



# *The Thumping Part*

*miles millikan*

*hi,*

*this is a collection.....*

i don't know if it's *all* depressive,  
but it's the sound my hands have made  
in attempts to knead out this existence dough  
during this time of me  
not sure how far i'll get.....

i do want to preface --

i'm not *trying* to say anything with these  
maybe just that you're beautiful and you should write the thing down however you want...  
but if i got caught up in trying to write stuff around a message  
i don't think i'd ever write anything

so these are some stories  
and some characters  
who i love very much  
that i'm giving to you all because...  
i think i love you all very much too...

but...

words can only do so much  
but they can also do SO much

so,

whatever that all means...

enjoy <3

the 1st park

*two 6 year-olds snore loudly in a park*

*on a warm summer night in Milwaukee,*

*Firs is resting at the foot of the slide with their feet dangling off  
and Quinn is lying on the rubber ground beneath Firs' feet*

*Firs' legs aren't long enough to reach the ground  
so their dangling, unlaced sneakers are like a little mobile for Quinn.*

*then,  
while deeply wrapped in their own dreams*

*a single firefly flourishes above them,  
blinking its summer song.*

*and right as it is just above the two of them,  
their snores sync,  
which causes them, still in their sleep, to laugh  
ugly, snorty laughs*

*and thus,*

*in 14 years*

*they will fall blindingly in love with each other*

ice story

Gwen put her pen down  
 and looked out the window that was always above her desk.  
 through the circular reinforced glass,  
 she saw the violent blizzard of the arctic

guzzling peace and serenity.

believe it or not,  
 Gwen *chose* to live here,  
 fought for it her whole life, in fact

and,  
 being the daughter of two african american revolutionaries  
 studying for months on end in the arctic  
 was not something easily swallowed by her parents  
 and not something easily loved by Gwen  
 but,  
 she *did* love it  
 the ecosystem, the weather patterns  
 the wasteland of ancient mysteries buried beneath frozen stone  
 this place filled her with a sense of humanity  
 that she always felt so just-out-of-reach from in herself

but in this moment,  
 with her pen down,  
*that* thought came back,  
 the thought that can miraculously invalidate  
 an entire lifetime of her own passion.

and the reason the thought was so scary,  
 was because it felt *very* true,

sometimes Gwen worried about  
 how sometimes sad things

can feel the most true....

the thought was this:

*i want to run away  
i want to run away to some frozen arctic tundra,  
because then i can hide  
like a polar bear with its fur,  
i can insulate myself behind thick coats and dense metals  
that i say i use to keep me warm*

*when really,  
i'm just insulating my truths  
covering myself so no one has to see me  
so that i don't have to worry about not wanting anyone to see me  
my hiding is smart  
in fact, my hiding is necessary, it's top-notch*

Gwen was the only one stationed out in this research facility  
the scientists rotate every 90 days to avoid participant insanity,  
and it was day 29

to combat the echoing feedback of her own blinding insecurity,  
Gwen would take multiple baths a day

**the research facility had an exceptional bathtub,  
because the architect who designed the building  
was a lesbian named Dee Basin  
who was in love with the head scientist, Roberta Goldberg**

**but with Roberta Goldberg being a straight woman,  
and a married-to-a-man woman,  
Dee's only way to express her love to Roberta  
was to cater to her incessant love of baths**

Gwen wanted to spend more time in her naked self,  
because she felt like doing so would reassure her she was, indeed, not afraid of herself  
and plus she knew soaking in warm water was good for your skin,

'er something....

but every time she would sit,

every time she would submerge in the majestic porcelain,  
she would only last a minute or two

before stepping out,  
putting on all of her warm socks and coats and pants and goggles  
and walking out into the blinding snow

