

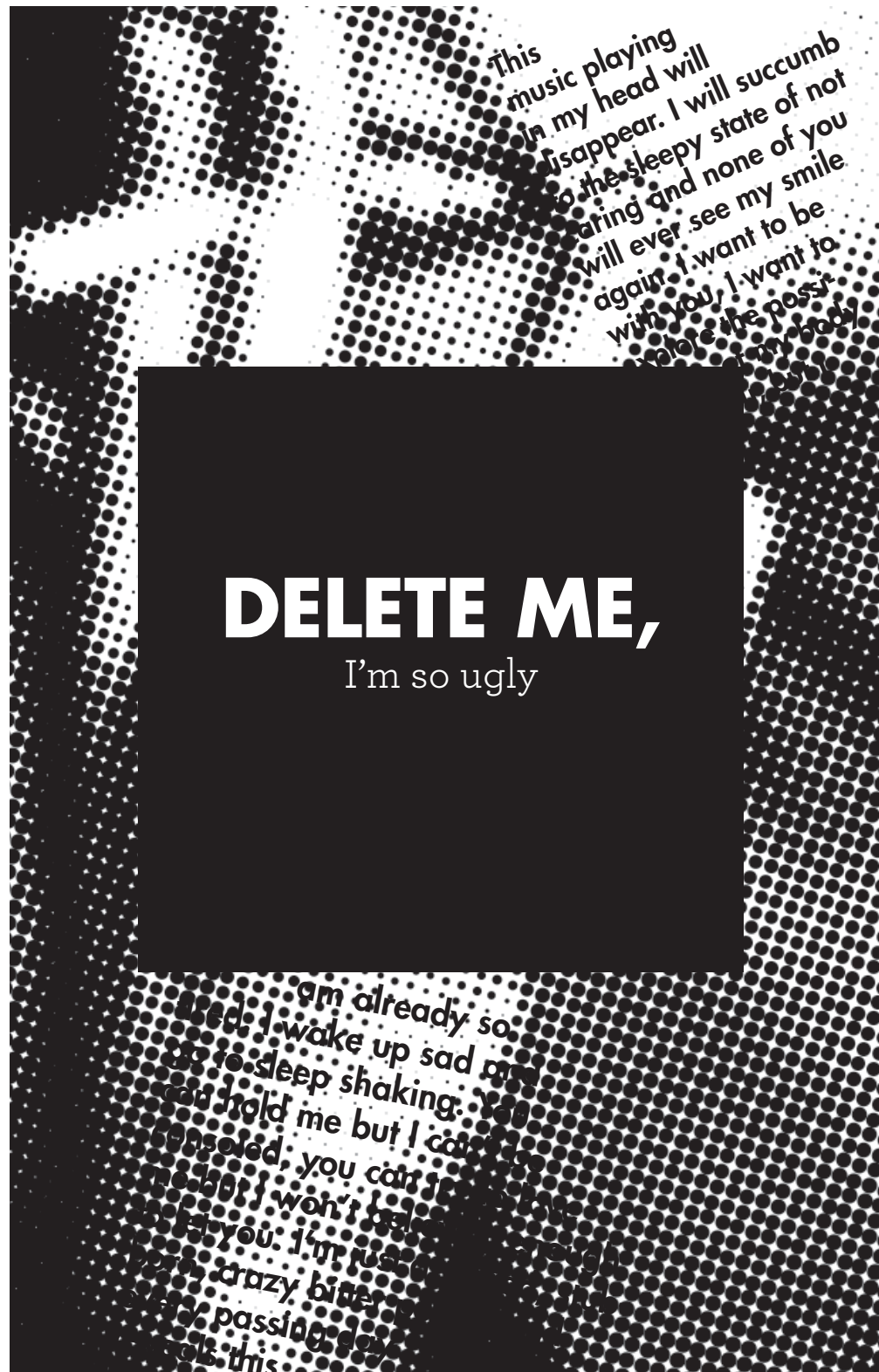
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**THIS PAIN IS NOTHING NEW.**

We are not alone in our fears or frustrations, nor unique in our struggle against that which traumatizes us. Everyone—everywhere—knows deep down inside of themselves how horrible the world we live in is. Despair reaches beyond boundaries that we can never hope to cross; it is the only thing that holds all of this together while simultaneously keeping it all apart, isolated.



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**DE-  
LETE  
ME**

I'm so ugly

“In our era, the experience of madness remains silent in the composure of a knowledge which, knowing too much about madness, forgets it.”

