

Conjure No Image

By Nathanael Patrick Walsh

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FOREWARD

Aphantasia is the inability to form mental images in one's mind. I wish that everyone had it so that no one could conjure an image of me in their head. I was not aware I had it until it became clear that no one else did. That is, I took language about *seeing images* in one's mind to be strictly metaphorical. The phenomena exist on a scale upon which, I suspect, I am at zero and one quarter. Of course, however, I have no alternative point of reference for which to compare. This is all to say that if an image does happen to conjure in your mind while reading my work, you can take great pride knowing that it is a product of your own creative expression and was of no intention of mine. All metaphors and similes exist only to express a relationship between concepts. Please enjoy. Thank you.

[Additional Notes]

This collection is composed of two parts. When my wife left I began putting together this collection so as to draw a thread through my life so far and tie it up nicely with a bow. A hard drive that contained my early writing was stolen with my laptop in 2009 (prior to my using the now ubiquitous cloud syncing technology) the first section therefore contains a selection of poems whose inception began between 2009 and the moment the divorce was finalized.

The second section of this collection houses what I have come to call "play dough poetry" because the experience of writing it for me resembles that of pressing a block of dough onto a page and rolling it out into tiny toothpick-sized pieces. I don't have a better explanation to offer you than that. It is my wish that the poems in *Section 2* not be read aloud for any reason. Theater is a beautiful thing, of course, but it is not what I have written and, as pretentious as it feels to say, the location and meaning of the words on the page do not translate legibly to any conceivable auditory experience.

Section 1

To Do with Actors & Authors

a heavy face boils on the stage
 a hold on their hearts as he opens
 to every memorized manuscript, which brings him
 severe tranquility- an intimate absence
 of anything which is or was
 . one's own
 -because *one's own* can only deliver
 . a cranky silence
 *no small
 . revelation. not even
 . a line or clever phrase, just
 the lapse of time on a silent stage
 and his busy mind and the empty page

 he reads it off
 the silent mug, the coffee stain
 the coughing lungs, the laughing page
 this is
 some author's way
 . of raising stakes
 turning the page
 and leaving it blank:

many

could go a lifetime
 never asking
 never trace the steps or hold up the thread
 of ourselves through everything
 our friends and chapters
 did we cherish? did we let them in? did we let out even our littlest
 wish?
 should we let them know? or shake the feeling
 that we have wronged them. that we hurried through it
 that we wished we were on the other end
 of every experience, however small or wonderful
 how we hope the show would suddenly stop
 and some holy city *new jerusalem* will crush our home
 and be suddenly better - infinitely better
 should we hold friends to some concluding paragraph of
 some page in some chapter of our unfortunate lives?
 or should we string the sentence along
 and push punctuation down enough to think this could be in
 finite could be in
 different to time // could be in
 our blood to last forever just
 not like this not in some forever state, not today
 not wishing we were on the other end,
 not wishing we could see the other side
 all settled into our eternal place
 maybe trapped - we'll see - if we can hold the reigns
 enough to break off even a piece of it for ourselves
 burn-in the television then and let out a light
 let go in an instant // faster than it came to us - - the present
 wishing it would let us
 drip our souls into unhappy spaces
 and then lick us up in less than a quarter of a second
 so that time is the true friend
 to give us what GOD invented
 the infinite irregular change and chase

from need to need all gone and arriving
without extra silver spoons or linings
just absence to absence to meeting to absence, it's clear
we have what GOD wants, so no wonder GOD came
no wonder GOD left changeless needless infinite space
to suffer the same unending, ruthless, brutal,
and lively and absolutely unforgivable change.

Oh Heaven Has Its Way

of letting water onto me

from the flow which we were let out
and to it we go

meanwhile GOD weaves onerously about our way
; deep in the womb

working m tight as in a scalp
binding a host of individual hairs- and in time
bids both goodbyes

and hellos, while we have not even known
now in the rain and
the mess of it

so it also is with each our own persons
wet and knit to a spirit world; worked together
tight

some sins drip, or dreams, or demons drip

from me to you and roll off or through so
meone else

and drip down or someone holds on until we hit
the ultimate heat

of the SUN

and it all passes from us& we from it&

for now as we breathe, we lay together, while each sleeps

on twine, on silk, on wheat fields or feather beds,
each night

we give them our heads

yet not one of them could know the number, the design

none could even hear GOD speaking

when your tired soul looked out on a layered sky,
unwanting

from your window

the water wears your skin, the water begins to breathe as you

breathe in

and beauty is never imminent,

eternity moves so fast, one might believe nothing

is permanent but

everything stays

for a little while at least.

