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dedicated to my childhood a lifetime of inspiration.



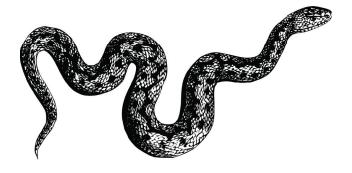
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FADE

# Hungry, but never full.



I know what it's like to be hungry but never full To choke it all down and swallow it whole

> To chew until your jaw is tired But take another bite, undesired

> > Uninspired

Stomach like a bottomless pit And satisfaction never comes from it

To feel empty and act starved Despite having it all carved

Out and laying on the table A feast to serve those unable

To feel anything more Than hunger.

# losing dogs



I try to keep me from falling apart.
I try to guard my swollen heart.
But I can't help but give you a chance,
A new start and one last dance.

But you keep stepping on my toes, Dragging me along to follow The path you have dirtied With your bad deeds and greed.

You say you've learned your lesson But still, try to lead with unbalanced feet. All you succeed in is disappointing me.

I don't know why I still have high hopes. I don't know why I still cry On the downhill slopes When I could see the fall coming.

Your shortcomings are all numbing. No longer surprising, I'm succumbing to the truth:

#### THE HUNGER

You've stolen my youth.

And now I must dance alone Without a solid guide or stability. I might trip but you've never been there To catch me, have you?

Have you?

I wanted a father, a leader, a provider
But have been given a child
Who denies the fact
That I am compiled
Of his bad decisions and abuse.

I am a sprout that has been stepped on too long to grow.

I've been defiled, now riled up As I realize I cannot escape Someone I still love passed the hate.

I am a balloon that has been deflated Because the needles keep prodding And the time keeps being wasted And I'm tired of you being wasted And betting on losing dogs.

> I bet on losing dogs As I await your arrival And hope you're not late.

## barbarians

The legs are the first to go
Fried, eaten like barbarians
Gnashing their teeth
Trying to get traction
I shiver at the savagery
Then remember
I started this,
I began the end
This destruction
Is my own creation
So I join in on the delivery
And I feast on the dead

### the rain



I wait in the rain
It's dark
It's cold
It's throbbing
Like a steady heart
I hold in all the pain
It's better to whisper than bark
I find I'm too old, no longer bold
I'm sobbing in the night
I wish I could skip past this part
Puddles form
I am stuck in the middle
I ignore the clouds

As they grow larger, heavier
Above my head
This gloom fills me
An omen, threatening death
The earth wets, so out is a worm
Wiggles through me, red ladle
Come cradle, in come the crowds
They fill up the streets, deadlier
To me, I fled
I can't see
The rain, fogs my vision
I sink into the earth
And find hidden mirth

Where I am going?

## fever

Fervently, I'm feverish,

calling in the night for a body I can steal.

I can tuck away my brain, a getaway—

perhaps I can sleep if the nerves burst

colors! flashing bright!

rapid movement!

what a life to lead fireworks sparking, sky darking, and, all the while, kept safe and high.

I'm caught in paralysis, too dead to dream.

Where is my blanket to hideaway? I've lost all my water, waste buckets fill, empty my stomach, aim for the kill.

No longer is my fever working.

#### THE HUNGER

The demons inside are my only comfort, filling plunging depths with hunger, fall into the earth but no longer do I suffer.

Find mold cover the ground like a dead lover but I am no longer able to falter—

can't filter what I say

to answer you in a proper way.

I'm bloodied and torn,
worn bones shown
through flesh charred
and broiled down,

melting eyes from sockets.

Fire fills up the black hole of my decrepitation, shoving every single person I know down with it—

Bye, cruel world,

left so young, I never had time to know you.

It's probably for the best, I know I would've burned you

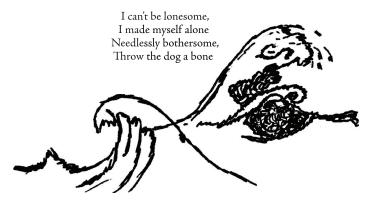
## Harbinger

Somebody must've tripped, Somebody must've fell, 'Cos now my hands are loose-gripped And I'm being launched down to hell

> I'm detached with turmoil, Feeling guilty, it's not my fault They must've stepped in oil, It's an impersonal cult

Call to action, I'll ignore Can't get no satisfaction, My body drifts to the shore

Cliffhanger, Bitten nails and shaky knees Harbinger, Ripped sails and moaning seas



## i'm you

i had to grow up so fast would trade this future for a better past tried to make the time last i'm sorry if i turned out bad

never had the time to develop i was always held up with something else more pressing a subject more depressing eased my foot onto the brake but the gas was still running

exploded, hit the curb now i've learned how to swerve and eject the seat unbuckle the belt hide myself away from the pain i had felt as a child, all alone i was too young to be a stone to lean on now a clone i fell from mountains strong bones the carnage of broken homes wreckage of defeat

> i'm you. i have your genes. i'm you.

#### rats

If people keep falling For a wise cracking, Dry mouth rat, How can I live Avoiding the plague

I can't.

At least I don't think I wish I didn't think

I can't.

My elbow is in shock My knees are bruised And it seems I just can't get over you.

I've tried to close my eyes To avoid your lazy gaze But your eyes are all I see All I can imagine is your face

I wonder how it would be, To be so close

As I once was long ago,

To trace the freckles Like constellations And connect the dots.

I've lost my chosen path And I don't regret the change. I'm retracing my steps, Backwards into the past But hoping for new beginnings, Hoping to make something last



They call me dumb For coming back to you But it seems I can't escape, It seems I don't want to.

