

Two Stories

San Francisco: An Autobiography
and
Love and Music

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San Francisco: An Autobiography

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DEAR SAN FRANCISCO,

Sliding chaotically down Portola from the outward spreading suburbs that are the Sunset, you see San Francisco, beautiful, teeming with life, luster, and loss. The only sight it can be compared to is a woman lying naked, waiting, her eyes pulling you towards her, your brain without thought.

San Francisco, I want you to be my mother. I want desperately to have the right to say my birthing origins occurred on your sacred grounds, where I think there is absolutely everything. From your famous fog to the fantastical sight of watching it swallow the Golden Gate Bridge, permeate into every convex crevice that our maze of urbania offers, I love you and promise never to break your heart.

MISSION

You are my favorite district from your international food perks to the vibrant chords of life that breathe through your mostly dirty streets, to the hip and happy bars that make me forget everything and everyone, crowded with beautiful hipster girls that I hate and love all at once—me too afraid, too enamored to subject myself to denial for their bubbles of desire floating in my mind's sky popping in and out of my everyday moments.

From taking the 49 and meeting the most kind and respectful meth addicts you'll ever have the pleasure of knowing who shoot up next to you in the back right corner of the bus at 11:43 on a Wednesday night, even sometimes asking for your permission first.

To the lives destroyed, souls sucked dry stumbling from instigation to instigation, screaming in front of the 24th St. BART about god or the devil or anything in-between. Screaming to be heard and looked at because they have nothing else but a voice of pain and a cry of hopelessness.

Mission, you house my favorite bar in the city, where they let you smoke inside, and no one says anything about it. Everyone just acts like it's the 80's and pretty much all the music is from the 80's, and most of the people dress like they're in the 80's. I guess it's kinda like being in the

80's...I love places you can smoke inside. It feels so risky, like your parents are going to catch you at any second and for those 3-6 minutes depending what you're on (what substance and at what level/depth and while killing yourself over a lifetime) you feel the brief ecstasy (great name for a drug) of childhood. I refuse to release the name of the bar as it is small and crowded enough with hipster scum that I probably am too. I fucking hate waiting five minutes for a beer.

24th may be my favorite street in the city. Nothing like walking down smelling carnitas (which I don't eat) and soaking in the magical murals of quasi-realism. You are sunny when nowhere else is, and walking down your street is perhaps the closest I will ever get to La Boca. You were there for me while I watched Barcelona win the champions league in my favorite taqueria in the city. I owe you.

If I could choose any district to be my secret ethnic hipster lover, you would be her. We would walk to Dolores Park and lay in the sun counting every remarkable thing we could see. We would drink beer and smoke pot and have conversations with bums and friends about feminism and Young Frankenstein and would argue in defense of our favorite Woody Allen films. Obviously, there is no other answer than "Annie Hall." If you disagree, please don't tell me or anyone else because, sweetheart, you're wrong (pat on shoulder). And if we're just going to be open about trying to be cool, 'cause even (especially) the 40-year-olds are competing in the category of taste, it is necessary to mention Valencia, all bathed in hipster shame and glory. Valencia, you make me feel like I am in LA, which I secretly like, without you how else would I dreary eyed ogle the sassy pixie girls with feathers in their ears, hair, and, sometimes, their noses. You remind me of the detest I have accrued toward bikers—not the leather wearing kind. You are home to Boogaloo's, a wonderful place where the hip waitresses don't make you feel like a complete asshole for not knowing every lyric to the punk music blaring in the background.

Oh Mission, how grand it is to sit on the patio of El Rio on a sunny Thursday embracing the splendor of an undeserved happy hour. You and I, reveling in intoxication, stumbling back to my home (which is technically in Bernal Heights, a beautiful lesbian couple told me that) and innocently fool around before getting to the heavy stuff.

BERNAL HEIGHTS

My home. I love your streets and my coffee shop, the one run by a co-operative of lesbians who know the names of their patron's children. I adore and take for granted I can get food from five different continents (Americanized of course) within a one-block radius! You are the first place that has felt like home since I fell out of the parental nest, a scared little bird in a big new city, pretending to go to school. Then I stopped going to school to be a full-time writer, which means I need a day job; actually, I have a part-time night job. I wear a shit-eating grin, lie to foreigners, and sell over priced shrimp(s) to overweight Californians who don't know there's better cheap food mere blocks away. But I'll get to that later.

Bernal Heights, I love standing on your shoulders and looking at what should be the center of existence: San Francisco—its majestic natural beauty covered elegantly in a concrete blouse of urban jungle. Once, when I climbed to your peak, I saw little kids light the hill on fire with a fire cracker and run from the police. At first, the brush fire seemed like it was going to engulf the hill and achieve the horrible glory of a hillside with houses spectacularly ablaze. But the fire smoldered unspectacularly and failed to reach its potential. We're all fire; words are fire.

Bernal Heights: I never want to leave you; of course I'm going to occasionally cheat on you with the Mission and Haight, and there was a period of my life where I slept in North Beach almost every night. But you're my girl, my buddy, my muse. I never want to leave you, and even though I don't appreciate you like I should, you'll always know I love you.

OUTER MISSION

You kind of scare me, particularly around Geneva, but goddamn your Mexican food is so fucking good. Taqueria Guadalajara is the only burrito I've ever had that can hold a torch to Southern California's. I saw one of the most intriguing human exchanges ever in your hallows. An enormous man, the kind you ironically call "Tiny," walked in and started yelling at somebody hiding behind the counter, as I would have been had Tiny been chasing after me. It was 2:30 on a Saturday morning, everyone is drunk, really shit-faced, except for me (I was grass high as a fucking kite, but I wasn't drinking that often at this point in my life, at least nowhere near as much as I am now).

Anyhow as Tiny pushed his way through the crowded restaurant, he bumped particularly hard into a small Hispanic man in an olive green business suit. The counter at Guadalajara is

L-shaped, Tiny is standing at the base of the L. The smaller man gathers himself and pushes Tiny over a bowl of oranges they always keep next to the water container at the base of the L. It was like something out of a cartoon. The whole restaurant sees what's happening.