you have heard it said

but I tell you

the whole universe is present

and eternity is

resonant

Must Be Heaven

for every time heaven opens an eye
and for every thrust
of my finger through my temple
heaven hears the pain, not the cry

and for almost every remedy
there is another pain—

must be heaven who spit on my feet
& made mud out of the clay—

must be heaven
who put her still in motion.
because for every silence
heaven opens

an ear and for every time a knot is made
with my heart and my veins
GOD points to a prayer, says *you are just*

like the world you rot in
and though you'd forgotten

there still is no heaven, just a book
and some names, and Peter
at a gate

I am the result of GOD losing a game.

our umbilical cords are
games of hangman

and the angels are guessing
and lucifer is playing

four letters for GOD to guess
and my two arms and my two legs

instantiate in place
and my head manifests

and upon my slim neck
the umbilical cord is

choking me to death

then a spin

I live

and lucifer grins

You-are-what-you-eat

so I eat leaves
the leaves off branches
off trees

give me these things
which have built you to be
bending growing
swaying, perhaps breaking but
staying in.

I felt your bruise and
counted the circles where they cut.
some trees fall completely over
but you
your bark seems all infested and
I eat your holey leaves
believing you
know more than me.

Feeling Lovesick at a Stoplight while Ignoring a Homeless Veteran

Am I gonna die like this
still holding out
to give my limbs to
actualize a desire that love's
alchemy would not bewilder me for

what could I exchange for
that which I live for;
surpassing the cumulative value of everything

that I can think of at least?
Men missing legs at least
at stoplights try
speaking to me, but I just can't conceive

that men missing legs at stoplights might
say anything worth my hearing and
much less. Shit.

I realize why GOD stopped
speaking
to
me

Cracks

We were outside, on the stairs
 where she did not smoke a cigarette
 but the rain sent us in
 where I would begin writing our events
 she says, "come on, let us back outside, the day is
 not over"

So now I'm sitting, biting my fingers, trying
 not to type, but I am, and she knows I am, as I have the laptop
 on both of my bent knees- and she's looking,
 now asking

"Why did you say it was on *both bent knees*?
 You couldn't just say your *lap*? or simply *knees*?
 Fuck why are you quoting me!? Stop!" she pleads

But I will not. So, she squints at me and moves on eventually.

Thunder rolls and I point out the lightning.

"It's ridiculous, lightning, like the only connection between earth
 and heaven,
 and it only lasts a split second," I say
 "No," she replies, "you are missing out on seeing the way that it
 stays."

That lighting is not what we think. It is from the earth, and
 lighting is just the exposing of the cracks along the canvas of the sky while
 it is crying. because earth loves to call out the cracks while any one of us is
 crying"

"But we've been to space, and we've explored," I say
 she insists that I am just oblivious

and

I imagine, when we are both in bed, I will tell her good night, and she will
 tell me good night, and I will tell her sweet dreams, and she will tell
 me sweet dreams. and we will hang up and lay our separate heads on
 each of our separate beds.

although right now
I lean in, and we kiss

You Knew

you knew
when our hearts beat
through our foil hats
when the hand you held
was holding back

at your mother's house,
we held each other up
past the moon's muddy eyes
at the same front door
like leaning towers
and then I knew that my chest is for
your head to rest
your head to rest
your head to rest

there were hours that I felt it
and hours I did not know
you knew that you could love me
and I knew that it was so

lipid

sigh to let our light back in
separate and stir - begin again

grow the way that mountains grow
erode the way that rocks erode

move the way the harbor moves
assume the shapes the stars assume

lit like GOD recalled to mind
recall some verse you lost to time

her hair not quite as thin as mine
undone wineskins reveal the wine

recall the scripture here to find
not much better with hidden signs

of luck and fervor and steady rain
our time won't stand when stands to gain

separate again like water
and oil

but spin us up enough to pluck
us up from waxed and waning cups
and smash us into one humbug
permit us one to grow among the seed
and soil

and everyone. thank GOD He got us in His love.
just Jesus, us, and everyone.
thank GOD He got us in His love.

Before Growing Up

wait

so you mean to tell me everyone
 is here remembering when friends
 existed without consequence and the height
 of romance was the brush of her skin's tiny hairs in the hall,
 and her arm in the auditorium out of nowhere
 resting in mine and feeling so fucking complete and my whole body
 was a band doing sound check
 and my mind in EQ just reeling through the input of
 every atom for no reasons speaking up and it was like this in
 parking lots, and fields with kites and I
 well I can't recall any better times and if you mean that everyone knows
 this
 then the audacity the the adjectives they've been using to
 describe it were ill ill equipped for
 anything much less its sheer diversity sheer
 pure complexity sheer pain in me and
 so painfully ill equipped their adjectives were for tilling
 the soil I will be using to receive the future's apparently inevitable seed

because "growing up" told me exactly nothing
 about the loss incoming
 and the ensuing numb existential experience that it would take
 four years of marriage
 and then losing it to cut through
 to even begin feeling anything even close to it again

January 15th, 2012 predicting our divorce 8 years before it happened

"Promise me..."

you said, "...that we will never argue again."

or more articulately

"...that we'll pretend to always be happy"

therefore:

Promise me you will bury pain and not tell me.