– Michel Foucault

## PREFACE

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I'm not exactly sure how to say this. I hate you for picking up my text almost as much as I despise myself for writing it. I am confident that nothing in here is of any use for a reader; it's not going to make you feel good or inspired. Writing is simply a purging I feel compelled to participate in, and no matter how hard I grimace upon glance of the outcome, it just keeps happening. It is a narcissistic addiction that sometimes helps to make sense of the paralyzing disdain I have for

*All that is ruined in you, I **CHERISH**. All that you have endured, every pain you have known brings me closer to you; I would not take you into my heart but for each crack in yours. Every bruise your mind cannot get rid of, every little d e t a i l that is hideous I find beautiful beyond words. It is only with the exposure of our horrifying scars that I can learn to love, and be loved.*

Perhaps there is simply no interest in articulating a message about what we are doing or what we believe, for others nor ourselves. The moments that push us to a state of despair or panic are not necessarily conveyable in a political context—or in words at all. There is a point when shit comes at you with such brutal force, everything is associated with trauma. Once this threshold has been reached and it is no longer clear where pain is coming from, we forget language and everything detestable is exposed to the violence of our swinging limbs.

EACH MOMENT IS AN OPENING UP for something more beautiful than what our traumatized bodies can handle, it will result in a death that is so overwhelming each breath brought into our lungs is forgotten, insignificant. With every wound inflicted to our hardening hearts is **THE CHANCE FOR REDEMPTION**; the potential to repair what is dear and has been dismantled, to destroy what has been constructed from the failures of those before us. Somewhere within this pessimism a light is trying to reach us; it calls to us from darkness, beckoning our return.

my surroundings, and the process wouldn't be complete without exposing it as an extension of myself to be analyzed, poked at, and disregarded. I can only select-all-and-delete so many times before relenting to the desire of my words- to be sent out naked for consumption.

The pessimism contained in my writing is by no means to be taken as a program for doing nothing, caring for nothing. There is little to lose and everything at stake; as such it is a necessity that the anxiety of living be translated into a fierce weapon against our enemies. The only thing in this world I have come to know as stable, that I can rely on when everything is falling apart, is a shared and electrifying hatred for the conditions that produce such a miserable existence. Madnnesses encountered among friends and comrades have become a part of my body, giving me life when death seems preferable. I would not offer the schizophrenia of my thought if I didn't also lust for the delirious beauty that so many have granted me; there is nothing more honest, more moving or penetrating, than insanity peaking through the cracks.

To my discomfort, I now leave you to my dramatic and morbid composition. Nothing would give me greater pleasure than for you to stop here, strike a match, and set my linguistic catastrophe aflame until smoke crawls up your nostrils in suffocating billows. Enjoy my contradictions, they are plentiful.

I suppose it is

# **ANXIETY,**

**just a jagged and uneasy feeling that keeps me awake. Tonight I am especially troubled, about what I cannot say precisely; perhaps a ghost or some other specter that could not exist without the shelter of my ceaseless worry.**

**What have we wrought** echoes loudly in these dark chambers. Demons hang heavily on our sides, tugging at our limbs with painful insistence. We approach every corner with clenched muscles and meticulous eyes, as if at any moment some unknown predator should appear on our path. And when all looks clear ahead—just as soon as our postures have relaxed—a decaying hand reaches from its grave, whispering threats of impending demise. These demons cradle us to sleep, clenching our brains in their hands when we are dreaming; they steal our memories and consciousness.

a jail cell,

and I am sure he thinks  
this was the

logical conclusion  
to the plot deployed  
against him.

and living corpses; it picks at our wounds and tangles our thoughts, our emotions, into its own delusions until we feel as if we are the crazy ones. It creates this horrendously sad environment, deploys its forces against anything beautiful and attacks the essence of being. Then, when our minds can no longer function in our well-kept boxes of isolation, when we are successfully driven insane, it punishes us. It whips us and locks us up, taunting us in the mirror and in restaurants and in the realm of love. Could it be coincidence, this fact revealed to us through schizophrenia, that genius comes only from dementia? It seems that only the mad are sane, only they know the truth this world holds for us, and it is an utterly incomprehensible, unbearable truth that destroys their minds and leads them into institutionalization. Only the thoroughly brainwashed are welcomed in this spectacle, allowed to exist without restraints on their wrists.

And in many ways, he is right. These conditions push us to insanity, deprive us of our senses and force-feed us the image of happiness. Then we are punished for this madness that has been induced.

This fucking society, this terrain filled with piles of dead souls

The angles of her body, laid out so intentionally, grow restless. The silence of sleep holds no interest for the deep curve of her hips; each plateau and crevice unnoticed in darkness, the stillness becomes unbearable. She arises from boredom to light the remaining candles, leaving her companion to dream while she sits transfixed by baroque shadows consuming her flesh. Slouched against a wall, cigarette dangling from delicate lips, she writes. Words, however acrid, keep the emptiness magical in her four-walled womb. Without beauty nothing is sacred.

**T**

his world takes the breath from our lungs. Every moment lent to joy is shaken into oblivion, by traumas contained in the past and threats hovering in the future. Many hostages are made, left bruised and beaten until the only escape is into nothingness.