As Tiny catches himself and drunkenly half-realizes what just happened, you see the fat rolls of his face (but not his eyes—he was wearing sunglasses—at 2:30 at night!) flush with embarrassment. He does what an Alpha does, wails on the smaller Hispanic man's face, everyone surrounding too scared to do anything: me, myself, and I included. After hitting the man in the face, and continuing to do so while the small man is on the ground, probably like 8 more times. Then the same look of flushed embarrassment overcomes him, and he runs (his version, anyway, of “run”) out of the restaurant. The small man is lying on the ground, barely conscious, bleeding from his head. His family goes to him with a wad of napkins, which they put to his open head wound/gash. The entire taqueria's eyes are transfixed on the poor small man and his small family, wondering if he's alive.

We hold our breaths collectively, everyone pretending we care, and maybe we do, but we're all secretly glad it's not us. Aw sweet Humanity! Then what feels like, but doesn't sound like, a collective gasp encompasses the entire restaurant. The man gets up, gives a small, pain filled smile, and everyone goes back to their business: drinking cerveza and eating Guadalajara's famous burritos—the small man and his family included. Then the police show up, and all the drunk (and stoned) eaters and drinkers miraculously forget anything happened at all. Maybe this never happened, and I'm just making it up, memory is a many splendored thing. Memory is everything. Without memory we would never exist, right?

BAYVIEW

I looked at a house here one time. The second I got there I immediately knew I didn't want the house. Okay, I'm spoiled, but I am willing to pay 200 more dollars per month to not live in a broken down industrial shithole. Other than that I've never been to Bayview.

One of my old roommates used to buy stuff for his pot plants there, like lights and vitamins. I heard there's a donut shop/bar combination that the guy from Girls goes too, Girls the figurehead of San Francisco's stellar music scene with lyrics so simple and clean, so full of reality that they hit hard. Chris (the lead singer)—your sweeping croon tickles my

spine like the yellow fog of Prufrock lore. When I see you live—I can't keep this to myself anymore—I think your knee shuffles are adorable. I love that you used to have a guitarist that looked like the kid from “Dazed and Confused,” you know the main one who hates Ben Affleck. Everyone should hate Ben Affleck. Your music has gotten me through some blue periods and attaches to the energy in my bloodstream during those sporadic periods when life genuinely excites me. The first time I saw you will be something I'll never forget, maybe the greatest show I've ever seen. My Fitzgerald moment of music, I'll get to that later.

It was Valentine's Day. My mom owns a flower shop in Santa Barbara. When you own a flower shop, Valentine's Day is the worst day of the year. Every year, I drive down there and help deliver flowers. It's one of the few times a year my entire immediate family spends together, irritated, exhausted, but fulfilling the obligations of familial love. I get off of work at 5 o'clock and drive to San Francisco, a six hour drive. Mind you I had been driving since 7am, and if you've never been a taxi driver, delivery boy, or gone on an extended road trip, you have no idea how painful driving can be. In my 15th hour of driving, I realize there is a Girls show at the Great American Music Hall. At this stage in my life, Girls was my favorite new band. At this stage in my life, I also had a crazily angry little Filipino girlfriend who looked far too good naked.

And when I say crazy, I don't mean like a frat boy saying a chick's crazy because she got angry after he fucked her best friend. I mean like, “one flew north, one flew west, one flew over the cuckoo's nest” crazy. Stupid things like holidays and birthdays meant a lot to her because of her incessant need to feel important. She wanted me to hang out with her, but I desperately wanted to go to the Girls show.

Driving past SFO (20 minutes out of the city), I see a white Subaru station-wagon fly past me with improvisational velocity. Moments later more police cars than I can count shoot past with an angry demeanor. How can inanimate objects have any demeanor? Just ask a tree, fauna's people.

Now I have a confession to make. It was one of coolest fucking things I've ever seen. Like watching “Cops” (the tv show) in person. The thing is, I hate action movies, and explosions, and Transformers, to the point where if I go to one, I will get absurdly stoned and fall asleep, wake with the explosions, doze again—five, six times. Thus I thought it was strange how this example of speed greed affected me so heartily. That's what my dad would do when I forced him to go to these pieces of shit (action flicks) as a kid—fall asleep. Hereditary procession, genetics: something inevitable.

This police chase at that time in my life was a sign, a symbol. Go figure, guess it was the car eluding the cops, exciting, brave? I needed to be selfish and do something for me. I wanted out of my relationship, but I was too scared to say anything, stuck in the depression of being 21, never having another birthday to look forward to. That was compounding with boredom, I was so goddamn life/relationship bored. It's true, you should never date someone you can't talk to. Also she would threaten to kill herself when I wasn't attentive enough. Something that scared the piss out of me, but after the 15th threat I just kinda wanted to see if she would do it. I suppose that would equivocate to, "I shot a man in Reno, just to watch him die." The shady sides of the human mind are dangerous places to hide when trying to get out of the sun of inundation.

I call her.

—"I'm too tired to hang out."

She freaks out, but this was a mild one. A 3.2 on the Richter scale of crazy.

I get to the show to find it's sold out. But after deciding to put myself out there, I begin asking strangers for extra tickets. I find a ticket for cheaper than door price. I go in. The GAMH has in's and out's. So fucking essential. I go to the bar pound 3 beers, then run to my car to smoke 3 bowls. The number 3 works wonderfully for compulsive addicts.

I go back in and Girls is just starting. They had flowers wrapped around their microphones, and balloons tied to the drum kit. They were all on cocaine and alluded to this with muffled subtlety. It was the best damn show I've ever seen. And it made me realize I didn't love the crazy girl that looked good naked. Thank you Girls, I love you.

And Bayview, how do you have so many police officers and still so many problems? You should be ashamed of yourself.

INGLESIDE

You need to be more interesting. Living in Ingleside is like staying at your Grandma's house for two weeks over the summer when you're seventeen. Everything stops at 8'clock, the food sucks (I will maintain always that cooking is not an Irish grandmother's strong suit—drinking, well that's a different story) and you're always horny because going out costs so fucking much because every night includes a 20-25 dollar cab ride home.

