

Love is a Habit

A boiling in the bones of my nose, I'm face down on too much mattress.

Every moment
since my wife



feels like 4 in the morning.
So hot with exhaustion
I can't sleep.

(This is my smell of sweat teeming the sheets,
limpid-making. But I am just one body.)

My hands seek familiar forms. My hands find harder shapes beneath them. My hands
force and fracture
wet again. This was my mother's advice.

hob•ble |'həbəl| verb

[intrans.] proceed haltingly in speech or action:

Debt and habit kept it hobbling along.

These curtains glow a different streetlight. My mind struggles to replace,
reorganize wrong silhouettes:
the hand-crank radio, my sister's slant-top desk, a small heart-shaped box full of hairpins
and fails.

In my mother's guest room
beside the garden
in Petaluma, small road signs
past the cows.
Morning comes finally.
Over the knit throw I took from our
house

my legs catch fire.

The white valley morning
with its muggy squares of hay
through drawn curtains,
light is just mute
burning if I agree
not to leave.

Mom, I'm sad.

Why do you want to be sad?

I don't want to be sad.

I want my wife to be in love with me.

Dannie is making me sad.

Is she holding a gun to your head?

Hey you, be sad! No.

It's a choice. Only you can make you happy.

Only you can make you sad. You're in charge.

I can't make myself happy.

I can't even make myself stop crying.

I'm depressed.

Hi Depressed,
I'm Nancy.
Help me water these plants.

hob•ble |hɒb'əl| verb

[trans.] 1. be or cause a problem for

She was often hobbled by uncertainty.

If it's not marriage, it is the only thing. (In the kitchen,
the disruption of a fruit bowl, we had always just used Tupperware.)
It's two thousand breakfasts.

2. To impede; hamper the progress of; be a hindrance or obstacle to

Love hobbled the disease.

Disease hobbled the habit.

Habit hobbled the home.

Home hobbled the desire.

Desire hobbled the love.

I am bow-ankled and unkind. Something is running in this house, a faint high-pitched
neigh in the walls, the rock and jostle of old pipes. I used to think a hobby-horse was a
hobbled-horse.

hob•ble |'hɒbl| verb

[trans.] (often be hobbled) tie or strap together (the legs of a horse or
other animal) to keep from straying.

In my dreams, we are hobbled like racehorses.

Tears for Dannie or Jello. Jello cause I hate it. This is easier in the grocery store
when over the loudspeakers,

hob•ble |'hɒbəl| noun

[in sing.] The rope or strap used to hobble them.

“(They Long to Be) Close to You” by The Carpenters.

Originally you called her, “The Poor Man’s Me”

Start drinking beer on Easter morning.

ORIGIN: Middle English *hobblen* “to turn, roll,”
of Low German origin c.1300;
akin to Middle Dutch *hobbelen* “to stammer”

I used to think about leaving her body’s space
and how she would fill it when I wasn’t there.
That scraping sound when the wall is who she wants.
So I move to my mother's house in Petaluma
where it’s hot and wide and yellow grass.

cognate with Flemish *hoppelen* “to rock, jump,”
German *hoppeln* “to jolt”

Callous furniture (in my mother’s
guest room, beside the garden).
Stained wicker. I hate this
bed, too big and firm for weeping.
I can't sleep. My tailbone's aggressive.
Window is painted shut.
Look mom, I'm a little girl again.
I was too sick to love.

related to *hob* “protuberance, uneven ground”

I couldn't fuck her.
This skin body.
I began searching emails.
Her's still in my hair, in my clothes,
I can't close my mouth, the last.
Her new machine,
she lived across the hall.

from *hub*, early 15th century alteration of *hubbe*
"a projection or shelf at the back or side of a fireplace,"
originally a colloquialism.

In our bed, surrounded by bowls of broth and my vomit
I reprimanded the kitchen for taking her away.
Her voice. Her her’s laughing and flatware skating. Slicing
tomatoes, pepperoncini, cucumbers, mixing
in left-over scrambled eggs.
In ways I miss the anger, because at least it kept me busy.
I won't finish a poem again.