### overused

"I love you" is overused
And all you're used to is being abused
You figure that's the way its meant to be
Because that's all you've ever known or seen
You fall for the broken ones
Because you're so used to picking up the pieces
And as you cut yourself on the shards
You forget to cry or ask why
It's your fault, you decide
Because that's what you've been told all your life
You've never questioned otherwise

## i never thought i'd become this

I never thought I would become this Layer and layer of desperation, Haunted by this infatuation. If you peel me like an onion, I will reek Because it is only you That I seek. I miss you when you're gone And sometimes when you're there Because one moment you'll be so sweet And then it will disappear. You turn like a crew on a ship, Like an oar that rocks the boat. Why do you always insist On pushing me When all I wish is to float

### stuck in winter

It's winter in summer
I'm stuck—
isolation overwhelming,
wear jeans and long sleeves
to cover up
the weight I've gained
after promising myself I'd lose.

I don't want to have to try so hard, bundling up to hide, sweating, panting talking too much.

It's winter in winter, I'm colder than ever. It never leaves.

I want to be happier but I can't. It should only be seasonal, but the cold follows me everywhere—

it's winter in autumn,
I can't be happy,
the falling leaves turn gray
and I can see them all die
as we prepare for the next storm
the one that always comes,

the snow that covers whatever footprints we made in the mud, it's winter in spring.

## the devil is beating his wife

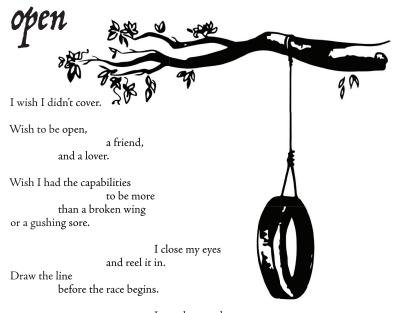
There's sunshine while there's rain I'm happy while giving others pain I don't deserve to be where I am I don't deserve to carry this confidence.

The devil must be beating his wife,
Dealing strife to those who vowed to love you your entire life
I am not worthy as a friend
I am not worthy to be here until the end

I should not cry in your place I should not lie, I'm a disgrace

Find someone else who deserves it
I'm sorry to have been reserving it,
A spot at the table,
Leave it open,
I'll eat in the restroom
I'm sure there's an empty stall.
Maybe one day I won't eat at all.
Why replenish what takes and never gives?
A parasite sucking on the skin.

Who wants this?
Like a nervous tick,
I poke the bear with a stick.
They just respond with a lick.
Why lick my wounds if I don't do it back?
I'm selfish, I don't know what for.
So many qualities I lack.
I regret it, I'm sorry
I didn't mean to.
I wish I was quiet
I should have kept silent.



I travel onward

and skip a step.

Tell myself 'I can't be kept.'

A wild thing,

a tired swing,

back and forth.

I can't implode until I unload

all this depth hidden under the waves and the shore.

But there's nothing left but water. And nothing else but a sinking daughter.

## melancholy

I'm sorry that lately I've been real subdued I've tried to escape from my dismal mood

But I've found myself cornered, with no where to hide You see the real me, the darkness I buried inside

I've drifted behind Now I'm swallowing dust Cruel to be kind It's in God that we trust

I've tried to be happy
I tried hard to talk
But nothing satisfies me
Better to converse with a rock

I've tried to sing songs And write sweet poetry But every rhyme has come out wrong Every line is melancholy

I've tried to film, draw, and do things that inspire me But now I must draw For a different reason entirely

I give up, I said I surrender to my own sad Nothing seems good enough to ever make it end

I've tried every pill Every possible way to fulfill But still, I'm left empty I've lost my urge to will

#### never a cat

I killed the kitten. An accident but still The kitten's dead. And there's no reviving.

It's my fault. I killed it. And now, All it will ever be Is a kitten, And never a cat.

I think about it often. A kitten. So small. So weak.

And never will it be. It will never be. A cat.

And how will I How can I Ever live Knowing that?

## cocooned in fire

I am cocooned in fire burning plumes ensnare my rakish lungs and blister my limbs until they fester and chafe; rub against the bone until it tenders and breaks. I char into a thick-skinned mountain, and peel like tumbling snow, sliding down, and churning again and again, until my rocks are smooth and edges are curved. I no longer feast on flesh without flumes to move through and waves to pass under, drowning out and in, haling until the reservoir drains and the land sinks; dirt piling and burying sea-strung out silk; skin stretching

#### SHEA WINTERS

and pulling over the body. I lay it all down and wait for the sun to parch the last remaining bead, pearling sweat that bleeds at the temple, and the hands of the priest that fold, over and over, like sand-time. the yeast into milky chalk dough. Wait—for it more to rise and then deliver her to heat; watch the crust crack and engorge; the bread is the body of the lamb. Bite! and taste the twang of iron, and pry tendons from between the teeth; spit! and unleash crimson streamsoil is added to the flame.

## blood runs thin

Hold on to the ribbon It's soft like red velvet And blood runs thin When it's diluted in water I figure it out Just as I falter And I can't take another step For fear I'll step on a crack I don't want the world To rumble and shake But the gravel is shifting All over the place I fear I'll fall in But I've been geared towards gumption My brain settled and I fed into it's corruption

# daunt days

when daunt days find haunt ways ghosts apparitions of time looking onward you fought so hard to lose it all

like snot falling from the nose you wipe but it dries and you hear the cries but shout the lies like praises words flying through church halls

> and chases the echo of changes that make what once was neat and full hollow and out of control I run

so far away to still hear the screams through the walls you used to be so tall and firm but now we hug your skin is gaunt and hanging from the bone — skin so pallor and raw from scratching scabs and blood

is thin and rancid like honey sucking morphine out from the stinger — you tried

to win her through stab wounds and scars and now we are living in separate yards — I watch

my life unfold like a voyeur, and you dismantle and rust like chainmail armor.

### the luckiest

The luckiest clover you may be,
perched on a rose,
its thorns up your sleeve,
the ripped skin of all you deceive,
scratched like an itch from poison ivy.

We all know the weight you carry—
the water that drips
down your petals
like tea from a kettle,
heavy, like metal,
gets harder to settle
for good—

I wanna be great

like the led that fills up your plate

take more.

leave it with less.