Ingleside, your hills are treacherous. I woke up every sacred drunken night I could sneak in at the age of 20 with bruises the size of soft balls on my legs and tears in my pants. You made me a stoner because there was nothing to do. You were where for a brief time in history I stopped writing, stopped reading, stopped giving a shit about anything—other than raves and soulless electro music.

Despite my open and outward disdain for you, you have held moments that are dear to me. And sometimes when the sun's out and you're on one of those treacherous hills, you have some of the most spectacular views this planet has to offer. You are where I first tried so much, and where I made some friends that will be dear to me for life.

SFSU

Thank you for Michael Krasny (the man who helped me understand “The Wasteland”), and thank you pretty much the entire English department. That's where underpaid teachers are forced to take sabbaticals (budget crunch) and yet they still actually give a shit about the subject matter, and sometimes their students, the good ones at least. Thank you for cheap coffee and your intelligently laid out design.

But fuck you for charging me thousands of dollars more each semester and without even giving me the benefit of having a functioning library. Thank you for nursing my alcoholism with your perverse boredom and lack of beauty. Thank you for my freshman year of college, where I lived on your haunted grounds that can be best surmised in one drunken anecdote:

When I was 20 I was dating a short girl with a fast mouth and pretty blonde hair. At this time in my life I was drinking heavily, probably 5-7 times a week, not like a beer or two, but getting shitfaced. One of these nights where I remember nothing, I managed to stumble from her tiny traditional dorm room, replete with all the nominal college complacencies: band posters, 2 desks, and celebrations when her roommate would go home for the weekend allowing us to fuck freely.

On a particularly drunken Saturday, I stumble to her neighbor's door and mistake it for the bathroom. I remember none of this, but know it happened because I returned from my blackout with a little girl dressed in purple doing her best not to punch me. Screaming obscenities.

Now the purple shirt is essential because at San Francisco State University purple

is the Resident Advisors' (College vernacular for what surmounts to be the Fun Police) uniforms, the purple police. This one happened to be the head resident advisor. You know she's that big a bitch when she schedules herself for the all night Saturday shift.

She is livid, white hot with anger. I am wearing nothing except for tiny Swedish boxer briefs, not even blessed with the benefit of shoes. Her voice shaking, she asks my name and where I live. I'm still reasonably hammered in my clouded stupor, but I offer a fake answer.

—"Paul Rodriguez, 404 Mary Park."

Put that through a drunken voice modulator and that's more or less what I offered her. She delves deeper, more questions, something, something, something, sounding like a grown-up in Charlie Brown. She's doing all this to circumscribe the proper punishment to crawl and shape itself in my life.

It's beneficial to know at this point I was on probation for having got caught with illegal substances many, many times. I always had the good fortune to never get arrested, but this night felt like a night for new things.

Realizing this, I begin to sprint without shoes to the stairwell. Fortunately, my girl lived on the second floor. My building, "The Towers," was around 1000ft. or 330 meters away. I ran the thing like Michael fucking Johnson.

When I arrived at the front door, which you need a swipe card to open, which I obviously don't have as I don't store my valuables up my ass, though that's not the worst idea, at least you'd never lose shit (heh). There is no one at the desk, which was so goddamn fortunate for me. I pry the sliding doors open, run to my basement apartment, and quickly change into a makeshift outfit that was as mismatched as anyone who had the good fortune to live through the psychedelic decades.

At this point, it's around four in the morning, and I decide for some reason to return to my girlfriend's dorm. I see two of my best friends/roommates—liking your roommates is one of the greatest gifts bestowed on a 20-something. We exchange "What's ups." They're laughing already and in a joking manner they ask,

—"Have you seen a guy running around in his underwear?"

—"Dude, how did you know?"

—“A cop asked us if we saw a guy running around in his underwear.”

—“That was fucking me.”

They die with laughter as I scurry back to my girlfriend’s dorm. A cop car’s parked out front. As I walk in, the cop asks if I’ve seen a guy running around in his underwear. I pause, give him a disgusted look, and say of course not, then walk away. I walk up the stairs—to my surprise there are no cops around. The bitchy RA is standing in the lobby, her face flush red, yelling at the elevator to hurry the fuck up. I say hi, but she doesn’t say hi back. My girlfriend, beautiful and half naked standing in her doorway down the hallway, motions for me to hurry my ass in.

SUNSET

I hate you. You’re always foggy and you’re worthless—ugly with suburban sprawl. Your cultural contribution to San Francisco can be surmised by a fart. If it weren’t for Irving and Judah and Golden Gate Park, I would write a proposal for your nuclear bombing.

Your only saving grace that isn’t kissing Golden Gate Park is the grotesque number of house parties you allow to exist. Oh yeah, and Shannon Arms has gotten the guy I’m in a bromance with a consistent “DJing” gig.

And don’t even get me started on 19th street. Drive on that shit Labor Day weekend, but only if you’re a masochist.

GOLDEN GATE PARK

Thank you. Your museums are a gift to culture and your beauty decadent, but irrepressible, contagious. You are the home for Outside Lands, which is the reason I wrote “White Lights,” probably the first piece of quasi-fiction I have ever written.

You are the first place I tried acid. And when I finally did get to go to Outside Lands, it was as good as I expected, which is so exceptionally rare, with how increasingly jaded and cynical I’ve become. I think they call that getting older?

While on age, when did 15-year-olds start looking so young? I remember the few people I still know from when I was 15 being 15 and not looking anywhere as young as they do now. And then once they hit 23, you can’t tell how old they are until you hit 35,

and your posture starts to droop because gravity is heavy, and without it we couldn't stay grounded, and we'd all float away like Remedios, how poetically beautiful and tragic.

One time my former manager and current friend (shit, I forgot to call on his birthday) who was exceptionally good at guessing peoples ages told me,

—"You can't look at the face, you have to look in the eyes."

And when I stop and think about it, it really is amazing how much of somebody's soul exists in the eyes. If you look them straight in the pupils, and don't lie to yourself, you can tell absolutely everything about someone without speaking. Ariel Pink (another one of LA's strong suits) was wrong, you can hear my eyes.