A copy of Andrew Wyeth's Christina's World on the cover of Sherwood Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio.

"Sometimes sadness is necessary," my mom says, clutching my hand in Petaluma. "If you need to be sad, set a timer. Give yourself 15 minutes to be sad then say, okay, that's enough."

I no longer all of a sudden turn happy.

Her childhood blanket hanging on our once bedroom wall,
it was yellow when I first met her.
A Tupperware full of soap on the windowsill
she's redolent like that now.
French milled with ripples like a tin roof
she reaches over, pulling her hair back with one finger –
lavender and lemon verbena,
patina of ocean dew.

"To walk lamely," transitive sense of "tie the legs
(of an animal)" first recorded 1831, probably an alteration
of 16th century *hopple* "to entangle; to hamper."

Desire is either
the elevation or increment of pressure.

You can still desire non-desire
even that is a flaw.

This is About My Failed Marriage

An oven has reached the desired temperature. The heat shuts off. Flames backdraft. Nothing like sunset. The temperature hangs, bending over air in flux. The temperature falls, slow ridges, in the shape of a shark tooth.

An oven loses 25 degrees °F, then turns back on. Orange bulbs with blue bottoms; shoots at thumb width intervals. Pipes hiss the sound you make when you imitate the ocean.

An oven reaches the desired temperature. The flames press on. Plumes like eels swimming with the current; the temperature rises 25 degrees °F. Sometimes to the huff of flour burning, the heat shuts off.

This doesn't happen right away. An oven doesn't continuously monitor its own temperature. It takes notice every few minutes or seconds, depending on the manufacture.

On the Occasion of your Girlfriend Claiming you Treat her like a Cum-Bucket

There is a song about your neck.

There are colors at the bottom of your throat that come out when you talk about chess, or when you look up after looking down to avoid my eyes trying to find the colors in your throat.

(you make a wood-tinted sound, like a wind splitting itself at sharp angles)

Your hands are smaller than mine and make me feel like a big, strong man.

I was so used to being the little woman that I forgot what a hand on my thigh felt like beside a grocery list. (bumblebee humming, sun yellow with fringe)

My groceries took up half a basket and now I want to make every egg dish for you.

Scrambled:

garlic

dill

Poached:

sea salt

honey mustard

Fried:

Sriracha

Yukon potatoes

Quiche:

Could we make a filling without milk?

Soufflé:

Would you eat it even without cheese?

You were making her vegan focaccia from scratch and while I grilled croissants in a skillet for breakfast you danced to The Smiths and pushed sticky black fingers into white fleshy dough.

You work with grease

and no matter how hard you scrub, you say

I can't get clean.

So I eat the dirt of your fingers.

Weekend afternoons, we're alone
with yeast fermenting.

Silver bowls under red cloth,
the back deck is still wet in the sun.

Our mouths wide and waiting,
our mouths are hemmed in coal.

I thought love felt like family dinners in bed.

I thought love was like a mailbox – sometimes empty, sometimes full,
with varying good or bad news, but always there,

always with news,
even when it is no news.

I thought love felt like no news.

I find faults with your body and I don't resent them.

(this is a red birth mark over the carotid artery)

I reach with my hands but you want to hide them and keep them
from my white-knuckled fingers. (that wooden sound)

So I take off my shirt and I show you my scars, still gleaming
and dimpled like caterpillar skin,

(when they took an organ from my body, left a plastic plate in my chest)

and the tube coming out of my abdomen with its clicking clasp that leaves an ampersand
imprint on your back when we sleep naked. I hold you from behind because my stomach
aches from rejected eggs and I need the pressure of you against me.

Though your girlfriend is better at this since her body
fits into the nook of mine,
empty and pleated

and she really does have one of the best asses I have ever seen or held or held against
myself when I've felt sick. (this is bronze
and those sounds – very,
very close)