Everyday, it's harder to impress

myself-

must decompress my chest from emptiness—

I'm a mess that must be cleaned; not even God can do this laundry. It's me, in the washing machine you see?

#### THE HUNGER

just how I feel.

Every day gets more unreal,

every day feels like a dream, except I can't get any sleep because I overthink

about my life and

what my dreams mean.

But I'm awake now and it hard to take now—

I bet it's hard to take now-

because it feels like I haven't eaten in days now.

But I'm not starving, I'm just hungry for approval from the best of trash removal:

the garbage man, the man,

the MAN who I'll stick it to only to realize who I'm talking to only to realize I'm insignificant only to realize I'm only a speck on such a big planet—

Oh, my existence doesn't matter, I'm just piece of lint stuck to the clothes of someone better.

I'm only a beggar on the streets pleading, please

please

please

#### SHEA WINTERS

help me.

Save me from my need to impress.

Save me from myself when I undress.

Save me from my own

scrutiny-

I'm a bug under a microscope circling around a lamp post

constantly seeking attention,

constantly being deflected,

constantly wanting affection,

constantly losing direction

of what I want to be,

who I want to be.

When I look into my reflection and see only condemnation.

I want to happy but I need validation,

a solution to my hatred:

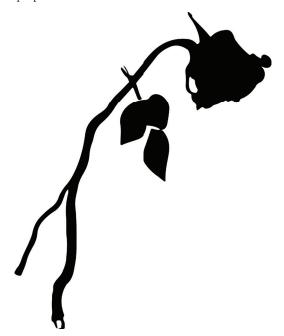
a means to be pretty in the eyes of the ман.

I want you to like me I need you to like me

I say I don't care, but in the truth that's not fair. I care about so much at once
it's hard to look in the mirror
I try to be strong
but sometimes the fog clears
and I'm open to the hurtful things
that people say without meaning.

I push myself to not be human but truth is, I'm so stupid

The luckiest clover she may seem but truly she's just a wilted rose crumbled in the hands of all the people she knows.



### Beating



Sometimes I feel like a soul Without a body, Other times I feel like a body Without a soul.

> Sometimes my chest Is only a gaping hole And other times it's Stitched up and full—

Beating like the flutter Of a hummingbird's wings Light and soft, evanescent, My soul sings—

Hammering like a Drum, the rhythm chaotic, Uneven, chest heaving, Body screaming, impatient—

> Loud, unsteady, Bouncing off walls Of a cage And a cavity,

I might fall If I'm not careful.

And so I freeze And breathe And squeeze Until there's nothing

Beating at all.

### trees of old

Cast shadows of cold

In the light gold

I have many rings

Cut me open, you will see me

Find a reason to even be

Here

I fall—

at all.

Natural disaster occurs

I try to take the better offer

But the wind blew me off course

It's gentle pull turns into full force

I pry the branches off my arms

They cling, like birds to a wing

Fling my heart to the swarms

My body drops to the worms

Is there truth in this madness?

Good passed the badness?

I'm lost in my own sadness.

Rain on the window

My mind feels so shallow

I bend down so low

Only to never come back

To the high

I can no longer see the sky

The birds attack

The world's against me

I try to fight back

The world only sinks me

"Nice try, now you're buried" Tried to lift the weight But was only left dirtied Lets see who I can begin to hate Now that I am gone

## waiting

Bleak, desolate space
Holed up in a hollow ground
Found a tired existence
Until no one is bothered
Or bothers to try
To find meaning
Amongst stars:
Burning gas in the night,
Flying in the empty,
Waiting.

## no offense but

You don't know me You only know what I am perceived to be.

I wish you would've listened to what I said

Of jumping to conclusions,
My words are not meant as persecution
I'm sorry you can't handle the distribution
I don't want to be friends
But this doesn't make me

Your enemy

Being civil doesn't have to end It was never my intention To offend.

No offense!

But really, I can't help if what I say hurts your feelings Because I say what I mean I'm sorry if my opinion Disregards yours.

I'll make amends But you have to be able to forgive! Sometimes you're so vindictive

I mean well
I promise
But my mouth is blabbering mess
Of my incoherent thoughts
And I have to address
The possibility
I'm just insensitive.

Instead!

## I was not allowed to read

And so, basking in the warm, tender glow of the fire,

I rested my head on my father's knee and let go of my own desire. In the dark, dim light of the room, my father read his book and huffed with gloom.

I sat there, still and quiet, and listened to his murmured words—aloud to himself, not I.

Rectifying my own wishes, as his brash temper brimmed over his

So still was my body as the fire crackled over my father's soft speech. The words that I could never seem to reach began to take over me and my heart began to beat rapidly as I found within them a new meaning.

The bird in my chest fluttered intensively, whirred, and I swallowed a breath in order to stifle its wings and

leave it be another day.

"We will find another way," I told the bird in my chest and still, it threatened to escape.

This caged bird heard the words like a spell,

winding down my throat in a swirl or tornado,

taking over my body in a flush of storm and reckoning, turmoil, and deceit.

But still, as this storm rolled and thrashed and turned in my stomach, as the bird fought and flew and chased and battered,

as the heat of the fire began to grow cold in comparison to the heat of my core,

I was quiet and I was still,

never moving as if time had stopped.

And my father continued his murmured reading

until his breaths began to slow and his words died out with the flame.

I sighed and closed my eyes, but the storm inside never faltered. Within me, behind closed eyes, there was still color.

## eggs that never hatch

How angry are you, really? Silly to dream of flight when nothing you do feels right. Keep trying and failing, flailing through cloud bloated skies:

w e

soar too high

a n d

forget how to

land.

