

**-- an alien asks to become human, i have conditions**

Understand.  
Understand this,  
this life -  
this long-hearted sorrow  
this melancholy greeting -  
understand this life we are given to live.

Understand waking  
at the bottom of the Thames to find  
a breath  
fills your lungs with water.

Understand dull, grey  
pulp  
slipping through the crevices  
of the basement floor.

Understand screaming.

Understand bracing  
your legs against the hot Alabama pavement and reaching  
your hands to heaven  
only to be asked to hold up the sky.

Understand moving,  
stretching,  
cracking  
your back, in half,  
against the bleachers  
at a high school football game.

Understand it's the things that break that stay -  
fast and loose and empty  
and hidden -  
collecting dust and damage  
from under the bed,  
from the shadow behind the record player.

I played an Al Green album once.  
Someone clapped.  
I haven't played it since.

**-- pride and penance vol. 1**

"Wait for me, wait for me, wait for me"

I whisper weakly, waifish-ly,  
lounging, caressing, melting  
into you, *implied*.

We are done now, spent.  
In your palm my face  
seeks solace from the moon  
illuminating our misdeeds,  
our flawed consolation,  
this autumn undoing.

There's a range here.  
There's a glimpse there's a  
glance there's a  
dip of the body into the unknown.

There's lace  
tied loosely around the center of me,  
centering me.

"Wait for me, wait"  
Today's autumn is a place for haunting.  
I fear the fall,  
I fear the echo of my desperate wanting,  
my misplaced desolation  
in this room I made  
for us,  
for me.

**-- one day I realized that blood can stain clothing and that my friends look good in red**

Who's going to pick up the shattered glass?  
Who'll be the one to admit  
that there needs to be one  
at least one  
who does this alone?

If no one else is willing, I guess  
I can start by describing how it feels  
to walk past the cafeteria counter  
in the dress you saved  
especially for this.

You sit,  
you laugh even though it's not funny,  
and that's where it starts.

**then**

Their shirts scream justice!  
but there is no court of law  
that can stop them from breaking my kneecaps  
and handing me a half-hearted smile in return.  
I take the gift, so kindly given.  
I take a shaky breath.  
I take notes.

**then**

Milk carton seashells tell secrets  
only girls with long hair can hear.  
I learn to press my ear just so,  
I learn to listen at windows,  
I learn that they have soft hands  
and that sometimes  
they'll hand you raspberry chapstick in the locker room after gym.

She takes one of my pinkies  
and slips it in her backpack  
in exchange.

**then**

Love looks like outstretched fingers,  
a hasty "thank you" spoken,

whispered  
over shoulders  
shared with people who don't know I exist.

Who'll be the one to admit  
that they found life in the refusal  
and that I found myself  
holding empty gum wrappers  
and smiling  
that vapid little smile?

Who will admit to me  
that I've been doing this wrong?  
I can't I can't  
I can't bring myself along,  
so who will admit that this is all there is?

**-- desert elegy (Song of the Moab)**

i planted seeds of myself  
i thought something profound  
i scattered sighs in the wind  
and listened for the sound

i watched time control my tongue  
tick tick tick ah  
i wished for rays of the sun  
half-baked, extra raw

i prayed for lamb and blood water  
i prayed for silence in my slaughter  
I told Him I am your daughter  
turned to ghost, turned marauder

was i chased or did i flee?  
was I forced to face the moon?  
will this conquest set me free?  
see: *crescent palms, mind monsoon*

desert elegy  
you won't lie to me  
desert company  
won't you stay, for me?