You have buffalos, and beautiful tree people that let me observe them extensively and watch over the world breathing while I'm on acid having my private and silent conversations with nature. Then lying on my back and asking questions to the expansive sky painted in its vibrant twilight, a still life Van Gogh in real time, realizing how amazing the song Fireworks is. Possibly the best of 00's.

I've played soccer in you maybe half a dozen times. You are the closest thing to Never Never Land I've ever had the pleasure of knowing.

HAIGHT

As cool as it would be to hate you because you're so goddamn chic and popular, I can't, you're simply too wonderful. You are rich with hippie history and blended with a movement that formed the freethinking worthlessness of my generation. You have edgy boutiques that are unique along with countless head shops that are pretty much all the same. I dare you to walk down Haight and not see a beautiful girl (usually with a beautiful boy). It's like licking your own crotch, (almost) impossible.

You are the home of the first girl I ever fell in love with in the city. The first girl that broke my heart and jarred me from the sleepy stoner stagnancy that infected me in my early 20's. In her apartment, which was pure LA, we had conversations that were exciting

—Her: Modest Mouse is probably the best band ever.

—Me: I personally don't consider cocaine a drug.

—Me: ‘Oh, no! Do you believe in God?’

—Her: ‘I believe in energy.’

—Her: Excuse me for pontificating but I think you’re in love with the idea of me.

—Me: I don’t know if I believe in love.

We’d sit and talk like that through the night, her across from me, beautiful. If I weren’t so proud I’d tell her I miss her.

You have some wonderful bars, and have housed so many house shows that have welcomed my company. One of the five best breakfasts of my life happened on Haight, at All you Knead where my friend told me the girl would break my heart but the eggs benedict and conversation were so damn good I didn’t care even though I knew he was right. His name’s Carrey, I love him, he’s the one I’m in a bromance with.

Lastly, I know if I ever need to get a quick tattoo or redo my Prince Albert piercing (Look it up. Warning: Must be 18 or older) you’ll be there; you’ll be there. Oh yeah, Buena Vista Park is absolutely gorgeous. Oh yeah, homeless people, lots of ‘em. Thank you for keeping them out of the Mission, or at least evening the spread.

PANHANDLE

I love you because of your sunny days and for your having trees and grass and birds. For giving my two favorite girls in the city their more than comfortable apartments. The two young women are both dynamic conversationalists and easy to look at. One, the one I fell in love with whom I said lives in the Haight, actually she says she lives in the Panhandle (or if you really wanna be a snob, NOPA), because it’s cleaner—she’s from LA. Her best friend lives within walking distance of her serene Green and White apartment, her friend’s apartment is just as serenely white. She makes you take your shoes off. If you forget she berates you for getting her fuzzy white carpet dirty, the same carpet we rub our faces on when we’re rolling.

Cheers to the musings we’ve exchanged when we’re stoned. And salud to what I remember when I write about it, because sometimes it’s genuinely poignant. It’s beautiful and rare to have a poignant conversation with someone, hold onto them and do whatever it takes to keep them in your life.

Thanks to the girl that inspired me to write again (at first, I was trying to impress her, but to impress someone you must first impress yourself). Ode to the first time I ever saw her and “All Shook Up” became my favorite song (for the week). I temporarily believed in love again. And I feel no shame whatsoever in admitting that everything I’ve ever written is because of that girl (and maybe a few others). Just read “Araby”— everything ever written, sung, or stroked is because of a girl, is for a girl—unless it’s for a boy. We’re all just fish swimming in a bowl trying to get fucked. And you don’t even have to apologize for the broken heart, and how I picked up the pieces, put them up my nose because of the writing you inspired. Inspiration is much less common than a broken heart.

Oh, and your taste (and your taste!) in music is super hot. One time you asked what my type is, or maybe I asked you, but I said you weren’t my type. I lied. My type is any beautiful hipster girl who knows who Neutral Milk Hotel is. The Cindy Crawford mole doesn’t hurt and your intonation makes me feel like I did in 4th grade when my blazingly hot teacher refused to wear her bra, which prematurely urged my best friend and I to start puberty.

And to Ballz (the other beautiful girl), I never thought you would be as awesome as you are. You two together are great, please stay raving cocaine Feminists and never deny your love for each other. If you fight, kiss and make up, and let me watch.

RICHMOND

I have very little experience with you. I suppose I owe you for providing her coke dealer with a home. Oh yeah, and when I got kicked out of campus housing my freshman year of school, I was supposed to live with an old stoner lady my dad knows. She oozes sex despite being 63. If I were 63, I would fuck her, but I’m not (maybe never will be) and my mom kept telling me she was a cougar, which scared the shit out of me. My parents ended up giving her a large amount of money for a room that I never went to because no one ever came to evict me at the dorm. Even though it was “illegal” for me to be in the building, I stayed—the cougar lady scared me. Oh also I hear you have good Thai food, and that it’s super easy to get laid at 550 Club on Mondays—is that true? I did have a transcendental experience driving down Geary one day. I’m fairly certain I was on my way to score cocaine (I was). Driving down your streets, I was wearing my unassuming little black frame glasses. I could see for miles, which in the city is a rare treat. Driving down

San Francisco's main arteries, a miracle happened—every light was green. It was like Meet the Fockers, but it didn't end up sucking. That night I was going to hang out with the girl I fell like a leaf for, who lived in the Panhandle (Haight). Whenever I knew I was going to hang out with her, I got that feeling, the one where your stomach feels like millions of little people are dancing—Electric Daisy Carnival Jay's stomach. You get all antsy and time moves at a distorted pace, impossibly slow, then disjointingly fast. You shoot into your brain to create memories that will never exist, practicing conversations, looks, and ways to kiss her in a non-awkward fashion. I'd store away several talking points and pray I'd remember them in case things go awkward. But things rarely get awkward on cocaine; only falsely important, and teen drama dramatic.