How tired are you, weary?
Bleary eyed smiles take
so much time to
fake, so instead,
we reach inside and pull out
a fabric made of entrails
like the never-ending rainbow
ribbon coming out the mouth,
in a circus act:

we dance and dance

until our feet can no longer bear the rhythm stumbling, fumbling phalanges balancing on thin copper wires and disrupting connecting frequencies like perching birds,

### SHEA WINTERS

weighing down string

How sleepy are you dreary?
Endlessly climbing ragged ropes
and sliding down fatal
Searching how to cope
when time keeps slipping
through dry, crackling fingertips,
blue in the wind-chill.
Where is the thrill
I thought I'd catch?
Like butterflies

t h e

 $f\,l\,y\,i\,n\,g$ 

furthe r

a w a y

slopes.

and eggs that never hatch.

### a string

I took a breath
and held it tight in my chest
until it built and melded into a mountain of twine,
bundled and knotted, ropes of time
swirling around the cavity of my sternum.
My anatomy unreels and I am left only air between
and when I breathe out everything else unravels
and I'm left only a string.



### Disastrous

When will hell freeze over?

I'm already feeling goosebumps rising like blisters on yellowed skin.

I'm feeling heat like a rash inside, spreading inch by inch, like a fungus colonizing a fallen tree.

Metaphorically kicking the log when it's down.

Dead horse beating, bleeding hearts

### **EVERYWHERE!**

Keep it under control, weeping, broken, whiner.

Your tear-soaked flesh stains winter's bones like when bone marrow hollows, making hallowed ground like crumbling, echoing, caverns, creating chasms within darkened tunnels.

Baby faced, diapered, brat.

Sandpaper scrapes against silkened cream fabric.

Keep crying, stretch your lungs like elastic. Feel tears pinprick like needles tearing seams loose.

And sew again until the stitches are stronger and more easy to mend.

You bend your wishes like a contortionist bends her back, arching into a bridge nobody can cross.

> You cross me like Judas and kiss my lips until they tingle with the stain of your imprint.

This is disastrous.

I collapse with the weight of you.

# blue, my dearest,

when will petals fall like rain from
open , white , and beaded skies ,
opalescent gems filtering blues as
I open my own limpid eyes
and die , melting mountains like
violets transcending the heat
of violence and the smears of reds that cloak
the marooning night , bleeding out from pink ,
gushing hearts and spoiling , rancid and soiled ,

I want to keep you

in my pocket like

a daisy , sunshine beaming through tearing , fading fabric ,

and my love still slipping out
and glittering gold ,
like loose change
I keep trying to catch

but lose anyway each time.

## done dreaming

when i was done dreaming for more leaden floors. sunken through revolving doors i watched hawk beaded sun glared and struck at wooden beams splintered and ax split, felled foundations slipped, and skipped through another day crookened steps, hooked limbs, and faltered breaths, fading in between choruses, crescendoing and stuttering, i reached for the stars and found

your hand.

### forevermore

When light peeks through slotted window shades, I think of your smile and the smell of coffee at the dawn of sunny, summer days.

You held in your hands a mug, clasped it tight like a prayer, and I just watched you watch the sun rise

casually, like my heart was still in my chest, and not beating rapidly in the palm of your mug filled, coffee-warmed hands.

If you caught my gaze, you'd laugh you'd say, "what are you looking at", as if your laughter wasn't the same music

I looped over and over again on replay. As if it didn't twinkle like wind chimes, and hang and twirl in the air like

a spinning chandelier. I feel the warmth of you, marigold petals, shining

through my entire being, pounding into me like some sort of tidal wave.

I feel this gush of something, this changing season, spring up within me

until I'm only looking at light. The halo from your head beaming bright. I squint and perch lightly at the edge of the table.

#### THE HUNGER

You look up, startled by my movement. "Good morning, sleepy head." I feel your words like a fire kindling wood.

iloveyouiloveyouilove-

But I hold my tongue. I wonder if you know the power you hold over me.

A smile, the gleam of your teeth, like stardust, would cause me to combust.

"It's so early." I say instead, reaching over to grab your cup, and put my lips where

I knew yours had touched before. "Hey!" you shout. I'm sinking slowly, sipping

and I don't even drink coffee but I love the way you make yours.

I wish to stay in the orbit of your sun forevermore.

# "This is so much better than sex"

you tell me with your back against the wall, legs swung over mine

and I smile in reply.

How is it that you can always read my mind?

When my lips forget to move and my hands forget to still their shakes.

When I still desire you despite all the evidential mistakes.

"It takes time to build this," you say as I'm piling pebbles and rolling them towards your dancing feet.

It takes time but I still feel this and it's this thought that makes me feel so weak—

I will never tire of you as you will soon tire

of me, but at least for now we have this and at least for now

it's better.

### liar

come to me, solemn speaker and close your mouth agape like curtains staining light

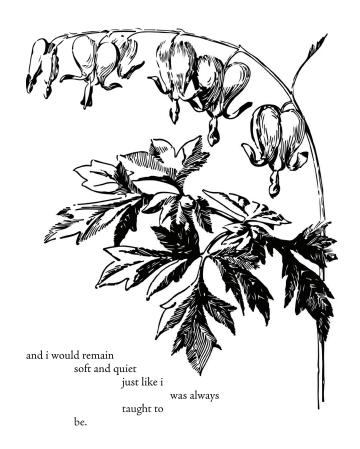
I love your eyes when they cry and glisten like stars that drench the ever-night

I'll suck your teeth like metal and taste your heat like venom and I'll eat your poison like truth

when you swear, with your hand raised to my heart you'll never cross behind again.

## i wish it could be gentle

```
if i had the choice
    i would let you kiss me,
                                gently,
          but something holds me
                                back, and it's remiss of me
                                           to turn away but i just
          can't.
but if you were to
           flip me on my back
                     expose my neck
                                and the soft of my belly
                                           i would let you plunge in
                                without flinching, i would
           stay.
and arch like an
          altar over vows-
                      i would let you stab into
                                my flesh and carve
                                           me like watermelon
                                                      until all I am
                                           is spilling, gushing
          seed.
i would let you
          destroy and pillage
                      without complaint,
                                without restraint,
                                           you could take
                                every part and
          leave.
```



### Love-Me-Nots

I am a flower—dreamily rising to feel morning dew on soft, staunch petals.

