



*for you,  
in the next life*

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When you say that you don't think we are meant for each other, I beg to say  
*right now*. I don't know how our story ends, or what genre we end up in, or if  
we are worth telling anyone someday.

*-Excerpt from a love letter, 2022*

## Cyclical Dynamics

The beach is hot yet grey,  
under a forecast of tantalizing pressure.  
    The wind pushes the waves  
    hard enough to c r a c k.

I wonder what happens  
when the rain meets the sand.  
Would you let me dissolve in your palm  
and carry me to your lips like water?

*Do you sense it too?*  
    Feel the pressure rising  
        with a suffocating heat.

An evening sky full of electricity,  
so wet and dense  
    to reach out and touch  
    would make it *real*-  
        This cyclical dynamic.

You and I  
Me and you  
    Waiting for the sky's  
        plummeting release.

You won't touch me  
like a like of wet sand on the shore.  
Once you give into it,  
it clings to you  
and takes forever to dry.

## The Bug

There is a bug in my  
chest, between bars  
of ivory and forests of flesh.

It slithers and slips  
between limelight and  
oblivion, only vibrating  
when it's maker is near.

My lover is obliviously  
unbothered, my parasite  
lingers between the words  
I      miss      them.

If they could see this  
thing they created,  
might they remove it  
from my breast? Or leave me  
to grin and bear the pain  
as it continues to make its nest?

## Love is Larceny

Greedy hands never still-  
always reaching, grabbing  
for amber fruit hanging above  
that does not belong to them.

*Nothing's as fragile  
as a dance of thieves  
stealing the other's heart.*

I wield a sword-  
cut the love from you.  
You dagger my chest-  
see a heart with your name  
carved on it.

*Belonging to each other  
through acts of robbery,  
embezzling ruby red lips  
in sapphire nights.*

Go back and forth-  
torturing ourselves  
in hopes one day  
we can mutually surrender.

*Lay down in fields of jade  
under onyx sky  
with all the wealth in the world  
between my soul and yours.*

## The game I was never meant to win.

Light the candles  
with the foot of your cigar.  
Blow smoke in my face.  
Take long draws of  
cards and chips and whiskey.

Play it Texas,  
hold me real tight.  
Find ways to make me flush,  
hand close to your chest.

Pray you dealt me a bad beat.  
That it's all too big,  
and I've been blind  
to see your emotions are counterfeit.

That look in your eyes –

between grey fog they glisten hazel green.  
Intentions become a crystal decanter  
that tell your whiskey colored secrets.

You are ready to fold.  
A winning hand isn't enough  
to make this house full.

This tournament for two  
has become a game of one,  
and I was never trained in

solitaire.

### Pluto to Proserpina

Birds call thy name,  
    *Proserpina.*  
Spring adorns thee  
in robes of fresh lilies,  
and perfumes thoughts of  
eternal sunshine, lavish and ethereal.  
    *The sun seems effervescent,*  
    *as I've only known night.*

In greed and lust,  
I have taken thee  
from thy meadow of rest.  
Between arms of might  
in a chariot of ebon flames,  
I have crowned thy pomegranate heart  
ruler of my dark and wicked world.

*Bring this damned soul*  
    *to his knees.*  
Grant me pardon for this capture,  
see the torment it brings me,  
to know I've stripped thee of spring.

I care not for thy contempt,  
for soon thou shall see,  
through endless professions of devotion,  
thou fate is to be my queen.

### Cacti Hearts

I've been kickin' up  
these western leather boots  
on the oak bar of this saloon  
while we talk about you.  
Your Papa's got a mistress,  
Mama doesn't know.  
Down that whiskey  
to suppress the secrets  
you keep.

Tell you 'bout a potential bounty.  
How I spend all my time huntin' him.  
Don't have time to hang around  
shootin' gizzards in the sand  
with you. It's obvious that green  
in your eyes is jealousy peaking through.

Tell me your my rough rider  
and I'm your cowgirl,  
so we can stop these rendezvous  
where you tell me classified things  
meant for you, Papa, and the moon.