to let the shrieks of the cold  
harmonize with the screams inside her

*is this what i really want?*

she asked herself every time

*is **this** what i really want?*

she knew the answer was yes,  
she just didn't know why she felt so goddamn unlovable  
because of it

~~~~~b~u~t~~~~s~o~m~e~w~h~e~r~e~~~~e~l~s~e~~~~~

*how sad,*

the creator thought out loud

*why?*

one of her angels responded

*if only she'd open her eyes....  
she'd see just how grateful the blizzard is  
for her unbreakable ferocity*

maggie

maggie saw the pretty girl's face illuminated by the glow of her lava lamp

something she got when she was a freshman  
and thought to herself how silly it would be to own

*haha imagine if i had a lava lamp....*

but her mother insisted  
said it was part of the college experience  
and maggie never told her mom  
but she was grateful she did that

maggie saw the pretty girl's cheekbones caked in the soft reds and purples of the goo lamp

she hadn't noticed much about this girl  
considering they met on tinder the day before  
and had only been in this apartment for 46 minutes

46 of which maggie spent with her heart racing

but then the pretty girl

who's name is removed to protect her identity....

put on a chet baker song

to which maggie softly and performatively exclaimed  
'oh fuck yes'

to which the pretty girl corrected herself, muttering

*shit wait what the fuck no hahahaha  
uhhhhhh*

and then she put on a song maggie had never heard before  
it had a didgeridoo  
and cymbals

and....bats?

it was a nonsensical song

and the pretty girl immediately laid back on maggie's bed with her eyes closed

and maggie looked at her  
, her cheekbones in the lava lamp light

and wondered if being this care-free was better  
wondered if being this unaware of another person's reaction

was easier

and maggie felt her chest get warm  
felt a rush down her legs  
she realized she was still staring at the girl's cheekbones

*do you really want me to be the person you freak out about?*

maggie heard the pretty girl say  
with eyes still closed.  
she floated them open but looked not at maggie

*you can kiss me,  
i'm really good at kissing*

*and i think you're really pretty*

*but if you fall in love with me, that can't be on me  
i need you to know i've gotten really good at taking care of myself  
and so if you fall in love with me i will cut you out of my life  
i won't hesitate*

maggie felt how annoying her own voice was,  
even though she hadn't actually said anything in hours

*this shit is whack man,  
this shit is whack.....*



the pretty girl got up from maggie's bed and walked over to maggie's desk  
started fingering around the cluttered contents like it was her own skin

*like, i don't know what your deal is  
you don't know what mine is*

*we like could very well have been lying to each other all night  
about who we are, trying to make ourselves seem really cool....  
but we all want connection too badly to do that  
so all we're really doing is pitifully attempting to communicate  
what little we understand about ourselves  
to someone else in an incredibly complicated situation  
can i smoke this?*

maggie had been looking at her duvet cover  
at the drool stain on one of her pillow cases  
she looked and saw the girl holding up her pipe

a little banana pipe she bought at hemp fest when she was dating that boy

**for sure!**

she hated that that was her response

hated it even more when the pretty girl didn't smoke out of the pipe  
and instead just put it back down exactly where she found it

....at least put it somewhere else

peutrid

mr. howard was a man without much skin

he's a 58 year old man  
dating a 25 year old girl

he loves having sex with her,  
however,

whenever they do,  
she always screams out

*you like that young pussy?*  
*yeah? that young pussy?*

and....  
mr. howard always felt uncomfortable in those moments  
because....  
her pussy was the only pussy he had ever interacted with  
so....  
he had no comparison,

and thus, would usually just give a nondescript grunt whenever she asked

this, though providing  
no actual substance  
satisfied claire,  
the 27 year old

who had run into mr. howard  
in what could only be called pure cosmic happenstance  
behind an goodwill on new year's eve in 2017  
where they fucked for the first time

and claire *really* likes fucking older men.  
now,

of course,  
 the age of an 'older man' has changed for claire as she grew older  
 but essentially it was any man who she, at that point in her life

would call **OLD**.

something about it felt very powerful to her  
 by the time she was 16 she would sleep with strange men in their 30's  
 and in their 40's

men she would meet in chat rooms  
 men she'd meet at bus stops

she never kept this kind of thing a secret from her friends  
 however,  
 she noticed whenever she told anyone what she would do  
 friend or foe,

people seemed to get *extremely* uncomfortable.

and part of her really liked that,

that a genuine desire of hers made people feel so uncomfortable.

her FAVORITE thing, in fact,  
 the true thing  
 that she wouldn't be able to hold with acceptance  
 until she turned 23

was how,

at some point,

whether before,

after,

or during sex,

claire could tell that

what the men she was with were really thinking  
 was,

*oh god what am i doing?*

she's so young,  
what am i doing?

.....

she liked that it seemed....  
that the people who liked her....  
well -- the older men who liked her, to be specific  
also seemed to be *afraid* of the fact that they liked her....  
so when they were with her....  
they were simultaneously indulging in their greatest desire  
and frenching their greatest fear  
and she liked being people's angel and devil at the same time

liked that, in a very tangible way, she had an immense amount of power

that all she had to do  
to make any one of them dissolve into shame  
was look them in the eyes.

and *that*  
was well, simply put,  
**really** hot to her

and mr. howard,  
as we've already covered

is a man without much skin.

and claire could feel that the very first time they fucked  
in that alleyway behind a Goodwill.  
claire felt with extreme confidence  
that mr. howard was a man who would *never* come to terms with himself

and so, naturally,  
having lived a life where every person she was with

was all-consumed with their feelings about her  
 she assumed mr. howard's unsureness resulted from her

and since his unsureness was the ripest  
 and, in some ironic way,  
 the *youngest* unsureness she'd ever felt  
 she decided to keep him around

because he wasn't sure of himself

but also because he kissed her like he likes her....

and also because he remembers how much she likes baths....

\*\*\*\*\*

but,  
 in reality,

mr. howard never gave much thought to their age difference  
 again,  
 he'd never been sexually touched by anyone before claire  
 -- he was more confounded by the fact that anyone could physically enjoy him at all....

the unsureness....  
 well the unsureness **certainly** wasn't about that  
 mr. howard's relentless unsureness wasn't about claire at all

in reality, mr. howard's unsureness was,

and always is

about the same  
 single

thought.

that first came into his head  
 when he was 13

and hasn't left his echo chamber since.

**never** cleared away

pestering his every day,

crashing every subtle moment,

and colonizing all moments of serenity in his  
 skinless life.....

the thought was this:

*ugh,*

*what a strange body i have.*

*what an absolutely abominably weird shape i'm in*

*i have never seen anyone with arms like these*

*nobody....*

*do you think some people don't feel like that?*

*some people must*

*some people must have the bodies that we all refer to as The Bodies*

*do you think those people feel like a normal body?*

*some people's experiences are just more normal than others*

*and nobody will ever know what anyone else's experience really is*

i dont wanna do laundry

solly peterson's day began with him waking up in bed  
he was in pain.  
this was a sure-fire sign that the day was not going to be good.

whether this was his own projection  
or a truly never-failing sign from the universe

whenever solly woke up in some sort of bodily pain  
the day to follow was never good  
and so,  
solly peterson had a terrible day  
he found 2 voicemails from his angry mother  
a hole in his favorite shirt  
he was out of groceries  
but was too sorry for himself to leave the house  
so he decided today would be a day where he didn't eat

this lasted until 2:30 in the afternoon  
when, after masturbating  
and 'accidentally' ejaculating onto his television

solly peterson felt an emptiness

a wallowing emptiness inside of him.....

....he looked at the semen dripping down the pornography still playing on his television

normally after orgasming,  
solly felt some sort of guilt or shame

especially when he 'accidentally'  
ejaculates onto his own television

but  
the sight....  
filled him with nothing.  
and the noises of the pornography filled him  
with nothing

perplexed....he began thinking of all the things he usually  
anxiously and repetitively thinks about

his ex-girlfriend  
his mother  
time passing by  
death  
.....  
he knew there had to be more  
he spends most of his day in anxiety  
but.....

all of the things he thought of  
filled him with nothing....

not to be mistaken with  
thinking of these things *did not* fill him with anything

it appeared that everything, whether in his own mind  
or tangibly existing things in the loopy space around him  
actively filled him with more and more  
nothing.....

*how perplexing....*

solly peterson thought  
(though he did not feel perplexed,  
as he only felt nothing,  
he did feel that the situation was itself, perplexing)



this was a kind of high he had never experienced before  
some gaping nothingness  
some renewable, never-ending blankness

and so,  
he stood up  
surprised that he did so,  
walked over to the door,  
almost as though he was watching a television show.  
he saw his hand reach for the doorknob  
saw his fingers wrap around the metal knob  
he felt how cold the thing was

*hmm*

and then solly peterson,  
in one of the most entertaining hours of his life  
watched himself go to the grocery store  
and spend three hundred and sixty two dollars and sixty three cents on groceries

absolutely drunk,  
on nothing

a tessellation

god looked inwards,  
at her creations  
which was around her stomach....

she looked at one in particular,  
a human,  
but for our purposes we'll call them a snail

we'll call all humans snails

so god looked,  
concerned,  
at this snail

who spent so very much time in bed

now, god didn't think there was a use of time that was worse than any other  
not a construction worker, an artist, a politician, a soldier  
god didn't think there was any good or proper use of one's time

she was sad when the snails started thinking that way,  
thinking that there is something they *should* be doing with all this time they're inside of,  
because it's something she herself deals with  
something she hasn't figured out either.....

but god watched this snail,  
watched....  
a member of the smartest species on this mossy planet  
a member of the species who had achieved evolutionary success

lay in a swimming pool of her own self-inflicted torment.....

and....  
this was peculiar to god

the snail spent so many hours in the same position

staring blankly into a small screen  
 or a medium screen  
 or sometimes even a medium screen that played audio  
 while she stared at a little screen  
 god believed the complexity of the snail's relationship with this technology  
 could not be understated.  
 it confounded every idea she had about life,  
 every idea she had about snails....

that the snail's universe had shrunk so considerably in the physical sense  
 but expanded to infinity in this 'digital' universe

the snail was watching videos that were posted by people rioting in Washington D.C.,

~~~~~ ~ ~` ~~~~~ ~` ~~~~~ ~`~~~~~`

which was the most important place  
 within the place she lived,  
 according to the place she lived.