You are so cruel to pick me—to uproot me from warm, rich, velvety earth—

to pluck me out of a sea of buttery, sun-filled dandelions and watch as my own petals darken even in the light, beaming skies of day. I fall limp in your grip, lion face falling, and you tighten your hold, choke up on my neck like you're playing baseball in a field of weeds. My petals unfold and tumble and you soak me in water, feathers tinged green, faltering, suffocating, until I can no longer be relieved. To think, I should be grateful.

To think, I should feel pride.

To be the greatest of flowers picked—

I wish, instead, that I could be a rose that pricks your fingers until they bleed, all while you're desperately stroking my leaves and cradling my flaccid stem—

I'd fight and you'd finally hear my screams— I wish you'd bleed.

You are so foolish to believe you could choose my love, pulling petals, "love-me's" and "love-me-not's" — caveats of the truth— when my love belongs to me and me lonely.

### shoot first

If I were a gun You can trust I'd shoot first Hands up, run away Don't run away I miss on moving targets

Lost my way Long ago and now my fingers are stuck on the trigger

Why can't I be honest with you Tell you how I feel Why can't you be honest with me Tell me was it real

This is why
I don't hesitate
To shoot

Can't change my mind
If you can never get close enough to

I want you to beg On your knees Want you to stay there and plead that I won't make you bleed

I'm a weapon How do I make you see You are the one who needs pity

# honey muddled

watch flowers burn and wilt underneath the light of stars feel petals tickle under the nose until you sneeze sparks im leaving in the morning and youre lighting candles buying time with smoke im counting coins from a jar and youre flipping the lights off i dont want to be left in the dark without you — you speak so hushed im staring at the pennies as your hands attempt to touch and i feel your air brush me like cottontails as my lungs stiffen like barbs i miss you so already but i can't stay when im stuck like poison darts and teddy bears walking with honey muddled feet.



### see you

If you had smiled. I don't think I would've seen you.

Not that I wouldn't have wanted to.

It's just that the entire world is smiling. The entire world is smiling.

And you are so frowned upon. Frowning.

I mean to say that I'm happy that you are not happy.

It sounds cruel but it is the only way I can say.

I can say that I am happy that there are others who are miserable.

Others who can't pretend. Who can't—
So I see you and you're not smiling. And your mouth is down.

And I see you.

I see you as bold as I see the reflection in the mirror every morning. See you as clearly as a picture in focus.

See you even when it hurts to look.

See you until my eyes bleed and blister.

See you until the vision sours like overripe lemons.

See you until I can't see anything anymore.

See you

see you

see you.

# caged

Seemingly, the love is there The feeling that we know and share The look that seems as though we care

But sometimes we don't, Actually

For that, we grieve It's hard to be On this side of things, The regret and thoughts of leaving But not knowing where else to go But here In the one-sided arms Of a commitment But feeling trapped like your arms Aren't arms They're wings That need to be free but You feel sorry for your captor So instead you don't flutter Instead you stay still And live without any thrill But everyday you need excitement And this entanglement Is overdue Like library books, I wish you could sue For the entrapment of your heart When your heart is not even there To be caged.

### the screen

maybe it's because your feet are curled up on the couch and my hands are resting in my lap and the tv is playing the show we always watch and the subtitles don't always align with what comes out of their mouths and maybe it's just the way I feel like I am a screen myself and the words always stay slightly out of sync from what I actually think but maybe I'm just wrong and everything's okay

and it's too bad,
because of what we could
have, if I only I were smart
and if only I didn't
kiss that man who could've
been your cousin at the bar
and if only it had been your cousin
so that maybe you could know
by now and I wouldn't have to tell you
because I should probably tell you
and maybe we did more than kiss
or maybe I only imagined it

but would that make a difference?

how do I know I still love you
when you're the only one I've ever
loved? love? I don't know
anymore. and I'm watching you
watch tv and laugh carelessly
with your head tilted back
and it all plays in my head
like a movie and I want to shut it off
I want to unplug it
I want to rip the cords apart
with my teeth and split
all the internal wires as they spill out
like intestines, bleeding hardwire



# wayward

What is this girl-Wayward girl Write for? She smiles In delight for? Something, Rueful ruse. I pledge To call For truce But find No one Has signed The treaty. I pledge to dine But no one Wants To dine with me. And so I starve.

### less

Is it weird to say I want you to look at my ass I want you to see what you can't have I want you to feast your eyes upon my breasts I want them to linger on my heaving chest I want you to dehumanize me and make me less than a person, turn me into a fantasy one that you can't help but see but can't believe would ever be true

I want to be more than just another person to you

I want you to want me not because I want you but because I want you to see me as better than she'll ever be I'm competitive, I know but I can put on a better show I swear, I'll have less to wear and I'll eat less and prepare to be your wet dream so you can always be on my team I want you to want to be mine to make up for all the lost time I spent wanting to be yours



and i used to be whole

pristine
blossoming
flower,
Lolita with heart eyes,
until
[madness]

#### made me into a whore

i used to be so worthy of the wholesome affection the love the sainthood i wonder if you could still see the marks on my flesh and forgive me for allowing the cover to be besmirched the core to be rottened i am eating my own intestines from the inside out to cleanse myself of this need i wish i had remained blessed and healthy and whole but now i am only pieces left to be picked up and stepped on and collected like butterfly wings stapled onto picture frames i used to be so beautiful—

and now i know i am so ugly.

and so i burn my flesh to cover my sin and cut my cheeks to hide the red smear of shame but i know you can still see the blood tinted stains that mark the puritan cloak i am deceit poised in my prettiest dress a snake consuming the raw flesh of the forbidden fruit fallen from the prickliest tree i relish the taste pomegranate seeds spilling from my tongue stolen spring

dredged from hellfire i lie in the lion's pit and wait to be devoured.

