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The Appetizer and Other Poems

Sam Blomberg
Claremont McKenna College

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Claremont McKenna College

THE APPETIZER and other poems

(with After Words)

Submitted to Professor James Morrison

by

Sam Blomberg

for

Senior Thesis

Fall and Spring 2016

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**Negotiations**

Negotiations are like gunfights:

Never have your safety on,

Don’t take your eyes off your target—

For one second, always count the shots fired

From *both* guns. Know the exits and escape routes

And the most important rule,

Never let him know it’s a gun fight!
Denied Insertion

A tattered scroll, you by temptation read
Stability will tremor, after shock
Has set in, and settled down the clock.
Pallid murky waters you must tread,

Take all the times he leaned to make amends,
And pressed forgiveness on whom he desired.
The hamster’s wheel will, nevermore grow tired
Though constantly, your cage’s bars he bends.

But here; you pray, think, grow and become
Satisfied in your unrippling reflection.
Waiting calmly for the resurrection
Of your heart, which will protect your kingdom.
Pudding

The proof is in the pudding.

So, make your proof sweet

If your guests like to get fattened up,

And feel good. Make it tart

If your guests are mean,

And like to bicker and argue.

Make it plain if your guests are vanilla

And will only accept the basic.

And, if you don’t know what it is

your guests want…

Don’t fucking serve pudding
The appetizer

Oh, how you thought this was so brilliant,

You ordered an appetizer, without

Even mentioning anything to her.

She thinks you’re spontaneous and cool now—

She’ll expect you to order an aged bottle.

But—WAIT, taste it first of course. Don’t act

Like you know what you’re doing all

Pretentious-like. Act like you’re doing this

To be witty, and for shits and giggle—

Wow, you’re really overthinking everything now.

Interesting strategy: Shoving your

Fork with that overpriced, underflavoured,

Skewered fried seafood in her mouth to get

Some early, half-assed body contact going;

Somebody jumped gun before the wine uncorked.

You need to act calm, take a bathroom break,

Breathe—Ah, the men’s room; or the scared shit-less

Baby boy’s room where so-called, manly men

Try to deal with a selection of problems;
None new, but none familiar or calming.

There’s always the too-drunk-guy, staring at
The mirror giving himself a prolonged
Thumbs up, while the sink is still running,
Repeating “you’re under control, you’re a
Smooth astronaut,” up, up, and away, man.

Then, there’s the rugged, hardcore, goatee-and-all
Lumberjack-of-a-behemoth, shredding
His asshole apart in the handicapped stall—
Angrily screaming and grunting, on tear’s verge,
Scolding truckloads of baby back ribs and bacon out.

Meanwhile, the all-American, real man’s,
Family man is coping with his
Debilitating fear of women with
Four powdery snorts that each cost more than
The bill sitting in his nose; and for what—

To construct the courage to throttle his
Under-worked, over-paid sexy blonde hire
That he’s already signed a pre-nupless-
Marriage-worth of bonuses to defile.

My one eye feels blind still in this valley.

Why does every walk back to the table

Turn into a unique staring contest

Called: how long we can avoid eye contact, so that

When we see each other, we’re up close, at

The table and surprised to see each other.

Who were you expecting? A guy that has

Something to say when he comes back from a

Brief bathroom break?...Now stirred is silence,

Thanks to that asshole waiter; he damn-well knows

(I was going to fill her glass after)

I wiped that sauce smudge off the glass table.

And great, now you have to piss. Stay calm, this

Nervousness can only help, though ‘cause at least

You’ll avoid embarrassment on your toes’ tips

Wow! this glass table is horrible, it’s

Enticing us both to stare at the ground...

At least, her boots are fancy; point to them,
Say something complimentary, you can’t possibly
Fuck this up. Wrong, again! Of course, these dates
Where you’re the ‘cool guy’ always end when she
Finds out you’re not actually cool at all
When you spill wine on her elegant (red) dress…

Whoa, she’s right, it is the same shade of red.
Well that was an unexpected delight
Maybe you aren’t cool. No, you’re just lucky.
You’re the lucky penguin that wanted so
Badly to be a shark with a deadly smile.

OR, Maybe it’s not as much about me
As I thought. I’ve essentially acted
Wrongly and foolishly according to
My patented playbook. And yet, we are
Drinking, laughing, enjoying a peculiar—

Assortment of arranged, ticklish, flavors,
Comparing our bland sets of hobbies to
Our unfulfilled dreams and boring passions.
Small talk grows and turns into bigger talk,
Not only focusing on pillow talk.
Or that last conversation at the porch,
Or doorstep or driveway or…or…what if
She has an apartment? No, knock it off…
Overthinking has only caused you to
Stop by another lame cheese and wine bar,
(An expensive dark chocolate place, and a
Grossly disappointing adult toy store.)

Things are decent, the vibe is nice, just try
To focus on how good tonight has been,
How many fantastic things you have done…
It’s been a nice walk back and you’re a block
From your place…Holy fuck, you’re steps away

From the streetlamp of no return, her heels
Could start hurting at any moment, and
She could decide to walk right back to the
Sea of cabs just a few curb stumbles and
Deep breaths away. And yet, she came this far,

She now wants you to ask her a question.
Open your mouth, you coward. Good, that’s it,
Now unhinge your jaw, and say something real—
Confidently and proudly. Give her
One of those go-to, Hell-yes, I rule, works-
Like-a-charm lines and mention the ‘nightcap.’

Be smooth, operate on this fine Penny
Money with the style of James Bond…OH no,
You have nothing to say, you’ve opened and
Closed your mouth 4 straight times now…
You look Like you’re chomping the damn air…
May day, may day.

This is a tailspin, you’re freezing up on
This ice princess. She’s got a chill up your
Spine, so cold…wait, that’s not your spine, that’s
your…Pinky…my God, that’s another pinky
Wrapped around your pinky…I don’t under-
Stand it. I’ve embarrassed myself and made
An asshole of myself all night and here
She is, holding my hand. Grabbing my whole
Arm, moving in closer like her body
magnetically fits into my grooves.
And it does, of course it fits, it always

Fits before it gets dirty. Yet, it’s not

The dirt that makes it shrink and constrict. No,

It’s the washing process. But look at her.

I’m just impressed. She’s done so many things

I don’t have the balls to initiate…and

I’m just smiling at her warm face. This is

One of those moments. She has no idea

I’m looking at her right now, and I know

She thinks when I smile out of the corner

Of my mouth like this…Just like…yeah, like this,

Just when this sideways, crooked, drunken

Grin cracks my face into an apparent

Collage of lust and confusion, she thinks—

I must be thinking about her naked

Well…it’s true, when I grin from the side of

My face, I have a nude vision of her,

But not the nudity of the flesh that

Exposes her shape, textures, and tastes.
Instead, I’m picturing the unclothed, unmasked
Bravery that she possesses and I respect.
The courage I wish I had myself.
The strength to venture into uncharted
Territories with a nervous loser
Who has been trying to impress her
All night long with fakeness and clichés.

The curiosity to try me on
For size even though I’ve tried to make my
Tag misleading. The very same foolish
Instinct that caused her to cling onto me
Like she is now. No words have to be spoken,

But I still ask, maybe out of habit,
Maybe because I know it’s one of the
Realest, and most intimate things I can
Actually verbalize to her…Can I
Take your panties off with my mouth?

Girls never like the word “panties,” but I
Toss it around like a stir crazy puppy
That hasn’t been taken on a proper
Walk in weeks throws around a rag doll.

The response to my question is always
A facial cringe, not a verbal “ew.”
The term Panties is not socially unacceptable
Or offensive, but she doesn’t like to hear it,
Especially if she’s topless and thrilled.