Promise me i will not know i hurt you.

Promise to remember that no matter how much i care for you (and i do care for you)

that you won't make me feel bad for caring more about myself.

Promise that when i want to do something, you'll never not want

me to, because you'll promise nothing hurts you because you

promised that even if it does

i will not know.

Because i just don't want to argue.

Let's do this until we explode.

Three Months After You Broke Up with Me.

You want to meet,
I choose the time.
We speak for six
hours - three we are analysts
 three we are in love
nightfall enters you in
to the hospital because
your aunt abuses the emergency care facilities maybe
or because that wound on your arm is getting worse
and what we suspect as surface
 is becoming blood
I pray believing GOD will
take it away. GOD does not believe the same
nor seal up the wound at all
instead, I, myself, am coming
that my finest suit might sit beside you
I stop on the way for flowers
but realize inside
 petals seem petty to token my intent
but your mother sends roses
and for whatever reason after
in the elevator, we kiss
at the door and in the car
we kiss you leave
a rose on my dashboard...

The sun licked up what little life it had
and, as your texts became crystal,
those nights were the rose
both dead and dying
before they got to me.

How My Mother Opens Jars

When I close my eyes
you are lazily painted
on the lids underside;

vivid and loose, the dance,
I presume it is you.
When the sun is pressed hard behind,
your blur comes through

my lids closed like
a jar of jelly, which I will ask mother
to open, and she will

bang it against
the counter.

A Way

a few keys just. resonated
- if some songs don't just drag you back
 you're a psychopath
and there's nothing wrong with that
I, of course, thought of you
found a photo and
stared held it the way that
wrinkles these kinds of real world things, a way
that makes me wonder what I'd do
if you ever get much farther
a way that has me vacant, a way that
looks past articles of evidence in
a way that makes me want to make promises
to myself, at least
but I guess it's just the
self-eating carnivore in my chest sounding
like a caveman's thud of a drum
brutal and boney;
I, regardless,
should try to do something now. something. somehow.

Patio Chairs

because I don't have patio chairs, I'm sitting in my car in the driveway
with the windows down
because she took the patio chairs
while I was at work
because she drove up some seven hundred miles with her aunt and uncle
and cousins
to collect her things and apparently
the patio chairs

Patio Chairs 2

you must not know what it's like
to even drive through it
slowly with wind and birds
this neighborhood
where we had an entire life
for four years and sixty planning and I can see us
in the neighbor walking his dog
because we walked
exactly there. and talked like nothing like this
could ever happen

and you took Roscoe
 after you came back
you took *most* of your things
and left the rest to me. I guess
and you still haven't seen me
but we are talking. through selling the house
and I hate it, and I want it - to talk
to talk so casually
almost. playfully
one could almost not know
a fucking goddamn thing. was happening

and where are the fucking patio chairs

beyond repair

The things we are
 another larger hole in the proverbial drywall
 beyond the things we can repair
 the damage we can do
 born some kinda way
 raised some kinda other
 learned some third way
 intending some fourth
 acting out some fifth history
 everyone seeing some sixth connotation
 manifest
 just enough to see the world come down
 4 & 5 in a constant conscious
 bitter fucking movement around
 like hemispheres at war like the left hand not knowing
 the sin of his sister
 just instinct made from(?) the first or second?
 the third is sneakily unconscious despite ourselves

 meanwhile, there are people demanding
 that I am beyond repair, and I never
 quite
 knew what that might mean. Somehow so often
 it meant to try with all my might
 it meant to fight
 contending with every fiber to muscle my way

 bandage up, make it right
 another hole
 the left hand unknowing I know it hasn't settled in

 the myths all manifest
 twosideness no taking back
 only semblances of progress evaporating

 in every eye but mine...

Eating Sesame Seeds Reminds Me of You

I told her, the way that she loved me
 never let me wonder why.
 Well now I remember the feeling, the reason why
 I told my mother
 that we weren't just teenagers,

instead we were
 -something. something that I wouldn't put a finger on.

But my metaphorical mouth just got dry
 going in and outside
 humid to dry air conditioning just like
 going in and outside of what we would later stop calling "love."

She would laugh
 and laugh. and
 and I couldn't fight back I, just...

remember, how hard sleeping was.

Sometimes I guess, there is also a place for "babe, just don't think
 about it! [laugh] You think too much about [laugh] too little of
 things! [laugh]"

So replace her. and when you do, remember, that you're just
 replacing her.

So they say I should,
 pray her out of me, it is the best for me,
 bow my head so that only GOD can see me
 and fill a need.