I remember thinking everything was in front of me. On the road I was finally going at the right pace. Maybe ambition was slowly fading, but what was truly important to me was at my fingertips or a phone call away. I remember the innocent jubilation of seeing something that thousands had seen before, but was something I'd maybe never see again. Green light, after green light, after green light. An affirmation of acceptance and everything being right in the world: a symbol. Life is full of symbols but is desperately lacking interpretation. The way these symbols are (or are not) interpreted make us who we are. Do we lie to ourselves, are we irritatingly cynical, or are we positive balls of energy desperate for connection and exchange? Desperate to create and live, a mad one(s)—I've been a mad one before, I've also been a sad one. Right now I languish in the between.

MARINA

You are so detestably bogey. I never go here, but I hear some of the younger Giants party out there, a certain pot smoking Cy-young winner. Also, holy shit, so many hot women! You are another aspect of San Francisco that reminds me of LA.—one of Southern California's minimal strong suits, large amounts of exceptionally sculpted women.

My broman's favorite restaurant in the city is Osha Thai, which he's right about: it is better in the Marina than at their sub-par satellite locations. One time I saw a play at the Magic Theater, "Word for Word," Thomas Wolfe, it was pretty exceptional. The girl that played the daughter in one of the stories was effervescently dreamboatish, and in my high stupor I convinced myself she was in love with me like I was with her, at least for the duration of the performance.

Also I would sacrifice a testicle to scientific research for a house on Marina Blvd. Impossibly gorgeous on a sunny day, with the dense correspondence of life proceeding on your grassy shores, kites flying and everything in life that's good and nubile.

FISHERMAN'S WHARF (MORE SPECIFICALLY PIER 39)

If you ever catch on fire, I want to stand at a safe distance with my glasses on, the ones I never wear, and watch. I want a lawn chair, a six-pack of artisan beer, and a full pack of Camel Filters. I want to sit there next to six beautiful naked women and watch. You have played the largest part of any in the ever continuing destruction of my soul. You are where I work.

—"My name's Jay, and I am a (I'll be your) waiter."

I have been demeaned by fathers in front of their entire extended family, second, even third cousins included. I have been condescended to by people who can't spell the word 'people.' I have learned that -isms still exists. Racism, classism, sexism, not to mention ignorance, in the minds of the larger percentage of Americans, Americans who don't know or even care that LBJ signed the Civil Rights Act in 1964. That in 1964 as a nation our country did something ten years before unthinkable. That we finally turned progressive thought (once transgressive) into law. And I am reminded how far we have to go when I hear drunk people make the same damn joke about how many gay people live in San Francisco. That if I say something salted with even the slightest touch of innuendo they will make that joke, and I'll look at them and smile while thinking what disgusting pieces of shit they are. I know because I work at a restaurant that requires me to mention trivia about a movie that I hate.

I smile for tips. Sometimes when I'm at work, when it's slow and I'm high, I think about how absurd it all is. How wasteful this "tradition" is: Going to a place that throws out enough food to feed Calcutta, waiting for the food at a table in a room full of strangers, and stressing out about a waiter you assume is an idiot. And the pressure of it all because it involves money. All the goddamn pressures of money. When you have it, when you lose it, when you start caring about it, and it becomes the most important thing in existence because without it how are you going to go to a fried seafood restaurant with a theme, and pay much too much money for food that is scientifically proven to kill you.

Then some days when I wake up early and still drunk, and the still drunk careens with me

to work—it seems worth it. Worth it for all the wonderful people I meet momentarily and the friends I've made at work. Worth it for how much I've learned about people. The beautiful Australian families so full of love it feels like a Hallmark Thanksgiving. Where the kid almost cried when they left because he realized he would never see me again, a lesson that can be quite difficult to accept when learned too young. To the two proposals of marriage I've seen, at my table, a yes and a no—never forgetting the man's face when she said no. And who could ever forget the mother fucker who barely spoke English (though he was born, raised, and will die in America) who managed to utter a discordant sentence of intellectual condescension in the form of "How fucking stupid can you be?" Possibly the only sentence not pidginized to idiot speak he uttered all night. And how I couldn't tell him to fuck himself, despite it being in the worst interest of my own personal safety, because I was working, and I had to quite properly tell him that I didn't appreciate his comment. And oh how desperately I wanted to reach across the table and grab his throat and scream to him that if he even understood how much human bullshit I had to swallow he'd throw a parade in my honor, but didn't—I needed money.

That's life, it's good it's bad, and it can't be perfect, it shouldn't be perfect and we're all so caught up in minutia distresses that we forget to take a second and count every beautiful thing that we can. We forget that no one knows why the fuck we're here; that we're all just floating in space, and breathing is a privilege, not a right.

Don't forget to see the seals.

NORTH BEACH

You are the reason I moved to San Francisco. You are the Beats, you are delicious, you are everything the world should be and more. From Washington Square to Café Trieste, and who could forget City Lights, the world's second favorite bookstore. My second favorite in the city.

Cheers to Vesuvio's where they obviously understand the hardships of the poor alcoholic by offering the recession special, a whiskey and a beer for four bucks. I love your gloomy, glory-filled rooms, your wicker chairs, and the random conversations I've stumbled into with the right amount of substance intake. One night myself and three other patrons discovered we all had the same professor: me in my 20's, him in his 40's, she in her 30's, the teacher educating generations. And we cheered and thanked him

and agreed that educators should be paid better, but did nothing about it because one person can't make a difference, not without shitloads and shitloads of money.

Toast to Mama's where I had the best breakfast of my life. It was just my dad and I—I was 10. I ordered a waffle with strawberries and whip cream. Why do you have to be so damn good, with your line always around the block and your closing time at 3, I never get to eat you, but I will always remember the best breakfast of my life, where nothing extraordinary happened. No epiphany or life changing conversation, just a 10-year-old boy and his dad, going to a baseball game in the afternoon, staying up late and waking up early.

You're where I take girls when I'm trying to impress them, because of the regurgitated facts I can throw out, all learned from my dad. About how Kerouac used to walk your hallowed streets and Francis Ford Coppola wrote the screenplay for "The Godfather" there and blah blah blah. Word vomit, the things we do to get laid.

