

## **Playful**

Perseveration methodization ranging from implausible correlations and preposterous extrapolations to idealized altercations and beloved quotations

Obsessive fixations; midnight realizations and sunrise revelations implore short-lived motivations lacking the proper determination

My only vindication is merely justification and rationalization achieved in shameful falsification

My state of mind falls somewhere between the combination of enduring intoxication, the everlasting inebriation, and the horrific contamination; self-indulgent victimization

Writing supersedes articulation as my nervous mispronunciation and scandalous affiliation make for nauseating mortification

Generalization and dissemination dilute the concentration of the memories.

Simplification and demagnification discourage self-mutilation during times of desolation.

Regurgitation of said altercation with consolidation goes as so: teenage mystification, sadistic manipulation, stubborn insubordination, forceful domination, inadequate lubrication, painful stimulation, virginal fornication, imposed ejaculation, failed insemination, traumatizing violation

Both the culmination and the detonation of any and all desirable relation

Habitual exhalation fades to melodramatic hyperventilation fades to withheld oxygenation; coveted suffocation

Isolation is my only organization of self-preservation, momentary alleviation vital to mental conservation, make-believe desire for socialization, understanding of materialization, purification

The fictitious assimilation proves only a fleeting hallucination once actualization turns reality

Perseveration: a cycle of frustration immune to prospective validation; a fabricated destination

## Hands

I've had clammy hands as long as I can remember.  
Cold sweat would build up and flow out of my pores at the worst times.  
Dad told me it was bad circulation.  
My hands are always tacky and slick with a cold, uncomfortable sweat.  
Sometimes I can't move my hands very well.  
My fingers occasionally go numb.

I've had torn up, bloody fingers since I was young.  
I never stopped biting my nails.  
My teeth would tear skin from my scarred fingers like it was made of tissue paper, so delicate and easily broken.  
I bite and pull until there is nothing left, only raw flesh that was never meant to see the light of day.  
I glance at my fingers and see the way my mind feels, bloody, scarred, hopelessly attacked.  
I never did mind the pain as much as the appearance.

My Dad told me from the time I could hold a conversation that your hands represent you, that they were your only first impression.  
He said that hands give someone insight into the person you are and the person you want to be.  
They showed how much you took care of yourself and cared for your appearance.  
I looked down at my hands and saw things I didn't want to confront.

Handshakes were important, too, he said. They show your confidence.  
Apparently, sweaty palms weren't going to make people respect me.  
"Don't go to a job interview with dirty hands or unclean fingernails. They'll think you're unprofessional. Give a firm handshake, not too flimsy. You need to seem self-assured... But not too hard, either. You don't want to seem too eager or aggressive."  
Dad's words spun through my head like Saturday morning cartoon reruns  
And planted roots in my mind deeper than the trees Dad planted in our yard  
I would give him the middle finger; reveal the anger I've built up toward him over years of constant criticism  
But I don't think I could handle the disappointed look he would give when he saw the freshly torn skin.

So I hide my hands, right? Right, that's what I did. I hid the sweaty palms and gnawed nail beds beneath long sleeve t-shirts and balled up fists. I didn't show anybody.

But, people noticed. They asked why my hands were like that. Why I constantly looked like I had caught my fingers in the revolving blades of a blender before it had fully ended its rotations.  
I clenched my fists and changed the subject, embarrassed at myself  
Maybe Dad was right. My hands did represent me, my flaws.

Later I was ashamed to be embarrassed by such a meaningless and simple thing.  
If they matter so much, what do my hands show people about me?

My hands show the way I pick at myself. The damage I have created in my nail beds is nothing compared the holes I've dug in my mind. My fingers show a preview of the way I dissect myself, but only skin deep.

Every thought, every idea, every hope and dream... I've torn them all to bits. Never allowing my mind to be silly and free. I must always be realistic, never over-confident, only sometimes hopeful. I lie awake at night, destroying all positive thoughts one-by-one. I don't deserve to be that happy.

My fingers look a lot like I would imagine my head would. I never allow new skin to grow. I always tear it off before it can happen. Sometimes I tear it too short... that's when I bleed.

If people can't handle my torn up fingers on the outside, I wonder what they would say if they saw what's inside my head.

No one would know except for him and me. No one would know that our thumbs curve in at the base like the lines of a Barbie's waist, unattainable to every young girl. And no one would be interested in the fact that that the nail is flat and round with a big curve at the edge. No one would notice that the third crease down on our knuckles only goes halfway across the surface of our thumbs, starting on the side closest to our hands and ending right near the middle, while the other lines go all the way across. No one would see that our cuticle makes a half moon shape in perfect proportion with each other's, never changing in size. No one would care that my right thumb is a little fatter than my left, but so is his. No one would think anything of the fact that I care so much about such a small detail. But I am proud to have those thumbs.