But, maybe GOD, has a reason for everything, and maybe it's
 not always
 that we should be un-emptied

but maybe, the act of forever longing,
can drive enough of us- to keep on living -

after all,

it is the same drive

that keeps GOD living and chasing us. that is
I'm guessing -

we have seen You

we have seen You in leafy things
under city streets and waterways
breathed you in from greener things
met you in a pasture under aged oak's heavy arms
felt you from a mountain range where every sense assumes the
stimulus of sight

but we saw You without skin
(all ripped from the bone)
out the vineyard they came
connoisseurs of the blood

now under heaven there remains
testimonies without an ounce of love
connoisseurs with exquisite tongues
they teach to tell and unteach
each man from his eyes, each heart from its soul
all wisdom for coin they say
give to me as is mine, as it is written, give to me
that she may all be mine

You have seen us under the sun...
we have no claim to excuse it, no deaf ear or blindness
I cannot think now
what You could be thinking...

Watch a Boy

watch a boy watching
the ridiculous wave reflections
feet half in freezing consideration
of the art of intentional surprise

he couldn't know the other side of cold water
yet he'll compromise his legs, at least half,
while wondering why he can't see every thought through
waiting just for one wave to outdo to be

interrupted
by
his body in the water.

such a thing, is impossible to slow
but, I stole a photo frame
here have a look at him splashing on vacation
childhood and summer, and spring
all up in pieces jumping around
his soul a cup for carrying love

water

I want to drown.

Don't freak out.
It's just water.

And it's just
Death
Everyone does it
some time or another

Why did you paint your walls

Why did you paint your walls
why tonight could you not stand beige-
the cream crept in and licked up your sense.
Did you try to get drunk and stare it down
because it owed you the service
of starring back. Did you yell
at the walls did you yell-
because they ought to shut up
and listen for once.

So you paint them in a life they
never knew. Were they
jealous of your mind so you
gave it to them
finally were you
just alive and
just tired and
ready tonight to paint
more than
 all the other nights
 that we both knew that someday we will all
 need to paint
 some time. some place. on some wall?

R.I.P. Jonathan Jabari
[2019 addendum] R.I.P. Judah Teinert

Did you think tonight
that I would not notice
and would not also want to paint?

eu·lo·gy

I don't remember a time in my life
 that Judah was not a part of.
 For as long as I have been conscious, he has been my friend.
 At first, I had to fight to convince him
 to call me his best friend, he kept saying Trent Sweeten was
 but we hung out more than them. Judah and I
 stayed in constant contact
 until his very last day
 where I'm grateful
 I got to tell him that I loved him and I was there
 if he ever needed anything, which of course meant basically
 nothing
 because he refused weakness in any part of his life,
 so he refused to ask for it for help no matter how
 desperately he needed it.
 That night after asking though the last text I have from
 him reads
 "I want to talk. Not a good time. I love you." and I believe him.

The Judah that we want to remember
 is almost certainly not the same as how he saw himself,
 yet alone who he actually was.
 In fact, some version of Judah's voice has existed in my head
 since I was very young
 and I used to resent that fact - but I think right now I'm a little
 grateful
 that it will probably always be there. A voice
 which is ever devil's advocate.
 One which challenges every word.

His motivation for challenging likely changed from case to case.
 Sometimes he was genuinely curious – but more times I suspect
 he just wanted to see how much he could make someone squabble
 under the weight of some

almost certainly unnecessary intellectual pressure.
Judah and I had a unique way
of talking. We essentially reinvented the field of philosophy
and poetry
from the ground up before we ever knew there
were such things.

It is essentially our own language - a language I simply cannot speak to
anyone else - which is why I wanted to take a few moments to speak to
him one last time if
that is alright...

Judah,

You always wanted to be the picture of a man who took life by the horns. You believed in yourselves. I remember when you were first reflecting on Descartes "I think therefore I am" proposition. You took it to mean that you, yourself, are the only thing certain in the world. Your own mind. I was a little disappointed to discover that I was not as real as you or, at least, that you thought I might not be. But, heck, how could I argue? Now I still don't think that's the right way to think about that concept - I mean, if you like Descartes so much you should have at least followed him back to whatever weird version of Christianity he affirmed... But you held to Philosophical solipsism, a view which asserts that everyone else is really just the mental content of one's own mind - figments of your imagination - the irony of course is that at the moment all we have left of you is the version we can reconstruct within our minds. Now I'm a little sorry that you can't defend yourself right now, but I think after thirty years of intellectual sparing I deserve to take a couple cheap shots. I am glad that you know what I think of you Judah - that you are an asshole, through and through, and that I love you. You're still wrong about so many things - for example Nietzsche's "will to power" was supposed to be an observation about the way things are - not a challenge for you to see how much pleasure and power you could suck out of life before it's over. Know how I know? Because no matter how much you tried, you always looked back. Because it is not possible for a self-conscious man to be so ruthless and still avoid regret. And I know that's why you hated Christianity - all the guilt and regret - how it told us to hate ourselves. It said the only good in us wasn't our own, wasn't even from us, that in fact all we could do was make matters worse... That's why it told us to give up *our* lives and take up GOD's. I know you wanted to prove that wrong; to prove you could be a good man on your own but - and this is another cheap shot - it doesn't seem to me that you were really able to prove that. Plus the bit about regret, you still had it - up until the last moment. I keep wondering about your conscious experience those last few hours that they say you survived. Wondering if you had an out of body experience. Wondering if you saw the face of Jesus and heard Him remind you that He loses no sheep. Trust me, I can still hear you laughing when I say that but - you laughing

