

*Lessons on sleeping with poets*

Don't.

Don't make love to a poet.  
Do not caress her thighs with dandelion soft fingertips  
if you don't own a watering can.  
For the seeds you plant on her hip bones, through kisses,  
will lust for your honey-sweet watering.  
She will pluck flowers from the gardens that grow in your molars and plant them on her neck,  
leaving botanically influenced bite marks.  
Leave your gentle kisses at home in an envelope,  
high atop a counter,  
away from her muse-hungry hands.

Don't make love to a poet because  
she will kiss every door frame you walk through.  
Peel fingerprints off the doorknob and  
place them where the ghosts of your touch last danced.  
As your tongues tango,  
she will write the chord progression of their song.

But don't *fuck* a poet either.  
For she will hear a grand symphony in your growl at her to bend over.  
Don't fuck a poet because she will search for constellations in the freckles she can connect on your chest.  
She will moan your name into pillows made of angel wings and  
beg you to pull bible verses from her hair.

Do not push her up against a brick wall and  
claw at her body hiding under her shirt  
unless you're ready to experience  
her throaty howl to the man in the moon.  
Refrain from dragging your snake-like tongue across her raised collar bones  
until you've tamed your own, inner Medusa.

Do not fuck a poet because she will write about the threesome you two had with  
your personal, childhood trauma.  
She will become a scribe of nasty details like,  
how, shower sex is your favorite because you  
can't tell when you're crying.

Don't fuck a poet because she'll ask you to choke her  
and while it may restrict her airflow,  
it will not keep her hand from paper.  
She'll trap your blissful curses in her ink  
and tattoo them across her journals.

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She will bury half your body under a daisy meadow and  
the other will be stored in the mausoleum next door to the local gentlemen's club.

*Yellow.*

It's hard to write some days,  
with the beehive behind my sternum violently rattling.

my pen throws his ball-point head back, away from the paper.  
Writing poetry is a skill my anxiety has not yet mastered.

It is hard to put words together when you're struggling to find oxygen.  
When you swallow the paper bag and your square breaths cut the inside of your cheeks.  
I've learned that shaky hands cause accidents and that  
attempting to calm down without release is like trying to cut yourself with wet cardboard.

When I am anxious, I want to rip my chest apart.  
Let gold, gooey honey spill out.  
I want to tear off bee's wings and shove them into my eyes to use as contact lens.  
I want the relentless buzz to rattle my bones and wipe my brain of all but static electricity.  
I want to let it consume me.

I have become far too familiar with the feeling of my lungs folding themselves up like lawn chairs.  
Of my heart yanking on its muzzle and slamming into the back of my chest.  
Of the way rumble strips feel to the unsuspecting blind and  
sewing needles filling my throat with dream catchers.

*Sixth Grade Biology*

The one thing I retained from sixth grade is about geese.  
My biology teacher explaining the V Pattern of flight they take is permanently ingrained into my brain.

*It's a survival skill*

she said,

*they can save their energy and take turns being the leader.*

That year we learned about camouflage and poison  
and which snakes were safe to pick up in your backyard.

Geese seem to have instructions pattern tattooed to their wingtips,  
but it is all instinctual.  
For hundreds of years, geese have been born knowing how to stay safe.

Growing up, you are not taught a foolproof method of avoiding rape.  
You're told your thumbs can puncture eyes and that your voice is the loudest siren, but  
you are not given an escape route or born with a V pattern to save you.  
In a moment of panic you don't remember your hands can fight back.  
You forget the banshee trapped in your throat and how to tie your shoelaces into anything but a noose.

I don't remember his name but  
I still remember how his calloused hands felt as they brushed my cheek as he pushed my hair behind my ear.  
How it felt to have N's and O's clawing their way up a closing throat.  
How my limbs felt like wet laundry and how easily I became a rag doll.

It's been nine months since spider legs tugged at my jeans and I still dream of my chest collapsing.  
My ribs disintegrating into an hourglass.  
I dream of the sweat dripping into my eye and  
a gritty,  
*you're such a pretty girl*  
spat out with the scent of cigarettes and fry grease.

Desperation greets me when I jolt awake in a cold sweat.  
He guides my clumsy, half awake feet to a desk in the pitch black.  
He helps me block the stench with crushed opiates via a rolled up biology flash card.

You don't think you'll become a statistic until 1 in 3 isn't just a set of numbers.  
You don't think you're the only one who sees victim branded across your forehead.  
You don't think a white ceiling will ever be interesting.

But in that moment it was.  
And the only thing in my mind was flight patterns and the geese.

*Handfuls*

When I was younger,  
I used to collect fireflies.  
Tiny drops of sunlight drifting through the black blanket of night.  
Once they were in my cupped hands,  
I would slide them into clear mason jar kingdoms out on the back porch.  
I'd lay my head next to the jar  
and watch the bright yellow flickerbees blink kisses to me.  
I caught well over a million baby lightening bolts throughout my seemingly endless summers.

Now, there are seams tearing in white dresses  
and every postage stamp I see is torn in two.

I can't tell you when it happened,  
and I sure as hell can't tell you why,  
but sometimes vending machine lights flicker at the gas station by my house,  
and for a split second I swear I can see fireflies behind the glass.  
Maybe it's because I noticed one day my hands were leaving too many cracks to keep light in.  
Too many holes that cannot be filled.

Someone mailed me a pair of hands last week.  
They were packaged in a cardboard box.  
No paper.  
No bow.  
I haven't stopped shaking since I peeled the tape off the crease.  
Not because of the present,  
but because I couldn't remember the last time I had held them.  
But more importantly,  
when was the last time that they had caught a firefly?

*A Masterpiece in Progress*

When the question "How do you identify yourself?" is shot up into the class like a starting pistol,  
the class is off to the races.

The scratching of pens and pencils father together like a pack.

Did you know wolves howl at the moon to find each other?

Did you know I cry at night because I can no longer even find myself?

I am a deserted island full of faceless dolls,  
a museum with no artwork,  
I am self-baptized in a dirty bathtub,  
a link in a broken chain  
and thrown away pizza crust.

There's a guitar that sits in the corner of my bedroom and I have no idea how to play it.  
I spend more time staring at the curves than I do learning how to strum.

I wonder if you played me correctly if I would finally sound beautiful.

I know I talk a lot,  
it's only because I don't want to forget what I sound like.  
According to my doctor, I am medically overweight.  
I try to tell him those extra pounds come from the  
grenade clipped to my tongue.

I'm told poets have switchblade words,  
but lately my mouth has been so full of my own damn blood that I can barely speak.

A poet once told me,  
they used to get "rapper hands" when they performed  
and that it was completely normal.  
But the only wrapping I do is at Christmas.  
Boxing up fake smiles for everyone.  
A season of giving but lately all everyone does is take.  
Did you ever think twice before you swallowed me whole?

I have given away parts of myself I am still searching to get back.  
The small of my back was in the flash of a camera.  
My dignity and dependence had been camping out in the hum of a fluorescent light.  
Making love to the memories of when I saw myself as a good person has become habit.  
I am a nymphomaniac of defeat.

A poet once told me,  
to not make myself the monster in my poems  
and although that's hard,  
I have started to believe him.

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Because my suicide date was set for May 1st,  
but now the first thing I think of when May is said aloud is another reason to live.  
Because May has a special place in my heart for giving me  
a reason to live.

Two reasons to live.

A million reasons to live.

Enough reasons to live that god dammit

*Here I am.*

I am going to be me no matter what metaphor I mend to myself through poetry,  
so I better make it a good one.