The discomfort is what makes the question
So deep and real. It’s an uncensored,
Candid decision question that never
Gets more than a second of thought.
Such a familiar story to me: it’s always
The same instantaneous cringe followed
By a brief, momentary stare in which
She very quickly assesses that yes…I am
Fucking serious, that truly is my intention right now.

And oh, how reality-grounding and
Perfect is the typical response:
Either a so obviously fake moment
Of excitement with a high-pitched “yes,
Pull them right off” or a reluctant sigh
Of acceptance…“sure.” But this one—she was

Different. She pushed my hair right down into
The Bermuda triangle. I must have
Been lost deep undersea in Atlantis
For a long time because I was breathing
With newfound gills, ignoring all knots,
Stiches, and pains in my lungs, flapping my fins
Fluidly, and holding my trident steady.

No jokes cause simultaneous laughs, in fact,
No slapstick humor does either. We could
All be in the same room and watch the same
Hilarious pranking go down, or hear the
Same punchline, but no two pick up the
Feeling together or at the same time.
That’s all in your own head and up to you
When you decide it’s humorous.

But this primal, rhythmic dance of love, and
Lust, human hormones, and vanity
Connects minds. Something unspoken about
The drive to reach a peak of emotion,
The serene feeling of nirvana and ever-
Lasting peace, ties lifeless and scattered
Brains together into one complete feeling.

Only when this utterly complete feeling,
This connection of exhaustion, comfort,
And pleasure is reached, can one know
The incredible joy and uplifting sensation
That is the rare simultaneous laugh.

At the exact same time, all of the worries
In the world were solved, all of the conflict
Was at peace, and every part of your body
And mind felt happy. So you laughed,
Let out an invigorating and freeing snort,
Barked like a hyena, felt like a drunk clown,
And cracked up almost hysterically. And right
When you thought your sweating, shaking,
Fulfilled body was laugh-relieving,
You discover her laugh-attack is slowing
At the exact pace yours is, and the
Uproar continues in a beautiful cycle.
There’s a messy resolution to the story,

But it’s best to end at the climax.

Always order an appetizer.
Sunset of Love

The festering urge to stare and gaze
At a glorious, fleeting spectacle
Is combatted by a sting-
A need to wince, blink, and turn the head.

I'll engage my full being into this gliding orange
...Not out of obligation, the beauty alone is worth watching.
After all, what's a few temporary purple blotches in my view,
Relative to the masterful peace of this masterpiece.

All is pure and clean in the quiet coastal scenery,
Until the rays and reflections onto the ocean
Begin to shrink in length. The emotional giant
Begins to nestle under the trees. For shelter?
To hide? To protect fellow horizon lovers' eyes?

So many, Too many thoughts entertained by such
A sunset. By the time this spherical slice of my heart
Is completely covered, a new moon can venture
And creep its way into our sky. But of course, even
The lunar miracle is just a reflection of the sun we truly loved.
Heartburn

Got that heartburn,

Bit off more than

Teeth could gnash

Into manageable pieces.

Got that headache,

Splitting, piercing ringing

Sound that makes

You dread being awake.

Got that chest pain,

Got those asthma lungs.

Got the ailments

That make laughing not so fun.

But shake the cobwebs from

The dusty skeleton. Medicine

Causes dependence. The

Body only feels sicker,

When the soul has regulated relief.

When the fever runs high,
And fingers can’t control the
Countours of the awaiting thigh,
Fight through, do not fall to sleep.

Yes, it’s contagious.
But we all want to
Be sick together, don’t we?
No permanent heal.
But, heat will be felt.

Two opposing land masses
Collide and tectonic shoulder
Plates form mountains, body
Quakes, Tremors. The after-
Shock is the best part.

Is it not? After the volcano
Erupts, a moment kicks
Itself into your sinus.
You cannot physically
Stop yourself from shaking,
Smiling. That is when the
Heartburn goes away.
It will come back, though.
If I

If I hold your hand, will you feel wanted?
If I always cuddle and am honest,
If I do all these things will you notice?
If I was witty with these words,
If I could hatch this scheming bird,
Out of the egg of if I, if I tried.
But is and ors
Are bitches and whores.
And this is more
Than you expected, neglecting me.
And ifs ands and buts,
I’m going nucking futs,
Oh, if only I was a little more impress-if.

If I looked like chiseled stone,
Or If I had a golden throne,
If I had a mighty and proud steed.
If I tried to be a prince charming,
If I wasn’t off-putting and alarming,
But If I wasn’t these things, I wouldn’t be me.
Cause ifs and ors
Are bitches and whores
And this is more
than you expected, inspecting me.
Ifs and ands,
I’ll try with my hands
And you’ll wanna dance,
If you take a chance on an if.
Wannabe

I want to be the flip to your flop.
I want to be the skip to your hop.
I want to be the crust on the bread
Of your sandwich that you just don’t want to cut off.
I want to be the zz to your top,
But if I was the lolly to your pop,
I’d ask how many licks it takes to get to the center:
one, two, three.

I want to be the something to your something.
I want to be the nothing to your nothing.
I want to be the anything to your abundant
everything.

I want to be the hip to your hop.
I want to be the ship to your battle.
I want to be the prince in your castle.
If you’ll be my princess, then you should saddle
Up on my horse, straddle up on the porch,
No hassle, skedaddle before we explore—
These new lands with true romance.
I want to be the zipper to your pants. And,
I want to be the dragon to your fly
I want to be the who, what, when, where to your why
I want to be the fruit to your fly,
The frown to your smile, the cloud to your sky.

I want to be the something to your something.
I want to be the nothing to your nothing.
I want to be the anything to your abundant everything.

If you applaud and cheer and clap,
Then I’ll just snap and tip my cap,
Down to the ground for you to drop
Your lost and my new found.
I want to be the Jackson to your Five.
I want to be the pulse that tells you, you’re alive.
I want to be the beef to your jerky,
The lock to your turnkey, the turkey to your jive.

I want to be the something to your something
I want to be the nothing to your nothing
I want to be your everything,
But for now, I’ll settle for being anything.
Your Meadow

IS it greener there?

Sometimes I think the grass is greener over there

In the meadow you lounge in. Perhaps you’ll invite me

But considering I walk under ladders, break mirrors, and open umbrellas indoors…

I know luck isn’t my lady

But maybe, I’m not the only one that’s crazy, and shaking, and looking for a nice pasture for grazing.

Hopes and fears interchange like train tracks conducted by a dice roll. I don’t know if I’m a steam engine, but I think I can…I think I can…

I haven’t decided my expectations, but if cacti certainly root in the sand, I can be the oasis to quench your thirst…

But of course, there’s nothing green about this desert…

Maybe it’s the fireflies in your face that spark in the night, but something is much livelier and greener is over there.
Blonde Dream

I wrote a stupid song that expressed my
Feelings, but I know you don’t want to hear
My voice; even this is a naïve whim.
I’m not saying that I need you,
I’m certainly not saying that you need me;
I just believe deep down that we
Owe each other civil conversation.

I fully understand that your friends will
Forever hate me (justifiably so), and I
Have come to that harsh realization that
You won’t ever again, intend on enjoying
Anything about me (excluding laughing
At my dispense). But I want you to know
That I believe that people never change,
And if you’d just let yourself talk to me again,
We could have a little blast from the past.

I taught you a little about life and reality too.
As we grew up (and fucked up) together,
All that we cared about was having each other.
I’m sorry we lost that feeling with time and conflict.
Should that dictate the rest of our interactions?