never seemed to affect objective truths, which is, after all, what we
were always after - you and I.

Yours,
Nathanael

Judah had a lot of things
he wanted to be.
And he was quite sure the only thing
in life that mattered was himself.
He was quite sure he could be anything if he only had the will.
Which is why he was typically too proud
to ask for help. But
sometimes I think Judah forgot
forgot that all he cared about was himself
because when he cared for you
it was something wholly
other. Where nothing you ever said
or did
could shake his commitment
to you.
He was able to be strong and take a beating
for or from you. And you could see it
when he switched.
All his energy went into caring, and I suspect that's
really where
he was able to find joy
in those moments with others
when he'd forget himself and his dark almost certainly incorrect
philosophies.

I never really got to see him with his wife and kids
but I can imagine they brought out the Judah
we all prefer to remember. One that was
happy... though we

both agree happiness is
an awful aim.

Judah chose
to punctuate
his life
right here, in this way.
Always wanting to control his own fate and
in some sick way
he sort of did. And in so doing
he undermined so many of his own values, and I'm sure he
knows that.
I'm sure he regrets it just like so many other bad decisions he made...
 and regrets.
He was riddled with it.
but also riddled with love and desire.
I think Judah spent a lifetime
being devoured by his own competing
desires.
Like many of the best pieces of art in Judah
we see a wide range of human emotion and experience.
In this way I don't think it's hard
for us to see ourselves just take one of your emotions
at any given time and crank it up to eleven
that's what Judah was feeling most of the time. Probably.

We're all going to choose
to remember Judah in our own ways and I hope we each feel
free
to hold onto the version he chose
to let us into. The good and the bad.

Judah,

I love you, and I'm pissed we didn't get to finish our conversation about the relationships between discrete human modes of being. I don't know where you are now and I'm just glad I don't have to make that decision. A GOD who loves you more than I do, pleaded for you more than I could, pursued you more than I was able, and sacrificed so much more to be with you than I can comprehend, and who – I am fucking assuming - feels so much more pain than me right now... that GOD has to decide where you are right now.. and I trust GOD more than I trust myself about this. But I do so hope I see you again... part of me keeps thinking one of these days I'm just going get another text or drunken phone call from you, and I'm genuinely angry that won't happen.. I could only ever stay angry for so long. Sometimes years though. But you never wanted our friendship to end even though you sometimes managed to do the worst - most heinous - things to the people who tried hardest to love you well. We all know that somewhere inside, you knew better, and loved us. So thank you, for your friendship and for the voice in my head that doesn't let me speak a goddamn word without second guessing it. I love you more than some insolent words can express and I really do trust you know that because we both tried so hard to make our poetry say more than words otherwise could...

I don't know if you're resting in peace or regret but, either way, you deserve both.

Yours,
truly

still

I'm still not sure you're dead
I can tell

still wondering why your girlfriend's brother messaged me saying he had something to share but shared nothing
still thinking about how at the funeral your sister said she thought she saw an unfinished letter to me on your laptop
and you said, and I quote, in a text "But I am writing to publish so... Anyway // I talk about you, have talked about you very much"
and how I've since had a friend send me every file we could find on it, the laptop
and I still have no idea what letter you or she might have meant
I'm still worried all your work underwent some first round of censorship like some family member went and deleted anything they didn't want left to represent you
and I wonder if your family is even tech-savvy enough to manage that they used my calling as an opportunity to ask me for help setting up a webcam to video chat with your brother in prison
I don't mind it at all - it gave me the sense that our relationship still existed despite all the distance
like my spending so many years of my childhood in that airconditionless house around that one wood burner might, well, it actually meant something
I'm still fascinated that the word "still" can mean to stand motionless to not move at all
and yet I can still use it in the way that I am
which is to remain
remain moving with me wherever I am
and I wonder if I should be alarmed
does it imply I am somehow emotionally motionless
although I don't feel motionless
I feel chaotic, active, and moving and bouncing and thrusting around, maybe
but still