My thumbs are identical to his with a few variations. Mine are smaller, not even half the size of his. His thumbs are fully double jointed while mine can just barely pop in and out, a nervous habit I developed around the age of 11. Mine are also swollen and red, peeling at the sides of the nail, while my Dad's are scarred only with age.

Dad tells me to fix my hands or hide them.

“Stop biting and picking and just let them heal. Work out more so you won't have such clammy hands.”

He tells me to change my hands, to change what people see of me.

But Dad was also the one that gave me Band-Aid's when I ripped off too much skin around my pointer finger. He rubbed my hands between his until they were warm and I could move them better. Dad removed the in-grown nails that I got every few months from biting my nails too short. He doesn't scold me about it too much anymore. Dad showed me our thumbs. I don't remember when. He doesn't bring it up much anymore. He seemed proud of it when I was younger, proud that I had a part of him so obviously represented in me.

A few months ago, Dad told me he still bites his nails sometimes

I don't want to hide my hands.

Abandoned lab, color of midnight with the twinkle of every star in the sky, combined,  
multiplied, shining, blinding, in just one blazing, green eye  
Fur the texture of freshly sterilized hotel bed sheets, the kind trying too hard to smell like home  
Puppy-dog eyes might minimize the danger in such eyes,  
Eyes that held the power to cure disease and hypnotize  
Paws burned on scalding pavement a time too many  
Hidden wounds decorated his once-whole soul

How ironic that a stray would be the one to teach me that even scars could bite back  
Dogs with a past like his hide terror, hide damage beneath their gaze  
But him, that goddamned stray had this unforgiving stare that was stone-cold and red-hot all at  
once  
We touched & stroked & sniffed & smiled until no distance remained  
I felt his heartbeat, inhaled his dog breath, and simply basked in the gentle glow of him

The first time he bit me, my flesh seemed to glow angry-red, even in my despondent darkness  
The second time he bit me happened before I even had time to sterilize the first wound  
His teeth dug deeper, much deeper than the first time  
By the fifth bite, the wound was weeping more than I  
Once whole flesh, now turned infection, tainted by germs and a fatal one-way affection  
I noticed a warzone of fleas setting up camp in the hills and hollows of my freshly mauled flesh  
Looking down at my contaminated wounds, I knew time was up  
He shifted; first distressed, then distraught, then disdained, and finally done  
I watched as my stray woefully limped away to find another victim  
How pitiful that I had to be the one to say it hurt to be bitten

We are revenge, incarnate  
Destined to walk, to remember, to listen, to be  
We are revenge incarnate

We march, hands intertwined with those of strangers along with brothers  
Heads held high, along with fists, along with flags  
Chanting, stamping, singing, stomping  
Footprints lain upon dirt soiled by the most inexplicable acts of human cruelty  
Lungs saturated with a stench too sickening, too repulsive, too nauseating to bear  
Shoulders sagging under the weight of a burden called blessing

My mind wanders to a different time, one easily mistaken for a different world  
The shaking in my legs intensifies, spreading to my hands, as I think of those who walked these  
same steps in an inconceivable life  
Looking around, the implausible existence of us seems too astonishing to comprehend  
Elderly hands clenching youth, holding onto vitality

The air sits heavy in our chests as we take in every breath  
Teenagers should never know how it feels to inhale death

I march, listening to words spoken in foreign tongues but all progressing in the same direction of  
forward  
Dust floats into my chest and the clouds feel right  
Together, we stride, linked by arms & heritage & tragedy & history  
We sing songs in our peoples' language with an identical strain of mourning and celebration  
coursing through our proudly-pumping veins  
Flags of every color and country wave in support, in remembrance, in grieving, in appreciation  
Tears fall from eyes shut tight as the names of fallen children ring in and out of our ears  
Our footsteps stain dirt proudly, declaring retribution; we are still here.

-Dancing in Auschwitz

## Poem for Graph Paper

Paper curling in the heat of the beating sun  
Water drops staining concrete, inconsistency  
Hangnail splitting from finger, unacceptable  
Shirts out of order in the forgotten dresser  
Crooked windowpane adorns, immoral variation  
Carpet discoloration turns beige cloudy gray

Rip out the entire page, imperfections spoil  
Dump the frosty water, darkness standardized  
Tear skin from skin; regulate all divergence  
Color code the wardrobe; contentment at once  
Spend money on repairs; annihilate deviation  
Use your dirt devil to cleanse satanic filth

Hyperventilate at a consistent pace; breathe  
Count cable knit rows closely thrice; & stop