

## Listening to Folk Punk in Bed

I just know the gutters are overflowing, and I want to go for a walk, but I've been laying here so long, roots have grown in my back. Moving hurts.

So, I put some folk punk on my speakers. They sing about the sunsets in Arizona. I wish I could see them. They must be beautiful.

But the rough wood has tangled itself around my heart, digging deeper, only nourished by the storm outside. I look to that one small window, darkened and cloudy,

I think maybe that's all there is now. And even though I'm trapped in these twigs, splintering in all directions, I'm safe, aren't I?

The sloppy rhythm of banjos and drums beat in tandem with my breaths, they scream of dying young, and holy shit, I know the feeling.

But the darkness—it's not an intention of the rain, just an effect, like a bath. It doesn't bring the dirty, it washes it clean.

And through those static speakers, they got me thinking—maybe I'm the rain. So, I kick, and scratch, and pull, and heave,

gripping these sheets in my fists,  
Your heart is a muscle the size of your fist, and my heart releases. The roots slide out my back.

## My Brother Walter

It wasn't his fault. The ice  
cold liquid sank ever so slow,  
and dinner was ruined.  
Mama always said nothing was worth  
doing if Papa was mad, his eyes  
the size of the pumpkins  
I cut to shreds one quiet October night,  
and Walter took the blame.  
Earlier in the Spring, Walter met some pretty  
guy and he came to me, smile  
as long as the walk up the stairs to  
Papa's room—he was sure it was love.  
Walter tip-toed around, and told me  
not to tell, but just like when we were  
kids sneaking one more chocolate chip  
cookie at midnight, I always woke  
Mama. And Mama cried.  
Now, it was Summer, and I  
remembered the time Papa caught me  
kissing Eddie Thompson under the  
school bleachers when Walter's Guy  
begged to come to dinner.  
And we sat at that table,  
still as the one family photo that  
hung in the hallway. Walter's guy  
spoke a little too soft, and Walter  
looked down a little too long,  
and Papa was a little too quiet before  
he chucked his glass of Budweiser  
straight at Walter's head and his guy  
cried a little too much when the ice  
cold liquid soaked Walter's shirt, and  
the blood dripped down his cheek.  
Papa knew there wouldn't be a faggot  
living under his roof.

## Perpetually Stuck in Traffic

Have you ever noticed how Texas  
is really just a series of highways spiderwebbing  
together in an abstract pattern,  
sprawling across the entire state,  
constantly looping round in arbitrary routes  
that always seems to land you stuck between two  
hulking F150's--one red, one blue, both with  
mud on their tires and sporting some sort  
of confederate flag?

I'm starting to think that approximately  
90% of all 'living' that takes place in Texas,  
happens in traffic.

They (whoever that is) say there's this  
direct correlation between quality  
of life, and commute time to work,  
but that's doesn't seem to matter when I have  
a bachelor's degree to finish, and parents to  
make proud, and this weird desire to actually  
afford the place I sleep—

and if this goddamned Honda Civic cuts  
me off one more time, I swear to god  
my foot will become a brick and I will  
plow through these cars until every one of us  
won't have to worry about schedules anymore—

and sometimes, on top the highest overpass—  
the one that connects George Bush Tollway to I35—  
I put aside my fear of heights for just a moment,  
and I think how effortless it would be  
to rush my car over the side.

I remember those they's.  
Maybe my life would be better if I took their advice.  
But I don't think I'm quite so simple.  
And I'm still stuck.

## Push Misery

Incredible—the  
Anticipation wetting my  
Mouth, reaching forward I'm  
Anxious for a taste of this  
Persisting delusion others make seem  
Amazing.  
This ability to not  
Hover seamlessly above the crowd,  
Effectively separating yourself from  
The mass of humans that terrify and  
Ignite within you this  
Crippling mess of  
Passivity and regret, so you become  
Invisible to the rest, so they needn't  
Engage in petty  
Conversations—to them  
Effortless—but to you,  
Of course, the sheer definition of  
Fever dream that leaves you  
Groping for the door, and  
Any day now you might  
Reverse this damaging habit and get  
Back to the cherry-cheeked girl  
Asking for friendship through  
Gas station hugs,  
Efficiently hiding the  
Lurking demon behind her mask of  
Eccentric love,  
Teasing the beast for one more  
Meaningful moment before the  
Eventuality that comes as a  
Revolting sack of loneliness that  
Eats her up inside. she's  
Shaking and praying  
That she'll grow out of this.

## Don't Worry About Me

i'll feed myself this gruel  
from the soggy underbelly of my

anxieties—

i can take care of myself—  
i'll soak for hours in this  
dirty water, tainted with despair.  
let it bleed right out,  
let it soak back in—

this vicious cycle.

i can be responsible.  
i roll this pile out of bed,  
i brush my hair, i comb my teeth,  
i tie my shoes, i do my work,  
just don't—

don't ask me how i am.

i don't know much about  
purpose or fulfillment—  
but i'm alive. oh yeah, there's a pulse,

alright.