

On Heartbreak.

Pick a card, any card. Mad, Sad, Bad. We have them all here.

Take your pick.

In this world of glittering waves, wandering vacationers, pregnant sunsets drooping in the sultry heat landward.

Pick a card, any card.

You say this, oceans brim, threaten, over-flow, coursing rivulets, eroding layers of carefully crafted deflection. We're in it now, this life.

We sit, knees knocking around him on the couch.

If you look too closely into any one life it would break your heart,
you're risking it he shouts, getting close I mean,
you're risking heartbreak.

Age five, you told me of the Holocaust and I cried for hours.

Imagining the concentration camps, the gas chambers, skin taut over elbows. Yesterday,
you showed me the rapes in the Congo and I felt outraged,
ashamed of my own culpability, buying electronics, fueling the conflict—
later, online, I bought a macbook pro.

What happens to this rawness of childhood?

Exposed, we stand without the bark grown of cold winters and hot summers.

We lose imbued emotion,

held tightly in xylem and phloem,

we, the trees, stand firm weathering storms of silence,

waves of suffering breaking over barked walls.

We sacrifice this realness for the broader 'good,'

protecting our hearts.

These days I'm New York based, you know,

New York comma New York.

Its brunch when we put two and two together, us trees, New Yorkers, new and old, she the Prada-wearing girlfriend of my Wall-Street uncle.

When I spout West 144th she gives me a look of moderate confusion,

144th? her face quizzical, as if questioning the integrity of my memory,

Hm, I didn't think people actually lived up there.

In my mind's eye I see the stoop sitters, the strollers, the hawkers of wears,
no, just the life blood of the city,

the Puerto Rican music plays until eleven, then the children sleep.

Who do I live with if not people?

These beautiful bodies, tattooed, pierced, partially clothed
claiming indoor and outdoor space with vigor.

Yes, people do live here.

The humanity—don't get too close, it could break your heart.

Waves, ocean perhaps in particular, rub me raw.

Waves hit and drag, hit and drag, sanding the oil slick. Leaving me raw to the world, here I
am world, take me, naked and rubbed raw,
standing, buckling skin, fat tacked deep into my mass.
Here I am, naked and raw.
Open to the world, brimming with compassion,
overflowing connected consciousness.
Naked and rubbed raw I can absorb it all,
tears, pain, devastation—hand it over.
Hit and drag, hit and drag,
let it rub me raw.

I'm jogging to the subway, 5:15am, perpetually late—
why can't I get up five minutes earlier?
She totters towards me,
hands outstretched, rotund,
Wait, Mami, Wait, stop. Help me.
Her voice grates, unbalanced, off-putting.
Hands close around my right forearm.
Mami, I'm hungry, give me money, food, anything.
Vice like, these hands, freeze me in place.
Heart rate rapid.
I turn against her pull, held, total resistance.
My left arm reaches to pry her hands off.
I can't, not now, I'm late, let me go, I hear myself rush
before ripping my arm back and racing down the stairs to the subway.
I feel those hands on me all morning, thinking:
perhaps we could do with more heartbreak.