

If you could, wouldn't you want to? If you could?

"As a Gemini moon," I mimicked myself, in a self-loathing valley girl accent,
"I'm conflicted about nearly everything."

My best friend tells me that he dislikes fall the most -
the season of rot, dead leaves on soft dead leaves on softer-softer ground,
the souring of summer's fruit; the seasonal shiver of the earth,
her goosebumps rising like the mountain peaks
puckered skin-like crests frothing with shriveling trees
burnt red-yellow and crispy, straining for warmth like a fever
alleviated only by the balm of the wind
gently and gradually cleansing what must be new.

But isn't there so much to desire about how the leaves are brightest right before they go?
Like how the scent of fall seems to clean out your entire chest,
it's spoon freshly hot from underneath summer's faucet, scooping out my ice cream insides
leaving behind menthol breaths.

To feel a whirl of wind and a rush of leaves brush by in a hurry,
your legs holding you heavy and steadfast against that heady,
mysterious and wonderous pull of air.

Maybe it's not that I'm conflicted,
but I just can't help but see
the beauty in everything
(except myself).

I've got a heart crammed with years of my own waterlogged tissues,
that I just thought was just the normal stuffing
and I call myself the world's saddest clown for waking up in the morning
and trying to make a fun magic trick out of pulling a line of
red knots between my ribs with straining fingers.
It's an act that should be funny
but it's hard when the only audience is the mirror and tough crowd is an understatement
cause no one wants to hear a half-written joke
and although the best part about rock bottom,
is definitely the view
I'm exhausted of living life without reading the first chapter -
without at least reading myself -
with a little reading comprehension.

I'd let the nearest stranger violently choke me to death
as I held them tenderly as Mary
with only a kind look on my face to defend myself
because I'd rather have faith that once I'd black out
that they'd let go.
If it all has to be worth something
you have to be, too.

and all he wanted to know is what the box meant

I don't think people understand
anxiety makes your life about survival
you don't care about what's on your
fucking dinner plate
when you're just trying to not think about
the guy in line behind you who's tapping his foot and clearing his throat
when every lightbulb feels like a stage light
and every gaze is a crowd
and you're pushed out onto stage
every time, croaking
no lines

The last time I saw my ex
I only glimpsed at him long enough to catch the white line of his smile
like seeing a dead, loved relative at the end of a hallway
and the soft curls of his hair radiating light
his words like white silk brushing against my lungs
making them coil tight like windswept bags against my thrumming ribs
be not afraid my ass

I hand him the box like I'm offering him my own bleeding hands
like he personally punctured these palms and I've only ever bled for him
and his hands move like the way kids ride bikes and like how trees in Italy must grow heavy with olives
and how the sun strokes the sea
as in, if I could watch for a long time,
sit and ache for a life so stunning and so close
that it makes even the dark silence bloom
and grow dewy with gratefulness –
- I would.

dew dollops on the petals of each iris of my eyes
collecting and growing heavy but never spilling

His voice is three rooms away
echoing through me
and I realize I outed myself the moment
I chose to stand way too close to him
every cell in my body reaching towards him
but my sunflower neck snapped

and all of the sudden I say, "I owe you one,"
lips moving mechanically, like I'm a puppeteer
halfway through the act, all rehearsed lines and blind vision
and he replies, "Owe me one?"
suggestively,

and the world narrows to a pinprick.

all I want to say is
when I saw your terrible handwriting earlier
I realized I had mastered crying on command
as long as I had a note from you on me

What I wanted to say is
every time I looked up at your bedroom window
when I was leaving your room

-behind the blinds
were you looking back?

If I had the writing degree I've always wanted
I would fold it in half
and write a love letter to you on it.

cleft palate

It takes some kinda altruism
some kinda purity,
a milk-colored divinity
I could never understand as the dirty barnyard,
shit-covered, floor –
to love
in that easy way that nature intended
like yeast rising and fruit ripening.

I get the first white strings of frothy bacteria and soap laden milk
I live off the mishap splashes of holy
like streaks of righteous lightning
sputtering and cutting into the brittle hay dryness
and the Earth of my heart giving a quiet hiss, a cry

slurping and sucking up dust filled droplets
like the neglected runt it is.

But what we lack to hold close in freely given, sweetly lined jewelry boxes
we scrap together with dew and gossamer
lined with moss, carefully tucked away, our mushroom secrets.

Is it a comfort food
if it's all you live on?

The male nurse held me
held my hands lovingly,
like carefully, tentatively handing back a stranger's wallet
as if the ceasefire, the letter from a home I can't go back to during my war
(I'm going to wonder what life is like from the udder all the time
but I worry that I've got a cleft palate)
and he'll never know that I only handle this memory
with nature's milled flock.

I could never understand,
to love someone in a way that is strained,
versus unfiltered
when love has always felt like
lurching to grab the microphone at a party too nice for someone like me and
desperately trying to make all the words fit
until my lover gently pries it from my fingers with an awkward laugh.
What do you think a worker bee would do
if the queen started giving them little hand-crafted flowers, made of honey?

All I'm saying is
just imagine how lovely
that woman must have been
for Mary to be named after her.