

i want to die in september

let me go out in a month of possibility
where the trees vibrate with change
and the days are vast
and full of novelty

where migratory hordes
of children
and birds
and wayward adults
make their ways 'cross the plains
to hopes of new horizons

when the slow death of august
is over
and cool currents of soil-scented air
electroshock the world back to life
to witness its own forthcoming wintry re-death
(the world dies three times a year, i believe)
with clear eyes.

let my death day intermingle
with the birthdays of all the women in my family
let my passing be one minor note in the symphony of the month
and make all the joy that much sweeter through a little bit of sorrow

of course
now that all this has been said
now that i've made my little sales pitch to god

i'm sure
that i
will die
in august.

it should always be night in the desert

fragrant and purple and dark
the curves of the dunes
silhouetted by stars
the air cool
the sand warm

why must all good things be made
through pain
why's the sun got to boil the land?
the animals wait 'til sundown anyway
why can't we just skip 'til then

we could live in our home that we built on the sand
where the temperature's perfect
and the wind is alive
and the sun is a memory
a forgotten threat
just you
and i
and the dunes
and the stars
where the sky's always purple
and the sand's always warm
and nothing changes
and nothing burns
and nothing hurts.

in our desert night the sun never rises
but it gives us some warmth
from below the horizon.

of course desert sun never listens
and neither does weather or hurt.

so we sit by ourselves on the slightly-cold sand
watching dunes become orange and white,
imagining deep in the depths of our hearts
this sunrise reversing and letting us start

living our beautiful
permanent
night.

Sincerely,

i know that this part is lonely
and hard
i know it has to be.

i promise you i'm trying my best
and i'm not upset—
i know everything takes so much time.

i'd just like to know
for scheduling purposes, etc
when i will feel as loved as i wish i could be.

A little crystal
A tiny diamond
Is all I need

To make one beautiful thing
With the pressure in my body
To crush the coal in my stomach
That I ate
Until my tongue was black
And my throat was raw
To use this hurt
And this feeling
That I may burst
And turn it inwards
Until I vomit a treasure
And my bile sparkles

shall I make a pearl
Or a diamond
Or a ruby

What kind of factory am I?
What powers do I possess?

What will my gem look like
When it spills from my throat
hits the back of my teeth
And tumbles into the toilet water
(I assure you I have covered the hole at the bottom)

Will it be black
Or red
Or gold
Or will the coal simply eat through my stomach
And leave me here on the bathroom floor
An object of no beauty
with nothing beautiful inside

i suppose
I have nothing to do
But lean over the bowl
And clench my stomach
And every muscle I can control
And feel the pressure in me build
And think of gems and of beauty and
Coal and acid and bile intertwining
compressing until they cut glass
Hope that my thoughts reach
My stomach

And wait to see what comes.

Fivewalls

there is a town with a wall over top
(it's not a ceiling—i asked)
and four surrounding walls, each 'bout five miles long
all made of some sort of black glass

there's no doors in the walls, no windows, no holes
but the population grows inside
all those thousand's desire
in their five-walled home
is to make sure
there will not
ever
be light.

their houses are normal and pretty
they look just like you and i's
but after the town was sealed away
no light's ever reached that town's eyes.

once when i was a younger man
met a girl from Fivewalls in a bar
(her eyes were off-white,
her pupils odd-sized)
who said that she had been outcast--
I guess that she'd broken some law.

she said that she had been exiled for years
that it'd taken her months to adjust
to our cold ugly world
where the light tells, shouts all
and our eyes became all we could trust

she said that Fivewalls was near
she said it was sitting in the most massive field.
she said she knew a way in under the ground
she said that she'd bring me to see.

we left the bar, walked down the road
till street gave way to sky
while she told me childhood stories
of her youth untouched by light.

she made it sound perfectly wondrous
as field-grass started brushing our hips
to be young and alive in eternity's night
laughing, not seeing--still kids

i could tell that we were approaching
though Fivewalls' glass blends perfect with night
the girl bent down and reached into the grass
i could see that her eyes were shut, tight.