We argue the meanin' of this  
smoke 'n mirrors courtship  
'till Sheriff kicks us out  
and we drunkenly stumble into  
the unknown. Unspoken between us,  
a line in the sand you've conveniently drawn to

try and convince me we  
are partners in crime,  
but that you want  
a different woman to wife,  
a politer lassie to warm the bed.  
Well, partner, I've decided to leave  
you to it, and in the meantime,  
your secret is safe with me  
and my western leathers.

## Noir

There was time when I was  
flesh and blood and  
yours.  
A heart between my breasts  
beat in time  
as you'd coax me into  
crimes of passionate affairs.

In those days,  
when our secret lived  
only in the dark matter of minds,  
I wished I were wine,  
so I could stain your lips  
and everyone would know you've known me.

Our closeted connection  
has stripped me down to bone.  
A skeleton in the boudoir  
you cannot dress up.

Through the years I've remained,  
watching all your lovers  
through the light of this keyhole,  
waiting for the day  
you dust me off  
And make me flesh again.

## Graveyard Shift

A black cat crosses my path,  
as I walk the graveyard  
of past lovers who  
feed its supple sweet grass.

Hairs prick on my back,  
and I feel you staring  
through me in the dead of night-  
a cat hisses at you in the distance.

Turn behind  
to see the same man  
with a very different outline  
than the one I had drawn up before.

Skin the color of moonlight,  
hair as light as fog,  
hands as thin as bone,  
and words as empty as  
the space between them.

Black cats play in voids,  
to curl their tail into them,  
and paw at the door  
of the forgotten.  
The mind lets memory  
fill in the dark matter.

A spirit remembers love  
his corpse has lost while  
trapped in a nail shut coffin.  
Yet it's this flesh that is haunted  
by the spirit of a man  
who only apparates in starlight.

## Fangs of Fancy

My blood smeared  
all over the Viscount's ballroom—

I'm courted  
by a vampire.

He holds me close  
as he sucks me dry

through lace collars  
and cages of corset,

tainting everyone with the impression  
that I willfully wed this man

in all his immortal glory.  
I rest beside him

drenched in a symphony of lust,  
painted to his liking.

When crimson runs dry  
and the artist cannot finish our portraiture

my husband contemplates  
what has happened?

The artist makes him aware  
the muse has stopped beating.

The love has dried up  
and there is not a full vein in my body.

## Savior Complex

*based on the song by Phoebe Bridgers*

*emotional affair,  
overly sincere-*

You need fixing, cast a prayer,  
let an angel pierce through the austere.  
Drag this winged woman  
to the wasteland of your mind,  
and she starts patchworking love  
into all the holes your dad made.

*you're gonna drown in your sleep,  
for sure-*

You flinch from touch, and she weeps.  
Though she's not the cause she begs to be the cure.  
Archivist of your mind,  
let her in to clean the clutter  
organizing nightmares from daydreams.  
Make it a palace where she can live forever.

*All the bad dreams that you hide,  
Show me yours, and I'll show you mine.*

### **I'm superstitious so I shook it twice.**

My best friend Kait stands  
next to me. A crossroad ahead,  
a Magic 8 Ball in my hand,  
she waits for my decision  
and reminds me,

“At the end of the day  
it's what's best for you.”  
But-

I can't ask Mama for advice-  
unless I see her in my dreams,  
where she is alive and well.  
She would have coached me through  
how to tell a man I love him.  
I could ask Dad, however,

He doesn't know I've had sex,  
my sister hates this guy,  
my brother doesn't know he exists,  
and all my friends think he's a loser.

I draft up love notes,  
a correspondence from my heart.  
Kait nods her head,  
supportive of me, doing what's right  
for me isn't clear yet,

So, I look into the  
sapphire iris of this  
Magic 8 Ball  
and pray it has what I need.

### **Back Home to Me**

Tonight, I found the way home  
Under fluorescent pulses of light.  
The streets are quiet up north since  
Lincoln Park has fallen into sleep,  
And there it is...