Driving home. I have just left my brother at dad's cleaned out apartment, he is high and frighteningly aggressive. I try to stay in the lane—I'm going home—I lose all composure. Reality takes hold of my body, terrorizing me until my whole being is seized with incomprehensible horror and grief. Pulling off the road, dizzy and nearly blacked out; neither time nor space exist. Sobbing hysterically, my hands and legs and breath shake as I scream with rage, only to have it bounce against the walls of my car and back into my face. In three short and devastating months I have lost my aunt, my best friend, my dad all to alcohol and drugs; now my big brother, my comrade against this heartbreaking life, is a mere ghost of himself because of heroin. The insanity of it overwhelms me, like a tidal wave hitting my body into a brick wall. Have you ever watched someone's soul slip away into the darkness of this disease? I don't remember how long I have been on the side of this road.

**WHAT ARE WE DOING?** Grinding our teeth against this enveloping madness like it will somehow dissipate, turn into ash and fall through our fingers. No warmth is deep enough to keep this anxiety from bubbling to the surface and scratching the esophagus until bloody and sore, no coldness capable of permeating the hearts of such amicable subjects. And if anger is not shared, it certainly is not tangible as a weapon.

strangers. And we hate, more than anything, having to explain why.

Running from everything, breathing ragged and feet sore. We run from the past and evade the future yet no matter how many times it catches up with us, and it always catches up with us, we keep running, into nothing, into darkness that is unknown. No speed is fast enough, no armor strong enough to avoid defeat. We will not win, we will barely make a dent; this is how the movie ends.

There is no arrangement of words that could make sense of anything here, not for you and least of all for me. It is undoubtedly narcissistic to write down my history, my stories and thoughts and expect them to have any meaning. You don't care about my sick father, my fears or regrets. I cannot help but reflect contradictions, it is what I see in the mirror. I need to speak because I have forgotten what I have worth saying. These scars chip away at me like an ugly stone eroded with time and I need something to replace what I have lost. We all need to see deeply into each other before we lose what little we have left. This is all there is.

**SPEAK, SPEAK, SPEAK, SPEAK.** Please say something say anything just speak to me. This silence oh my god I'm hanging on an edge here, that sadness in your eyes that confusion that fear is too much to handle, I know it seems crazy, this life, but you just need to tell me what's going on. Stop feeling guilty, stop blaming yourself, stop being silent and even if it's nonsense, just say it out loud. The longer you keep it inside, the longer you hide this from me and from you, it's going to eat you up and swallow your soul. Don't let everything that is fucked up win, don't let the past be now. Please, I'm begging you, just speak to me. Stop being lost.

They took my brother away last night. He can no longer articulate anything, not even his delusions. His PO said he eluded to hurting himself but wouldn't go to the mental health center, and so they have taken him to jail for self-protection. He talked to my mom on the phone for 30 seconds before they issued the warrant and drove away with him. The last time we talked, I waited for two hours. Waited for him to speak, to tell me what was on his mind but he could only get out little phrases like "um, well I guess" and "this is so fucked", laughing nervously to break up the silence and sighing heartbrokenly as he searched for his words. Right now he sits in the mental health unit, And in



all my  
nightmares  
are just  
**REALITY**  
and my dreams  
are just  
dreams

**B**eneath my fingernails are lumps of scar tissue; my disfigured fingers remind me of the days when I bit my nails until they were bloody, aching strips of flesh. I remember how much they hurt everyday, yet I could not control myself from tearing them apart and swallowing the pieces. It felt disgusting, it looked horrific, but somehow it held a certain gratification for me that I was unable to quit.

It is increasingly tempting to discard all rationality when acting on our surroundings. We hate everything. We hate the way we have been taught to see our reflections and selling our bodies to survive, we hate watching the people we love die and having our friends stolen from us, we hate sad faces on tired strangers and happy faces on rich

Instead of going to sleep tonight, I have decided that I will stay up, ride my bike to the lake, and watch the sun rise over this half-assed city. I've got about three hours to go, it is now 3:47 am. Perhaps I am tired, it's hard to say. Nights like this one play tricks on my mind; I feel like a stranger in this place, foreign from my life.

I cut my flesh, it is never hard enough. It's funny, if I see blood on anyone else, if it is an accident, I pass out. Yet here I am in this disgusting yellow bathroom with a stained linoleum floor, razor-blade in trembling hand gazing with awe as a drop here and there falls from my unconsenting limb. I am not satisfied until I see red, not happy until it hurts.

My older brother took care of my dad his last few years, the best he could. He was into junk real bad when dad was dying, and told me that he had to be high just to handle seeing him throughout that time. In between jobs and errands he would dress our father, try to budget his social security money, make sure he ate, and had other household needs. He took him to the hospital more times than either of us can count,

staying by his side while nurses with cynical eyes looked at him like vermin. Always leaving before detox was complete, my dad would get so infuriated by his hospitalization he would rip off his IV's, then shit and piss all over the floor of his room.

