

# **Piecing Myself Back Together:**

A Humpty-Dumpty Narrative

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## New York Transplant

I was born of the sound rain doesn't make  
but masquerades,  
of fleeting glances  
across subway platforms  
for my voice is too weak  
to make thoughts collide with air  
in the sex of speech  
but the eye can't help but look.

I don't know how I got from trains 1 to 3 to E  
from smoking in high school  
parking lots to New York City  
or what about taking headache pills  
makes me wish for the headache back

but stop signs are the reds of Valentines  
if you let them be  
and flipping through old diaries  
is a requiem  
for relationships passed on.

Eleven years ago, in class, we tore up squishies,  
the earthworms we kept like pets,  
in the name of science  
and I'm still shedding tears over their  
shiny intestines exposed, embarrassed  
for their vulnerability.

I harden my insides with cigarettes  
so when these city streets break me  
and they finally get to cut me up,  
there will be no wet-looking pink, blue, grey sunsets  
for them to write poems about  
and the black that envelopes them  
will mask the wounds of the scalpels I swallow daily.  
The only thing they'll find  
is what I want them to: the love letters  
tucked away like children in the protection of my veins—  
to the rat I saw scampering down east 10<sup>th</sup> street,  
to the punk girl I met at the bodega who  
thought *I* was the one who's cool,  
to all the people leftovers that still live inside me,  
taking up space, not letting me leave.

### Procession of Late Night Confessions

Sometimes coffee spilled over all  
the pages, post-its of my thoughts—

soaked-through milky smell  
concealing tears felt—

is a ritual cleansing,  
like baptism, spring cleaning  
purging of sin.

Don't send a plague on this house  
rain-streaked windows

make this place more livable  
this house is not a home; I'm sorry.

We like to talk of christenings  
in lieu of baptisms in blood

*I am not a martyr, I know I am not a martyr.*

I know not who I am  
but I know 5 AM

and its cousins—hunger sans appetite,  
dry heaving over toilets, the silence

like scalpels, silence like UV rays  
burning my skin with the lights turned off;

silence—

you wouldn't believe me if I told you how  
5 AM is a scalding cup of chamomile

I pour down my throat every night  
and every time I'm still surprised  
when it burns.

## Love Kills

*For Nancy Spungen*

You cut up your arms with  
love bite-heroin injection cocktails

but if you ask me about these markings  
on my skin, I will bear my teeth.  
This is not self-harm like my mother  
tells me—it is survival.

Some people use the backs of their hands, veins—  
feet because they're easy to cover—  
as a sketchbook, the medium—dad's  
toolbox nails, razors left in the med cabinet—  
please

cut me open to prove  
there is blood in these veins  
instead of strings of copper, zirconium—  
I don't hide hi-tech electronic tendrils  
of synapses under my hair.

I can't tell you how to love your scars, Nancy—  
like ones Barbie doesn't have—  
but mine are my art history,  
and if this sharp linework and shadings,  
teacup, clover, fadings in the letters  
reminds you of addiction—I'd say,  
Hell yeah, these beauty marks—not scars—  
chart my path through self-deprecation, hatred,  
crises of identity I metaphorically injected  
into my veins every day for the past eight years—  
yet reveal, on close inspection,  
a faint floor plan back  
to self-love.

I gladly go under the needle,  
pour ink into my skin  
to be less human—  
not bionic but stronger  
than bones and teeth.

Nancy, close-read yourself, study  
the patchwork quilt you wrote  
on your own body—I don't talk smack.

What kind of love is this,  
if you don't come back.

## Coast to Coast

I could not tell you why  
I've never had the taste for Earl Grey tea  
or why I've been craving shrimp lately  
or why my little brother's hands  
tightening reflexively around my wrists  
makes me think  
of low-tide wanderings,  
hermit crab-chasings,  
lobster rolls with Cape Cod chips  
and sweater sleeves hanging limp past my fingertips

but home is bus windows looking out  
onto the calm roads of Cambridgeshire,  
friends who wander with you along shorelines  
past town limits 'til you couldn't know what would follow  
or if you would be swallowed up  
by seaside winds and unsaid hope-filled mementos  
of future meetings, hints of which wafted toward you  
from the ocean depths.

I cannot say I have much to be proud of lately,  
but last week I went to bed before 11 three nights consecutively,  
didn't miss my stop on any of the trains I took,  
and feasted on a love expressed in crêpes with jam  
in a seaside town in Suffolk.

**MD's *Nu descendant un escalier n° 2***

Cubist-Futurist Modernist classic  
can't take my eyes off  
that stroboscopic-, stop-  
motion photography  
those curves and lines  
browns and ochres. Can this simply be  
a dissection  
of movement, human like a machine?  
Faceless, emotionless  
someone, teach me  
how not to feel  
give me a new word  
for fucked-up hurting  
instead of "broken"  
there is a certain strength  
in getting out of bed.

Can't walk  
down a staircase right,  
watch these Iron Man legs  
and shapely thighs,  
curvaceous ass like 3-D disks—  
I trip over stairs that aren't there.  
I've been told to stay away from  
empty calories,  
feminist arguments,  
to keep my clothes on,  
I drink my coffee black.

Marcel Duchamp,  
where is a cause I can believe in?  
Do away with art, with it all—  
Marcel, give me something I can piss on.