Perhaps this seems overdramatized to you,
But you were the only thing I ever loved
With all of my heart and soul. The one
And only person that I do whatever it takes
To start smiles. I bend over backwards to make
You feel beautiful. And you are, always—

The only person for whom I constantly curb
Mistakes. Worst of all, you are the only person
I abandoned.

I’m sure your friends and family agree
That I’m just some crumpled trash,
Skipping around the dark alleys of your past.
But from your watering can of compassion,
And kindness, my petals opened and faced the sun.

You know it would be instantly magnifying,
To get high and watch horror
Movies. Have food fights and tie each
Other up with zip ties and handcuffs.
All that fleeting fun. And more, we could
Shower together with my dog. I could
Fix the hole in the dry wall from when
We tried contemporary dance lifts
To Tears for Fears.

I know that we have an unclassifiable,
Chemistry. A bond from which Beryllium
And Phosphorous does not parallel.

Perhaps you’ll never want to be my friend,
But I’d really like to get along with you.
The very last thing that I want is for you
To hate me, but you know that’s your call.

Don’t go back to those exciting nights when
We first met where I’d try to impress you.
(Sorry I prompted that earlier in this note.
I suppose I am still overly manipulative.)
Go back to the nights where we struggled
Together over bullshit and hurt each other.
We were able to cling upon sharp,
Yet docile cliffs and know that
The fright of the cavern in which we found
Ourselves was an eerie belonging.

I know you don’t want that back; I don’t either,
But there was something special between us
And to just stubbornly throw away a friendship/
Relationship/whatever-you-wanna-call what we
Had would be a huge mistake.
For the both of us. So I’m going to try
My damndest to avoid that outcome.

Erin, I really think it’s time we talked.
If you disagree, I don’t blame you because
I know you’ve matured into a lioness.
And here, I feel like a mouse offering to
Pull a thorn from your clammy paw.
Your gaze shows strong will,
But I know that you’re still the same
Compassionate, sweet genuine person
That just wants contentment and peace.
As big of an insensitive asshole as I am,
I know that my heart is in the right place.
I just want good terms and a chance to talk.
If you honestly think that the break-up
Was unforgivable, I understand and I’m sorry
That I wasn’t a patient or kind partner.
My side of the see-saw rarely grazed
The mulch. You must know that you don’t
Belong with a punk like me and you’re
Way too beautiful and pure to slum
Around with basket cases like myself.

But I was proud of who I was when
We were together, and I was proud of us,
And the woman you were growing into.
It’s awful to think that such a fond
Part of my life is completely missing,
Or hates me, or wants nothing to do with me.

I have these two tickets to a La Sera concert,
Friday night, the Echoplex. If you’re busy or don’t
Want to go that’s fine, but I think it could be
A good experience that we could positively
Move forward with. It’d mean a lot to me
To get a chance to have a discussion;
Because it is still easy to say,
You are the most significant thing
That’s ever happened in my life.
I just won’t go down without you.
You are my story, and I want a resolution,
Not a conflict.

The most important moments have
Already passed, but I know that there
Is some future for us. Maybe it’s you
Hating me forever, maybe it’s civil
Disagreement, but I hope with all of my heart
That we’ll be friends, or at least friendly.

Please Erin, consider all things said in this note.
Hopefully and Humbly,
Sam
Keith Stone

The new Keystone Ice can bears the emblem of a fish.

The first can in the 30-rack holds the tail-fin.

The next can, the thick of the tail and start of the abdomen.

The following can, gills. The fish is long, two complete Dorsal-fin Sections. By the sixth can, the fish’s head can be seen. Stack the cans and you’ve got a full-Grown aluminum trout.

Who am I to say the new design encourages binge drinking? I discovered the insignia when I was cleaning up the wounded soldiers and torn up shotgun shells.

Such a wise wizard am I with my fish staff.

Look, everybody! I’ve found Nemo!
Hey Ho

Hey Ho, whaddya say and know,
I think I’d rather sleep in the sleet and snow
Than listen to your mouth,
Go on and on about,
How you just might, just never let him go.

And now, I flounder and flop about,
Just trying to get my nose above the surface.
But an anchor drags me down.
I guess at least I’m grounded,
But my rewards card is valued at worthless.

So swipe, re-swipe, and know to your delight,
That no matter how much you take this serious,
That I feel hysteria,
Think about my cheeriness,
I cherish that big picture we’re bacterias.

So dance till you drop,
I’m sure you’ll shake it off,
He doesn’t notice that you’re feeling desperate.
Be all that you can be,
Cross your eyes and dot your tees
And pray to God that it’ll happen,
And He might let it.

And I’d rather trip, on your ex-boyfriend’s lacrosse stick
Than face the mad hatter facts about this.
And I’d sooner laugh,
About my grandma drowning in a bath,
Than stumble in the dark without a glow-stick.

Let’s make a bet, so that the winner gets
All the wish I didn’t do that shit regrets.
And to the victor goes the spoils of the winter,
You spring forward, I’ll fallback
When we meet up and commence.

So dance till you die, get ceiling fucking high,
He still don’t notice that you’re feeling desperate
Do all that you can due, pay your fees and ask your cues
And swear to God this will happen,
And She might let it.
**Trashy**

I’m that trashy kind of throw-me-away in the paper basket.

Waste me, I’m nasty. Might go moldy in this casket

Worms crawl inside of me, delightfully. I always scheme.

I’m that trashy kind of throw-me-away in the paper basket.

What’s growing on my face? Is that my face?

What is my face? Throw-it-away in the paper basket.

Before I face my own buried hatchet.

No regrets, but I’m all out of bets, so disposed,

I go, I suppose, it’s just next. Like a dandelion spreading

Its seed even after you fail to blow them away in one breath.

I’m that trashy kind of throw-me-away in the paper basket.

I’m not recyclable, I’m landfill bound, compacted.
Don’t litter me, or belittle me, I am not made of plastic.

No, I’m that trashy kind so throw me away in the paper basket.
Oz

Tap, tap, tap, tappity tap, tap your ruby, ruby red slippers.

There’s no place like my domain, my dojo is dead chipper.

You could by lying in the grass, like a lion in the grass, how krass.

Got no courage, cowardly like Eugene’s Ooga Booga Booga Mask.

Cause I need you—

Like Mario-Italiano kneads the pizza dough,

‘Cause he needs the dough, or his legs both will be broken-

His shroom guy’s already beating Luigi.

And I want you—

Like a cat, without a post wants a little more scratch.

And, I think you get the point

I want you like I want cash—or road dome.

Please follow, follow, follow my golden, golden path-road.
Got some dumb lyrics, moronic, more brainless than scarecrow.

I’m mean, meaner than Mr. Clean, meaner than the man behind the screen.

The one that puffs that emerald green, I want to light you up like White OG.

Until that witch, that bitch, that wicked western hitch-hikers

Worst nightmare if they get picked up,

Hope they like a bumpy broomstick ride up their butt,

What’s up, I think you’re my buttercup.

‘Cause I love butterscotch, and nutterbutters rock,

And your nutty and mother fucking hot-to-trot.

I want you—

Like George Washington really wanted weed and hemp to catch on.

I want weed and hemp to catch on. But mostly,

I just want you to wear a hemp thong. Wait,

What was my point?—oh, I don’t need to bother.

But I fucking want you

Like them hoes on Maury want Jerome to be the father—
But he’s not the father.

I want you to suck me
Like the lolly. lollipop guild.
I’ll make sure you and Toto are not killed—
She won’t get you my pretty, she won’t get you my pretties.
Sugar Fix

Ah, the ritualistic joy of parking in front
Of the closed-down Iron Works Gym,
Only to waltz right into the Fruizen
Next door, to order a gelato in a waffle-cone!

