

I live entire relationships in the course of a week  
with the bartender, my co-worker, a father.  
One-sided, unrequited: all in my head.

It begins when I suck the meat from bread  
and soak the heel in olive oil,  
light to ignite a spark.

I feed the flames with your laugh,  
a sideways glance, stories of how  
you disappointed so many you loved.

Then, as if scripture,  
I feel my hand on your head  
like a phantom pain I feel  
the penis-shaped wound  
inside of me, a phantom  
limb.

If I were Lorena Bobbitt, I would have shoved John's  
severed dick inside me to hold like an Easter egg hidden  
from the cops.

I would let it ferment and rot until it falls  
like an unfertilized oocyte.

When our make-believe relationship ended, this is what I did for you:

I smoked on an absent bench  
I listened to music loud enough to bust hymens  
I did Xanax with my sister and could not stop sobbing  
I set alarms to remind me to sleep  
I remembered shards of dreams in a 5am vacant lot  
I smothered my face in pillows to remember what fresh air smelt like  
I thought of my mouth duct-taped to a glory hole

I did something bad  
that made me feel good

but only for a little while.

I didn't mean to think of you thirty times today,  
but when you found out

you swooned and attached  
like a spirit in search  
of an object to haunt  
you as desperate as I.

But what can *I* do  
when I find out  
I didn't want you  
after all—

humiliation is a small price to pay  
to feel wanted.

*John Keats obsessed with death had planned his gravestone  
well in advance, he asked that his name not be included,  
instead, he wanted the phrase "Here lies one whose name was writ in water."*

If life be a musical  
then I have lagged—in the scene  
where I alone sing  
out the bedroom window  
hopelessly devoted

If life be a window  
my face would—surely spill out  
as I think about horses  
firm warm bodies

If life be a park bench  
I would sit— on books to  
brood like fertilized eggs

If life be a yolk  
it be yellow— tinged with green.

suicide-lane *noun*

1. (informal) A center lane of a bidirectional road, used by traffic proceeding in both directions, for example for passing or turning.

i'm

in the suicide-lane, a refrain i have been here before coasting yellow lines, avoiding street signs.  
this asphalt holds poison, corroding rock, each crumbling block my hometown shame—

i'm           addicted           to           these           side           street           diversions  
perverse           procrastination           with           no           street           destination

red           lights           haunt           me           through           distorted           plastic  
frames           it's           shame           like           my           my           cheeks

the asphalt ruts leave cuts, i fall and bust in the suicide-lane, a refrain i've been here before  
it's the same as lying on tracks waiting for a train, the feeling moments before —

in the middle, i shiver, trying to figure  
which ditch looks best for a head to rest  
a swatch of grass to press my chest against  
i'm out, like a driver drunk searching for  
6am fame. without a doubt, i'm stuck  
in the suicide-lane.

you've been having trouble sleeping  
because —

you don't like to do it alone,  
but you have a computer  
and a phone.

you've been having trouble sleeping  
because —

you've outgrown the  
morning and the way  
it creeps in.

you've been having trouble sleeping  
because —

you like procrastinating  
too much.

you've been having trouble sleeping  
because —

you close your eyes  
and nothing happens.

you've been having trouble sleeping  
because you can't stop thinking

about repetitions.

all rides are the same  
 they spin-spin  
 and spin again until  
 my stomach begins  
 to churn

queasy, i sneer  
 longingly at peeking  
 carnies who observe  
 ascending skirts-a peek  
 of underwear

i'm not really here  
 i'm thinking  
 about the boy who smokes

in bed, the letter he wrote about  
 sartre and bar fights

i'm thinking about how  
 i want to force-feed you words  
 like puckered baby bottles stuffed  
 into mouths of sickly infant squirrels

i have to tell you

on serene november nights as this  
 i long for arms to hold amidst  
 popping funnel cakes frying school girls sigh  
 i am crying out- spinning out  
 of control, a ferris wheel on the fritz

rides designed to make me come alive but i'm flat-lining on the yoyo thinking about

all those letters i sent

how i'd like to call  
 you on the phone serenade me  
 i am a telemarketer or a friend from tallahassee

motion sickness i approach  
 the claw reluctantly  
 take my seat

children kick

listless lovers grasp hands  
 i cling to his few words my heart contracts

expands