
i do not like the feeling of dreams where i'm stood
from a height and you are the breeze
(i swear to god i heard you hiss)

i do not like the feeling of being rattled
snake jaw snapped open, i'll swallow you whole

i do not like you
i do not like how your body next
to mine feels like a death sentence
killed by cutting clauses
too accidentally tender

i do not like the feeling of you
in the same way i do not like the feeling of drunk,
swimming in head, scorch throat red
but that doesn't stop me
i do not like the feeling of you

i do not like the feeling of bones bending to fit your shape
creaking music of decay
you are eating away at my flesh
parasitic picture of perfection
i do not like the feeling of words trapped in my chest
lungs sticky with smoke and regret, second guess

i do not like the feeling of you





the only things i know to be true

i know i should clean my room right now,
because i mostly think more clearly
without pajamas and mugs
and fifty water bottles
strewn across my bedroom floor.
it's likely all those things are sprinkled with
a solid two-weeks-in-the-making layer
of dust, pencil shavings, and dead skin cells

art may come from tragedy,
but i'm not sure it ever came from mess.
this may be the first time.
maybe this mess is a tragedy itself.
(bless this mess)

i know i shouldn't be wishing the days away,
but i can't help it.
counting down from twenty-four once midnight strikes
and then sixty every sixty
and i only need to sleep three more times and
then everything will finally be okay

i know that's not healthy
but at the same time,
if someone told me i was going
to die tomorrow
i wouldn't necessarily regret
spending my last day
lost in my head thinking about
the happy times that await

when you think hard enough
about feeling things,
you can almost feel those things
like a warm breeze,
or an overcast chill
or a kiss

i know i should probably either sleep
or do work,
even though this sort of is work—
but the nice kind,
not the kind that everyone else says
i should be doing

i know i shouldn't have another coffee
but it looks like that's the direction
the evening is going in.
i know that won't help the ever present bags
under my eyes get any smaller,
but i've kind of come to terms
with them and i'm happy to let them
live on my face

clock tick or a time bomb

everything is beginning to look like you
i spend passing moments carving
your features in the grains on my ceiling
and in trees in the dark
they all have your eyes
so much so
that i can't even recognize
rainy afternoons
or warm blankets in december
anymore, because
i'm struggling to remember
when those things had a
distinct identity
and didn't just feel like your chest
falling and rising,
synchronizing like a clock tick or a
time bomb
the nights are the worst
because they remind me how
differently the air shifts when you're near,
and how shallow my breaths seem
when you're not

i seldom thought there'd be a time
when it'd be easier to sleep than when
i'm next to you
it turns out, clenching eyes
clutching sheets
dreaming up the smell of sweet sweat
and morning breath
works not nearly as well,
but as well as i've got
right now



heirlooms

my mother

taught me that love is a sense best enjoyed at arm's length,
like a too-loud sound, or a too-hot heat
(heartache hurts because it burns)

though she also taught me that feeling things too much
is what keeps you alive
(i've got malleable bones
and i could loosen up for you)

my father

taught me that sometimes the happiness
of others sits lighter on your eyelashes at night
than your own

my father

taught me the importance of a firm handshake,
an unwavering confidence to your speech,
and possessing the ability to make the strangers
in the room feel as though they've known you for years

my father taught me that the hands
of anyone who touches me should
be gentle and my mother taught me
that if they are not, i should slice them off
with the blade my father gave me
that i keep underneath my tongue

my mother taught me to not be afraid
to be a shout amongst whispers
and to be unapologetic for the noise
(this is something i am still learning)
my mother taught me that if her presence
feels like a grenade, then so
does mine

my parents taught me that some
things do not age
especially
the space behind your eyes

*three things i have learned four thousand miles
from home*

one

you must avoid repetition
whenever you can
doing only things
you've done before
makes it impossible to learn
anything new
you must look the things you are scared of
right in the eyes
and say
i am far too smart
to have something as dull as you
deter me



two

there is more than enough time
to ask a million questions
and then some
try not to worry about
bothering people, because
people are kinder
than you tell yourself
and they sometimes know more than you too
(in fact, they usually do)
trust the advice of the experienced
because everywhere you go,
you are a student
you will make more mistakes
than you ever have before
so master the art of vulnerability,
and do it quickly

three

you can try and convince yourself
that you are happiest
with a locked door
and quiet to keep you company
but even the most beautiful place
would be a shell without
the echo of laughter
and the sound of a group of clacking
heels on pavement
in the early hours
of the morning
you will sometimes feel safest
with another hand in your own
(independence is not a striving to be alone,
not purposeful seclusion,
but having the strength to say
i'd be okay if you weren't here with me
but i'm so glad that you are
and i hope you'll stay awhile)



words of gods

the only thing you can rely on is time.