eternal life

maybe if we carve out a place in someone else's mind before we die

then when we find we have no body

that space our soul can occupy

sleeping with regret

Lay back down my ugly craning
clown of a neck
And try to deserve the sun again

beautiful miserable

if i was dead i wouldn't get to feel this
miserable
the privilege it is to feel it
do you listen to Lucy Dacus?
have you ever wished she never lived
or wished she'd never been so sad she'd resolve to make such beautiful
art?
i didn't think so

i could live there
if i had to
and paint like i'm the art
out of her ink pen mouth

matter

in the end, does it matter does it matter does it matter does it
matter

a hundred ways to ask the same
sips of coffee, summer rain
hero's journey in a box with a cat
in the rain with a hat

digging nightmares up to re-quell the same
some pain, some names, some little hundred fucking shames

under serious consequence, we lose the name
names of heroes and architects that taught us to refrain
from the joys and pains of sin and shame
from the heirs of torture and summer rain

heck! no wonder we refrain from all the little hurricanes
that come up and under hero's way
just to *still* the heart away

just to *wish* your soul could sleep
just to *whisk* your eyes in shame

does it matter what we did if sins and shames all wisp away
does it matter in the end if sorrows mount forever and

does it linger a little longer in the bosom of the beast
if we let it simmer on our skin
will it singe a ring of sin
will it have us hold our little fingers all twisted in
or will it let the sinner linger
once all its hopes of heaven quench
little bubbliies in a thin elastic skin all rumbly in my tumbly
without morale or consequence

bounce and pop and piss all
on parade ignite the tumult please again
does it matter when it matters
let it matter when it matters

let it linger when it lingers and
burn or choke the sinner's skin
little demons in the morning
little seasons through the summer
little windows through which minds can wander
little whispers - hearts can wonder - whether
enough will really be
or if the sun could ever really just
 enough, just right
to let our heavy heads release just like
little sprinkles to the sky

your rope, my truth, my lie.

I have as I want. as I want and I
push and it is old. old. Adonai it is old.

if you're here on a line like an art you can't re-
member

how to worry . just the height, the audience, m
y pen, your eyes and I&

it's just this comfortable line&

so high you don't guess what it takes to be ali-
ve

so why leave to guess of you and your life and
how you will like

me down from the skyline&

present

sometimes i notice
how beautiful the present is
and I wonder how long it has been like this
and how long i have not noticed it
that every moment i make it through
is one more than him
and one without her too
each one more worth making it through
and i know that in a moment i inevitably won't see it
and i'm already okay with this
because seeing it cannot
change it ever being
the way the present
always beautifully is

comfortable

comfortable the way self-hatred is comfortable

the way self-harm helps

reconnect my skin to my soul

I see her and I know

I want her but in the same comfortable way

me in unity

this is where i am
and there is a fight
some people want me to have
with myself
and i won't have it
not anymore
not just right now
but maybe not ever

I'm okay

in every single way
and the tension they want in me
the tension they want to see
that they think they see
I don't
I won't see
I'm just one. me in
total fucking unity

why it's impossible to count birds

there were two birds
and one ate the other
but the bird survived
just now the one bird
can only do exactly
what the other is doing
but with their wings the same color
and their beaks the same shape
species the same
flight patterns the same
there is now no distinction
and no one knows how often this might occur

coincidence

the one life
just the one – the this one
and time narrows in on possibilities
just in time for you to notice it
a claustrophobic quasi-openness to meet me in the morning
it's a small kindness in the sunset to train goodnight
and goodbye

settle in or skip every song enjoying none
for whatever reason we are fixed to play back
free just to rehearse our plans
and play black our past
one could almost never notice the coincidence
it is to progress one way inside a fixed space

from outside we must sound insane
revelation after revelation recasting ever intuition

every breath another push to shape the next new me to see
first to myself then myself again
then to him and her and you and me again
but from whatever place if we can just settle in enough to see
the coincidence we're all in

Section 2

Witnesses

To everyone who showed
and thus committed
with the two of us
 on that day
to be there
for the both of us
 and then
did nothing
except show up
to collect her things
 and some of mine

you
you are as rotten
 as they come
and no more rotten
than as rotten as me

and to my parents
who drove
some 700 miles
twice
I wonder
if you can feel it
at all
the way that I do
 the way
effort never correlates
with outcomes
quite the way one wants
never quite the way
 you told me to trust
 that it would.

and to you
 on a starry throne reclined
your heel
and our necks
on every continent
barely men
 what can we say except
to hell
we go
for sin
unshown.