`~`~~~~~`~`~~~~~`~`~~~~~`~`~~~~~`

the snail would watch videos of food,  
 of songs,  
 of islands she would never see otherwise  
 she had access to everything....

*is there such a thing as too much access?*  
*do i want them to know as much as me?*

god thought,

*maybe if they didn't have it*  
*they'd awaken into that dreamer/explorer*  
*that longs for the stars....*

but....

no matter.....

this is where the snail was....

lying on her bed....

lonelier than she felt expressable....

her phone was resting upside down....

the snail had gotten nauseous

of how much she hated what she was doing

so she just thought about what it meant to be a snail

-- something she does pretty obsessively --

the snail felt like she was one of many pirates,

*kids*

*kids in the stars*

*kids sailing in the stars on their own ships*

*big magical ships made of stars and constellations*

*and it's night*

*cold*

*it's dark blue*

*and we're all sailing somewhere*

*it's magical*

*this.....*

she was beginning to journal!!!

*this magical connection*

*it's beyond comprehension.....*

*where am i going? am i becoming someone?*

*is this my voice here? do i sound like this?*

*is this what i think i **actually** am?*

*like do i think this way that i write is my soul....*

*do i think that the way i type is the way i breathe....*

*do i think of myself now as what i put out of myself online.....*



started thump

i

n

g... .

t hh u mpi nn g... .

bb i iii i iii gg

llaa yy e e rr s

oo o ff bb re a a t h iing

ii i i i i i i n n n n nnn nn nnn n n n

a a a aaaaaa a nn n nddn nddd oooo uu uuu u ttttt

the snail collapsed onto her bed.....  
her eyes buzzing inside her skull  
one million thoughts  
bouncing around her hot furnace head  
and the snail felt that heat  
felt like her heart was sweating.....

this doesn't feel ll ..... .. goo d .....

the snail's room was dark  
and she was alone in it

w ww w hh y y y d i ddd dd i. .... ?

www w w hh y y dd o oo i ll iii kk e tt hh is?

god still watched.....  
and realized she didn't know why either....



why doesn't sushi make us feel sick?

michael

schrimer was having a terrible bout of awkwardness

michael was a man who lived alone  
he was 23  
but had been living on his own since he was 15  
after his mother was diagnosed with brain cancer  
and his father committed suicide

michael has had a very sad past 8 years  
and no one has called him 'michael' since his father committed suicide  
in fact, the last thing michael's father said to him was this:

*this whole damn world's a mess....  
supposed to bring up a child,  
someone who knows nothing about this world,  
and i'm supposed to convince you this is a place of wonder?  
me....  
i'm supposed to lie about the mess of this world....  
and leave you to discover it on your own....?  
no.....listen to me,  
this world is a mess, michael  
this world is fucking mess*

and then michael's father shot himself in the mouth with a small pistol he purchased from a Wal-Mart

his mother lasted another 46 days.....

.....

but,

michael

schrimer wasn't thinking about his tragedy right now,

though he believed everything in his life was related to it

right now michael schrimer was simply lying on his couch  
with a copy of *Call Me By Your Name* on his chest



it was 11:30 in the morning on a Tuesday.  
 and michael could not seem to breathe right  
 his eyes were sore from all the looking he'd been doing  
 his muscles tight from all the trauma they were holding  
 and each time he tried to hear his shrink's voice in his head

*take a deep breath in,,,,,,*  
*and release,,,,,,*

his release would sound hoarse  
 his release would sound like another homeless teen he roomed with  
 in an abandoned warehouse

this boy's name was Moss

moss was obsessed with acting,

which michael hated

moss was obsessed with relaxation and meditation

which michael didn't hate  
 but michael was positive moss was not very good at either of these things  
 and so michael hated just how good moss thought he was relaxing

moss would average 2 deep, loud and unapologetic sighs every minute, every day

and while michael didn't know how it *felt* for moss  
 he did know it just made *him* feel more and more tense

michael found moss one day with his neck broken right outside the warehouse

he never found out what happened to him....  
 he didn't even say any words  
 he just let out a sigh.

--

so today,  
 6 years after that broken-necked day  
 michael is trying to take deep breaths,  
 within each one, an entire microcosm of  
 hate                      weeping                      frustration

discontentment      fury      sorrow      loneliness      hopelessness  
fear      longing

he thought he sounded exactly like moss,

which made him feel like he wasn't acting like himself at all

but when he would do *nothing*, he felt uncomfortable,  
and when he would scream and punch and tear he felt uncomfortable,  
and when he tried to be soft and touch himself he felt uncomfortable,

so, michael schrimper just felt,

and felt

and felt

and felt

and felt

in hopes he would feel all the feelings up  
so no one else in this world would ever have to feel these uncomfortable things ever again

.....of course, this did not work  
feelings are not stacks of cans on a shelf  
they're the product of one's own chemicals

so while micahel's martyric torture was completely futile,  
it quietly filled his suffering with a sense of purpose,  
and for that,  
god did not intervene.

the story i told you i'd write

wake up

adrienne shook the sleeping boy's strong shoulder,  
wake UP, i have something i wanna read to you

wha?

the sleeping boy,  
whose name adrienne did not know,  
was sleeping against one of the walls  
passed out

ohgod

the sleeping boy's head began to erupt  
with sunlight and bird calls and sunday church and slinkys,  
the world was splashing against the inside of his skull  
but nothing was making it out of his mouth except for

fuck

so adrienne continued,

*last night i couldn't sleep and tried waking you up, but you wouldn't wake up  
so i was just like lying awake for like hours and hours and hours  
and i remembered i had this english teacher in the 4th grade,  
but i guess it was called like "language arts" or whatever, which is crazy  
this teacher, i remember i wrote some short story about like thanksgiving in class  
and she told me after class,  
she said like, wow you're really like, good at writing  
you have a real, like, **voice** to you, you know?  
....and i had like completely forgotten about it until last night  
but for whatever reason this memory came back to me last night  
and played on repeat for like days it felt like*

the boys hands were over his face  
he was moaning,  
like the rotting floorboards of a pirate ship  
his palms were pressed into his eyes so firmly  
he thought he might be able to reach into his head and pull the world out

*and i was lying there thinking,  
 why am i remembering this?  
 why am i remembering this now??? you know?  
 like i could've.....i guess there wasn't like a **better** time to remember that but....  
 like why would i remember something like that in the middle of the night in a heroin house?  
 and i raise my head up and i see you,  
 slumped over against the wall, with your head on the like....whatever the bottom thing is called*

the boy's face was on the floor now  
 sweat was pooling from his face onto the rotting wood  
 his body was quiet  
 but the kind of quiet that sounds a lot like death

*and i felt this like....FLURRY OF EMOTION COME OUT OF ME*

the boy vomited on the floor  
 while his face was pressed against it....  
 so his face....  
 was in a pool of his own vomit

*oh my god!!!*

adrienne moved the boy out of the pool

*are you okay?*

the boy could feel all of his red blood cells behind his eyes  
 pounding at the doors  
 pounding to get out  
 he did not hear what adrienne had asked  
 but he happened to let out a breath  
 that was, for him, an attempt to ease the overwhelming nausea he felt  
 which adrienne took as an affirmation to her question  
 and so she continued,

*so like, in this moment,  
 i had been visited by a persisting memory,  
 and things only persist if they want something,  
 my dad told me that once.  
 things only persist if they want something....  
 so this memory was persisting,  
 and i looked at you,  
 and a FLURRY happened*

*and i realized  
 this!!!  
 this is why the memory was here!  
 i was in the middle of some galactic alignment!  
 some spiritual conjoining of time and space and memory!!  
 all on the floor of this house!!  
 and so i took out my phone and just started writing  
 i just wrote down anything i was thinking of  
 anything i saw  
 ....and....  
 i wanna read it to you....  
 is that cool?*

the boy was quiet.

the boy was quiet.

his mother didn't know that he was now quiet.

but the boy was quiet.

adrienne read the following story from the notes app in her phone.