lovers leave,
and you tell yourself stories
of could-haves
and should-haves
(memories always taste sweeter
years down the line)
everyone lies,
but everyone dies
like the streets named after oak trees
that have been cut down,



and the tombstones that have
crumbled away,
eroding the names
and the memories
of the living—
a bit more faded
and forgotten with each rain storm

all history books rot
even paper containing
the words of gods
disintegrates
nothing is too pure to avoid being
sliced away slowly by each
passing second
there's a comfort in knowing
that there is an end
to each elation and tragedy,
there is an end
and i think that is the only thing
we can be sure of

hum

in the seemingly minuscule moments
before i met you
and in the eternity-seconds after
(even more so)
it was made apparent
(by a part of me i
didn't know had a consciousness—
didn't know could shout so primally
or in those notes
so high and low
i think it's howling)
that i would do everything in my power
to make you hum
you would know every spot
i had been because
they would be marked in
yellow and purple and blue
paint you
silver and gold

thin red rivers stretching down freckled muscle
i decided, in that heartbeat
that you would never whimper again
in the presence of anyone
(except me)
desperation is not an emotion
i grapple with often
so when i do
i tend to not forget it
you have been
branded
into my scalp

*(i can write only so much poetry
about how i want you to beg for me)*

no angels

the way he smells loses its charm
when you realize it's just the smell of
the laundry detergent his mom uses,
and the sound of her laugh becomes
a little less magic
when she starts to laugh at you, not with

and in the pit of your stomach
you can feel the plummet,
the rummage, the buckle
of knees against
the weight of the lump
in your throat
when you find out
all that you wrote isn't true—
they're just a mistake, mortal like you

their skin can be pierced
(and it normally is)
with regret tied with lace, disinterest post-chase
what a day it is when you discover
they're just as not-special
as you think of yourself to be
just as wrong-wired
as you think of yourself to be

no, there's no angels
but yes there is love
it doesn't smell like april
it's not covered with gold dust
encrusted with jewels, smothered in lust
it is there, but it's dirty
and under the ground
where the rawest of all of
humanity's found

it's up to you to clean it up



a poem for ohio

where you are born will never change
in name nor place nor creed
old words decay and footprints fade,
but it's still home indeed

someday you'll make the grand return
to see with outlook new
all that has gone, where the time went,
if they've forgotten you

the smells are unfamiliar in
the boxed-up clothes you wore
even mirrors don't reflect the way
you thought they did before

you'll find the buildings taller, that
the halls are full of ghosts,
but everything still here is
what you remember most

firsts and lasts and birthdays
(july would warm them all),
frigid days spent breathing in
the apple-colored fall

we slept until the winter when
the world was painted grey,
draped ourselves in scarlet and
it all melted away

braving rain, we'd pedal
to the river styx at dusk
where the world did not stretch further than
the thickets and the rust

here, i play the role of past-girl,
jumping back onto the scene—
i fit the part so nicely that
you'd think the girl was me

though i may roam (to different sights!—
out of small shoes i'll grow),
there'll always be a part of me
that's filled with ohio

worry dolls

i.

you look like my worry dolls
whisper you my troubles dolls
put you in my pillow while your
breaths sing me to sleep dolls

you've got these melodies
that sound like wilting flowers,
i'm regretting all the days i spent
counting down the hours

ii.

until—i don't even know what.
i always figured the weight
of all my fears and nights
i spent crying
would make you shrivel and die

calling me a pesticide
would be too kind.
it's herbal homicide
i'm sorry you're unsatisfied
i'm sorry i'm unsatisfied

iii.

i'm not sure who is in
the palm of whose hand
i know you could crush me
with a twitch and a glance,
but i think i could suck out your soul

i've woken up elsewhere

i love that color of the sky
that color of the sky triggered
by puffy eyes and dry mouth
and broken clock
empty docks and harbors
haloed by that kind of pulsing purple sky