Help Cat

Your tongue has all those hooks though

And your throat is rolling I can tell maybe

You're tending to me but

maybe you're just cleaning your tongue

On me

Which I... is fine

It's cute

At least the purring

Especially the long-exhausted chirping ones

It's like I know you're present, and I wish I could be, but it does

It does help me be present

That was the first thing my therapist told me as a strategy

To remember

That I can look at you and your little face and lion
nose

To draw out the present a little bit at least

For respite from

Well

Everything

half cat

Half cat on the sill

It's seven but it's goldening

On her mane and down

The long cloud of her back

Some sun pushing through her ear's fleshy
rose

Half cat half curtain

On the sill and her tail

Black drapes her undercoat I do try to brush it

I could try more but I bleed and

Oh my

My

She

Dropped now on me like

she sensed it and I hear little beads and I do
try

To brush her but goddamnit

Your mom at your funeral

They were on their knees	she said	at the funeral
On their knees the night before	she said	at the funeral
Praying	she said	praying
That GOD would finally do something		
About you	and your suffering	and imposing your suffering
on them		
And <i>thank</i>	<i>god</i>	she said <i>god</i>
<i>Seems</i>		
<i>To</i>		
<i>Have</i>		
she said....		

Piano Poster

Piano poster I had such high hopes

actually not just the almost high hopes full blown

And I did learn but it wasn't so much about the skill

I realized that I need not so much the skill

Just the space to express until I run out
 until I run

out

Surviving Hydrangeas

we planted them before the summer
then the sun dried them all out
their trunks were like raisins

I only wanted them
because other poets
had them

and we wanted them blue so
we poisoned the natural ground
and I always worried that was why they never bloomed

then the snow in thirteen inches
immediately beating
what was already barely

and then the divorce and
the summer again
and suddenly blooming
I sent you a photo
saying they are more resilient
than our

than us

girlfriend / photos of my first marriage

I suspected you did not understand when I said it was a whole
 life
 And I suspect still when I say I loved her
 we
 Won't agree
 And not even
 Be able because we
 are not
 What she was
 and I
 Was
 When we were an entire open endless
 colored world worked
 into
 every space in
 any pattern we were
 what poets call saviors of
 the wording world
 because
 we
 acted out each syllable
 instead of just
 This. Instead of doing this exactly
 On every page...
 ...not a thing we did

left

to be said

because we rarely had sex when we were married

I've been sleeping. with other women and

I just can't help but think

I'd still rather not be sleeping

with you

miscommunication

I said it right I think
you heard just some wild other thing
neither should know yet
you're sure
you know and
that makes it so much worse
than if we could just both not know because
then
we could try
guessing together we
could be something together we could
try
just being
together

never know, trazodone

trazodone

never know

if it's the trazodone

I could fail to see

the need beneath

or just could be the trazodone

up or down the dose I could

guess and my psychiatrist just also
 could

guess

god

fuck

shower radio

hum of her radio

muted by three walls at least

the bathroom door

the half arch

her skin the muffled music

over the shower sound

leans in

to me I feel it my ears out my fingers

down my neck across my skin

I wait

for the collapsing sound the naked curtain makes getting
out

Stockholm

the impression of her

these were her couches

she hasn't seen them

I'll be rid of them but

or had to sit on them

since

I saw she's on a river

she was surprised

though she immediately

from surprise

to saying

where I have never been

that I was missing

turned

her

she could have predicted it

and

I wonder

if it's because she thinks

abusers tend to miss

like she completely
syndrome

she remembered

their victims

confused Stockholm

upwards of one hour

I just spent upwards of	one hour
finding perfectly good reasons	that I cannot write
the lock screen on this should	be pens and paper pieces
but it flashes some mountain	even after I changed it
it keeps saying I can update	by restarting
so, I keep restarting	it keeps saying it
of course, I cannot write	
under conditions like this	

will be refunded

and

I can't think about this anymore

we create

we create

to connect

but we aren't sure

and

who will it help us or

with whomever it connects

but

we know it helps us

to do it

and so

we wonder if it matters but

of course it does that's at least half of what we want

to connect with others

but behind the curtain

we tell ourselves it

wouldn't matter although we know it does we

tell ourselves it

is

enough

because almost sometimes

it is

about as bad

it's about as bad as a

hurricane

epidemic opioid

white America

forest fire

tsunami on a thatch roof

tornado season already missing windows

buried in the bathroom

mattress on the six of us

panicked so near the porcelain

wincing from the hustle to find

my cat

unnoticed until I

snap

about as bad

as some

conglomeration

of all of that

art

art if I could

inspire it

at least

I could meeeeeeean

something

on something

maybe

to someone the artist

I could the artist

I could

mean something

in

on in

art

just french

a month just over love
 and love I said it first? or
 back?
 I don't recall but
 a month of it of so much of all of it
 what anyone could ever want
 and we had it
 I just
 couldn't and
 she came back upstairs
 two times
 to be sure she was justified storming out the first time and
 she was she absolutely was
 while I was sitting on a yellow midcentury modern that
 belonged to my wife
 a month
 of fresh and new love stormed out
 twice back to give us exactly that
 ending just like she hates
 the french ones all open open
 to debate