It’s the only non-frozen yogurt ice-cream shop
Open ‘till 11:00 pm. Its clientele mostly hangout
With boba iced-tea, speaking in Korean,
With textbooks sprawled across all tables and seating.

I feel at home in these sweet, Asian sanctuaries.
I cruise by Pixie Donuts in approach of my
Consumerist treasure. Pixie used to be my fix.
Jelly donuts—my jam. Jerry Quo’s father owned
The place: it was similarly inviting to Asians.

I speak of the powdery bakery in past tense
Because it has been shut down, years before.
An article was printed in the local courier.
It exposed Pixie’s magical dust as fueled by
Means other than maple logs and cinnamon buns.
Apparently, the shop was a front for massive Ivory shipments. As sugar-hungry kids, we all had our theories about back-door Bear-Claw Deals. We never suspected whale-bones and Elephant tusks.

Now, Mr. Quo has been forced to open a new shop: Texas Donuts. I don’t feel so welcome there. It’s much like Yogurt Land or 21 Choices—(No free wifi).
I won’t Mind Sinking

May Day, May day, I’m sharply losing altitude
Tailspinning, shipwrecked stuck with a mutinous crew.
Batten down the hatches, anchors away let’s shove off
Hoist the sails, we’re on the trail, I’m no Kirk and far from a Spock.
Illogical! My navigation system’s confangled,
Danger danger, Will Robinson: our course is all mangled.
Marooned on a maroon island, both eyes color blinded
Directionally challenged, no balance, stranded on this island.

We’re caught in a downward spiral,
My panic and paranoia is viral.
And if this ship goes down too deep,
And there’s no more oxygen in our submarine
… I won’t mind sinking.
Full speed ahead if it’s still in ye’, warp pace in this spaceship
Rocket off to the moon and back, it’s all about displacement.
Cape Canaveral is quite the average travel route,
But my GPS is pointing me to the Koopa King’s castle.
No hope, no note, just abandoned in this lava moat.
And even though I’m begging to sink, I wind up afloat.
Driftwood ashore, no more time to explore,
My first mate has stabbed me in the back. Et tu brutus, you whore?

We’re caught in a downward spiral,
My panic and paranoia is viral.
And if this ship goes down too deep,
And there’s no more oxygen in our submarine,
I won’t mind sinking.
Hit the Gas, Ski Mask Fast

Put the money in the fucking bag,
And nobody else will get hurt.
Put the money in the fucking bag,
You saw the hero die first.

This is a stickup, everybody freeze!
Or else. This trigger might get squeezed.
Nobody make a fucking move,
NO-body make a fucking move.

Everybody remain calm,
Or I’m setting off this bomb.
I’ve come to automatically grand theft a grand.
Unmarked rolls and rubber bands.

If you’ve got a watch or swatch,
I’ll swap it for your safety.
Don’t you try to test a testy
Motherfucker named me.

Me I says, me’s the name,
Robbing blindly is my game
So before you try to moan or brag

Put your money in the fucking bag.
Graphic Novel

I want to be your superman,
But I smoke too much kryptonite.
I could be over there in a flash,
Yet, I don’t have the power of flight.
If I was Peter Parker,
I’d get tangled in my own web.
Because I get green, no manners,
Bruce Banner, and I Hulk-smash myself.

Maybe if I had a batmobile, or shiny utility belt.
It seems I’m Iceman, and you’re the human torch,
So when we touch I melt——
Under pressure, but not underwater,
I don’t resemble Aquaman.
Other sea-fishes are just bitches
Isolated like doc Manhattan:
Blue alone and naked, so Magneto angered.
But my villainous ways won’t force
Me into a choke-hold Darth Vader.

No I must be a hero, like Tron and fend off Sark.
Or pull a Tony Stark, and wear a blue thing on my heart.

To protect you in such choppy waters from the circling Hammerhead sharks.

Thunder thunder thundertcats! you know that ain’t my call.

Not at all, I’m no Buzz Lightyear.

Infinity and less-than-beyond.

I’m far from a James Bond, more like scary Barry Bonds.

Big Headed, super unimpressive,

No spidey-senses, sensitivity or incentive.

I can’t guide the way, I lost my green lantern.

Damn sure, that I’m not Mr. Fantastic, Dr. Galactus, Destroyer of the planets. Just a hopeless romantic.

But I can promise you for sure that when it boils Down to the thick of it, I won’t save the day.
**Public Transport**

I want to publically transport you, and take you on a ride.

Just subside, smile, hold the rails, and keep your arms

Inside—

The vehicle, hop on the trolley. It’s foreseeable that you and

Me would get caught in-between a bus and a taxi.

I wanna take you underground, and eat you fresh like Subway.

Can we take the bus today? I think it’s to too much dismay.

But it’s only a couple quarters for a round-trip trolley.

Holly, hollers at pills of molly, cause I folly over pocket’s,

Call her Polly. Along she came, on the tram, on the train,

All the way, one way. Let’s just say it wasn’t okay—

For both parties involved, I’m so Hardy boys to solve.
You are not one with the sun: the earth don’t revolve
Around you.

I want to publically transport you, take you on a ride
Just subside, smile and hold the rails, keep your arms
inside—
The vehicle, keep them safely in. Unless you want to
lose your limbs.

But you need those, to feed the meter,
Keep the train on tracks, and either
Take the ferry over to the island,
Where double decker buses only cost two limes, and
Diamonds are awarded to the team that wins the food
fight,
And afterwards there are public hot balloon rides!
The Bird and the Bee

My mind drifts out of control and lands on your shore.
I know you’re winning, but it’s the beginning so let’s not keep score.
You keep your cold shoulder turned and it’s freezing me up,
But my mind keeps buzzing with that bird’s and the bee’s buzz.

And I’ll be your singing bird, if you’ll be my busy bee.
Honey we both got wings and live in a tree.
And yes, I’m alive in a hive, and you’re nestled up in a nest—
But when the pieces don’t fit, the puzzle looks the best.

I could bring you some pollen, and you could chirp for me.
Migrate over to my land and kill the Queen Bee.
I don’t need her orders, directions, discretion or mandates.
Just flap around a field of flowers—I’ll butter you up, pancake.

And, I’ll be your singing bird if you’ll be my busy bee.

Honey we’ve both got wings and live in the same tree.

And yes, you’re alive in a hive and I’m nestled up in my nest.

But when the jigsaw doesn’t fit, the puzzle looks its best.
**W**’s

Who the hell are you, to tell me

What I’m really all about?

When did this become a showdown,

Where I got a gun in your mouth?

Why are you talking down like

You’re horse is stories above mine?

Who, what, when, where, why,

What, when, where?

Who, what, when, where, why?

Who, what, when, where, why?

What, when, where? I question

Your motives, but I’m confused about my life.

Who does this kid think he really is with that

What-ever attitude? And

When did he get off acting like home is

Wherever he feels in the mood?

Why is he such an inconsiderate jerkoff at any given
time?

Who, what, when, where, why,
What, when, where?

Who, what, when, where why?

Who, what, when, where, why, what, when, where?

I question your motives, but I’m confused about my life.
Carnivale

The Coney Island Cyclone is the world’s Oldest functioning roller coaster.

It was invented on a pier in Brooklyn in 1927. To give you an idea of how Old that really is, Sliced bread wasn’t Invented until 1928.

