

## Using This Booklet

“This booklet does *not* offer a plan for recovery from alcoholism” (*Living Sober*)

There is no chronology in addiction.

It is always where it is. Love too  
can be like that; young love, especially.

This booklet is not a plan, it is more  
like a body with bruises; the poems  
connect the contusions in an attempt  
to remember what was erased by force.

This booklet is full of accidents  
with pages like carrier pigeons -  
in hopes to reach out to the dead,  
to coerce the grave to grow roots.

## Review of Fears

“Can you imagine drinking a bourbon and soda right after a chocolate malted?” (*Living Sober*)

I stomp the ground and toss a cocky smile to the dirt.  
I have your “Review of Fears” before me, my darling,  
and what I suspected while you were still able to stand  
in front of strangers, to introduce yourself to crackheads  
and coffee-slurping deadbeats, is in pen before me.

I breath, my darling, I breath and shit, and go to work,  
and ride roller-coasters and fuck whomever I want.  
I woke today and went where I wanted and rode a bike  
to get there. This evening I’ll cook chicken marsala  
and wash it down with wine. But now I eat a delicacy.

I fill my stomach with the supple stew of your underbelly.  
This “Review of Fears” is confirmation - a check paid -  
of our current difference in appetite. Your fears  
is dulce de leche served with espresso. A rind of lemon  
twisted on a porcelain plate. A young waiter who flirts.

Let me tell you an ugly truth, my dear. The impact of someone’s  
death is measured by their accumulations in life. When all  
you did feels like the wind that follows a fist missing its target  
and all you owned can fit inside the glove compartment of a Plymouth  
Neon, there is not much reason those who can still eat to mourn.

For years, I imagined what it would have been like  
to find you: keeled over your keyboard in a halfway home,  
undisturbed for hours but for the tightening hand  
of the grim reaper. You can’t fight images. God, I know  
that. I know the taste of liquor. I know how the photo fades.

You were infantilized by the bottle you clutched, afraid  
of “being alone;” “ridicule;” and “death;” afraid of situations  
you would never let occur: “Stroke” and “Alzheimer’s.”  
You took away any chance of challenge and for the reason,  
you wrote, “conscious but debilitated.” I don’t want to understand.

## Watching Out

“... resentment is a luxury that, as alcoholics, we cannot afford.” (*Living Sober*)

You came in a dream, weightless, an exhalation  
and aged by the pulls of planetary travel.  
You looked so man-like: not sallow sick with a bowl hair-cut  
but blue-eyed and full-faced. You said you died twice.  
The first time your family waited too long to bury you.  
The second time Sanitation shoveled cement on top of the casket door.  
“Are you sure? Are you sure you’re really dead?”  
I was asking myself like I’ve asked you during solitary walks,  
‘When you said “us”, did you mean it was me or you  
who was Morrison, when under threat of suicide,  
demanded to be love?’

There’s a subcutaneous black-hole near my chest.  
The horizon-line sucks all surrounding debris  
and presses it into a tack, tip-heavy enough to keep me  
crying eight years into the past. I ask where you have been.  
“I tried to visit you but couldn’t get close.” And I saw it -  
an atmospheric sphere I’ve never noticed before,  
an ozone of sulfite I’ve drawn around our romance.

## Don't Go Feeling Too Good

"Be especially cautious ... of feeling extraordinarily good" (*Living Sober*)

Fuck you – feel good. I can feel good. I can pull my legs over my head  
recite Shakespeare and drive to goddamn Kentucky. Don't tell me  
'Watch out for good feelings'. I've accumulated trunk-full of bed sheets  
stained sweat-brown long down the center. I'll take them  
and turn them into a tent, where I'll wash my feet and cure schizophrenia.  
Feel good? I'll feel good. I drive like Cassidy and smoke intellectually.  
It isn't dangerous. I don't even want a goddamned drink.  
But I will have one. Later. Not now. I want to discuss the sound  
of a tree falling in the woods by analogy. Does it make a sound?  
Does a dying baby make a sound if they're no parents?  
Fuck yeah! And babies scream loud and I'm sure, like a tree,  
The baby can hear itself. I don't even want a drink!  
On first dates I'd sip a martini glass, do this skit, proclaim  
real class is gesturing with the glass and not letting a drop drip.  
That's the trick, not the not spilling but making it like  
I'd just came up with the idea. I do feel good, man. I'm a clever bitch.  
And I don't even want a drink! Not now anyway. I mean I can't even  
not with all those trees screaming like newborns as they fall.

## Steering Clear of Emotional Entanglement

“Rather, our drinking lives left our emotional selves pinched, scraped, bent, bruised, if not pretty firmly warped” (*Living Sober*)

You probably want to hear that after your death,  
I stopped fucking your best friend.  
Perhaps I loved him, I don't know,  
the way a woman loves brushing her hair  
until enough of it has fallen out  
to make a labyrinth on the bedsheet.

That day, he and I purchased a 12 pack of Mexican beer  
and went to a small house he was renting.  
The sun lounged as if on a hammock.  
He cooked for me. A first. Barbequed hamburgers,  
salt and pepper.  
We ate the patties on sesame buns  
with ketchup.  
It was all so simple.  
I know what you're thinking, and it's true.  
If the cameraman took a step back  
the audience would see how little  
he actually cared.  
But after the food, we went inside  
and sat on cheap, wobbly chairs  
in his linoleum kitchen  
and I picked up the local crossword  
and for 20 minutes we were a team.  
That first summer,  
when all agency was taken from you  
and my subconscious no longer clutched  
a blurry image of our children,  
I was able to enjoy  
his company  
thoroughly.

I know the dead can enter  
any room they please (the inability  
to ask comes with privilege),  
but I don't think you masochist enough  
to have stalked his narrow bedroom,  
and so didn't hear his answer to why he didn't  
say good-bye to you. His excuse was so flimsy  
a platitude could have shone through.  
But maybe you were in the living room when I crossed it,

my throat in my hands like I was trapping  
a small animal capable of great damage,  
and alarmed or merely amused, followed.  
I think you watched  
as I washed and rewashed my face and neck  
in the bathroom sink.  
You whispered, "Go,"  
your face over my shoulder -  
bare except for a bra strap.  
The hand towel fell from my fingers,  
which I thought were clumsy with grief.