There was once a girl. There was a girl who was on fire. And there was a boy who was also on fire. They were both on fire and they lived in a forest. A forest of things that burned when touched by fire. But the girl and the boy were *on* fire. They were the kind of animals that were on fire for forever. And those kinds of animals have to find other animals who are on fire, because anything not on fire would just catch on fire. And for some reason, all the things in the forest didn't like being caught on fire.

*initially that's where i stopped writing,  
 and i read it and was like  
 'holy shit, that's good!'  
 and i didn't wanna fuck it up by writing more  
 but then i realized,*

she said to the quiet boy who had vomit resting in his quiet throat

*there's no such thing as backwards,  
 if i fuck it up! the good-whatever doesn't exist anymore!  
 it's just what it is now!  
 i can't lose anything because there's no such thing as backwards*

*so i just kept writing*

There's no such thing as backwards. There's no such thing as backwards. There's NO SUCH THING AS BACKWARDS. Said the on-fire girl animal to the on-fire boy animal. And they shouted together. They shouted it so loudly they spit fire at each other. And it burned like ice burns hot chocolate. And it melted like June melts into July. And the animals felt the bottoms of their stomachs glowing with earthworms. Earthworms that were on fire. And then the animals grabbed hold of each other's faces and started eating each other. Started eating each other while they cried. And while they cried they screamed. And while they screamed they came. And while they came they laughed. And while they laughed they cried. And they were there, wrapped in each other's blindingness all night. They were there for as long as darkness lasted. They were there until darkness gave up in the universe. Until light was all there was left. Until fire was the only thing that walked the earth. And when that happened, the animals who were on fire were so happy and so full with themselves that they collapsed. They collapsed onto each other and into each other and there was so much of each other in both of them now that it was impossible for either of them to tell themselves apart. And they liked that. And they both smiled. Big smiles. Big, big, big smiles like they used to get when they were kids playing in the park. And then their smiles reached out and caught everything on fire. And because darkness had given up long ago, everything was happy. Everything rejoiced now that the fire was finally sharing itself, sharing what it knew, with the rest of the world. And then everything was on fire. Everything. But the animals? The animals were asleep.

it was quiet,  
for a while,  
long enough for the place to sound like a junkie house again

*i don't know about the ending  
just like, everything passed uhhhh  
"big smiles like they used to get when they were kids playing in the park"  
i really like that line*

adrienne smiled at her phone,  
her rotting skin  
glowed by the phone light

*but, yeah,*

*the after is like  
i don't know, it's not bad  
but it's not like....  
i just --  
at that point i had started thinking about how it should end  
and it got me in my head and.....  
yeah....  
endings were always my least favorite part.....  
of like....anything  
i never liked endings....  
i would close my eyes sometimes when i would go to the movies as a kid....  
right at the ending  
i would close my eyes so i could just like  
imagine it.....  
i always liked that better.....*

wind

marcel was in some sort of dream,  
 some apparently very stressful one,  
 because when he came into consciousness,  
 his entire bed was soaked in sweat

ugh  
 uGH

the bed was now wet  
 and cold  
 it reminded him a lot of when he used to wet his bed

marcel wasn't awakened from his locked dream by chance  
 he was awakened by the considerable sound of someone dry heaving just below his window

....marcel slept with his bed next to the window  
 ....and always slept with the window open  
 ....but only when it was really windy at night  
 ....and when he had gone to bed the wind was howling

but now as marcel gooped his eyes down below his window  
 even though the skies were dry,  
 and not a single drop of rain was falling  
 he heard his favorite sound of all time

## ROLLING THUNDER

marcel had never consciously thought  
 about *why* he loved the sound of thunder so much  
 but because i have written him  
 i am inside of his head  
 i am inside of his bones and his soul and his blood  
 and i can convey to you  
 just *why* he thought thunder was so extraordinary  
 and this was the reason:

---



*lighting*  
     *is a scattered beam of light*  
         *a linear explosion*  
*that races towards the earth in such chaos*  
         *and kisses the ground*  
         *kisses the ground so hot that it blows the fuck up*

*and marcel liked destruction,*  
     *liked watching it very much,*  
         *he would spend all night on the website reddit looking at car*  
*crashes and public fights and workplace accidents that ended in enormous destruction*

*something about it soothed him in a way that scared him.*

*but thunder.....*  
*something about thunder was peaceful*  
*that was what marcel had never voiced or thought for himself*

*that because thunder is so far away,*  
*because thunder is invisible,*  
*because it doesn't have a body like lightning does,*  
*it poses no threat*

*it should be noted that thunder and lightning are one in the same*  
*thunder is the booming sound that shatters off of lightning's extraordinary explosion*  
     *but, in one of the strange beauties of the english language*  
         *we have given separate names to thunder and lightning*  
             *thus, at least in the imagination*  
                 *separating the two*  
             *allowing each of them to take on their own identities*  
                 *their own personalities*  
             *which is why thunder can exist so peacefully*  
                 *so much like a dream*  
             *because with words*  
                 *we've severed it*

*so,*  
*marcel, without knowing it,*  
     *liked that thunder could lie like that*

---

marcel heard another dry heave

he peaked down to the sidewalk  
it was still pitch black out  
and the streets were deserted  
no cars,  
no buses,  
no sounds except  
for the  
wind and the  
rolling thunder

the only thing that was out at this moment,  
was what appeared to be a man  
right below marcel's window  
leaned up against a dark-colored Honda minivan

the man was bracing himself on the hood of the car  
his head was hanging down  
he did not look good.

marcel just watched.

the man brought his head up and looked around

marcel scurried his own head down to the corner of his window  
afraid the man might turn around and look up,  
even though marcel knew nobody *ever* looked up into windows....  
it was one of the strangest things to marcel  
how little people paid attention to their surroundings

the man spit on the ground and then rested his head  
on the hood again  
he began to moan

the kind of moan a strong animal makes  
the kind of moan a man who wants to be strong makes  
( i.e. a really pathetic and sad moan of pain )

marcel gathered the man was probably drunk.  
 but that wasn't a particularly enlightened observation  
 even you've probably gathered that much  
 but,

marcel saw.....  
 the man.....  
 and....