**BEAUTY SURROUNDS US;** we find it in the sun rising, in the gaze of a stranger, in a warm house with friends. But this enchantment is fleeting. Every day brings new exposure to pain; the pain of hurting ourselves and others, the pain of being betrayed, the pain of being weak and mortal. It never lasts long, these moments of ease, for those of us who experience life such as it is.

She cannot be moved. Her body is dry, heart impenetrable. She cums and she shudders. Loves desperately with loathing and destroys.

There hasn't been any reason, in quite some time, to imagine a different reality than this. Our bodies grow tired as we take repeated blows; it is increasingly difficult to create that secret world in our head, the world saturated with beauty and congregated in conflict. Hope, despair, belief, disillusionment—these words hold no meaning as we walk our day to day lives with aching knees. (the light coming down from the sunset tonight painted everything a golden-pink; stifled sobs can be heard from the bathroom)

I want to be on display for you. To make you sad and scared of becoming what is left of me. I want your ordinary eyes paralyzed by this blank expression I wear, until a shudder creeps down your spine and into your toes because you know, you feel, how much I hate myself and want to die. This loathing becomes so boring when I am the only one experiencing it. I want I want I want.

LIES FALL FROM THE MOUTH like teeth sliding past loose gums, spit them out with bits of blood and rotting food onto a heaving chest. Too many years of keeping hatred contained in this clenched jaw and now it tumbles out piece by piece, feels like dry-heaving into a slimy and overfilled toilet.

I am the sparkling princess of this spectacle, smiling and laughing while the world around me crumbles. The land beneath my feet is barren, cluttered with remnants of shattered potential and empty dreams; day after day I feign the optimism a proper youth ought display. I exist in a perpetual and pathetic state of denial—finding the naivety of hope more comforting than the somber realities I know to be true.

We must embrace ourselves as the unruly heirs to this highly evolved hell, merging so completely within it that we become invisible and incomprehensible to its garrison and citizens alike.

Pictures of me, endless pictures of me. Me as a young child, me as a teenager- he was always taking so many pictures of me. He was a photographer, an excellent one, but in his apartment it was clear I was his favorite subject. They were on the wall, in his journals, in his wallet, they were photoshopped they were framed. I have taken to pulling them out and burning them. I watch as my young face grows distorted in flames, smiles turning into grimaces before falling into ash.

To what do we owe this pleasure, this sensation of discomfort, in opposition to the numbness we are offered (and reject), is both paralyzing and acting as an electric catalyst it sets us off and we set everything else off, or at least that's the idea. I didn't choose to

be this way, to be sensitive and hurting and mad and crazy but thats just how i am and how i will be. i want to take it out on something, on someone but no one in particular and usually i just take it out on myself. i hate the world and i see it in my reflection, every day i just personify everything my body detests and why do i bother to hate it at all if i succumb so easily? you are my solace and yet you hurt me and i fuck you over with every chance i get and we're so brutal to each other i wonder why that is...

**CHEST. THE DUSTY  
THAT IF I CONTINUE  
E, MY MIND MAY  
IED TO FORCIBLY  
DAL URGE DRIVES ME  
DREAD SEIZES MY**

**I WOKE UP VERY SAD TODAY.** The sunshine could not reach past my skin and pierce the anxiety building up in my stomach. Walking lethargically on a trail towards the road, I was somewhere inside my head when I heard a desperate squawking, and saw an injured bird trying to hop out of my way. The female cardinal cried fearfully as I got closer, and its mate flew frantically overhead to warn me away. I tried not to cry as I passed it, knowing there was nothing I could do to save its life or end its pain. Later, I went back to the trail to find it. I didn't know what I would do when I got there, but I just wanted to check in on it. There was no trace of it anywhere, no sounds nearby.

Birds like portraits of time singing me awake keeping me from sleep they follow the clouds I follow them down the street with leaves hanging overhead sunlight dripping in like sparkling water down my back I smell this summer and every one before it I feel the breeze of being a child again and this feels sad but familiar no not nostalgic I use that word too much and besides everyone knows that autumn lays claim to nostalgia this is more than melancholy this is surreal and how can I be me if I used to be that innocent child in the sunlight?

**I PULL THE GREEN BAG OUT OF MY CLUTTERED SCENT OF OLD SPICE AND CEDAR REMINDS ME TO DRAG THIS THING OUT OF ITS HIDING PLACE GET LOST IN THE MEMORIES MY BRAIN HAS TR DISCARD. A CATHARTIC AND SOMEWHAT SUICI TO CONTINUE THE EXCAVATION, AND FAMILIAR STOMACH AS I EXAMINE THE CONTENTS INSIDE**

Weighing down can't breathe can't shake this insomnia, this overwhelming need to sleep. Disgust crawls out of every pore, spiders hatching down my back making me twitch and moan writhing and endlessly irritated. The light hurts my eyes, soft sounds feel like motorcycles without mufflers, making my brain rattle around in my head until it hurts to open my eyes. All of this is infuriating beyond belief. I can't hear what you're saying.