If I listen closely,  
I hear a whisper,  
Mutter something 'bout love.  
A little lamb I once was,  
can't see her past the veil of time.  
Not now that I've left you without  
a way back home to me in the concrete.

You waited too long  
for that atonement, now turn back  
to see my laughin' alone down Montana.  
Lost love always misses the chance-  
a delayed reciprocation.  
Moon shining for the absent sun.

I stay,  
to hear your lament,  
Shouldn't care since you always lie.  
Maybe you can love me in the future,  
Not now that I've left you without  
a way back home to me in the concrete.

It's not until the city stills,  
You come crawling back.  
Take your time on all fours.  
I like to see you down there,  
lost without me.  
So, tell me, man-  
what does a girl gotta say  
to stop the whimper coming from you?

I can hear you plead,  
On your knees as you beg.  
A time machine is all that you want,  
But now you are stuck without me  
and a way back home in the concrete.



## A Thousand Words

Today I wrote you a  
love letter. In the sand  
I etched a thousand words  
never said.

As the sun died,  
my eyes brimmed with  
lake water and regret.  
*You will never love me back.*

Staring at the confession,  
I prayed the waves  
drifted onto the shore.  
Wash the words away,  
and bathe me until I'm clean again.

Ever so slowly,  
an epitaph to my love,  
the feelings that clung to me like algae,  
dissipated with the sound  
of sand settling back into place.

## Author's Note & Acknowledgements

When my professor Kathleen Rooney told me we had to not only write but make a chapbook by the end of the quarter, there were many things running through my mind: *Is there enough time? What will I write about? How many bottles of wine will I need to get through this?*

I can only for sure answer one of those: seven.

The first two poems I wrote were *Cyclical Dynamics* and *A Thousand Words*. They were both about the same person, someone very important to me, who I was struggling moving on from for quite some time. The two were mirrors of each other, the beginning and the end. The sand that sticks and the sand that has dried, falling from your ankles.

One night I was sitting on my couch at home, mulling over what to do for the project with a glass of Noir in hand when it hit me. Not only could I write endlessly about this person, but I could write an entire book of them, us, and most importantly me. My therapist loved the idea and told me to use it as a gateway into letting go.

Looking back, it's hard to fully describe what this project has done for me. It has allowed me to be vulnerable, dissect all my feelings, to face things I didn't think I was able to, or didn't want to. Over two short months I have been able to let go, and although it's scary, I know whatever comes next will be fuel for another chapbook.

The first person I would like to thank is my professor Kathleen Rooney. Thank you for the feedback, the support and all the classes we've taken together in my time at DePaul University.

Thank you to my family and friends, for reminding me that love is a two way street, never to be walked alone. All of you have helped me immensely in realizing my value not only as a writer, but a woman on the verge of adulthood.

To Dad, who reminds me how beautiful I am and that boys suck.

The biggest thanks of all goes out to my everything, my platonic soulmate, the other half of my heart, the adopted Carlotti kid: Kaitlyn Nicholson. Kait, you have put more hours of workshop and thought into my work than I could ever completely thank you for. Not only have you endured thousands of drafts, but you've gracefully handled the fact that *he* is the subject of this project and *he* makes you want to commit crimes. Thank you for being my chosen sister forever and ever.

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Corinna is an avid reader who prefers romance and fantasy because the real world is a bit too rough for her hopeless romantic heart. When she isn't reading or writing, you can find her either making a new obscure playlist on Spotify or on a dance floor somewhere in Boystown.

You have unraveled me  
with this laced spine bent,  
as you dissected every layer of love.

I pray her words  
have brutalized and bandaged you-  
well worth their blackened ink.

Now that you have broken me,  
turned over every page,  
may you know her heart.

Let not this elegy of love  
cause your soul to cry out,  
but whisper a gentle goodbye.

Tuck me back in  
to rest within my four-sided hearth,  
and let her tragedy succumb to sleep.

If there be a day when you long  
for the sound of her voice,  
open me gently and I will bow before you.