the wind was blowing hard into his window  
 he thought about shutting it, but  
 knew the sound of closing it would give him away

*give me away?*

marcel thought,  
*i'm up here, why would i care if --*

the man took out his penis  
*oh my god.....is that?*

the man was standing upright now, looking around  
 with both hands on his penis

*he's gonna pee on the car*

and marcel was correct.  
 see, the man down below with his penis out was named Eduardo Vásquez  
 and his night had been absolutely terrible.  
 he spent it locked out of his own house  
 because his girlfriend at the time, Rebecca, refused to let him in

*get the fUck out of here!!!*

the girlfriend screamed at Eduardo from behind his front door

get the **FUCK** out of here!!!!

this has happened before,  
 and was a relatively regular occurrence.  
 Eduardo's girlfriend would meet someone  
 at a bar, or her work, or the bus stop, or a dating app  
 and decide she wanted to sleep with them  
 so she would take them back to her and Eduardo's shared house  
 and when Eduardo began unlocking the door of their shared house  
 she would scream at him to go away  
 without reason or explanation she would simply scream  
 guttural, life-threatening screams  
 sometimes the person she brought back would get involved  
 but always would they be on the side of her  
 and always would eduardo eventually leave.  
 he would walk for a while,  
 sleep somewhere on the street,  
 and then come back in the late morning  
 to his happy girlfriend  
 and a house that smelled a little less like himself.

eduardo always wondered if this was happening because he was dating a white woman...

this time, eduardo went to the bar by his house and stayed there until they closed  
 the bar keep, who was an excited and compassionate young puerto rican girl  
 who had seen the terrors of the world but come out the other side a soldier of compassion  
 she asked,

*you gonna be alright, eddy?*

and eduardo nodded his head

*it's real windy out tonight, you got somewhere to go?*

and eduardo nodded his head

this was a particular moment,  
 one i don't like very much to experience,

but i quite love to witness and think about  
 it'll happen again later on in this story.  
 the moment is this:

when the only things left to say between two strangers  
 are real, genuine soul truths  
 when the path of nonsense words happens to lead two people  
 to a crossroads where the only thing either person can think to say  
 are real, genuine soul truths....  
 there is a silence that falls  
 because both people feel the impulse to either say or ask the real thing  
 but both are too afraid to act on their instinct to connect  
 so they sit, quietly  
 in communal awareness  
 feigning simplicity

this moment happened between the bar keep and eduardo  
 luckily, the bar keep had been someone who'd had the world attempt to beat the love out of her  
 and emerged with her love still in tact  
 and so she was strong  
 and she had very little to fear  
 so she said to eduardo,

*it's none of my business here eddy,  
 but if you don't ever look this world in the eyes  
 for what it really is,  
 you'll be living in a sea of your own deception  
 and the only person you'll have to be angry at is yourself  
 are your own eyes....  
 the last enemy you want are your eyes, eddy  
 you gotta see this world for what it really is*

it was quiet....

this was not the genuine soul truth the bar keep  
 had the impulse to speak

the thing she had the impulse to say was

*i love you*

*i'm sorry this world is so cruel  
but you're going to die if you don't fight back  
and i don't want to see anymore people die*

it was quiet....

eduardo placed forty american dollars onto the bar  
slinked from his chair  
covered his head with his hood,  
and walked out into the storm....  
the bar keep sighed  
and pocketed his money.

so then,  
as you can imagine,  
eduardo did not think that his moment of gagging  
and subsequent peeing on a car at 3 in the morning  
was the climactic moment of his night.  
this was the boring part

but for the glowing pair of 21 year old eyes peeking from the 2nd story window  
it was.

and in a burst of courage,  
a few words left marcel's mouth  
and embarked out into this world.

*hey man,  
don't do that*

this was the most pathetic,  
most cowardly phrase  
that had ever come out of marcel's mouth  
it was so cowardly and pathetic, in fact,  
that it was gobbled up by the wind before even coming close  
to reaching eduardo's ear

and so eduardo began to pee on the car

*shit*

*h...hey! man! don't do that!*

this one didn't sound any more powerful

but it did have the gusto of someone playing meditation music too loudly  
and so was enough to reach eduardo

the drunk man turned his head toward the sound and saw the boy's white face  
which made him think of the face of his white girlfriend  
and.....

and wow they just looked at each other  
looked at each other for a while  
eduardo stopped peeing

*what?*  
eduardo responded  
it was calm  
it was whatever.

the boy didn't want to be in the situation he had brought himself into.

*you shouldn't pee on people's....you could just pee against that tree*

eduardo looked to his left  
to a sidewalk tree less than 10 feet from him  
but the world around him was rolling now....  
so he grabbed his head to stop it from falling off

*just....like people, like you don't know who that person is or what their story is you know?  
you're just peeing on their car*

eduardo puked.  
it landed on the street but caught the side of the car on the way down  
and pooled up at the front tire  
he puked two more times  
each with interludes of sad and echoing dry heaving  
and then he finished puking....  
and silence returned....

and,  
this.  
this is the moment where it happened again

where the only remaining things to say are magma truths

marcel looked and wondered why the first thing he said to a man clearly in distress was reprimanding. he felt, with extreme awareness, the falseness of the skin he was wearing. he felt like his least favorite kind of white man. he was scared. and now he was concerned. he wanted to apologize

eduardo was not intellectually moved, but upon throwing up, was sunk to a rock bottom so low that he felt with great understanding why people wanted to die. for the first time in his life he felt just how much of a release death might be. and that thought scared him. scared what humanity was still sober. and he was cold. and it was windy

and both men stayed still where they were.  
marcel's truthful impulse was to offer the man to come inside  
eduardo's true impulse was to tell the boy to go fuck himself

neither did it.

eduardo wiped his nose,  
put his hood back up,  
tucked his penis away,  
and slipped back into the river stream of the sidewalk

....  
marcel felt abysmal  
and then was asleep 7 minutes later

eduardo walked for another 20 minutes  
until resting behind a dumpster in an alleyway,  
as blocked as he could be from the wind  
feeling with extreme newness  
that he was capable of doing absolutely anything he wanted  
and didn't have to ask anyone's permission  
and for that,  
he fell asleep smiling

marcel woke up a few hours later in the morning  
and only halfway through his day did he realize  
the dark colored Honda minivan wasn't there anymore.