## pizza

and I eat pizza until my mouth is stained red and slick with grease, until its scent covers my skin, until I can no longer sleep without its taste on my tongue, its dough molding in my hands, the crumbs tangled in my hair, I ravage it whole and slice by slice but it's never enough — I hunger to consume and to be consumed like oven fire:

dancing flames

will

eat

eat

eat

until nothing else remains

## gasping for air

```
have you ever noticed / ever felt / ever
heard
the way / the way that
my body sighs / my body
sighs with you?
```

```
how I / how you / how
we
breathe in / breathe through
and how
I / how I seethe /
how I need
you / to
see / to hold / to
please / to grasp
you
```

when you release me / release from me / my body / my body it cries too / loud / too soft

have you ever felt / ever seen / ever touched / so much / too much fear

all at once / everywhere / where is / where are /

### SHEA WINTERS

how can I / how can we?

I ask / I beg / I plead I am / I was so hungry and now / and then / I was fulfilled /

but when? and from what / from who?

### hard to love

why am I so hard to love when I am so soft for you when I bake until my center melts until my sugar coats every layer until I frost and crumble until I am so sweet it hurts your teeth? why am I so hard to eat when I make myself so inviting and warm but cool enough to be touched and malleable enough to be stretched and molded into any shape you want? why am I so hard to feed when I open every entrance, every crevice, every crack in the crust every hole and every bust for you to fill and stuff until I can hold no more I bare every bit of flesh and I fold and undo and I reach and I bend but still you find me too hard to chew so what more can I be before you can love me?



the line

I strung myself up on that line

and hung,

stilled my spine—
different from the usual catch you'll find that spins and tangles—

while you unveiled your stinger
and pushed it through pink silk flesh
and then tore it up
like sewing needles ripping through fabric
and razors cutting through braided wire—

### reel it in

you're greyhound barking, deranged self-seeking chase, and parallel parking on streets without names we make our ways over the ocean curve and hold hands like seashells, cupped and screaming—the sand scratching at the pads of my feet like digging claws as I melt into mud. how causal is this relationship? I mean, which fish was the first to bite? say "mine" and the stretched line snaps and suddenly the heart goes down like a sinker. get a grip, I beg my own fists as they watch the bait slip. how embarrassing-I can't reel it in.

### separate

i let you pull into me and cleanse yourself in my sheath, hug yourself so tight against my body that we became one, for a secondi bled on the sheets for you and clawed my name into your back and you cleaved my chest and spread my ribs apart until i split into halves to welcome you in, fed you a meal of my heart, and you spilled all that you had left inside me until the chasm of my sternum felt whole again; tethering souls together like twisting twine and hanging rope from the cracks in our necks; we fell into our own fissures and kept sinking slipping feet-first into the heady gulls of our entanglement until we lost everything that once made us

# by god,

the cold air was an excuse to hold your hand, or reach into your pockets, to pull you closer, and warm myself against your body, so, what can we do now

when the highs of our

days surpass the seventies?

I fear each day spring approaches, for in this rebirth, what more excuses can I permit?

and the breeze isn't the only thing that causes chill as the sun beats at our backs, walking through the park,

together but

apart

I cannot touch you and you wouldn't dare touch me.

not after.

so, when, if ever?

and I should be grateful for the escape from the once eternal winter but with the sun comes a reason to leave the safe and warm burrow, our den:

your bed which kept us tucked in, ignorant to the changing seasons, until the pure white covers were

stained with deceit.

and the reawakening was bitter like coffee and black as the hair of your lover, and your eyes spilling like dark pools of ink

#### SHEA WINTERS

when you admitted to me what you did.

and I'm trying to reach through the divide, to confide, to find trust, to forgive, to listen, to understand, to soak in the sun and live on in light and warmth.

but, by

god, I never thought I'd say that

I really miss the winter.

### April is the cruelest

and I'm so done with loving a wasteland. loyalty to dust and dirt has weathered my skin until it has eroded to silicon bone and this heat has never been conducive to growth, but still I begged for change from rattling tumbleweeds. how greedy to ask dead roots to plant new seeds, when the sun has dried all of the fresh water up. and these tears that used to sink into soil now die as soon as they hit the crusted land, because what once was hope filling the pan, is now a dust bowl, burying its head in sand.

# And why did it have to be her?

The girl named Grace.
Because I see Grace everywhere, praying at the table, how amazing she is.
And how her dark hair tangles in the wind, how her body bounces when she walks—

I would love to hold Grace.

Or, even more, I would love to be her. To feel her as you felt her, to live inside her as you have wrecked my home and left me nowhere else to be.

Grace, I plead, for *Grace*, and for mercy. Is this greed? To beg on my knees for a place next to Grace and her face, that is not all beauty in the way of Aphrodite but still smiles with her feminine wiles and confidence: the swing, the curve, the gentle sway of her hips. Oh, Grace, I wish you could stay and perch on my limbs forever like birds singing in the trees.

#### THE HUNGER

I am rooted and rotting but Grace is spring: decadent, lovely, with lips as soft as tulip petals and skin like velvet, it felt so good to touch her and be touched when I was left alone and touchless, giving you Grace and space, and missing your laughter, all while lying, alone, in wait for your return

home to me.

come back.

#### Tonight, I would rather die slowly in your arms than live without them

and tonight, I am wearing my sluttiest dress the one designed for revenge—and, underneath, lingerie or nothing, I haven't decided yet. and tonight, I'm getting high for the first time in someone else's dorm room, far away from your apartment, and I'm bringing snacks because I'm told they'll keep me grounded, even when the reason I'm smoking is to fly far, far away until I can forget why I'm doing all this in the first place. and when I'm high I'll call you, and I'll pray you'll reply, because I'll call to see if you'll have sex with mebecause our sex was always good—and I'm hoping once you have sex with me, you'll remember how we, together, were always good. and maybe you can finally make me cum when I'm high and we're broken. when I'm high and I'm broken too much to care. and tomorrow maybe I'll get drunk, even though you know I never drink because it reminds me of my father and how bad alcohol on the breath can stink, but I'm getting drunk anyway and I'll call you to have sex with me because when I drink, I cry, and I would rather my face be stained with your sweat than tears, and I would rather my body shake because of your touch than my sobs, and I would rather be used for pleasure than forgotten— I'm sorry, I know you always said that our conversations were even better than sex but I don't want to talk anymore I just want to lay, together, in your bed, naked, and die, in your arms, slowly.