The expression ‘the best thing since sliced Bread’ is used to denote the sheer age of A thing. It was the most practical invention In ages. Centuries and epochs have passed Since such a simple yet well-needed design Was pitched and erected. The very fact That this expression cannot be used to Describe The Coney Island Cyclone Speaks lengths and loop de loops.

The line to get on the coaster is not-so- Surprisingly, short. It is comprised mostly Of wood and rusted iron. It creaks like a Neglected front porch rocking chair In the Everglades.
I have no desire to get on this ride
Other than to prove to my girlfriend
That I am brave. She doesn’t care.
She just thinks I am stupid. I am.
Instead of spending my time with pink
Admit one tickets and sitting on rides,
Leaving her alone on the piers,
I should be tenderly applying Calamine
Lotion to her Shingled back.

I nervously and improperly laugh
At her shingles. Not at the misfortune
And pain she goes through, just the very
Word itself. This disease is a synonym
For roof tiles. You’re not supposed to walk on
Them, for they are dangerous.
But I like to climb on top of things, even
If it means getting a firm megaphone talking-to.

I joke, ‘do you want me to remove your
Spackle, my dear?’ She doesn’t find it funny.
It isn’t.
Untitled (for now)

A fish will just feel like a fool
In the deepest most beautiful pool
If I is told to find the top of a tree
A bird can’t feel at peace
And can never calmly sleep
If it is told to dive deep
A horse is nothing but an ass
Can never stride fast
If it is told to move backwards
A chicken will never take flight
Has no brain soul or might
If it is put into buckets and nuggets
Drugs

Drugs, drugs? Drugs
What do we love as much as? Drugs
Drugs, Spontaneous euphoric
It’s drugs, drugs, drugs, drugs
You know I gotta have it
Drugs drugs drugs
Relapse is not a habit
My brain is fried, completely destroyed
Is that a narc? Getting paranoid
I guess I’ve just entered the void with all these
Drugs
You like your caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine.
Sometimes, you do blow and smoke that
methamphetamine.
I’m getting green with reefer, leaving it to beaver,
Not a devout believer, so I’m golden, as a retriever.
And receiver of drugs and hugs and love, because I
always share irresponsibly.
Consume drugs, drugs, drugs.
My favorite girls are mary, lucy, and molly.
Gosh, goddamn golly, I’m feeling really gnarly.
Charlie-horse your whores if they’re horsing around dolly.

Llama and Parton but I don’t pardon for all these Needles and injections, and people with their infections.

It’s not a worthwhile lesson to just check in To any motel with a herojuin addiction.

It’s just in, that I’m more oxycontent than your ambitions.

Picture me,

I played so hard the other day my knuckles bled on my guitar.

The lifestyle I lead is wild and uncomfortable.

When I touch you touching me I feel so untouchable.
Transmonia

I’m stuck living in the past,
The present is a gift too hard to unwrap.
Pruny hands in a bubble bath,
Old notes in raincoats still make me laugh.

I scanned the pages of your diary,
Looking for the very best version of me.
Somewhere between all the lines of hate,
I’m sure there’s something okay.

And I need help.
Almost as much as I hate myself.
I knew you like the back of palm,
When I used to park in the front of your lawn.
I’m a stubborn asshole,
Even when I try to change.
Pack my bags for Australia,
I’m sure I could take a train.
Drink away my troubles,
Because tomorrow will be great,
Waking up with a fucking headache.
It’s awful funny how talking sucks,
When you’ve come so far,
And always get drunk.
Well, it wasn’t only sunshine and sex,
But it was better than denial and loneliness.

And I hate myself.
Almost as much as I need help.
I knew you in the back of my car,
When I used to park in the front of your lawn.

I’ll learn my lesson, when there’s nobody left
Who wants to hear my bullshit, excuses,
And I confess!
That I was the lowest point in your happiness.
I’m sure I won’t be too hard to miss.
At least, I won’t get caught lying to myself.
Shiny Red Dumpster

Looking outside the window of

A religious studies class, its common

To see a cute girl jaunting from somewhere

That must be interesting, to some place

That must be daring.

This time, a brand new dumpster catches

The eye. They replaced the dining hall

Parking-lot dumpster. The upgrade is

A crimson red Front Loader waste-container.

The metal shines above a waxed Ferari.

Why does a scum receptacle have to be

So clean and new? What was wrong

With the old one? Did it not have tenure?

The dumpsters teach one thing. It is easy

To lie about recycling.
Hot Pink Plaster Cast

Where do you go when no one wants to hear your shit?

Where are you off to, where the hell have you been?

I saw you under the Rosemead Freeway underpass
Selling your ass for claps, cheap drinks, and laughs.

I miss you like I miss your hot pink, plaster cast
I was wearing an orange vest, picking up trash.

I never saw some-one with a limp, run so damn fast.

How can you get away from your own past?

I signed your cast, with a drawing of a dick.

The best detox is retox there’s still some in the clip.
And in the chamber of secrets, but the safety was latched

You never pull the trigger anyways.

How can I be so lost when I’ve found God?

How can I be so vain when I’m such a sloth?

Where do you go when there’s nowhere left to turn?

I look as mighty as an oak, but I’m as soft as a fern
And you turned my gulley—into a wooly, wooly mammoth farm
All my tusks were transformed into your bracelet and your anklet charms!

I signed your cast with a drawing of a dick.

The bet detox is retox there’s still some in the clip.

And in the chamber of secrets, but the safety was latched.

You’d never pull the trigger anyways…anyways.
Influencing Influences

Moving through a thickening high,
Unable to clasp hands together.
When the knees wobble, and the lips
Are too numb to feel the saliva bridge
From its tongue to your chin,
Look for explanation. Try to
Recall cause-and-effect to understand
Your drug-induced side effects.

There was the kid down the street
That sold indoor hydroponic weed.
It was a good thing to introduce him
To the runners, he knew the farmers.
He was always in a pleasant mood.
Even when lost in Joshua Tree
His focus was rolling a blunt and
Team morale.

Before that, close friends prescribed
Of all pastel colors of medication.
Terracotta Pink for the scattering times,
Powder blue for mind-numbing,
Tapioca Yellow when the goof wanted
To be brought out. White just for the
Hell of it.

Then, the guy on the DarkNet preferred
Mailed-envelopes of cash to BitCoin.

Always left town to see Cocaine Kyle.
Usually surrounded by buildings and
Large crowds of clueless masses. Only
A few were in on the big joke. What a
Laughing riot it was between us.

Now who’s laughing? If there was a
Stupor police, hands would be cuffed.
No, there is only a fuck-up police.
A Sonnet to Hangovers

Blast awake from a static whirlpool dream,
Beside the mummy only stirs a grumble.
Dawning tangles of perspiring bedsheets mean
Impossibility to recall night’s folly and fumble.
The howl from the moon erupts a temptation;
One only lethal without acceptance of pain—
For all skin cracks and sheds reconciliation.
But beneath the surface of the molting vain
Is a spirit that can be rejuvenated with hopes
Of praise for being so bold as to jeopardize
Spirit, mind, body, heart, reputation and scope.
The blur makes every urge pleasant in hindsight,
Even recurring debilitation is a token of might.

The dripping faucet can never be repaired
When whiskey triumphs fears and dares.
Ballad for Lost

Magic carpet could use some shampoo.

The pixie dust ran out in the dumpling-house booth.

Chipped my tooth on a guitar

Trying to write you a song.

 Ankles click (clack, clickidy click).

When we cuddle them up.

Stop watching day-dreams

Projected on your windows.

It feels nice to wallow…in my regret.

Broken lights dance on wet pavement.

You told me twice to knock-it-off,

I know I haven’t spent—

Enough attention to make my eyes cross,

When I look at your ugly dolls.

