

## how to differentiate star clusters from orgasms

Last night I asked my lover to punch me in the face.  
Don't ask me why.  
I guess I've always thought bruises are pretty  
after all purple is my favorite color.  
I've forgotten how to want sweet caresses  
and most nights his hands are gentle lullabies  
but I wanted to feel thrashing metal.

He watched me undress quickly at first,  
before remembering all better things  
go a little bit slower.  
Asked me to get on my knees,  
and I thought if needed, how I would tell the nurse  
in the emergency room  
that I was an excuse, too clumsy to fly.

Made me ask once, twice,  
until I convinced him it was like boxing  
consensual violence.  
He told me exactly how he was going to hit me,  
the velocity physics of it all.  
Taught me something  
about scientific method  
while our bodies learned space,  
velocity, time travel, how the stars form  
and different ways he can make me see them.  
I told him science can not explain  
how our bodies turn screaming  
into love songs, makes punching  
feel like butterfly kisses

So I taught him something  
about poetry.

I have written feminist lines  
about shooting the man who raped  
my teenage years in the head  
so I can not explain  
the way I felt when he made me cum  
after fisting  
my face  
then tenderly picking me off the ground  
carrying my slight body up wooden stairs.  
He ran me a bath, shampooed my hair,  
but he didn't have any conditioner  
so it took him a while to brush  
through my curls

as I fell asleep,  
letting him take care  
of all my tangles.

This morning I tried to convince myself I am still supernova.  
That asking for suffering  
is thirsting  
to know how much of my power  
I can take all the way back  
before I break  
down.

I know science might be able to explain orgasms,  
but scientists come up with the worst names  
for things like that.  
Take the big bang  
for example.  
Cosmic radiation, universe spinning  
I know I don't know anything about cosmos.  
I got a D in Astronomy, but an A in poetry.  
So I know that 'The Big Bang Theory'  
does not capture galaxy creation  
constellations form like words carved  
down craving back on nights where our spines  
become empty cages, not protected from cold iron.  
I've started wondering  
when I'll deserve to be warm again.  
Hell hasn't frozen over yet,  
but maybe hell isn't about being on fire,  
it's always being a little colder  
than you'd like.

Maybe I'm a sinner.  
Maybe I'm Michelangelo painting dicks on the Sistine Chapel,  
when I was supposed to be Soli Deo Glory-ing that ceiling.  
After my lover painted me with bruises  
it made me want to paint the heavens instead  
of old religious patriarchs. Cover them  
with brush strokes royal blue and gold.  
Maybe my problem is that I've written too many poems  
about my sex life  
and not enough about stars  
or God  
for example.

## **I'm not religious but I wonder if**

You are there when light hits long pine trees  
just right speeding down I-45, driving through  
tornado devoured forests tunneling Mississippi  
in the backseat of parents who raised me drunk on You.

It will be a while before I appreciate that kind of tipsy.  
You turned water into wine, but I prefer vodka instead.  
My dad was a pastor, so I know that this is not sound theology  
but I used to believe You lived on window-side clouds above my head.

We're driving and there's a pond in between trees. I can't help  
but think I could be baptized in it if I could just ask to stop the car.  
I hear You're a carpenter, but if I never had foundation how can I be rebuilt.  
You see, my body's an abandoned broke down shed in a sinner's yard.

You performer of miracles, You once fed the masses with just one fish.  
But damn it, God, I'm a vegetarian now and I've been hungry for awhile.

## When I Wanted to Drink the Paint

A. June, 2010

The first night he hit me was after a lost soccer game.

I was fifteen.

We went to be alone,

with a few shots of under-21 vodka.

The morning after,

I made him cinnamon chip pancakes.

Never told, never wanted

to get in trouble

for underage drinking. Lied

to my parents the next day.

Told them I stayed the night

at a friend's.

Never thought teachers would believe me,

All Star Athlete, travel player.

Nobody wants to think blonde boys

are the ones who beat their girlfriends.

I wasn't his girlfriend.

B. Today

I drink to forget legally now,

and I don't remember

how I got here.

In a bathtub, full of cold water,

and no soap.

I don't think I'm ever going to be clean.

Not this way.

Maybe the ibuprofen didn't thin

my blood stream enough,

because I'm still —

And I don't think I should be. Tomorrow,

I'll pretend

like tonight didn't happen.

A. August, 2010

I pretended the first night never happened.  
We took art classes together,  
he taught me how to shoot  
a three pointer.  
Couldn't learn how to shoot  
in video games though.  
Never knew how to ask him  
to stop playing Far Cry. Cringed  
every time he laughed at a sex worker  
being beaten and bruised. Started wondering  
if I was ever any different in his eyes.  
It started happening every night.  
At least I was finally his girlfriend,  
but he never belonged to me like that.

B. Today

I want to know what is inside this body  
I don't own.  
Never learned, never took Biology.  
How do my lungs keep me breathing  
and how the hell can I rip them out?  
And right now?  
A night where  
I wasn't supposed to make it,  
I'm wishing I could be Van Gogh.  
I want to cut off my ear,  
forget you ever whispered  
sweet nothings in it.  
It's been six years but I still  
feel you boxing it.