If you were a woman you would be a bangin' hot older hipster cougar sugar mama. I would sleep in your opulence while you smoked cigarettes using a quellazaire (think Cruella Deville). You would say crazy shit that I absolutely loved and thought was brilliant, me enraptured in naïveté, and I would feel touched by God to have been chosen by you. Then you would hit 50 and me 30 or your husband or numerous other lovers would find out about us. And I would get over it because the crows feet started walking across your face. You'd go insane and I would do my best to forget that you ever existed, like every other girl I've ever dated.

Oh North Beach, I sing of thee, if only you weren't so damn expensive and habitating your rich grounds was a possibility.

NOB HILL

I have very little experience with you. However, there are some experiences I am exceptionally fond of. You are home to the 24th story penthouse we use to party at till 6 in the morning. The way 20 something's get access to a 24th story penthouse is they have one friend who is insanely rich and gives no fucks about anything, especially the state of her parents' house when they see it in the morning. Anyway she is in love with your best friend and will do anything he asks. So she lets him have parties where you drink or snort molly, or do both.

At one of these parties we all took some OC and had a cuddle puddle, taking pictures. Then

the girl whose penthouse it is takes three too many and stops breathing and starts turning blue. Then you have to call the paramedics. There are few things more shameful than having to tell the paramedics what drugs you're on as they do their best to resuscitate your blue friend. You praying to the God you don't believe in that she will come to and everything will be normal. You bite your teeth and scream in your brain that you hope this turns out better than the ending of Requiem. It did, she was fine, she did break a rib as our friend gave her CPR trying desperately to sacrifice some of her own life into the blue one to bring her back from the ever extending void. Fucked up people helping more fucked up people, Irelands National Anthem.

I remember the beauty of watching my friend cry her name, scared out of his fucking mind she was going to die, him holding her, the look on his face, perhaps the best expression of compassion I've ever witnessed. It's beautiful to be one of humanity's witnesses.

Then the next day when Ballz and I were driving I had to pull over and puke. I pulled over in front of a Catholic school, business men with their briefcases walking by. Neon yellow bile shooting out of my mouth my stomach turning my brain making a mental note to never do opiates again, then making a mental note to forget to never to do opiates again.

Nob Hill you also hold the hotel we got kicked out of two nights in a row, on one of those rolly weekends filled with the electro parties I detest out of one side of my mouth, yet take molly with the other. My excuse is I love getting fucked up. My friend, drug angel, former roommate, rented a hotel for a weekend of particularly good electro. We got back after the show, 50 of us in the Frank Sinatra suite. Smoking, drinking, snorting, screaming. The security guards come, they kick us out. We come back the next night, the same thing happens. I can't believe they let us go back, I can completely believe we got kicked out again.

Nob Hill, I have no feelings whatsoever towards you, but goddamn if you haven't supplied me with some wasteful and dangerous fun.

FINANCIAL DISTRICT

I have no experience with you. I used to walk through you to get to the BART when I would sleep at my friend's house in North Beach. I am astonished at how good looking some of the people are in business suits. It makes me wonder were they smart enough to deserve the amount of money they make or was it their jawline that got them their

degree and charmed their interviewer? I'll never know, which I am exceedingly jealous of and exceptionally grateful for. I think how different my life would be if my eyebrows were a shade shapelier or my chin broad bold and beautiful. I wouldn't be me.

My head turns toward BART two blocks away, passing Starbucks on both sides of the street, the novelty Wells Fargo display and gourmet lunch places geared towards convenience and expedience. I love standing below the buildings touching the sky. Looking up, the buildings bending like a mirage. The windows at night with their little lights and smaller people. People working all night to put their kids through college. And the higher up the light, the higher up the person, at night most of the lights are in the middle of the building. Another looker flies by, taking my eyes with her, like they're on strings connected to her butt. I get to the BART more hungover than a 19-year-old that goes to San Diego State and do my best not to fall asleep, my abode a mere five stops or seven minutes away.

TENDERLOIN

I love your story, whether fiction or not, of how you got your name. Purportedly cops would get paid more for working the Tenderloin beat because of how dangerous it was. And with the extra cash they could afford better cuts of meat for their families. What a wonderful name for a district. How could a place dubbed the Tenderloin not be dangerous? Is the tenderloin dangerous? Kinda. Oodles and oodles of crack heads, hanging from every corner.

One drunken night, I was stumbling down Jones when a crack head popped out of the woodwork and offered to babysit my children. I was 19, didn't have any kids. He told me he would do a great job and that he had a shotgun. Needless to say I was scared, and he didn't get the job. This same night while waiting for the OWL, the 91, which is a bus that does a loop around the entire city, takes forever to get where you need to go, and has some of the most ridiculous vignettes of the human condition a person will ever see, I met the nicest crack head on the face of the Earth. If there were a crack head yearbook, he would win the male award for nicest crack head. Anyway, he comes up to me and asks for money; I asked him what he needed it for. He was dismissive and tried to change the subject. After prying for several more moments, he finally told me he'd been awake and on crack for the past three days. The way he said it was borderline adorable. He said it like a child admitting to some menial act of ill discipline which they know will yield minimal repercussions. He then asked for advice on how to get more money to get more crack. I

told him to be honest and clean, probably the best job advice I've ever gotten or given.

POLK ST.

You hardly deserve your own section, but... I have a love/hate relationship with you. You're like a beautiful girl/guy with no personality, a waste of space but somehow I continue to stare and always go back. Your bars are impossibly packed on the weekends—they might as well serve deli style:

—“order 203, apple martini...”

But so many gorgeous girls, hip crowds, so much money talk and who's who and what the fuck—having a bad time is nearly impossible.

One night Carey and I were with our friend Jenna who has a Skrillex (who doesn't) haircut. Her friends from Reno were in town. People from Reno love to fucking party. We had drinks, then more drinks at their hotel. We were on our way to Polk St. We needed a cab, a task and a half for 11 people. One of the impossibly drunk Reno boys was standing in the bed of a pizza delivery truck. The pizza man came out, which I thought would result in a strange interaction. However, the kid convinced the pizza man to drive all 11 of us in his two-seater truck. Three in the cab, eight in the bed, me and Carey in the caboose, both of us holding on to the bed's door for dear life. It was impossibly stupid, and so much goddamn fun. Why are the dumbest things always so much fun? We made it to Polk safely and indulged in a night of decadent drinking and DJ bashing.