# blue jay

why am I trying to find companionship in a blue jay?

the bird that will just fly away after stealing real estate for its egg to lay.

I am just a house for it to squat at and squawk at, piercing croons at my cranium—

shouting petty complaints as I pick up sticks and weave my straw, tuck in spare feathers,

> and build a nest in a tree, so strong it can't be blown away

can't be taken, can't be disturbed except by its own empty

this empty that I feel

so strongly that I'll call back the blue jay and lay feed at my door

Come on in, I say and it takes and takes

and takes some more.

#### I do not wonder.

I do not wonder what you are doing now.

No, not while I eat stale cookies from IKEA, gift wrapped from my mother, and think about buying you flowers, and what would I write on that card because you don't deserve them, but I know how I feel and it doesn't matter what you deserve, only what I am willing to give, as the sweet KAFFEREP breaks under the pressure of my teeth and sticks to my gums. There is raspberry in its center, fitted into a heart shaped mold, and I do not wonder if your heart still bleeds for me as mine does for you.

I do not wonder if you are thinking of me.

No, not even as I scrub my dishes in lukewarm water and cheap soap suds and think about your apartment and how you slept with your back to me while I cried, turned on my left side, where I could feel the blood from my raspberry heart drip and ooze like syrup from a wounded maple tree. I do not think of you even when I dream of our last meal and how all I could do was stare, and all you could do was look away.

I do not wish to see you again.

No, not even now, as my hands quake with the ghost of your touch, and my back aches from not being held long enough and from holding far too much. My mind is not plagued with images of her face and your hands and her naked body and yours, entwined. I am not desperate for your affection, or for your voice as you told me how pretty I was in the morning, emptying yourself inside of me until the heart-shaped hole in my gaping chest was filled again.

No. not even then.

I do not wonder.

# Someday, I will move past this

I told you everything I feared
I shed myself layer after layer
and revealed the innermost skin
I unveiled myself from weighted veneer
and crushed my body against your cadaver
as you told me through brittle bone-

white teeth

that you wouldn't-

but you did,

you did,

you did.

And who will I believe now

if I can't even trust myself?

I asked for something real

and trusted that you would be it but now all that I can feel

is mold darkening the pits

of your empty skeleton, a

cavity,

and the sharp

crunch of ash falling below my feet-

you told me I wouldn't—

but I do,

I do,

I do.

#### SHEA WINTERS

And how am I supposed to breathe again if my last breath went into you and was never returned?

How am I supposed to recover if your darkness has consumed my light and your death has ate at my loose-leaf

like flying moon-lit moths? How

am I supposed to live with this?
I don't know—

but I will.

I will,

I will.

I promise.

#### And here we are~

rebuilding the same sandcastles that had been washed away by the big, bounding wave that struck our shore and wrecked our sailing ships without warning: I saw no red that morning.

Yet here we are—
hoisting up our anchors
and moving out to the
sea again.

Here we are and you are the same barnacle latched unto my heart as a buoy, floating and drifting and trying not to sink.

And here we are—
the same hands
with the same fingers
that sculpted this structure,
that curl into each other,
enclosing trickling sand
like some sort of hidden
treasure chest: there is
gold to be found
in our wreckage,
or, at the very least,
there is more to dig.

#### SHEA WINTERS

So here we are—
and although your affair
with the dry land
angered me and
the sea and
the Greek gods
that once blessed us
and our tides with
netfuls of fish, and while
there is nothing more I wish for
than that it could be undone,
the best we can do now
is move on
and rebuild.

#### a dancer

One day you will find yourself a dancer who will match your tempo, and keep her balance when you start to spin.

Someone whose steps
will float gently
down like a feather
or a cloud.

rather than collide with the ground or your shoes—

She'll be a shooting star

rather than a meteor clumsily crashing, thrashing around, and collapsing.

She'll be graceful and poised with pointed tip-toes and flat feet.

She'll be draped in ballerina slipper pink and silk, smooth and fluid like the steady flowing stream.

And I will be here, a tsunami, a klutz, fallen and wrecked,

skipping like stones

across the river

#### SHEA WINTERS

and somehow,

missing

all my steps

but

still dancing.



### i love you

Does not come to me Like a sigh of relief Or an epiphany. It does not sing To me like a mother Rocking her child Or a choir rejoicing. I love you Comes with a shot Of electricity, A panicked breath, A scream down An empty tunnel With no light on Either side. Because no matter Where I go now I love you Will haunt me. And no matter What you say, I love you Will remain.

### poison's kiss

I'm bleeding from

my lips

the ones you kissed the ones

you've kissed the ones

you've punctured

the ones

you've fed from

the ones

you've leached from.

and I've been bleeding

ever since

cannot bear it any longer-

got a sliver and was driven mad with hunger, vampire / sucker stolen from the light, aiming for the stake, and plunging again and again and again.

### words fail me

and i am chewing moths between my gums like paper butterflies cutting teeth and scraping raw the roof of the widest cavern i hide in.

stringing blades of grass like minted floss and striking at the cavity, falling out and losing brevity, shortening breaths and mistaking steps—

i catch myself before releasing the call and bite the tongue and hiss at the snake but still the reptile regenerates, and grows and grows and festers

until the skin needs to shed.

### ode to garden state

you liked me cuz i was crazy quirk'd girl manic pixie dream said i was like the chick from garden state said it cuz i lied so much but, kept fessin' up, said it just for fun, said it cuz natalie portman is hot and we were in the bar, said it again cuz i kept bluffin' and it's honestly, just cuz imaginary me is better than the truth me and the truth is that if you knew her you wouldn't like me any more.

