

The How Series

1.How to Cope

The first poem I ever wrote riffed
 On sleeping pills, little tide pools I took
 To inhale skinny and exhale illness,
 But now I step out, six months sober,
 And have nothing to write about.

(Happy Anniversary, Big Pharma)

Why am I not permitted
 To exhale when the wind pierces?
 Why does the air around me (just me)
 Yelp like a shelter mutt,
 Chasing a scent I cannot see,
 Tethered to a lingering
 Death?
 Lie to me and blow a cool season
 Towards my bosom, my sternum appreciative.
 Autumn is the rebirth of a canvas,
 And Spring is the death again
 Of something that was never present,
 Cold, broken, white white white.
 Hush! Even nature is racist.
 Mercy, he cries, mercy! Windows
 Yawn, allowing for a peeping persuasion
 That bilingual nuns ignore, ignore, ignore
 Prayer hands thrusting towards the garden

Thick with blood

Now.

Sing for me your vocal warm ups,

Stretching out each gibberish syllable

Until I am satisfied, squeezing my own

Crossed arms and creating

The dent in the piano (he) wrote about.

Finish your gig, future (me), rub dead skin

From beneath

Your ribbed guitar strings and drive the freeways

(No cost for revving) (There's a headlight! Swerve!)

Alone, because there was no one special

To watch you spit onto a cratered microphone.

How are craters formed, you ask?

A cupped hand reaches down... I don't remember.

If necessity is the mother of invention,

Depression is the weird uncle

Of entombment.

Deer seem to be the subjects

Of poems that crack my heart, break

The mantle of my lungs

With pink sadness, a phrase I cannot

Use anymore. Thank you!

Freeze in the moment (mid-stride)

When the blades of grass in your ear

Stand rigid, trying to discern

Where the sirens are coming from.

Nothing yells mathematical equations

From a dark place that, no matter

How many times you carry the one,
Never get solved, and Nothing wins again.

2. How I want you to think about me

Claiming a tardy pumpkin bread,
She stands, knees cracking
In refusal, to remove the loaf
From the apartment oven
Her first apartment.
Breezing back to the screen,
Flustered words, blushing
Cheeks with apologies lilt
From her pink lips,
Because her lips are always so vibrant,
Other bright-eyed youths'
Mouths are so skin-toned,
She is magenta in a troublesome hue,
A confusing lure for my testosterone.
Evergreen, bouncing, a deep-seated
Desire bubbling in her naive,
Almost-toned
Midsection;

A well, situated in a clearing
In an aspen forest yellowing
With autumn
Sits within her strong heart
That doesn't beat very many times
Per minute;
When cranked, an elixir of gold
Liquid spurts in drops
Onto the page, dappling
The ink with almost magic
But it's not
Because she is twenty one
And life stretches ahead as a lush
Carpet, lust and what's that
Creative longing?
An ache for experience
Typewriters and whiskey neat
That would be something
And sex and tears from The Hours
Passing
Passing
For me

But she is young.

A bowl of fruit sits on her wooden

Table, artfully disheveled, ripe

And she is my favorite

And I am her favorite

But nothing will ever be done

Because nothing ever gets done.

3.How I want you to indulge

Good morning and sweet licorice

Afternoon, lecher.

Deny it, I dare you.

(I never will).

Drive every cornucopia-dotted highway,

Harvest hues flickering— do you wonder

Why gold is not a color,

But a hallucination coated

In a brisk season?

(I always do.)

Brood, I say, brood! Wallow

In the marsh, thick with the afternoon—

Yellow, champagne, how do you do it?

(I don't.)

It is not candy, it is wood

Burning, running faster, flames

Licking the cold— ah,

But doesn't bourbon

Feel the same in a chilled throat?

(It does.)

Good evening and why not drizzle
 The inky night like expired honey
 On my chest?

(Absolutely.)
 (And if I may sprinkle
 Cloves and diced candied
 Ginger on top,
 You would taste warm
 And like the sentences
 I've let burn my tongue,
 Heating when never spoken.)

I know.

4. How to Shift

You look like your grandmother forced
 A jiggling aspic on the buffed table;
 You sound like Halloween
 Became a contemplation of Death
 And skeletons shook your living bones;
 So reach for the oil, the butter
 On the avenue, the crumbling politeness.
 Books always include
 (At the end) those blank
 Pages; your skin, it seems,
 Is similarly wordless, dotted only
 With carcinogenic constellations;
 I'm sorry for the insinuation.
 Stir the new ink
 Constantly,
 To brew a bravery sliced
 With syntax, ebbing with peony petals.
 Topiaries need trimming;
 This is a call to let the spiders
 Weave a web between your candlesticks;

One chore at a time.

My arm twitches, day and night
 Flushing out poison that stung
 Each divot on my ribbed lips;
 I need you to sway sway
 With me, let your weight linger
 On the liminal side, crossing
 The stained gutter and trilling your fingers
 On my body, pretending to play a dented piano
 When really the drugs
 Are exiting your body; Life
 Frisks me too often, an airport uniform
 Patting my body; you can make change
 For my ten dollar shape.

5. How to Write?

Scribble from the soil,

From the earth that sticks brown

Between your toes

And heats stalks of corn

Or saddles of mountains,

Bent straight.

Lope with abandon

Through trails wrapping

Grey bows around green arrows

Pointing to the brick square

That gifts you with anxious

Fingers, smoldering questions
And the fear that you will grow
To be like your last name.
Observe the hues of drops
Of blood melting
The fresh snow, Christmas
Traditions coated with tender
Murder, and wonder
Why lips are that same color.
Linger on grease stains
And the shape of his eye,
Jawbones penetrating
The quiet air around him.
Be present when circles
Grow beneath her eyes
And, with your thumb,
Make the sign of the
Pentagram on her forehead
In case God tries to grill
Her this evening.
Create in letters the beams
Of a spotlight, hazy

Judgement on episodes

Of emotional passing,

Rearrange the ever loving

Shit out of it, and press

Your cracked lips upon it

Seal it with utter horror,

Clammy hands reminding you

That you that you tried to capture

The universe in sentences.