A. December, 2010

His eyes were ocean blue beautiful boy  
but mine were black holes.  
I knew better than to look  
straight at the ocean.  
Knew I would get lost  
and if he convinced me to stay,  
the current would pull me too far in.  
Maybe, if he ever cared to look  
at my iced eyes first he would have frozen.  
Maybe, he would have gotten sucked  
in and crushed instead.

B. Tonight,  
I am her  
she is me.  
We are high, and baking cupcakes.  
We are together, and we are soft.  
I can't stop telling a story  
about how Van Gogh  
drank yellow paint,  
thought it would make him happy.  
Yellow is happiness.  
My favorite color was purple  
until tonight. Now  
I want to wear only yellow.  
I want to become a sunflower.  
Never stop reaching towards light,  
never forget tonight happened.

A. February 2011

I was never any good at art  
in high school.  
Couldn't really see colors.  
other than black, blue, red  
Never learned that Van Gogh  
didn't actually drink yellow paint.  
Didn't learn that it was made of lead.  
Didn't realize it would kill me.  
Didn't think I wanted it to kill me.  
Don't know how he never killed me.  
I swore it wasn't fair that I never died.

B. Tonight,  
Drinking only poisons,  
Forgetting doesn't heal.  
color can't correlate bliss .  
I won't swallow pain killers with paint.  
I'll try painting the body all in gold instead.  
Maybe let her lay on me  
wet sunshine on her canvas  
spreads to my own—  
until the night passes,  
The window is open, morning is here.  
Sunlight falls on sunlight.

## an analysis of our relationship under the influence of alcohol

i am a bottle of muscadine wine full of pressure  
you are a corkscrew  
that opens only costco cheap champagne  
let's use a hammer instead  
your hand cut not quite on accident  
by my sharp mouth.  
you drink me anyway.  
my blood tastes  
sweet, and like purple lipstick  
i called you the devil  
i named you samael in my phone.  
you laugh as you tempt me  
to take another deep swig  
of cinnamon churros smirnoff  
in between the shadow trees at laura bradley park.  
i tell you i'm fine  
that we can keep drinking.  
the lie upchucks all over your  
purple chucks.  
it'll take you four washes to rid the smell.  
we both know you can't open champagne with a corkscrew.  
it is five o'clock and i am alone  
because i am the sunlight.  
"how long have you been lonely?"  
i am the cathedral of friendlessness.  
you a jackass reading james joyce  
pretending to understand ulysses.  
i a genius reading romances,  
too deep for you.  
i still followed you from peoria, illinois  
all the way to neptune,  
i believe you could keep me warm  
in its -200 celsius temps  
"dear" can only take you so far  
she will let you come back to her room  
curl around her in bed.  
but you can't put your hand in her chest.  
my chapped words lick in your ears  
even the walls will laugh at my fascination with your cozy smile  
by the way, you can also open a bottle with a string, you dick.  
you pour me a crisp red glass  
i swirl it and it tastes  
cheap. but also like blackberry blood.  
it's a fact you ignore me because you can't stay away.

## **I am tired of aesthetic attempts**

Disordered thinking  
jumping down disconnected  
discourse  
paragraphs non –  
linear thinking  
non –  
linear breathing.

God is cracking clocks for me again.

My grandmother has a grandfather clock  
it's been in her living room chiming  
at exactly the wrong time  
for too many years.  
I worry all houses look the same,  
how do people know where they live?  
How does the post deliver letters  
without losing the mail?

I think I love  
the fragmented lines  
making half poems  
out of half thoughts.

I have advice.  
Take some time.  
Turn poetry into a religion.  
Write the Lord's prayer into stanzas  
grab bread and break His body  
give it to the birds,  
for He cares even about them.  
Grab some dandelions  
to make a wish.  
Wish for thinking logically  
to come more naturally.  
I never listen.

I never have enough air in my lungs  
to blow off all the dandelion fluff,  
throw it in a puddle instead  
where I'll sink  
on days I want my body  
to be a land mine  
just so I can explode,  
and maybe  
bring somebody down with me.



I know that thought is ungodly.

A specialist tells me  
at least five wires  
are disconnected in my brain.  
I tell her that's too many,  
let's go down to two.  
This isn't a negotiation.

I want to add  
that my disorganized clutter  
of research papers and poetry drafts  
stuffed in my backpack is a metaphor  
for my life.  
But I think I've used that line before.  
I know I've written this poem before  
but it takes me a while to drive  
back home sometimes  
on nights where using a GPS feels like failure.  
Nights where driving  
is all my manic mind musters  
up but I know if I keep going  
I'll eventually run out of speed.

We all fall  
asleep eventually.  
I'm finally reading my favorite theorists again  
and I'm romanticizing running  
barefoot on pavement to the beat of slam.  
It will come but it won't come  
easy anymore.  
So I'm looking for lines in the cracks  
on the sidewalk.  
I'm finding concrete rhetoric  
on the bricks of an alley way wall.  
I am learning how to stay  
in an attempt to finally find  
something beautiful again.  
I'm writing poems on my iPhone  
while I run to class  
getting aggressively baptized by the rain.  
I'm making up for what has been lost.  
Time. That is.