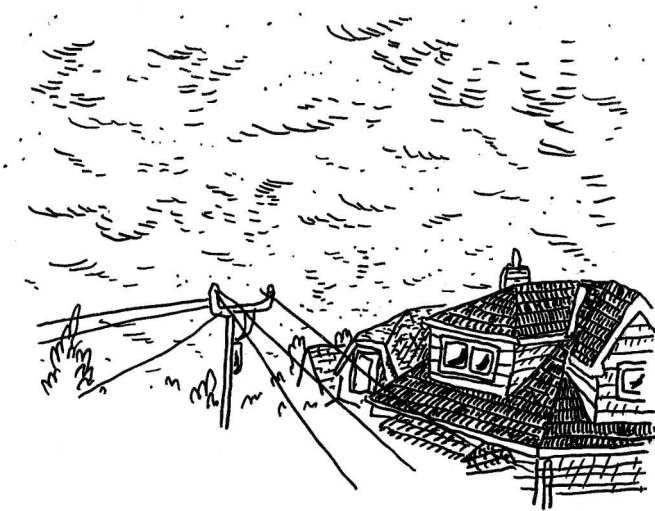
that color of the sky in between
a world apart and a world
so recognizable in your bookshelves
and nightstands,
drawers filled with
toothbrushes and chapstick
illuminated by a yellow sky
and leather-bound journals that are only
filled up to the second page
("i know i probably won't write
in this as often as i'd like")

that color of the sky
green radioactive sky
saccharine sapphire sky
red roses pink sky

(red and pink don't go
well together most days
but a red pink rose sky
doesn't care about
fashion, really)

visions of small town americana
quiet lulling chatter
ticking beat from somewhere
boiling feet and sticky pillow
open damp windowsill
i feel like i've slept for my entire life,
and have awoken in the gaze of an
oozing orange sky

where am i?
earth doesn't feel like this





either

could someone define for me balance?
teach me trade-offs, color me compromise—
i do not know how to position myself
in the middle of a capsizing ship.
if it fits, i want it too big or too small;
too much to exist, or too nothing at all

i'll exhaust every bit of you with my spider leg limbs,
spend an eternity pondering how low i should dim every
bright light i've ever known.
(either searing or pitch,
or it isn't home)

your lips taste like chloroform—
i could choke myself on them
fingers like switchblades—
i think i could die on them

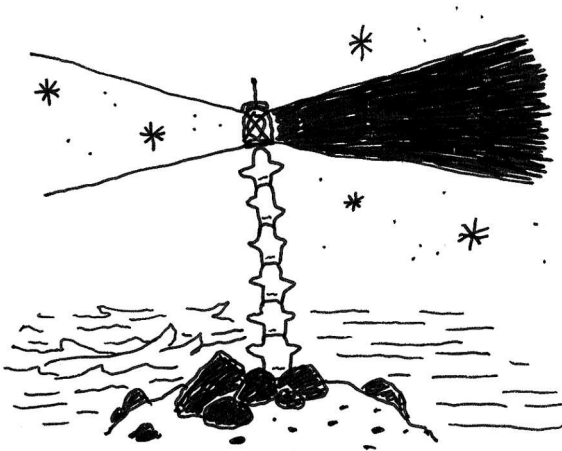
i have this affinity, a tendency
towards self-destruction—
joints stretching like days
(like they've always been),
either exploding outwards
or imploding in

sound of a spine
pop, pop, popping
twisting shoulders backwards
hang me from my feet
somehow i become less
dizzy upside-down,
high from the feeling of
blood rushing up to the ground

caustic conundrums
eyes either popping out of skull
or swallowed

stormy seas or sparking sand
i am a metronome
not like a heartbeat
but a convulsion

there are so many possibilities
as to how i take my shallow breaths
in this beautiful world,
but none of them are beautiful



o.k.a.y.

roar it into the inky blackness!
into coffee and mirrors and screens!
into all of the melodies haunting!
into all of the spaces between!

you say it once and it's bitter,
viscous and wrong on your tongue
dishonest, malignant, and charred with deceit
trickles down into your lungs

you say it again and it's greying,
shriveled and crisp from the sun
but here, on the precipice, looking below
you must not admit it has won

so you try it again, defiant,
toes dug powerfully into the sand
and in a burst of light, it occurs to you
that only you govern this land

and you shout, and you yawp, unflinching!
enough to extinguish malaise!
staring into the voided eyes of the night,
you are no longer afraid!

someday it will flow from you natural
it'll feel so lovely to say!
in the midst of the storm,
in the mouth of the beast,
i'm okay! i'm okay! i'm okay!

i'm okay!
i'm okay!
i'm okay!



Savannah Brown is a writer and a poet from a small town in Ohio. She self-published *Graffiti* at the age of nineteen, and everyone was quite nice about it.

She is working on her first novel.

Savannah currently resides in London and dreams of one day owning a big dog who thinks itself a small dog.

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