



A Side:

Whisper Well

Every Cosmo girl knows
not to talk about her flaws
it's not sexy.
So I never point them out to you
like we're driving past cows on a road trip.
I sneak instead
to the old well out back
and whisper into the echo.

At first my secrets dropped gently
tears or rain or dew.
Now they crawl up
frogs through slime
distending my throat
with their rough, warted backs
'til its sore
like after a blow job, pearls
spit like teeth
a clicking regurgitation of the never-ending desire I hate I hate I hate I hate
please
taste this filthy water
and tell me that it's sweet.

The Most Romantic

Soup, hot, in a paper cup.

My man held an icepack to my cheek

and put me on the couch to rest

and cried out “my face” when I nudged him with my foot

so I wouldn’t stretch my stitches by yelling for myself.

Soup, hot, on Valentine’s.

The closest to Love I’ve ever been.

B Side:

Separation Histories

The best part of living in the same place for a long time is that all life's occurrences are plotted on a map, invisible antiquities made flesh in buildings and street signs and abandoned, secret places.

I'm driving with a box in the back. Tupperware, t-shirts, and your house key taped to an envelope. Past the old neighborhood that remembers my fractured family: dad and his forbidden papers, sister on my bed watching ancient movies and sneaking tokes of weed out the window.

Past an erstwhile friend's childhood home. We don't speak, but her house could tell of meteor showers in the driveway, and coltish, wet limbs clutching margarita glasses juicy and concave as scooped out cantaloupes. It remembers standing behind her as she poured the ashes, shaking shoulder cupped in my hand.

Driving these inexorable ley lines, I am an arrow, a bullet. I do not wish to escape this trajectory. I'll take your mother's ring and give it back to you. And I'll miss you, of course I will. Still, I feel freer.

The road stretches misty miles ahead. Wherever it leads, I'll think of you with fondness.

Hidden Track:

LOATHE

She's a map of ruination. Scars and scars in the hanging meat of her thighs which swing like wrinkled sheets of skin off a starving elephant. Cicatrix and pocks dot her slagheap real estate as do little zits, red, like a line of bedbug kisses. She's gouged with deep, wet grooves where she's been at herself with a safety pin, and scraped on her wrists—hatchwork over plum—where she's banged them, staccato, on the stucco pillar outside. All marks necessary—fuel and fire both—to the cleansing of something putrid, disgusting.

Sometimes she longs for a helper. She wants to be grappled to a filthy, abraiding carpet and cleaved into halves, used like the nasty thing she is. But then the helper might see. Her hairy asshole and pendulous tits that she thinks look nice sometimes—full and round with little nipples pink as baby rosebuds—but mostly disappoint her. Uglier people get married and breathe their foul toothless stink into each other's faces, and fart and shave their toes, put on their makeup while their better half takes a big, meaty shit and lets it plop audibly down into the toilet. Such domestic closeness repulses her. Her last boyfriend repulsed her too. His soft, girlish mammaries and pooching belly, his gormless smile, and “a-huck”ing laugh. Even his sweetness turned her stomach, leaving her by turns basking in his kindness and desperate to tear his rosey little worldview into pieces, revenge for a crime with indefinite charges. She wanted to love him, but couldn't feel it.

The map goes nowhere, always a dead end. All she can do is hold her nose and drop off the diving board. Even if she breaks her legs, at least she's in the water. Pretend she can unknow a truth. Pretend it's not a truth at all, just some deep, parental perversion that seared itself on fetal flesh before she had mind enough to know the difference. Maybe she's not so much worse than everyone else and stinking and striving and cumming and living is all alright because she's a human being in a human body and that's all there is. Pretend and dive in. What else can I do?