

men i loved  
or  
boys in america

1. eric

when he came up to the house i was  
sitting on the porch on an  
old mildewy couch we picked up  
off the curb of some fraternity house that drooped  
to the left from the weight of girls  
tears and violent american masculinity. he  
stood in the street perfectly  
framed by the spotlight (street light?) and his  
smile was genuine and joyous  
and purely adolescent. i  
loved him then and when  
he said *hey man we  
should like hang out sometime* i felt  
truly hopeful  
and happy for the first time  
since last winter and the ugly  
and ominous chill  
coming off lake michigan seemed to  
lift and i saw the future all the  
way to the "hey i miss you bud" text  
message that i  
read but was  
too tired to  
answer almost  
a decade later

2. adam

when we met he was wearing black vans, cool-guy jeans, a blank black tshirt, and his ray bans  
that were the same as dylan's n his face was full n his eyes were happy n his smile was natural n  
it was never sinister.

when he ran at me from across the room he was holding a never-once-sharpened pocket knife in  
one hand and a plastic cup of kamchatka vodka and strawberry nehi that was as warm and as wet

as that michigan summer night and his blood and my armpits and his eyes which looked wild but not like the lioness or the coyote but confused and afraid and desperate and wet and warm like a rabbit in a snare or himself as a child hiding in the closet listening to his father shout at his mother again and the crash of something expensive and fragile meeting the tile. i was laughing because i didnt know what else to do then and when i put my foot out to keep him away (because even a dull knife in the hands of a boy with those eyes can turn a dirty old wood floor red with warm blood and warm nehi) and when his face hit my foot and his face hit the floor noosha ran to him and cried and picked up his flip-flop and slapped my face and wailed *you killed him ethan hes dead* and she was right but not yet.

when i called his mother to tell her she had to come get her son he was in the hospital for the third time in as many weeks. after the overdose and the attempt and the second attempt and no rent in months and no sight of him in days i had to call and she sounded surprised. i didnt tell her about the notes on the wall or the blood stains or the closet full of bottles all empty all having once held numbness disguised as hope or the bathroom that hadnt been cleaned since he moved in or that the last time i saw him he had wandered into the kitchen with empty eyes and shrunken face and blood stained university of michigan sweatshirt with the sleeves held down tight in his fists to hide the deep wide scars that i once held against my face as i cried into them hoping the salt and the sorrow would somehow make him feel loved or at least fight infection. but he didnt remember that and he wont ever bc his skin was blue that night and his eyes were closed and his heartbeat was as hollow and far away as his joy was.

### 3. grant

when we were drunk, riding in the back of  
 a large black suburban driven  
 by a stranger from an app, i  
 reached my hand to the backseat and  
 asked him to hold it. he held it  
 for twenty miles. i love him  
 for that. the kind of love that am  
 erican men are never taught  
 when he talks about his mother  
 and how he'll never speak to her  
 again i want to wrap his skin  
 ny body in my long arms and  
 hold him against my fat chest and  
 never let him go. when he says  
 hes gonna move to norway i

feel the earth and my bowels shake.

my stomach and my chest have holes in them and im afraid theyll never close

when i drove to work before dawn on the 5 south in the fog with no music and no radio i walked into his living room and it was empty and it smelled dank like despondency and i walked to the bathroom and he was dead and naked in the tub and his skin was white and i noticed the gray patch in his hair for the first time and his beard looked even darker than it usually did and i cried in the darkness and the fog in my car all the way to work

laugh track

INT. BEDROOM - YEARS LATER

Grandpa is standing bent over holding himself up on the edge of the bathtub. Grandma is stooped over, one hand on her walker the other hand wiping his ass with wet wipes.

GRANDPA

I was mean.

GRANDMA

I need to check your front. You have poopoo on your bum, I have a feeling you have some poopoo on your penis and your nuts.

Grandpa begins to sob.

(LAUGH TRACK)

FADE OUT

## untitled (2)

while i was pissing  
i saw the flashing  
blue lights of the  
television behind me

i was playing basketball  
electronic basketball

i was a small forward with  
something to prove

and as i played there were  
sounds outside first  
the slamming of a gate  
then the shii-ii-iick of  
metal moving unreliably

ive had two bottles of wine  
and the first half of this third  
one is culturally adventurous  
and he shows me  
the tastes of the  
regurgitated wine  
as i gag.

and when i walk out for a cigarette i  
remember when i decided to write this:

i was pissing  
in my grandfather's  
library  
and i realized that  
i was laughing

loose translation no. 1

You're in the kitchen  
and i'm trying to pretend  
i don't exist

I was in the kitchen  
I tried to do it,  
I do not exist

## untitled (4)

When you turn over to  
pull her to your chest it  
causes each muscle to  
ache, each bone to groan.

The white flames  
burning her skin  
like the moth in  
the patio trap.

I went back there.

Thunder rolled that night. Beckoning the last  
breath of freedom in this world.

*Remember that time  
in Kansas City?*

Your skin,  
I can describe it:  
sweet, robust,  
hyperbolic. But I can't  
feel it anymore, I  
can't find that smell, nor  
the mole  
on your clavicle.

My nails grew quickly,  
as did my hair.