UNION SQUARE

Okay, I have a confession to make. Every fiber of my consciousness knows I should resent, even detest you. I don't. I love hopping on BART, popping out at Powell and walking along your crowded corridors, sashaying into H&M and buying cheap fashionable clothes. Then window-shopping at Urban Outfitters, mocking the patrons for how utterly hard they are trying to be hip, they doing the exact same thing to me. Checking prices on things I'll never be able to afford; why is being cool so expensive?

I love your heart-shaped apples, and sitting in your direct center

with my dad wearing a hat like Raol Duke (FEAR AND LOATHING, PAUL!), but speaking to me like Hunter at his best. He says:

—“Jay, it’s time to grow up, we’re not paying for school anymore, you’re on your own. I’m sorry, but you took too long.”

I tell him I understand, I know, and thank him. Growing up is goddamned difficult. How do you make the transition? We’re all just birds, and our parents have to drop us out of the nest so we can learn how to fly, guess we should probably drink less.

Walking to my favorite coffee shop (the lesbian one in Bernal Heights), I fixate on one of my favorite anecdotes about Fitzgerald.

Fitzgerald, in a car with his friends in his 20’s. I think there were some women and booze of course. Riding in the sun in the back of a convertible; a realization undeniable overcame him. He thought to himself,

—“This is and will always be the greatest moment of my life.”

His mind wailing with thoughts of nothing else to ever look forward to again (something like this happens in “This Side of Paradise”). Of course he was wrong, but that thought sometimes usurps my general disposition and transfixes me. Occasionally I am worried I am experiencing a Fitzgerald moment.

This moment represents the death of nubile innocence and the loss of lust for life. And while walking to the coffee shop, I realize this is the moment where one grows up. I still hope that never hits me for real. I’d rather be Peter Pan than Captain Hook, at least Peter can switch hands when he wants to masturbate.

SOMA

I love your name. If you were a girl, you’re the kind I’d want to snort things off of. I would love to live in one of your chic modern lofts. I’m afraid that’s gonna be a forever dream—money. You are home to my favorite nightclub where I have done so many goddamn drugs that I’ve fooled myself into believing I liked techno. A club which is basically a rave, but smaller and 21+ with beautiful women, beautiful men, over priced drinks, five rooms of mayhem.

You are the parent of 6th street, the second most ghetto place I’ve ever seen. The first being a

tent city in Los Angeles' infamous skid row, not far from the absolute beauty of the LA Flower Market. 6th street has a needle exchange; I had no idea that needle exchanges existed in the United States, that's such a Netherlands thing. Probably the epitome of how fucking liberal San Francisco is. I love it. My old roommate said he saw a man leaning up against a telephone pole taking a shit at 8 in the morning in broad daylight. It's fragments of life and sights such as these that make me smile and make all the pressure of everything worth anything at all.

Other than that you're overrated. Oh The End Up is pretty cool—an after-hours club where you can do drugs out in the open and pretty much everyone just pretends not to notice. Is that a good thing?

MARKET ST.

San Francisco's dorsal aorta. You are the city. Encompassing everything beautiful and terrible. Touching every shade of life that exists in your consecrated terra firma. Ode to the F train, Ode to the Ferry building. Ode to all the life that permeates through your spirit inanimate. Ode to you and just you. All of you, the patter of your thousands of feet, the beating of your happy and sad hearts, your ever extinguishing life breath that gives value and poignancy to everything, even to Death our beautiful mother.

To the crack heads, who are dear to me, to the beautiful business ladies that turn their noses up when they see my unshaven face ogle them like a construction worker. To the 10's of millions of souls that have taken in your outrageous beauty. Market you are San Francisco and I love you. I wish I could kiss your feet and thank you for my habitation, cheers darlin', you're beautiful.

CASTRO

Your infamy precedes your greatness. You're famous enough for a Simpson's joke. Every time I go to Q-bar on a Monday, my life is ruined, but only in slight. Marcello's has arguably the best pizza in the city, which isn't saying much as San Francisco is a sandwich town. I don't remember anything from drunk and hung over Mondays, but have ascertained from my friends that sometimes I scream, laughing to myself and tear down dozens of posters

advertising shitty summer action movies or big titties that everyone is supposed to like.

And sometimes when I'm sad about that girl, you know the one that still lives in the Haight (Panhandle), I go to your nightclubs and make out with lesbians and sometimes gay dudes. Then when I tell people they say they didn't know I was gay, and I try to tell them I'm not, I'm just okay with making out with dudes. I could never suck dick, but they just don't understand that one action (or four) does not define sexuality.

And why the stigmatization of homosexuals? There isn't enough money for social security anyway, so they're doing us all a favor by not having kids. Does it really make you that uncomfortable to see two dudes making out, or does it make your dick wiggle and that scares you? Are you intimidated by the fact that most gay dudes could beat the shit out of you, whilst their couture bag is slung securely over their left shoulder? Or are you jealous of all the beautiful women incessantly surrounding said gay dudes. The reason you're scared is because you've been culturalized to insinuate perversion from homosexuality. Isn't it tough enough that we're all in a desperate struggle to continue the eternal pathos of existence?

How many times have you seen two male dogs bang each other with that stupid happy and serene look on their face? Being gay rules, I just wish I were included.

DOLORES PARK

It's impossible to describe the ecstasy of drinking a Blue Moon and laying on your back shirtless on those rare sunny days in San Francisco. I don't care how grimy your meanderers are, or the constant possibility of seeing some dude with his cock hanging out in broad daylight. The energy that you let off is too beautiful to be denied. The only thing that could even be considered a negative about your vivacious greatness would be how long one has to wait for the bathroom. But sometimes holding it feels good.

I have to extend genuine thanks for giving me a conversation I'll remember forever with the lost and maybe gone forever Haight girl and her beautiful friend who both have beautiful brains. How we talked and argued and laughed about Exit Through the Gift Shop. Then Feminism.