**“It is a turn-on to be an OBJECT, that is when you are on the runway, that is when you are on the pedestal. You can be an object to yourself. Everybody is an object to someone else.”**

Stepping into his apartment, I was overwhelmed by the lingering scents of my dad I had known since I was a baby, then hit with smells of a sick and suffering man. There was garbage, dirty dishes, empty liquor bottles, and broken stuff everywhere; my brother told me stories to accompany each mess. “That’s from when dad hit his head on the futon and fell off, I had to take him to the hospital and he blew over the fatal limit of alcohol”, or “that’s when dad smashed his guitar after Patty stopped talking to him” or “that’s when he fell over onto the table and the candles spilled on the floor”, they were never-ending. I remembered the calls surrounding each incident, the last 3 or 4 years my dad was always in the hospital. Either from being on the streets for too long in the winter and going into respiratory failure, or getting drunk and falling down. All those times he nearly touched death and I never went to see him, not once.

I wake up after an obscene amount of sleep and look in the

mirror to see a foolish and lazy girl looking back at me. She is ugly, annoying, and uninspiring. I get ready for the day with my favorite song on, trying to convince myself that I am contributing something exciting to the world when I leave the safety of my house. Venturing outside, I greet the people around me with smiles and jokes, presenting an air of weightlessness that is forcefully feigned and horribly transparent.

It is the insurmountable that drives us to insanity; nothing and everything at the same time. No theoretical analysis can properly describe the combination of pains we endure. Although such poetic attempts may act as a salve to our depression and discomfort, it is one thing to recognize capitalism as a system of domination and quite another experience to watch a loved one die at its hands. There is no sense to be made of the latter, no amount of causal understanding could relieve the aching of this misery.

It is no coincidence that

my father died miserably. I beg you to tell me he was not murdered. Please, scoff at the wretched layers of my memory and that of so many others; stare intently into such a reality without seeing the shadow of society in its every wrinkle and wound. I envy blind bliss; what joy must come with believing that each individual death carries no greater meaning than the technicalities of the departed body. To see this utterly morbid world without the red tint of hatred is not seeing it at all, though I cannot claim to be grateful for what my eyes have captured. It is with a sagging and anxious heart that I fight against all that drains the life out of itself. I fight not because I think we will emerge victorious, but because it is the only thing worth living for, the only thing that will relieve this fear of impending murder—through addiction, through cancer and suicide. I will never cease to shamelessly scheme and calculate against these conditions—not because I believe in something better-- but because I cannot knowingly submit to death at the hands of pigs.

Dad is still alive, physically speaking, and I am talking to my mom about him over dinner at a restaurant. She is telling me that his family had a very serious history of substance abuse. My great-grandfather died after leaving a bar one night, she tells me; he had fallen off of the stairs and hit his head. He bled too much to recover and died right there. When she told me, I laughed. I can tell she thinks it is inappropriate but what, really, am I supposed to do with this information, with this legacy, but laugh maniacally? She knows I have the right to laugh and after a moment joins in with me. This laughter makes us cry and the waitress thinks twice about asking us how our meal is.

I am really, when it all comes down to it, just a bitter and crazy person. I have no hope for my future and maybe this means that I am destined to be unhappy. Tonight I fucking disgust myself. Look at me, drinking this warm piss-tasting forty alone in the middle of the day. I am lazy, jealous, hopelessly weak and ugly; honestly I don't deserve anything that I expect from anyone. This world doesn't hold me down, I let it take control of my presence when I ought to just fucking stand up on my own two feet and handle it. I should dominate this life that I have, but instead I relent willingly to everything deplorable. I am so ashamed of this body I inhabit, it is a disgrace to everything I love.

We are expected to hate everything about our bodies and minds, and in many ways we do. We can no longer separate ourselves from that which consumes and abuses us, being actors within a theater of violence we play both the victim and perpetrator.

Each time I look at you

# I WANT TO CRY.

You lay there with your simple solutions to problems that seem bigger than my soul, and I hate you for it. I am locked in this state of despair and maybe I just want to dwell here for a while, but I imagine you loathe my unwillingness to come up for air. You sleep so soundly, I can't contain this envy. I'm tired of keeping these pieces together when they ought fall apart, and in any case- what a humiliating job I do of it these days. All I want is to be left alone with these memories, with this trauma, to let it consume and haunt me. But you stand here each day never wanting to face the real, ugly woman before you. You remind me always that it is uncouth to succumb, how unbecoming it is to fall into insanity. I need more than ever to push you away; each day the words almost come out of my mouth but I am afraid and so I prolong this agony, releasing a few tears onto the ground each time your head is turned. I am so unbearably tired of holding on, please just let me fall to my dark and effortless demise; let this pathetic illusion of beauty crumble so that I can breathe freely and without restraint.

just too drunk to know where his money went. He was also too fucked up to remember bribing my brother with OxyContin for company. And so my dad's old friends would harass my brother, demanding to know why he was so cold hearted as to steal money from his homeless father. All my brother was trying to do was get sober, and get on with his life. He was bankrupt but too poor to get a lawyer necessary for bankruptcy, he was in more legal trouble than he knew how to handle, and he had no home or hope. At that point he still had a grasp on reality, but it wasn't too long afterwards that he would lose his sense of clarity too.