#### I am an island

I am an island And I sea-latch My fetters To the plunge Of deep sand, Clamoring, Rattling Snakes, Vines that hang From sloping tree Branches I am an island And I'm stranded Like a floating Raft, Starving, Screaming, Choking on salt.

#### Love you just a little

Is it okay if I love you just a little? I promise I'll keep it tucked By the tail-end and dog-eared page, I swear I'll fold it up.

And you won't have to eat my words Even as they're spoon-fed Because you can simply close your mouth And the rest can stay unsaid.

But tonight I want to hold you till The moon shrinks into the horizon And I'll catch it if it thrills off, A sun-star beaming at the skies end.

There is no winner here
Till our faults become our pardon
I wish it could just disappear
But still weeds grow in the garden.

And still I'll pluck them all out, Soiled, rotten, spoiled spill— Until you decide to take your leave, Weakening my body for the kill.

But as the hearthfire burns up, I'll remain your glowing ember, Till the dust-keep blows me out—I'll stay alight and tinder.

#### i do

I straightened up my neck, folded into the pillow, warmed and beckoningmy back bridged, and I unlatched, eyes covered by fabric and blindsiding under my own weight, shifting, aching, and doubtinghow will we succeed if doomed by fate.

I want to live in your arms and stand still, unmoved, bouldered, shuttered, and enclosed, want to wait and become a sculpture, lovers entwined; a kiss; a picture formed from volcanic ash and seared into time's forever memory, outlasting the end, but we—I—am so young, too young to grow old or to imagine growing old

and so I must

wait

and rely on faith!

but

ask

still,

till when will we remain?

# you and me~

still have more time

—I find it hard to keep watch on my wrists twine ties so tight and twists too far, red lines stark onto pale skin

you and me surrender turn silver

—cuffed, I chain my heart to your aorta and wait to be carried out flow with you, bloody and stained

you and me crimson your favorite

color, this love is as sour as it is sweet split me apart and plunder hands through the core of me,

pluck out rooting seeds and plant your body onto mine—

I know

the clock will chime

but

# i'm trying not to see him in you

but I can smell the booze on your breath, and I can see your secrets through the cracks of your bedroom door, even when you lock it tight.

I hear the conversation on your phone as you leave, and tell me to turn on the tv, and I can feel the pinpricks of fear pressing in my heart,

and the unanswered questions as you give me a kiss, a distraction, and crack a joke, curling next to me on the couch like nothing ever happened.

And maybe nothing did, but, in my head, I am a child again watching my dad bury his head in the toilet bowl before making me pancakes.

Swallowing still, as my stomach hollows, nothing but disappointment and flour.

I never wanted to be there again. But you remind me so much of him. I guess it's true what they say about patterns.

# mirroring

I fell in love with a mirror and it has broken me

beyond shame beyond remorse

I wrap my own fingers around my own fingers

and I squeeze until the feeling

lingers and prickles like

needles prodding fresh grown skin

I keep scarring over scars

and tearing from within

it's too soon to see a reflection

but there, in the light,

it is, and mocking.

# wake up

You want to see me grow but im tired of stretching my limbs so far only for them to snap and You want to see me change but im tired of always molding myself into something new only for the rain to wash away all the progress and You want to see me be stronger but im so tired of my muscles aching and pushing past the pain and moving forward anyway and putting on a brave face and enduring and surviving and adapting and bouncing back because this "too shall pass" and i know it to be true but why, why must i always be reminded when all i wish is to shrink and stay the same and weaken You force me to stand when all i want to do is lie down and im tired and maybe im self destructing when WE are trying to build OUR life WE are in this together and WE can't let each other break

but im so tired

and You're never awake.

### breaking down

My car broke down so I cannot drive to see you on Friday.

And I want you to say 'that's okay' you'll see me anyway.

But I know that would inconvenience you.

And I never want to inconvenience you.

In fact, I want to convenience you, so I'll make myself so convenient to you

so even if I don't believe that it's true, I'll tell myself that it's okay too.

#### the chore

I'm starved and I'm taking chunks from my own heart to satisfy my needs when all I do is plead for your attention and you say you're trying but your trying won't keep the belly full and my crying won't make you want me more so where does that leave us when the chase becomes the chore?

# your pillow

I would like to be your bed, the pillow where you rest your head. I would like to be your sheets, the covers that tuck in your feet. I would like to hold you close, cradle you like a baby, swaddled. I would like this very much, if only you'd like it just as much.

# I'll be sorry this time

I always knew you'd leave so maybe I'll leave first because maybe then the leaving won't hurt as bad.

And I'll have one foot out the door and be ready for the aftermath and I'll be the sorry one this time

And I'll be sorry.

Maybe I'll be sorry.

#### undone

to when will i beat my first dead drum? like poets dancing around the fire, with burn scars chasing their feet: hearts yearning with the most earnest of desires, hunger climbing up the throat and sizzling teeth. i've been told heat rises and it's funny how much is known and how, still, it surprises. to when will i learn to slice my words before they throw the first stone? like a martyr, i bleed and i bleed like pomegranate seeds

#### THE HUNGER

spilling from the mouth

of the

unseen mistress

and bursting on the biting tongue —

i sing and i sing

until all songs all sung

or, rather,

it all comes undone.



### fade

Tired of an insipid population Fear the day where I have to rise above it I'm the same as them yet I feel so different Does everyone feel this way? We're all the same, But there's so much hate Who cares because I know I'll die anyway Put so much into looking pretty When soon my skin will decay Feel my soul fading away Black is the night without the stars And stars are just balls of gas, Scars burned onto our brains. Soon, we'll all be fossils and Carbon molecules, nutrients to the earth. Why does anyone try to escape oblivion While still being completely oblivious? And lost. Fall down, left marks and Peeled skin from sunshine rays Chorus fade fade fade And we will all fade fade fade Fade fade fade