**you made me feel like the wanderer**

50 minutes outside of Boston,  
 north, specifically,  
 nuzzled gently within the extraordinary body of New England trees  
 on the wooden balcony railing of an isolated wooden cabin  
 there was a beetle.  
 a beetle the color of nighttime in your dreams  
 deep purple.  
 the kind of deep that really does appear you could fall into it forever.  
 and this extraordinariness of color was not ill-placed  
 for this beetle,  
 had an equally extraordinary level of intelligence.  
 it recognized itself, humans, thought deeply about its existence, about all its possibilities  
 this was an even *more* spectacular feat  
 considering beetles live between 10 days and 2 months  
 unfortunately, the beetle was not aware of this fact,  
 as this was knowledge the humans had access too  
 and humans had not yet decided it was worthwhile, or even moral, to share their knowledge with  
 the everything else  
 so,  
 this 2 month old beetle  
 sat,  
 hidden,  
 watching an 18 year-old girl

her name was allie  
 she was a soft person  
 she was a person easily hurt  
 and a person easily loved  
 this world was not made for soft people like that....  
 for whatever reason....  
 but,  
 she sat out on this deck,  
 tired,  
 and intoxicated,

it was 5 in the morning.

the glass door that leads out onto the deck slid open quietly  
 allie turned her head, almost awakened from a dream  
 and saw teresa  
 the girl she had been talking to for the last 2 hours,

and the girl she had been thinking about for the last week,  
in the doorway

she was holding an almost empty bottle of Sky Vodka  
and was making the face a child makes  
when creeping through their parents bedroom at night

she slid the door closed behind her

*they're all still asleep?*  
this was allie's voice

*pretty much, i just don't wanna be loud*  
and this was teresa's voice

allie noticed her own hand was shaking  
she wasn't entirely sure why.  
the previous 12 hours had been a non-stop flurry of  
socializing and drinking and smoking and heart racings  
combinations of things she never anticipated

*it's 5 in the morning, you're just tired*

allie thought to herself.  
when, in reality,  
this was not the truth  
and allie secretly knew the reason her hand was shaking was  
minutes before,  
while the two of them were sitting on the couch of the living room  
having talked about the past and boys and girls and dreams  
teresa put her hand over allie's and whispered

*can we go out on the deck?*

it was not even in the realm of consideration for allie to say no  
this was her first year in college  
and this human who put her hand over allie's  
was strong  
and fleshed out  
and exciting.  
she was a senior,  
and was the president of the acapella group she had just been let

into  
 this was the reason for the party  
 this was a “new memberz party”  
 which meant everyone in the acapella group  
 rented a cabin in the woods  
 and got as intoxicated as humanly possible  
 to show how welcoming they are to their new members  
 allie was one of these new members.

*yeah. yeah, let's do that*

allie had never been the person someone asked to do something  
 and she had certainly never been asked by a strong person  
 to spend time alone on a deck

teresa sat down in the wooden chair next to allie  
 these were the type of chairs that were big  
 whose seats were wide and slanted down  
 so you could slide back into it  
 and never want to leave.  
 she handed allie the bottle

allie didn't know why she was drinking  
 but she also wasn't questioning it  
 because it was handed to her by someone so strong  
 she would go on to drink a lot in college  
 the most she would drink would be in her sophomore year  
 because of how teresa would eventually ghost her  
 and continue to be strong and fleshed out

*this really feels like college to me*  
 this was teresa's voice again

allie looked back to teresa  
 who now was exhaling the smoke from a joint

*my god she's quick.*

*what do you mean?*

*like, spending a weekend in a cabin in the middle of the woods and like  
 getting drunk and doing drugs and dancing with all my friends?*

*and staying up all night haha*

this was allie's attempt at a joke  
teresa laughed

*yeah :)*  
*it's scary to think this is my last semester*

*scarier to think this is only my second haha*

teresa didn't laugh this time  
because allie made her think about time  
and how the day that she eventually dies  
will be the day many, many people are born  
and that scared her in a way she wasn't ready for

*god, it's crazy to me how young you are*

*w....what? hahaha*

allie really didn't understand

*you're like,*  
*i was **not** as cool as you are when i was a freshman*

she smoked more of the joint and handed it to allie

*oh my gosh, please, i am **not** cool*

allie said, matching teresa's self degrading-ness  
but teresa, it seemed, really believed otherwise

*come on....*  
*you're smoking,*  
*and stayed up all night....*  
*you dance like a fucking maniac hahaha,*  
*your audition was ridiculous*  
*i mean your vooiiicce?? UGH!*  
*i don't know*  
*i'm just really excited to see what you do*  
*and like, pretty envious, honestly, of people who are in your grade*  
*of people who get to see you go through all this*

allie's audition was, indeed, ridiculous  
 her voice was unbelievably good and refined  
 she had been in voice lessons since she was 3  
 because her mother told her to go  
 and she was smoking a joint and stayed up all night  
 because this strong girl said so  
 so allie felt proud of her ability to live up to people's expectations

*well yeah but you're like  
 i mean you're like **teresa**,  
 you know? like --*

*don't do that.*

this time teresa's voice was flat  
 it sounded like concrete  
 it startled allie  
 made her feel caught  
 made her think she was, in fact, a weird and obnoxious loser

*people are going to compliment you a lot  
 you're really cool.....  
 and for some reason everyone's response to compliments  
 has turned into complimenting the person who gave the compliment....  
 instead of just saying, like,  
 thank you  
 ...you're allowed to just say thank you  
 you're allowed to just be awesome*

this was advice allie took to heart  
 even after she was hurt by teresa,  
 she would remember this.

unfortunately,  
 it meant that when normal people gave her compliments  
 they would find her egotistical  
 for how she seemed to just accept it and say thank you  
 and people would see her receive compliments  
 and genuinely enjoy them,  
 and people would grow to hate allie

this was an example

of receiving advice you aren't yet ready for  
 or receiving knowledge the world isn't ready for you to know  
 and while it will inevitably help allie's strength and confidence,  
 it will make college and her early 20's unbearably lonely

*thank you*

allie said  
 teresa smiled  
 allie noticed  
 and liked that very much.

she felt special  
 she felt understood  
 she felt unbreakable

*can you sit on my lap?*

allie was shocked  
 that she asked something like that  
 that those words came out of her own mouth.

teresa looked at her  
 with eyes that spoke a million backyard secrets  
 painted red  
 painted with confidence

she laughed to herself

*this girl....*

she really couldn't believe how cool this girl was  
 she wasn't lying about that part

she got up from her wooden chair that she never wanted to leave  
 and saw the most beautiful beetle she'd ever seen  
 sitting on the handrail

she laughed to herself again  
 this time shaking her head while smiling

*this world....*

during this whole interlude,  
 allie was undergoing an extraordinary flurry of chemicals  
 she had just been confident  
 and acted on a desire,  
 something she was not used to at all  
 and was watching teresa meticulously  
 to try and find out if it was an appropriate thing to do or not

teresa was operating as though allie was extremely confident  
 teresa was operating as though allie saw herself  
 like she saw her  
 this would become a strange dysfunction within allie

as she too, would begin acting as teresa saw her  
 even though she herself didn't believe it

all the while,  
 if the beetle could have cried,  
 the beetle would have been weeping,  
 as it was falling into the deepest possible depths of love

so teresa,  
 in her glorious liquid self,  
 walked over  
 and dissolved into allie's lap.