Each day is tempted by despair and many go surrendered; we have stopped looking for solace because it is no longer desirable.

## Grief is held dear,

igniting our anger and awakening our bodies to the reality we are situated in. Without this grief, joy eludes us as well.

This music playing in my head will disappear. I will succumb to the sleepy state of not caring and none of you will ever see my smile again. I want to be with you, I want to explore the possibilities of my body with you, but I am already so tired. I wake up sad and go to sleep shaking. You can hold me but I can't be consoled, you can try to love me but I won't believe it enough to let you. I'm just a scared, stubborn, crazy bitter person and every passing day reveals this to me more than the day before.

In the delirium of now, there is a certain feeling that we have nothing to lose. We are tired and restless, with electric anxieties driving our need to get crazy. Nothing really makes sense anymore, and perhaps this is becoming our preference.

One of the times my dad was in the hospital, it looked like he would not make it. He was hooked up to a respirator and my brother was called by the nurses. They knew both of them by name, and got progressively more irritated at my dad's frequent visits that he was unable to pay for. When my brother arrived, he asked the front desk where dad was. They said he wasn't in there first, then just that they didn't know the room number. My brother grew frantic, telling them he knew that he was there, asking every employee that walked by where he was. Every staff member gave him dirty looks and indifferent replies, until he was crying and running around the hospital looking for someone to help him. Finally, he gave up and was storming out sobbing. Someone yelled after him, telling him the room number at his moment of desperation.

I act out the roles  
I feel are expected  
of me, then search  
desperately and in  
vain for my true self  
when I am alone. I  
feel most  
connected  
to my body  
when I am  
destroying  
it.

Sitting here listening to the leaves shuffle on the sidewalk like footsteps; I am awaiting friends and couldn't feel more uneasy. This place is my home, the buildings are tattered and beautiful. The greens have turned to reds and oranges, but soon I will leave this to go back to an expansive nothing. I can't help but be ashamed of how much I have taken for granted, it all seems so full of life now that I have returned. These smells I have known since childhood, accents that make my ears ring with delight. The sound of broken down cars and mischievous children rattling the landscape, I never want to go back to my new home. It will never be my home, not like this.

Visiting him when we were young was always an adventure; we would stay on whatever boat he lived on, or in a hotel room, or in a big house with lots of interesting but crazy people. During the day he would walk us around the neighborhood, introducing us to his friends on the street or the owners of little shops. He told us tales of the people he had met and the crazy things he had done; I didn't know until his funeral that most of the stories he told were true- the adult me had dismissed them as mere tall tales. As kids we never noticed that he didn't have any money because he was so good at finding interesting places to go, and he would use food-stamps to buy us strawberries and carrots. Back then they didn't look like credit cards, they were just little stamps, one for each type of food.



The day I entered my father's apartment after his death was the day I stopped being a child. I walked up the stairs with my older brother, feeling nauseous and terrified. "That's where they found him" my brother said quietly; I had no idea what he was talking about. "He died on the stairs, he just couldn't make it up". I felt guilty for not knowing the details of his death, and for never having been in the apartment before. I stood in that spot for a moment, imagining what it was like for my dad to have died in a musty hallway, alone. I wondered which stair he collapsed on, what the last thoughts in his head were, if he knew he was dying and felt regret for the life he had lived. Was he grateful? Indifferent?

FEAR STARTS as a soft shiver in my spine and permeates through every bone until they are clanking against one another like spindly branches blowing clack, clack, clack on an evil night. My knees knock together in one loud rhythm and my fingertips tremble a fierce energy out out into the cold, this fucking cold. Why can't it just be in between? Why is it either SO FUCKING COLD or unbearably hot? Why do I bother at all, I am wasting every moment to this.

She sits once again on the windowsill frozen,

# SHATTERED

in the exposure of day. Every vein, up and down her arms around her throat down into the depths of her abdomen, is pulsing with a thick and vile resentment. She stares at her book, he stares at her. Everything is wrong, it is as if her body has been sacrificed to an anger so electric it would

**WALKING**, each step heavier than the one before. She holds her head down, eyes rarely seeing more than the ground shifting shaking beneath her feet. Every breath is like an admission of guilt, the agony of living. Each second of existing without crying, sobbing uncontrollably, feels like a lie; a tiresome burden to uphold. So many bodies around judging every muddled word that she utters, her tongue stumbling tripping on the simplest of expressions, drunk. Each memory hits her as a dream and she does not know where lucidity has been hiding for so long now. Things, she thinks deliriously, were once much easier.

