

Human

One day I woke up
And I was just human,
Skin as thick as water,
Soft enough to swallow,
A riptide in my crescent smile,
Flowing between channels,
Shaping into whatever crevices
Would hold me.

One day I woke up
And I was just child,
Spending my time nailing
My baby teeth into
This frame, bracing
My bones for walls,
Building up until
You can't see me.

One day I woke up
And I was just woman
And life was just a field
And love was just a bee
And my allergy was just a coma
And honey was just healing
And the lesson was just:

The things that can kill you,
Create the most beautiful endings.

One day I woke up
And I was just survivor,
My body a disaster zone,
A river running down the street,
Shingles floating through the air,
A barkless tree, standing alone,
Drenched bones and sunset scars,
No place to call home.

One day I woke up
And I was just man,
A masterpiece coming undone,
A canvas coming clean,
Dripping back into the palette,
An easel resurrected, a paintbrush,
My fingertips, a portrait renamed:
An Accumulation of Everything I Fear.

One day I woke up
And I was just human.

One day I woke up
And I was just,

Enough.

Relief

When I was sent to Alabama, deployed on disaster relief,
I watched as a little girl rummaged through the throw up
Of a tornado, trying to find any one of her toys that still
Had a pulse.

I remember picking up bricks, mourning the loss of time
It took for someone to build something so strong,
That got destroyed when mother nature blew a kiss.

I looked up when the little girl screamed, "IT WORKS!"
And watched as she colored on her hand with a green marker.
"I'm going to keep it," she said.

Two weeks later I was on my way to Joplin, Missouri
After a F5 tornado robbed the city of souls and structure.
I didn't trust the sun for weeks.

One mile wide, five miles long of desolation,
Stray papers blowing like tumbleweeds
On abandoned roads leading to the hospital,
A direct hit, 159 souls lost to the sky
And not even a place for the injured to go.
It was the worst in history.

And I couldn't contemplate why anyone would
Want to live there when every year there was
A chance that some force would come and leave
You to pick up the pieces again.

Most people stayed, faithful to rebuilding
We helped them move the bow tied debris from their once
Beautiful yards as the bare trees bore witness to the breaking
Of their bountiful community.

The schools, the churches, the fields were full
Of people offering their time, their hands, and their hearts
To resuscitate the city

We called it “The Miracle of the Human Spirit”

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When marriage equality became law of the land,
I remember writing, “it feels like I’ve been knocking on
The door for so long and now I’m finally being let in,
Told to take off my shoes and make myself at home.”

So I did.

I decorated the blinding white walls with pictures of my love,
With pictures of brilliant color, and it looked so well put together.
I hung my rainbow flag next to the American one
So that they could hold hands and compare stripes,
Both proud in the spotlight.

That was less than three years ago.
Now I feel like America is breaking up with me
And I am being evicted from the safe haven that I built
With my own two hands, all because I touch the woman I love
With these hands,
All because I embrace people of color
With these hands,
All because I choose to hold and not hit
With these hands.
And America is slamming the door in my face.

It is like a robber broke into the window of my soul
In the middle of the night and stole all of my faith,
Stole my safety from the pedestal,
Ransacked my vault to take what I had left of my Grace,

And I watched them do it
Like the bare trees in the middle
Of the disaster zone.

I am as empty as a gutted house

But this country is still my home
And I finally understand now why
Those people stayed in Joplin
Why people stay where they are in danger
Because that is their home and sometimes
You can't feel it anywhere else,
So you have to fight through the force
That is breaking you down
And hold onto something steady
So you won't get blown around
And maybe when it passes you
Can look at rock bottom and say,
"Here's a great place to start."

And you gather your weathered pictures,
And rings that feel like razors
And friends that feel like saviors
And flags that have grown blisters

Then you plant your feet
And grow from there.

On the darkest of days, put your hand on your heart,
Feel the rhythm under the lifelines of your palm
And yell or whisper, "IT STILL WORKS!
I am going to keep it."

This relief effort will be a revolution.

And we will build a community of houses
So that everyone has a place to
Make themselves at home.

Petals (Pedals)

I painted petals on my pussy
And then you plucked them
One by one, reciting:
Does no mean no?
Does no mean yes?

No means my legs are not
A door you can let yourself
Come in.

No means I did not give you
Control over the steering
Wheel of my wrists.

No means do not go faster,
The impact will not be
Quick and painless.

You will leave scrap metal in my mind.

And when they ask me for my statement,
I will hang my head in your presence
So the guillotine of my guilt
Finds a reason to cut off my thoughts.

My tongue has become the parking lot,
Heavy with the taste of pavement

Do you know how much I longed for my voice
To sound like shattering glass?

I want to learn how to grow
Between the cracks in the asphalt,
How to bloom between the pedals
And the brakes.

You want to know how I'm doing?

I've been coping by
Picking flowers in my garden
And counting how many days
It takes for them to die.

You thought it was heroic to
Deflower the girl who
Just started to blossom,
Not knowing you were stealing
A bouquet from a gravesite.

Here lies the casualty of the crash
Here lies the stem of my innocence
uprooted from my own body.

They say you can
Replace the bumper,
Install a new windshield,
It can look brand new,
But it's still a damaged car.

It shows up in the history.

So I want you to know,
It took me a long time
To clean up the burnt rubber
All over my youth.

I want you to know,
I used the gasoline from
My wreckage to soak
The flower beds,
The bushes,
The trees,
Anything natural
You could exhaust

To prove there was still a spark in me
Prove there was still a fire in me
Prove that you were not the only thing
That could explode.

Queen Angelfish

I imagine you breaking hearts
Over the barbell in your tongue.
I imagine you hooking gazes
By the way you flick your eyes
And sink into the core of someone's chest.

Queen of Hearts?
Go Fish.

I imagine you breathing in water
And telling oxygen to go fuck itself,
Your pruney fingers were the only
Vision you've ever had
Of yourself getting older.

I imagine you out on the town,
In fishnet stockings,
Swimming in the summer swelter,
Catch and releasing
Your nights prey,
Fueling your hunger of youth.

I imagine you the fisherwoman and the fish:
How you hooked your own mouth
To show the sea how you survived.

I imagine you licking the salt
Out of your own wounds
And then taking five tequila shots
Saying, "hey, when life gives you wounds..."

When I met you,
I was lured by the blades
Of your teeth,
How they felt on my peach skin,
How I wanted nothing more
Than for you to tear me wide open.

You were the sharpest thing
I was ever brave enough to touch.
You were the sharpest thing
I ever held that close that didn't cut.

I never imagined you'd
Let the mosh pit around
Your heart die down
Into a slow dance.

I never imagined you
Down on one knee,
And the only O you're
Giving me is in the shape of a ring.

I never imagined you
Leaving the life of water,
The freedom of the ocean,
And rooting in with me.

Me, a newborn tree.
You, flowers,
Growing wild next to me.