they sunk deep into the wood of the armchair  
 laughing at the combined thud the act created

allie wrapped her arms around teresa  
 and held her there,

and they both fell  
 into the thickest and most velvet  
 feeling of comfort they'd ever felt

they let out sigh after sigh after sigh  
 wrapping tighter and happier and giddier

and teresa's hips began to move on top of allie's leg

and allie thought

*no,  
she's not....*

but she was  
and she moved her hips  
and she laughed softly  
and so did allie  
and their eyes were closed  
and they were breathing hot ice

and their fingers were pressing into each other's rubber skin  
and allie's hands helped teresa's hips move  
and allie pressed her face against the girl's back  
and her teeth latched onto her skin

feeling unspeakable feelings,  
feeling unsearchable questions  
they moved

not for very long.

they would have,  
but they were tired

so,  
they slowed  
like a fire at the bottom of its wood  
until they rested  
in awe  
and disbelief  
and happiness  
and without a single worry

this was the moment,  
allie would lose touch with for so long,

this was the moment,  
allie would feel disconnected from once she became so hurt

but this was the moment,



it really was

allie knew

and teresa knew

and the beetle....

allie would never know what she gave to the little guy

teresa had some idea,

but only because she read so much Mary Oliver

and the sun rose,

and the beetle flew towards it

towards the colors it now understood

towards the colors it now felt

towards the world it now knew it was

wanna go on an adventure?*wanna go on an adventure?*

james and charlie ran through the forest

*wanna go on an adventure?*

james and charlie were 5  
and their 5 year old legs were hopping and maneuvering  
'round ancient tree roots  
through shallow streams

james and charlie would run and run and run  
until their hearts were beating through their tongues  
until their backs stuck to the floor of leaves  
and their panting was intermingled with  
the hundreds of bird calls they knew not one of

*wanna go on an adventure?*

james and charlie were best friends through middle school  
always going back to charlie's house  
because charlie's house had the Xbox  
and james' house only had an alcoholic father,  
and a very tired mother.  
so...

*wanna go on an adventure?*

james punched charlie in the chest  
hard  
charlie looked through the shock  
james' lip was still wet from his.  
there was an almost invisible string of saliva connecting their two lips  
both boys were shocked  
both boys kissed each other again

*wanna go on an advn....*

james looked into his rearview mirror  
through the stacked boxes in his trunk he could see  
a wilted charlie

waving goodbye  
 james' chest hurt bad  
 james' chest had never hurt so deep inside before

*i wanna.....*

charlie came inside his roommate's mouth.....  
 he felt like he had moaned too loudly

*i.....*

james found the window on the 8th floor that opened all the way  
 he liked sitting on the windowsill with it open  
 looking at all the other college kids walking below.  
 he would sit here for an hour sometimes  
 thinking  
 about clouds....  
 about texts he thinks he should send....  
 every once and while about charlie....  
 but mostly about leaning a little too far out the window

.....

charlie asked why every time he felt like he said something truthful  
 it was so goddamn fucking depressing  
 his therapist responded by reminding him he was perfect

*there's.....*

charlie quit his job at Wendy's  
 after he dissociated through an entire shift and managed pretty well  
 charlie didn't like how his life felt

*mom always.....*

james followed the steps exactly  
 he failed.  
 3 times, in fact  
 but on the 4th attempt.....  
 he had made the most beautiful cheesecake he'd ever seen

*james?*

.....

*charlie?*

*.....*

*hey*

*oh my god look at you*

*look at you! are you kidding*

*you look good*

***you** look good are you --*

*gosh you*

*god*

*god*

*i missed you*

*.....*

*sorry*

*no no*

*i missed you too*

*crazy to think uh*

*crazy to think how long ago*

*yeah*

*sometimes it really feels like yesterday*

*oh yeah?*

*sometimes i feel like it feels like a lifetime away*

*oh....*

*oh*

*sorry if that was --*

*how long are you back for?*

*oh uh*

*just 'till the end of the week*

*damn*

*yeah  
you?*

*oh, just till thursday*

*oh shit*

*yeah*

*shit.....*

*yeah*

*we should uh*

*we should catch up*

*yeah*

*i would love to hear about how like // how like everything has been*

*yeah like  
i would love to  
i would really like that*

*okay....*

*okay....*

it was quiet.  
the lake was still  
the morning fog had closed over everything  
so the air felt like dream air

and maybe if the fog wasn't there  
maybe james would have felt too exposed  
and would have kept walking

but....  
the fog was there

and through the silence  
and through the dream air

james sat down on the bench next to charlie....

.....

.....

.....

.....

i could tell you more  
i could tell you so much more about their relationship  
about their life that followed, but....  
but the point is

james sat down on the bench  
next to charlie  
in the fog

sometimes i'm worried by how long i realize i've gone without actively loving myself

---

*there's a bear in the middle of the woods*

---

*but despite what he thinks, he's really more like a dumpling*

---

*so we'll call him a dumpling.*

---

*there's a dumpling in the middle of the woods  
a dumpling who got stuck in hibernation.*

*this is a rare occurrence in the animal kingdom  
but every so often,  
a bear's body will decide it likes hibernating more than going outside  
this is a survival tactic, see  
the bear's body has **no** nutrients when in hibernation  
it's practically at the point of death*

*and so, in a decision  
completely unregulated by the bear's conscious mind  
the bear's body decides that reserving its remaining strength  
as opposed to getting up and going outside  
is actually the smartest thing to do  
and so the thought of not moving then becomes more appealing to the bear*

ahem.

*so this dumpling  
has been lying in his cave  
for about 10 months now  
he's essentially all skin and bones  
with his fur draped over his skeleton like dali clocks*

*he's curled up like a caterpillar  
with his eyes half opened  
staring at the mouth of its cave*

sunlight....  
 wildflowers....  
 salmon....

*the dumpling's stomach began digesting its pelvic floor*

*that hurt the dumpling*

*that made the dumpling try to relax deeper  
 curl up tighter  
 love itself better*

*the dumpling remembered when the mouth of the cave*

*only showed snow  
 only showed harsh, threatening landscapes  
 that pressed the dumpling back into safe sleep  
 and the dumpling dreamt about sunny skies  
 about tearing bark off a tree with its thick back*

*about rolling down a hill*

*about falling asleep in the middle of sunshine  
 and waking up to a sky laced with pink*

*.....and now it was all out there....  
 .....it's all right there....*

*the dumpling didn't have many thoughts  
 considering it was a bear*

*it did have more thoughts, though  
 than humans believed bears have*

*this little dumpling averaged about 2 thoughts an hour  
 the rest of the time was just unquestioned instinct*

*it's all right there....*



*the dumpling creaked his head up  
 and dripped its eyesight all around the light outside the cave  
 he huffed out a breath  
 one that made a passing hiker in short shorts and glasses run very fast for a very long time*

*it's right there*

*it's right there*

*no.....*

*oh?*

*no.....*

*it's here*

*oh....*

*it's....*

*it's right here, see?  
 see how tired your neck is?*

*oh....*

*let it go....*

*the dumpling let its head drop*

it slapped onto the stone floor like a marble bust  
 cracking what jaw was left  
 what teeth were left

*ohhhhh.*

the dumpling  
 felt a mixture of unbelievable relief  
 and unquelling pain  
 it didn't know what any of this meant  
 he was just a dumpling.....