And I feel like a wasp, all I do is sting

And nothing sweet.

Milkshakes of malt, always spill

Turn my lips numb, make my brain pump,

You call them puns, you still can’t drive,
I know I won’t die, if I can just lie.

I presented you with an acorn.
It was drained of all its poison, pretty quick.
You’ve never had to say more,
To express that you feel alone and sick.

But I’m not here. Though if I was
I’d probably tell you that I’m still enough…

And if I was, I’d hold your bones so tight,
They’d go from smooth to rough.

Candles drip, when you don’t blow them out.
I’d share with you my paper Mache,
If that was allowed.
Got your period front row at Tiesto’s show,
Apology flowers never grow.

And I feel like a wasp, all I do is sting
And nothing sweet.
Milkshakes of malt, always spill
Turn my lips numb, make my brain pump
You call them puns, you still can’t drive,

I know I won’t die, if I just lie.
No Reason

I wanted to see you perform at the
Vagina Monologues. I’ve never been,
I’ve heard it’s quite interesting.

(You wouldn’t have wanted to see
Me there, anyways.)

Instead of witnessing that Earth
Shattering moment of symbolic
Catharsis, I took too much LSD
And would up in the Pomona
Valley Emergency Room.

Captured in the rainbow tunnel of my stupor,
I thought I was the leader of a new world.
Travelling through unseen dimensions
Of vibrant Hourglass sand. Orbits of
Humanoid creatures with suction cup
Eyes hold me as their genderless pariah.

I sort of came-to in an ambulance.
A cycle of thought galloped recurrently
In my mind. None of this before me in this
Ambulance was real. I was under the impression
That I was being detained by the
Inter-dimensional travel police.

Carlos and Colin later informed me that I was
Sprinting around in the rain, until security
Finally caught up to me. Unable to answer
Their questions, I tried to climb fences and
Break free from their cuffs.

I didn’t notice the gashes on my hands
Until the surly nurse with the crew cut
Hooked me up to an IV.

I wanted to see you at the Vagina Monologues.
You wouldn’t have wanted to see me there, anyways.
Oh, Savior

Oh, savior can you bring me ease?

I’ve ripped self apart like Heracles,

By mine own hand, and with full-knowing.

I call upon your wishful glowing.

Brightness float me away from the swamp—

In which I dwell, and gnash, and chomp,

And sludge, and sting, and pain, and fuck,

Where falseness in their brains abrupt.

Yet my rebut still feels corrupt.

As only eyes that cannot judge

Dance toward the marshy undergrowth,

Of which I beg you to approach.

So dawn me life-siver, dispel me drink.

Perhaps I’ve misread your printed ink.

But you claim to forgive all—that let you

Into their hearts. Mine may be dark,

But you’re welcome to decompart-

Mentalize, and understand,
You will be splitting room.

For another, too resides

In my estately tomb.

I’ve heard you two have a past.

Damn-near shared a womb,

Yet out your land you cast

His sorrows and his gloom.

So I have accepted him thus,

As only your teachings find fit.

Be careful of the webs you weave

For evil is the wit.

The time so idle for Satan-play,

But also for scripture read.

Oh, Savior, if you hear me

Alleviate my head.

Like Zachariah trapped on the rood,

I have not space for all.

So join me, Hosannah in the Highest

Pray that we don’t fall.
Scavenged

Vulture of low-hanging fruit.

Talons never closing,

Neck fully-wound.

Eyes fixed on vulnerable prospects.

Perches on short, sharp cliffs

That hang above cavernous valleys.

Wings can bring the carrion

A higher comfort, but they

Are only spread to keep from

Splattering on the ground below.

All prey so young,

But none so fresh.
Notes for the Misguided

Let the spiked hair of the ‘degenerates’

You walk over be your pumice.

Exfoliate your brow, bury your head

Deep into the pit of the sand dune valley.

Polish your Rolex with the tears

Of child sex-slaves and lowjacked fillings.

Don’t you know how

Methylenedioxymethamphetamine

Is manufactured?

The clipboard toting scientist has no hand.

It was Meth Cook Daniel’s first-born son.

A seasoned synthesist can point out all

Three degrees of burn marks on his

Crackly skin.

Skin that cries not for your smooth shine.

But continue to cover your surface with

Sun-screen, then, tanning-lotion, both

Hooves of horses and cows.
Writing for Others

I used to write for others…

But I wasn’t any good at that

And as I’ve gotten better at making words sound nice
to people,

I’ve realized, that the only thing that you want to hear

Is exactly what I want to say.

And only sounds good to you if I don’t give a damn

Whether or not you like it.

So it isn’t that practice has made me better

It’s that rejection made me sadder

Rejection made me angrier

And write selfishly

For me.

Which, inadvertently, made it better for you.

(Maybe I still do write for others).
After Words

Thrust into a world of poetry, I’ve grown to embrace the poetic lens. Each topos, each trope, each rhyme, each cliché, each morning morning’s minion, each reduction to a state of almost savage torpor, each nightingale, each ode to an obscure, inanimate object, and every single Stella of the skies holds special significance hidden to the naked eye. Not insamuch as something undiscoverable upon ponderance. Rather, a way to contemplate the physical. The *Ah, Sunflower!* reaction. That is not to say that poets have a supernatural eyesight to certain beautiful images. My eyes do not see any more dandelion puffs whirl-winding in the sky than others.’ Take the image a step further. The puff of dandelion seeds becomes a floating scoop of ice cream. Dripping sweet nutrients to the field, fostering the growth of new dandelions. So, now we have the permission to kick the field of dandelions and birth more scoops.

These words come after my project as they are a reflection of my poetry. There is a step after expressing one’s thoughts into a poem. That is to say, it is important to re-read your poetry once your mind has settled. You can begin to reflect more objectively on your actions that put you into the poetic mindset. In the following pages, I have organized a few stories with deeper philosophical insight than my poems. Like my poems, they are about loss, love, life. But they contain moments of meditation and reflection. Moments in which I engage the reader with what is swimming around my head now that I’ve tried to understand the situation more objectively. But does reflection bring us closer to objectivity? It is common to believe that memory alters and bends the truth. By expressing my emotions ‘in the moment,’ I am lying. My written emotions are more driven by how I’m feeling with the pen in my hand than how I felt before I jumped off a
wall and broke my ankle. Yet, this prose sort of writing provides us with a different effect than poetry. Much of my poetry has been a series of images or emotions. Very little self-reflection on cause-and-effect or position in society is explicit. For the most part, I urge the reader to find my thoughts afterwards within my diction, syntax, or rhythm. During this prose section, I will outright express my emotions as they are. Rather than convoluting a failed relationship and describing it as a metaphorical moat, I will say that I feel as if there is a boundary between us now. I will address how frantically I behave when I see her in my peripherals, just dying to get her attention. I will conclude with the reflection that I only set myself up for more disappointment by expecting any kind of positive reaction.

The result of these ‘after words’ is more insight on the reader’s end, hopefully. When writing poetry I try to apply sensory images that put the reader in the present moment I am trying to convey. My goal is to give the reader a first-hand view at the experience. My prose attempt to provide the reader with insight to a more reflective mode of expression. While my poems create a comprehensive view on the inner workings of my mind, I expect that this additional prose section will bring the project full circle.
Negotiations

Everything in life is a negotiation. As a collectible salesman, I’ve begun to pick up on this. I had a collectible an interested party wanted desperately, but I had no idea how he conducted business. When I was younger, I used the internet to sell and procure old Nintendo video games and action figures. It wasn’t until college that I had my first face-to-face sales interaction. I had to create a game plan and persona.