I looked to the sky and could just barely view
by tracing where stars were not
the shell of Fivewalls, the town of the dark
that mile high, seamless black cube.

no one could tell me why it was so tall
why the fifth wall was kissing the stars
how was this not in the history books
how could someplace like this be unmarred?

the scraping of metal cut quick through my thoughts
the girl had pulled up a hatch
with hardly a sound she slid into the ground
through the metal door hidden in grass.

i followed her quickly and closed it
the darkness was full and complete
but the girl whirled around, again, with no sound
and she quite deftly blindfolded me.

i tried to speak and she shushed me
no words were exchanged from that point.

she led me through some type of tunnel
but the walls weren't stone or brick
they were coated with leaves and they smelled like the trees
and the wind was so pleasantly thick.

finally we stepped into somewhere quite open
and she told me that we had arrived
i could feel the space yawning out from me
I could sense that this place was alive.

she told me we stood on the top of a hill
on the very edge of the town
and we couldn't move or make any noise
but she'd let me look around.

I asked her, "won't I just see darkness?"
She told me that wasn't her problem. She was delivering her end of the bargain. I stopped arguing.
i being young and foolish and brave
had a flashlight inside of my jacket
and when the blindfold came off
and i stood in Fivewalls

i took it out, and i flashed it.

From the breezy hill where we stood my beam of light cut the darkness in a way that felt physically painful to it, as if it was an eight-foot long head of hair or a sequoia--it had grown for so long untouched, compounding its own beauty, grown soft from several lifetimes of absolute safety. It wasn't prepared for

light. I think that for this reason, the tiny flashlight I had secreted in my pocket illuminated almost the entire five mile by five mile by one mile cube in shades of yellow and white that were so violent that I felt I had firebombed the entire town with my little light. I could hear the dark screaming as it vanished.

But I couldn't turn the flashlight off.

I couldn't not stare at what rose up in front of me.

Below, a beautiful little American small town, just like any other, just without any lights--

Above, a towering canopy of the most beautiful, lush, alien trees and plants I had ever seen, filling every crevice of the jet-black cube that housed them, writhing and rejoicing with life and color. Every inch of the cube was teeming with vivacity, rejoicing. In that brief moment where I could see everything I saw giant flowers beyond description, vines weaving in and out of each other to create even more intricate, gorgeous vines, and animal life that surely lived nowhere else on earth, living, playing, growing. I could feel the joy and the life coursing through me. Waterfalls ran down the sides of the cube and birds somehow flew in closed patterns that did not suggest in any way that they felt trapped. I could not comprehend that this much beauty existed in one place, and that no one ever saw any of it, not even the Fivewallers below. I couldn't comprehend that maybe all this beauty existed *because* no one could ever see it--only feel it.

Seconds after that, of course, everything set aflame, all at once. The flashlight was too much--the dark couldn't handle it. Nothing in that wonderful place could.

I looked to the base of the hill and I saw the people of Fivewalls, strong and powerful and very, very pale, with odd-shaped pupils and milky-white eyes, leaving their quaint little homes and charging at me up the hill, their efforts futile, their immolation begun. They collapsed in flames like all the rest.

I flicked off my flashlight eight seconds after I had turned it on. I could still see everything, perfectly. The fire illuminated everything for me now. I took one last glance at that most beautiful and perfect of places, that I had somehow completely destroyed with one small act of curiosity. I saw the girl who had brought me run away from me, down the hill, to the people who had exiled her--maybe her family--I don't know--and touch them. She let their flame run up her arms and consume her.

I turned and ran backwards the way I came.

I turned the flashlight back on.

I figured the damage was done--if I didn't have it on some Fivewaller would surely catch up and kill me.

The lush, verdant tunnel I had come through went up in flames as I ran, every plant wailing as it disappeared into dust.

I reached the hatch, climbed out into the grass, and closed it.

I laid there for a long, long time, weeping.

I looked up at that towering black cube, blotting out so many of the stars. It looked as if nothing had changed. I don't think anyone would ever know it had, except for me.

So I waited for days upon days upon days
looking at the black and towering glass
until i was sure that all Fivewalls was gone
and its staggering beauty was all in the past.

then i shut my eyes tight and i reached in the grass
and i pulled, back open, that hatch
and i slid underground without hardly a sound
and i walked myself all the way back

to that breezy, black hill on the edge of the town
the paradise that i had burned
and i set up a camp, without any lamp
to wait for the darkness, and plants,
and Fivewalls
to return.