communion

more than just me

me more than

any two of us

weeping and gnashing

and that's the point the body

bruised and

we're closer

if we can even begin to relate and our blood

spread out on the podium

bread

all

embraced

unblinkingly swallowed

together

the entire crucifixion

together we persist

down

in our stomachs

together

all in

hear us defend

from our back foot defend

we could make our lives whatever we want

but

we want what we. had. seems so

correct

it is after all all we've known so

no wonder but

we're screaming

out every balcony for

jesus and lucifer to sort and seeeeee

see the space

connecting every living thing

to us and we

hope our heart (s) explode we hope

the soul

holds

it all

in

why explore

the poem more
 could be completely
 vacuous
 like so many poems
 we know
 and
 love
 and
 could be something
 hidden we think
 if we
 keep
 looking we think
 we think
 the artist knows
 somehow
 our
 soul but
 we know
 the artist thinks
 postmodernly that it doesn't matter what
 they think we should do

whatever it takes
barely make

to like the poem

they

the moon

ask for the moon

like a free wishing well I guess

holding it open

in your hand

the request without

demand

without

plans to bring it about yourself if not

we

hear every “no”

as a need asking to be let in into our plans

we could hear it

if we listen

through the static of criticism

we could connect

if we hear it

make it up if we must

before I let a word

of “unlovable” in

the mistakes

I could not think

it was not me

had to

had to be me

had to be me who

let them

in

the mistakes

had to be someone right?

and

so

it only makes sense

it could not

be no one

we have to have someone to blame

have to have

someone

to shame

Is it the withholding?

that makes me want it more than I would
 have I
 waited
 before is that why
 this is
 is it familiar?
 do I like familiar? do we
 all?
 is that not good? to like familiar?
 does that
 undermine
 the feeling
 if it is familiar
 do I run?
 do I consider that I am able
 to wait
 because I know I
 have
 do I run?
 do I wonder
 if I am *only* and can *only*
 reduce
 the whole feeling to nothing to say *only*

only because

as if there being *only* one *because*

is an inherent problem

we should have many reasons maybe

and

I think I do

my only advice

unrelentingly see

beauty

no one else can decide

what you see

unrelentingly

Orange Cake, Jesus

Australian orange flourless
 cold cake
 birds? little bird seeds?
 a citrus raven
 yellow bird beak
 bronze skin gradient
 it was foreign but
 years of evolution
 my tongue
 patterned by survival now
 the upper echelon
 of possibility
 critics subtle intonations // survivability
 and scarcity
 their tongue tuned to some nonsense frankly
 but it just
 has to be
 survival
 adjacent
 and
 if I had the tongue I could tell but
 breakfast

at Banksia

with shared silverware is a

communal

spiced orange cake

Jesus

any two of us

take up

a third

single

new

consciousness

for as long as we stay connected

to the gift of our needs

you

can be

me

and

I

you

and

as long as we stay connected

let all our needs

remain invited

in

houses

with or without a lawn

symbols of

every

heroine

child

drawn out

histories projected

infinite endless future every

conceivable

reality all wrapped up

in vents in
air

barely circulating

stories

about the present

and what it means

and what it will mean

to have

tomorrow

just like

today

and yesterday

until whatever sudden ghost threatens

everything

no matter how long it was boiling

a good kettle hisses only a moment after utter
silence

belong

I didn't

pull it

belong

the trigger

I

gave freedom

to myself

to talk

not

to

pull it

it's not so different

I

fucking

beg

to

differ

take

suicide

take

suicide

it's not so different

divorce

ninety six thousand

upend

ed

up

erhand

ed

up

holster by the oven

ninety six thousand

hours

at least

my mind

on her

on

winning

keeping

smiling

dreaming

her

up

to

be

every

heart

I ever had every

lullaby to sleep every

summer, spring, winter burrowed depressing

blaming

me

speakers

a song
on a thousand speakers at different times
although, it's still only
one song and
whatever makes it only one on a thousand speakers
is the way my soul is
maybe a pattern
put it on paper
all you need is
a body
to sing
my soul
again

armslength

at
a comfortable distance
be
unknown enough
to suffer some
quasi pseudo
form of
related ness
rela tion ship
un/open
in my opinion
into
some
less than
some
at least half of
it's
potential
we
miss
out
on

each

other

novelist

everyone wants to be a novelist

to say	there is a whole world	in them
and	to be	believed

extinction

truly last bits

clean countertops

polished

soberly extinguished but

essence(?) we

live in

an

echoey

correspondence

with mom

in the kitchen

and Judah's blood

in the walls

someone lives there probably

invent

a

spirit

consoling but probably

it

isn't

folly theater

write what you see

disturb it

yourself this moment

because

if you don't no one will know

you

were ever

here

so

how

could it the present

be ever

worth it worth

the cost

of living so

unknown