The interested buyer was the one to initiate the negotiation. He was looking for valuables, and I happened to have them. We agreed to make a transaction. Before I told him the value of the package, he made me a less-than-desirable offer. My response was to pin him against an imaginary bidder. In no way did I want him to know that the parcel in question was for sale. I even vacuum sealed the purple Gamecube disc-container and packaged it in a USPS priority mail box so he thought I was paying a shipping cost to the second merchant. I explained to him that I really wanted to give the game to him.

“You seem like a really great guy and I know you’re interested. But you’d have to make me a higher offer than my friend across the country. He’s not a friend, really. But he did ask for this game first.”

The truth of the matter of my example negotiation with the collectible buyer is that I didn’t care for wallet fodder. I wanted to establish an honest relationship in which both the second party and I were willing to put all of our physical and emotional capitol into a business about which we felt passionate: collectibles. The trick with vintage video games, comic books, and dolls is to keep them in mint condition. It is so easy to avoid the desire to open a package when your pay-off is contingent on patience. Especially with a
highly desired good, the sales pitch and consequent negotiation is crucial to making money.

I do not mean to say I aspire to be some Machiavellian sociopath. Simple favors and interactions can be viewed as negotiations of sorts. It is important in such interactions to have a sleight of hand and an honest heart. You must know that eventually, your intentions will be sniffed out. A truly powerful negotiator expects the second party to catch on to his end-goal. The trick is to have a clever guise up your sleeve. A red-herring can be good. An escape route is also recommended. If some level of honesty and sincerity exists underneath your guise, the scale will always tilt in your favor.
The Duel

How the fuck did I end up here? I’ve never even shot a gun with live ammunition in it before. I just got the stupid glock a week ago. I guess if I had to trace my trajectory back, I would find myself flirting with the wrong girl. God, everything is so easy in hindsight. So, this guy really thinks he has what it takes to kill another man? And over something so petty. Maybe, if I best his wit, he’ll submit.

“Listen, I didn’t know that was your girl—” I said.

“Yes you did, you approached her when I left to the bathroom!” He interrupted.

I wanted to tell him that a true gentleman would have waited for her to go to the bathroom first. I looked out of the corner of my eye. His girlfriend was staring blankly at me. I got this feeling that her man had been in this kind of scenario before. “So, you’re going to shoot a man for buying a perfect stranger a Long Island Iced Tea?” I asked.

“Where do you get off calling my girlfriend ‘perfect?’” I could hear her cringe. At this point he was firing verbal blanks.

I’ve never pointed my gun at anybody before. I imagine his safety must be on as well. This is beginning to feel like a customary type of engagement. “Cold steel chills the soul. If you want to have a ‘chill night,’ I air-quote with my index and middle fingers, “I suggest you keep your 9 mm Ruger pointed at me.”

“Oh yeah, and what if I do?” He said proudly. What a simple response to my over-winded grandeur.

I tried to cock the gun smoothly, but again, this is all new to me. I didn’t even have the holster on forwards. I mean, Sonny Crockett from Miami Vice did it that way. That was stylish. What I had going on was clueless. Lucky this baboon put his gun away.
When a person decides to point a gun at you and realizes you have a gun of your own, they’re likely to submit. Everybody practices their right to bear arms in one way or another. In my Mexican stand-off example, the true ammunition was wordsmithery, not bullets. The gun is the mouth, the trigger is the wit, and the bullet is the desired ‘compromise’ that will have to be met.
Falling Out of Love

I will be the first to admit that I am naïve. Each passing day, I learn more about how foolish I truly am. It always comes with a great surprise to me, but every day, I learn more about how clueless I am with relationships. I’ve always been the type of person that learns through experimentation and risk-taking. Quick to climb fences, prone to jump off walls. But, when the risks I take hurt others, the lesson learned is burned deeply into my mind and soul. I have the tendency to become an unstoppable force of pathetic will. Whatever cheap ends I can manipulate myself into motivates the lowly needs. Even if just to receive a harsh ‘fuck you,’ I’ve crossed boundaries figuratively and immediately. I have exploited others’ attention and patience. I am the hero, the fool, god, and the street urchin all at once.

I think my ex-girlfriend is doing the right thing by trying to seriously move on from our relationship. I acted so selfishly in the relationship that I must remove my ego from my conception of our past in order to understand the crux of the problem. If I look back at our relationship objectively, as a man and a woman that I do not personally know, I can begin to appreciate why she hates me now. My inability to consider how my decisions affect the people around me has made me a careless man. I cheated and I wasn’t there for her when she got shingles. We were on-and-off together for two years. I missed one of her birthdays and forgot one of our anniversaries.

The relationship ended as most do: a product of bad decisions and carelessness. I dismissed her feelings as trivial and wronged her countless times. I do not focus on my neglect or abuse, however. Obviously I have some growing to do, but I believe the cheating wasn’t what damaged her so badly. Rather, it was the time we spent apart. Or
perhaps the lack of which. I constantly demanded her forgiveness and friendship in a
deporable fashion. I took away the time she needed to spend healing and thinking about
herself. What I did with her time was also unhealthy, exploiting her emotions and
vulnerability. Unsure about the breakup, I coerced her back into the relationship, time and
time again. I never gave myself the chance to be alone and learn from mistakes in the
relationship. We repeated this cycle of stupidity, all thanks to my sick passion for control.
I was, as she put it, “inserting myself where I didn’t belong.”

When I said I’ve literally crossed boundaries, I mean, literally. Like a Venetian
gondolier in the Pacific Ocean, I paddled into deadly waters. Two months after our most
recent, and most painful separation, I broke into her house. Not with a crowbar or
anything. Worse, I betrayed the trust that I never deserved in the first place. I went to
open the front door with the Hello Kitty print key that Tam gave me at the start of our
relationship, but the door was already open. I drunkenly staggered into the dimly lit house
and beelined for Tam’s room. As I stared at the Cedar door soo many memories came to
mind of pointing out how the wood-stain design looked like an evil lady. Before I could
knock, I was angrily greeted by one of her roommates Esme.

“What are you doing, Sam?” She asked sounding more concerned than angered.

I told her I honestly didn’t know. She suggested I leave and I agreed. When I got
home, my Mom told me that she had received several calls in the last 10 minutes coming
from panicked girls. My Mom relayed to me that the girls that lived in that house will not
hesitate to call the cops next time I do something so stupid. Justly, so. I brought lilies,
roses, and apology note the next day. They mocked me for such a weak gesture. But I feel
like in doing so they wanted to verbally communicate that I felt sorry. That’s just the
problem. I feel like it’s okay for me to do anything because I’m charming enough. I’m not. Nobody is. Anybody looking for genuine human relationships will tell you that there is no excuse to put yourself above others.

Respect is paramount in relationships. If I do not respect Tam’s space, I will continue to cause her the harm. She will feel as if my aim is to control her and prevent her growth. However, if I behave in a respectful manner, she may grow and see that I am attempting to better myself as well. There is no ‘meant to be,’ ‘perfect fit, or ‘happily ever after.’ Relationships require work, love, and mutual respect. If I ever want to be a part of a healthy relationship, these ideals must stay in the forefront of my mind. Personal autonomy must take a backseat. Part of me feels as though I’ve lost the urge to continue to pursue. I don’t like losing urges. It is a healthy thing to be in pursuit of difficult outcomes. But if the outcome causes harm to others, it is best to let things go. I’ve fallen out of love.
Lizette

My name is Tonie Flor Nguyen. I used to go by Toni. Then, I started to tell people to call me Flor. Now, I tell them its spelled Tonie. None of my friends seem to bother my minor identity shifts, but it is important to me. Just like moving around the furniture in my bedroom. Change is good. God, I want to get out of Claremont.