There is about two feet distance between us. A wooden plank sits, we fold our arms onto it and become opaquely engaged. I try to look you in your eyes as words flop out of your mouth, sentences that are making me boil over with fury. I nod, smile, laugh, lie and hope you will stop talking soon. Or maybe I can switch the subject, so I don't have to make the choice of disgusting myself with silence or going up against the wall of your pride. I really do enjoy these little dates of ours.

The tired body, sore and bleeding from incessant, stinging whips of reality finds beauty in the crack of a sidewalk. Without hesitation, he forgets the task he set out on and bends down to admire each blade of grass that pushes past its concrete barrier. Many people push past him as he crouches down, annoyed that he has congested their pathway just to look at the ground. He does not acknowledge their presence, choosing instead to engage only with the whimsy of his discovery. Then, like a child suddenly forced to grow up, the man remembers his responsibility and gathers up the time and space momentarily discarded from his mind. Continuing on the long walk to his destination, his knees once again ache and his stomach grumbles with neglect. Trying to distract himself from the cries of his body, he looks to his surroundings only to catch glances of pity and disgust. Defeat and discontent weighing down on him like a blanket of darkness, all thoughts of his crack in the sidewalk are gone. They have been replaced with the heavy emptiness of his life.

When my brother was living on the same streets as my dad, he would run into people that had known him. Dad had been telling people in his sick state that my brother was stealing from him, when he actually was



**L**ike our father, my big brother has been at battle with addiction for most of his adult life, and after dad died his heroin problem completely took him hostage. Trouble with the law, his body, and everyone in his life made it impossible to avoid his impending demise. Trying to get into recovery programs is impossible without the money, they send you to Methadone clinics and charge 75 dollars per hit. Eventually he was thrown in jail for circumstances I need not describe, only to be released under the condition that he stay in the Salvation Army. The location his PO chose was the very shelter that housed our dad for nearly 10 years, when he was sober that is. In that city block there are 6 or 7 places where my dad at one point or another resided; half-way houses, shelters, homes for the mentally disabled, and small efficiencies. Every time my brother went anywhere, he had to walk by the stairs on which our father died, or a barrage of places that contained memories of time spent with dad.

destruct itself only through her emotional suicide. His accusations are met with empty eyes, she cannot face up to her hatred. Crawling down from the ledge with lethargic intent, walking out the bedroom door with a head held pathetically high. Mirror makes her weep. The silence of her return is met with callous indifference.

I used to call you my best friend, my sister, and now here we are at opposite ends of the house, mere miles away from each other. I cling to anyone who will love me because, I think, this despair has pushed the rest away and I am so afraid to face this life on my own. It doesn't matter where I am, I am drowning. I am in over my head and facing reality right now is the most terrifying endeavor I have ever embarked upon. I wonder, what has happened to us, to me? And to you...

The last time I saw my father was on my birthday, it was such a strange anniversary. It was father's day, exactly three years since I had cut off all contact between us. In those three years, he had been very sick and I knew that he would not be around much longer. When I learned of a graduation party at my cousin's house, I decided I would go see him; it was the scariest decision I ever made but it seemed meant to be. It was a really nice afternoon, I brought my friend with me and the conversations between my dad and I were like the ones we had when I was little. Saying goodbye, he hugged me harder than ever before and I watched him wave while driving away. I remembered being a small child, and my mom would drop him off at any random corner that was near a place to stay; he would wave until we couldn't see him anymore and I would cry all the way home. It was 10 months after my birthday that he died; I think he was waiting for that last chance to see me, and I guess I was too.

Every breath I take hurts a little worse than the one before. The sun is coming up while the moon goes away and I can't decide which one is welcome here in my empty room. Yesterday I got so uncontrollably mad; running away from everything crying and shaking, I fell down the stairs and hit the railing with a sickening thud that echoed in the house. Now my ribcage aches with my lungs and this lingering pain seems to suit me just fine. If it is anything it is appropriate, it is what I have been asking for.


**WHAT IS THIS FUNNY DELIRIUM** we find ourselves in? All hopes and dreams have been abandoned and we are left with a circus of apparatuses that we can seduce into dancing or follow towards death. It is with such precocity that hell is claimed, laughable even. The horror has yet to unfold, and we are waiting impatiently for its arrival.

At his funeral, my aunts warned me that cleaning out our dad's apartment for the next tenant was going to be challenging. They had gone in already, and said it was filthy. They said that they did us the favor of sorting through piles of bills and stacking them in order, so it would be easier for us to settle them. That was the last time they spoke to us. When we finished cleaning—it took somewhere around two weeks—they got a key from the landlord and took almost all the stacks of his personal belongings that we had set aside for ourselves. They left a note informing us that the money donated in his name would go to a good cause, and to make sure we got death certificates to stop creditors from hassling us. They wouldn't give us the limited amount of free certificates they had already picked up. My aunts are very rich, so perhaps it shouldn't have been such a shock.