*you see....*

*you see how much it hurt?  
 to want to go?*

*oh....*

*ow*

the dumpling did see  
 felt how badly wanting to leave had hurt it

this was when  
 for no particular reason,  
 the dumpling had one of its 2 thoughts an hour  
 and the thought was this:

*how did i get here?  
 i used to be out there....  
 i remember being out there....  
 i remember how i used to come in here.....  
 and then i would leave.....  
 for years.....  
 i would come in and go out.....  
 why....*

*how did i get here?*

you are not wrong to be surprised,  
 this is a *very* advanced thought for a bear  
 and the dumpling felt this too.  
 the dumpling was astonished by how interesting its own thought was....  
 and the dumpling felt awe....  
 felt awe.....

*felt awe.....*

it almost tastes as good as salmon....

it almost tastes *better* than salmon....  
 or hills.  
 or pink  
 or itchy back....

it almost.....

*wow*

the dumpling thought  
 the dumpling thought

*wow*

so loudly that it actually came out as a sound

*hmp*

and though no human would ever see this moment

this was the first moment in history that  
 a bear  
 or in this case, a dumpling  
 had a thought that it was so impressed by

that it felt awe  
or: in simpler terms

this was the first time a bear made itself feel awe

and so the dumpling

the sweet little dumpling,  
who knew nothing about anything except for being a sweet little dumpling,

with bones like coat hangers

with death's fingernails tracing its spine

smiled

:)

*what **is** this fantastic feeling?*

“you’re a nebula!”

*plum is sitting on the edge of the old, wooden dock  
next to her is her boyfriend dan*

*these two are, almost without question, the happiest people located in all these stories  
not forever, not universally, they’ve both got their shit  
and the rest of their lives will be filled with as much complicated dumb-dumb as anyone else*

*but they started dating 3 months ago today  
and those 3 months have been unbelievably happy*

*they’ve gotten to date their best friend  
they’ve gotten to kiss their best friend  
and sleep in the same bed as their best friend  
and say i love you to their best friend....  
and make their best friend cum  
and learn how to make their best friend cum **really** well....*

*they’ve gotten to be seen  
and held  
and they’ve gotten to see  
and hold  
for the past 3 months*

*it won’t make much sense to either of them,  
once they’re heartbroken about each other  
in 11 more months  
it won’t seem real,  
how happy they were  
how easy it felt like in their memory*

*but for now they’re still in the dream  
for now they’re one of the bright stars in the sky  
that those lonely alchemists look up and follow*

i saw this thing from national geographic,

*this was plum’s voice  
it had been silent for the last 4 and a half minutes.*

*this kind of silence was typical for plum and dan*  
*they felt like it was their superpower*  
*and it was*

basically it was this timelapse, --  
 no wait it was actually nasa, definitely nasa

we love nasa

and it was this timelapse,  
 i think from like the international space station

oh woah

over like, yeah,  
 over like, something like the last 40 years

wait, years?

yeah, like this *extremely* long timelapse  
 just of the surface of the earth over 40 years

oh shit is this about how much ice  
 has like, disappeared or something?

no no,  
 well kinda,

fuuuck man idk if i've  
 got that kind of existentialism // in me

no!  
 no, listen  
 well i guess it'd make more sense  
 if i just showed you the video

no no i like it when you explain stuff

*plum looked over at dan  
his eyes were closed,  
his head resting on the dock.  
she smiled  
she believed him  
there were times before in her life  
where she never thought she'd be as happy as she was right now*

okay okay.....

okay....

*but then it was quiet....  
dan peeked an eye open*

yes?

sorry, i just had a crush on  
you for a sec

*dan melted  
there will be times later in his life  
where he will truly believe  
he'll never get to be as happy as he is right now*

just,  
basically this timelapse showed the  
surface of the earth over this extremely long period of  
time  
so that you would see an entire year pass in seconds  
and.....  
okay now look at me

*he did*

the **ice** at the top of the earth,  
in the north pole,  
would grow and expand over the surface

and then it would recede  
 and then it would grow  
 and then it would go back

*to accompany this,*  
*plum held her hands as though they were resting*  
*on the top of some bowl,*  
*i suppose on the top of the earth*  
*and her hands would act out the ice's movement*  
*expanding down,*  
*and then receding back,*  
*and then down,*  
*and then receding*

oh  
 oh, woah

like the seasons, right?  
 like all that is is the seasons  
 in the winter, the ice at the poles expands  
 and then in the summer they melt back

buuuuut  
 when shown like that....  
 when played at that speed

well it just sounds a lot like....

breathing

yeah  
 holy shit  
 holy shit --

the planet BREATHESES!!!

the planet breathes

*they say,*  
*in sync*

WHAT



and like, it's not **technically** --

NAH FUCK THAT  
THE PLANET BREATHES

*dan was really excited now  
he got really excited about stuff like this  
stuff like life  
and plum really liked that  
really liked how just who she was  
could excite him like that*

which made me....  
i feel like we've talked about this before

say it anyway,

just that,  
well....what if the seasons *are* actually like  
the earth breathing  
what if the earth's time scale  
is just wayyyy longer than ours  
which would like make a lot of sense....  
celestial bodies exist for billions of years  
it would kind of work out that their breaths  
might be a year long....

woah

*one of those superpower silences arose  
but it was short-lived  
because plum is really jazzed about this idea*

which is just then like,  
okay then, *everything* breathes  
like everything has motion like that....  
waves....waves go in and out  
and flowers open and close

and....  
like even people like come into life and go out

i guess everything alive technically does that

yeah....  
but isn't that crazy?

no that is really crazy  
like it's just all....  
damn  
maybe that's just the movement of being this universe  
in and out

*and they breathed*  
*and breathed*  
*and heard the train rattling in the distance*

so do you think the earth like  
do you think it knows about us?

humans?

i guess all the life that's on it  
do you think it knows  
that it has all these quick little breaths on it?

i think so

cause the earth is like  
oh there's some crazy graph  
or image or whatever  
that like from sea level,  
down the mariana trench  
which is the deepest known place on earth, right?  
that depth is only like 1% of the way or something  
to the earth's core

holy shit 1 percent?!?!

yeah or something like that  
all to say, like  
we're like....  
we're like dust particles on the earth  
we're *beyond* microscopic to this big girl

*he patted the ancient wooden dock*

and if it can barely even detect the deepest trench in the world  
how could it know about us?

*there wasn't any silence this time*

well what about all the bacteria on you?

*now.*  
*now there was silence.*

woah

*and now there was silence again*

holy shit woah

i feel like if i think hard enough....

*and there was, technically, another silence here  
for a while, in fact  
but really what was happening  
was:*

*two young artists  
in the midst of chaotic discovery*

*sat at the edge of a dock  
and felt themselves  
as the planets they were*

\*\*\*  
,,,, - \*

.^|V\*\*\*V\_\_\*\*\*

”

~\*\*~

xxxxxxxx

.;-`~~~;,,,~::~()

the end.

thx

:)

,

- m