Lizette was my first childhood friend. My first best friend. I asked her if she wanted to be my friend and she called me an angel. I later learned that almost everything Lizette did was ironic. But the memory is still fond.

My whole life was a mission to shelter my friends. Wherever I went, I would amass a group of likeminded individuals and hold on dearly to each of them. When they left, I cried. I learned to hold on deeper to other friends. I didn’t have Lizette’s back. Well, at least not to her face. Now I am the only one with deep-seeded memories of her. I remember when we used to braid each others’ hair and put way too much make-up on.

Every girl in our class called us sluts because we were the first ‘sluts.’ Joke’s on them, they lost their virginities way before us. Well, I guess that’s not a joke. None of this is. I can’t imagine myself ever laughing about our memories ever again. Even the times we pretended to be Cholas and shoplifted from Gas Stations and Liquor stores. Why they ever let us into these establishments, I’ll never know. Maybe they were just distracted by our hot pink hair and the asymmetrical piercings on our faces.

Both of us lived on the ‘other side of the train tracks.’ We took the train all the time, but rarely went North of the tracks, except for school. Then, when we had to go to the continuation school for a semester, we stopped going North of the tracks altogether.
Well, I was only there for a semester. Lizette graduated from that cursed continuation school.

We spoke less when she thought I had sold her out. Without me around, she would get bullied. Even with me around she had adversaries. She was never the type to call ‘uncle.’ I loved that about her. Probably for the same reasons the bullies did. People always tell you that bullies are just jealous of you. But in Lizette’s case, they really hated her. They thought she was weak and hated that. They thought she was a slut and a man-stealer and they hated that. They thought she was a drug mooch and they hated that the most. I’m not sure from whom they got their information. But they were dead wrong about all of the above.

Lizette thought I sold her out. I remember our close friend Kennedy told me that she had been cutting.

“So, what? We all cut.”

“Not like this.” Kennedy took a few slow breaths through her beautifully crooked nose. I tried to read her expression, whether she was sad for Lizette or happy to get something off her chest. I bit my pen trying to think of a way to change the subject.

“What music does she listen to when she does it?”

“That’s the thing. She hasn’t been doing it to relieve stress, she’s been trying to—like…”

I’m not sure what interrupted Kennedy, but I knew where she was going. So, I went to see Lizette. I hadn’t talked to her face-to-face in two months. We would occasionally check up on each other on AOL Instant Messenger. Even back then it was super outdated. Facebook and MySpace were in and we just liked to IM because it was
funny to us. Like listening to cassette tapes or watching movies from a VHS player. I brought her some rice in case she was hungry. She told me she hadn’t been hungry in a while. She looked pale and her eyes were red.

“Have you been taking drugs?”

“You know they scare the shit out of me.”

“Then, what’s the deal?” I knew my words were stupid as soon as they left my mouth. That queered the conversation from that point on. I tried to talk to her about my close friend. This stupid boy she despised. I’m not sure why she hated him so much. He was friendly, just super horny. I liked that about him, but I never let him get in my pants.

“So, you’re no longer with Derek?”

I laughed. “Of course, I’m still with Derek.” She knew I liked to talk about boys. But I remembered that she didn’t. She told me it made her jealous, but I always knew that wasn’t true. I’ve seen her get jealous. She just didn’t like to talk about boys. At this point, I felt like I couldn’t really do anything to help. There was something on her mind, but she didn’t want to share. But I could see her constantly adjusting the loose sleeves on her Madonna sweater and making sure her skirt didn’t rise above her knees.

A few years passed and we graduated high school. Lizette turned a corner and she would laugh with me about fashion trends on the phone. I even got to see her more. We would hangout in my garage or her dusty living room and she would smile. We would make fun of how we spent our middle school days, smoking cigarettes on the roof of the frozen yogurt shop.
During my second year at Chaffey Community College, I heard she was having a hard time again. I felt so guilty, we hadn’t talked in a year. Not even via phone or computer. I didn’t even bother calling, I just went to her house, uninvited.

“You can’t come in, I’m on my period.”

“We’ve taken baths together when one of us was on the rag,” I knocked on her door softer this time. “I miss you, can we please talk?” I nervously bit my plump lips. I could hear her hip cock, it always made this cute clicking sound.

“I just want to be left alone right now.”

“No, you don’t,” my vision got a little blurry and my lips began to quiver. “It’s cold out, please let me in.”

She didn’t let me in. She just walked back to her couch. I assumed she was just in a bad mood and didn’t want to talk. It was okay. I convinced myself that I would talk to her later. But, I got too busy. I heard she turned the corner again, and I had so many other commitments. A new boyfriend, two jobs, and Community College really took a toll on my free time.

By my senior year of Community College, I had been so attentive to my close friends. I felt like I was building a complicated nest for pollinating honey bees. But I was really just a bear-trap next to a ceramic bowl of honey. I had met new friends who weren’t so likeminded. But they would listen and try to understand. Some of them were annoyed by my motherly impulses and need to stay in close contact. But I knew that they appreciated it when they needed my help. But, I lost track of Lizette. Until, I read in the news that she had passed away. I went to talk to her mother, who never liked me.

“So, what happened?”
“She died.” What a numb response.

“I mean,” I could tell that she didn’t want to give details, but I had to know. “How did it happen?”

“She hanged herself, in the closet. First she tried the ceiling fan in the living room.” She opened the door and pointed at the ceiling. “See? It’s broken.”

I cried for a full day. Then, for the next few weeks, I was upset and considered myself a failure as a friend. How could somebody so attached to friendship completely lose track of her first friend? I blamed myself. I called the suicide hotline to ask if they had gotten any calls from a lost soul named Lizette. They told me that even if they had, that information was confidential.

When I got the invitation to her funeral, I felt the need to express myself artistically. I painted a self-deprecating portrait of my trembling hand holding the funeral invitation on an expensive canvas. It wasn’t a very good painting. I’m not great with realism.

At the funeral, I brought a rose. Not one of those cheap-o ones either. Lizette’s Mom brought her dog out. A beautiful dalmation named Wheetus. Like, after the shitty band. I got this vibe from the dog like it wanted some attention. So, during the commencement I approached it slowly. Nobody saw me because the dog had run behind all of the chairs. Its ears perked and its head shifted from side-to-side like a street-corner dealer. Still, I felt like I needed to pet it. It was an urge to stick the fork in the electrical outlet just to see if your parents were full of shit. Wheetus didn’t react to my fingers, but when my face got near, he snapped. He bit me so hard on my upper lip that I jumped backwards. I held my hand to my face, shaking. I didn’t want anybody to see the blood. I
returned to my seat and sat next to my sister. She could see the blood soaking my p-coat. She leaned in to whisper to me, probably to tell me that everything’s alright. But she seemed to be in shock from the blood, too.

I looked over at the other people sitting in the front row. Lizette’s mother was sprawled across four family members. Her body language was lethargic, but her face seemed happy. Maybe the closure process was taking a much more serious toll on her than I first imagined. I looked down at the rose, it was dripping wet. The blood perfectly matched the shade of the petals. The thorns and stem were also covered. I took my hand off my face momentarily to see the damage. My hand was completely red with no signs of clotting. My sister’s eyebrows screamed. I told her I had to leave and handed her the rose. At the end of the funeral, she put the rose on the coffin for me.

After I got eight stitches in my face, I came home. I iced my lips constantly, but they were already numb. I’m not sure I’ll ever get out of Claremont. At least Lizette did.