**THIS PAIN IS NOTHING NEW.** We are not alone in our fears or frustrations, nor unique in our struggle against that which traumatizes us. Everyone—everywhere—knows deep down inside of themselves how horrible the world we live in is. Despair reaches beyond boundaries that we can never hope to cross; it is the only thing that holds all of this together while simultaneously keeping it all apart, isolated.

I was the one to find the grocery bag that accompanied my dad while dying. He had gone to the local market and was carrying his purchases up to his apartment when he died. In the bag were three full cans of the cheapest beer, one empty can, a bottle of aspirin, and a roll of toilet paper. I wrote a poem about that bag, his last companion, but it probably wasn't very good. It was such a symbol for me, though. It was the last trace of his material existence, and it seemed so incredibly bleak.

Looking into my big brother's face, I see that life has no intention of ever letting up. From the moment he was still a baby reality has been playing a cruel joke on him, and it has broken my heart to watch him struggle towards happiness. It is this putrid society, our mortality, and his own failures that put circles under his eyes and make his voice shake. Last night we sat in my car and I watched as he sobbed, wanting so desperately to not be in the chains



**IT IS IN OUR COLLECTIVE BELIEF OF INDIVIDUALITY THAT WE ARE MOLDED INTO A LIFELESS MASS, UNAWARE OF THE STRINGS ATTACHED TO OUR LIMBS.**

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# THE SCHIZOPHRENIC IS THE UNIVERSAL PRODUCER

*there are cameras in my television set or maybe my light fixture, and people whisper threats to me in the grocery store. every person i know is a part of this plot and i don't know what it is but i am sure that i don't like it. i'm afraid to leave my house because i know that they will be waiting. they are everywhere; they are everyone.*

*writing down the facts, i can see now that every day, every interaction, has been a part of this plot. sometimes i think how can this be true? this is ridiculous, but then i look at the facts and it's all right there in front of me. i only need to know why, why is this being done, and that truth is the only thing that will set me free. if i can just know why, then i can move on. i don't want to be crazy; i'm not crazy.*

of despair, trying to grasp some sense of his situation. All signs point to him being paranoid, probably paranoid schizophrenic, but I can't imagine that he is the crazy one. The experiences of his life don't make any fucking sense, and I can't blame him for being scared that the world is out to get him.

This is so fucking unfair. What am I supposed to do? WHAT WHAT WHAT WHAT please tell me what the fuck I am supposed to do? I can't help him, I can't do anything but sit here and feel his agony and his fear and hate this world and hate this life and it's just too fucking unfair. I am running away, I am leaving him here to dwell in this fucking despair, I am running away because I don't know what else to do.

**I got out of the car and walked barefoot into the sand; it was so warm outside. I sat there and just stared at my feet for like ten or fifteen minutes, while everyone was in the gas station. I was looking at the desert around me, not really thinking about anything but just being there. I knew that somewhere in my head I should be feeling really intense emotions about the whole trip, but at that moment everything just had a stillness; I can't really describe it.**

I went to work cleaning out my dad's apartment without anyone to accompany me; I started in the bathroom, finding a pair of soiled jeans that I threw in a garbage bag. I cried quietly while sorting through his things in the living room, finding dozens of journals all dedicated to me. Love letters, obsessive writings, every phone call to me documented, accounts of my teenage years and the time period in which I stopped talking to him. When I finished for the day, I stopped at mom's house on the way home, curling up in a ball crying. She begged me to let my brother and half-sister finish the cleaning but I could not. However traumatizing, I had to face his reality. Looking at her

worried face as she tried to convince me, I remembered begging my brother to cease his relationship with dad, when their combined addictions were killing them both. He knew I was right but always went back. Despite my mother's pleas, I went back to my dad's apartment for the next two weeks, cleaning and salvaging any note, trinket, or piece of clothing I found.

**WE ARE NEITHER NAIVE ENOUGH TO HOPE**  
for anything better, nor compliant enough to forfeit the possibility of our bodies. Every moment is at risk for our insanity and even we do not know when it will be unleashed next. We do not know who or what we are and probably do not wish to; the course we are nudged towards must be abandoned. We must lose ourselves completely.

My father's failures and traumas, their reaching grasp on my life, are saturated with more meaning than any polished and pristine life I have encountered. The nightmares I have of him are my fuel, they are my ammunition against this deplorable world. I am not a fucking hero, and neither are you.

I

**WANT**

revenge.



Her face, reflection illuminated, has lost its beauty. Every wrinkle and tear has taken its toll; youth no longer holds up to the scrutinizing eyes of those fixed upon her. But in the faint glow of the night, her silhouette sitting on a windowsill crying silently- this is perfection. Absorbed by the pain of what the world has shown her (cruelty). Hidden from the glare of her own betrayals she sits with grace; in shadows she finds elegance. Every regret spills down her face, glistening in moonlight without the wretched shame of sunshine to remind her of weakness. There is no solace without sorrow, to live and breath without the weight of grief on her chest would be nothing more than mediocre cinema.