Then both of them in their relation to each other. At the time I was reading *Martin Eden*, but I hadn't finished it yet, but I wish I had because how elegantly he explains art and its relation to the critics who create the cannon and how one critic can change your life, make you or destroy you. And people only like what they're told to like, that taste isn't objective anymore and that taste is related to intelligence. So if you can convince people you're smarter than they are they'll like what you like. And intelligence isn't objective either, but how can creativity be subjective? It's finite proof that critics and hipsters are all failed artists. They refuse to be honest with themselves, espousing bullshit and refusing to admit when they are called out on it. Brainwashed taste-Nazis.

We couldn't quite understand what we were saying, but we were so close, and stoned, and a little bit drunk that it vibrated in our souls like a perfectly placed minor chord. Then the guy on LSD came up to us and he was perfect too, then we left and these black dudes smoking a blunt while driving started hitting on my (pretty) girls, but they were perfect too because sometimes life is undeniable.

Your heralded movie nights that I've never attended. The acid trip that hasn't happened yet. Your view. Oh my fucking god, your view. Possibly the greatest thing ever. Isn't it funny that humans will do almost anything to get a good view, from climb a mountain to eating at a shit restaurant? Views are music for the eyes.

NOE VALLEY

Another one of the places draped in luxury. Noe Valley your early 30's professionals with dogs and babies make me sick. A not so subtle reminder of the success I will never achieve. Your entire district is basically that fucking guy who puts on spandex, wakes up at 6 in the morning on a Sunday, and jogs a 5k. And sometimes when I'm still awake from the night before probably rolling my dick off or coked out of my mind I want to stop him. Then ask him to stop listening to the Dave Matthews Band or Toad the Wet Sprocket and scream "What the fuck are you doing! For god sakes enjoy your life once in a while!" What's the point of living forever if you never have fun?

It deserves a mention that the most put together person I've ever dated was born and raised in Noe Valley. She was beautiful and brilliant, and 20 with a college degree in psychology. And sometimes she would look at me with rhapsodic desire that would turn the lower half of my body to liquid butter. Then one night I got way too drunk, as I always do, and she saw the

other end of my potential. The one that ends with me face down in a gutter drowning on my own vomit. A bottle in my hand and my only regret that I won't be able to drink tomorrow. What she saw in me I'll never know, but she was the kinda girl you absolutely marry if she'll let you. I really fucked that one up, if I had a nickel for every time I said that, I'd have 15 cents.

BERNAL HEIGHTS

A cab ride, another far-too-long night, and I'm home. I hope I wake up before noon.

SAN FRANCISCO

Seven miles wide, seven miles long. My life exists within 49 square miles and in no way do I feel like anything is lacking. I am home. Feeling at home is so damn comforting, it makes all my other problems small: the drinking, the lack of balance, the loss of love, and the back and forth of my luster dwindling and amplifying. But I can't complain because I am alive, and I have a place to sleep. I could be doing much worse, and much better. I hope it's always that way because perfection is boring and everyone should always have a goal. San Francisco, Bernal Heights, the Mission, North Beach, and all other districts: I love you. Please always change, but in the same manner as you continue to be. XX (and not the band).

Love,

Jay

Love and Music

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Music doesn't have to exist, but it does. Love doesn't have to exist, but it might. One of the most beautiful variables of the human capacity is the universally innate understanding and appreciation for the beauty that enriches the human experience—that jubilant realm of the intangible, the inexplicable, its only certainty that it makes life more enjoyable. That's why the "artist" (an umbrella term) is so celebrated. His/her duty is to capture the unexplainable, ubiquitous beauty that defines our mortal procession. Sometimes even the artist doesn't understand the impact of his/her work, but can feel the weight, the beauty of humanity pressing against his/her brain's fingertips.

TRACK I. GIRLS - CAROLINA

I wanna pick you up, Baby, throw you over my shoulder
Take you away, I wanna carry you home.

We're sitting in her room. We both just got off work. We're there, chain-smoking, snorting lines, and drinking Irish whiskey. Sometimes, when we don't feel like going out (rarely), we just sit in a room, and drink, and talk while listening to music: those are my favorite nights with her. We make a playlist, mix a drink, snort a line, light a ciggy.

—"I've been trying to write about you lately, but nothing will come. There are times that I desperately want to drop everything I'm doing and turn you into poetry. A beautifully unrealistic, Picasso cat lady made of words. That inspiration mainly comes at inopportune times, however, like when I'm driving. Then when I get home, I sit down to get out all my pretty thoughts about you. The abstractions become fog and all that drips from my fingertips is clouded prose. I think it's because I haven't been reading."

I decide to start her with a doozy, it's already one in the morning, and I'm too tired for formalities.

—“You absolutely need to start reading again. Look at you, you stopped writing, and you’ve lost words in conversation three times this week. You used to roll your eyes searching for the word and, within seconds, your lips would follow with pure beauty.”

Her voice holds a degree of seriousness I brought on myself:

—“You’re letting yourself go to shit, becoming a premature stereotype.”

Normally, if she’d hit me with this line, I would just smirk, smile, make her giggle, pin her down, and hold her shoulders, breathing slowly at first but steadily faster, the whole time trying to spin the conversation away from the numerous substance abuse problems I definitely have. Knowing the whole time she is more than entirely right. Then we lie next to each other like Siamese twins, half connected, half in our separate thoughts, fixated on the other. I start to smile in response, but before I can charm her into forgetting what she just said, she starts with the same matter of fact seriousness:

—“You’re leading yourself down this path of self-destruction and substance abuse. It’s okay to waste time, but you’re wasting too much time. And the way you’re wasting time is greatly reducing your life expectancy.”

TRACK 2. BARNACLE GOOSE - BORN RUFFIANS

And I’m frustrated with myself, but I can’t change

Don’t want to be me anymore.

With all these ticks and tocks and clicks of clocks that tell timeeee

Tell me this is not a phase.

Slightly taken back, I start to defend myself against her truth.

To seem more convincing, I look her in the eye:

—“Sometimes fiction can demonstrate life better than life can explain fiction. To create fiction, you have to understand life, or at least your version of it. For me to do this, I need to remove myself from seeing things with a neat construction of the fiction I want to create. To be able to properly construct fiction, you need to see the mess of life’s certain capriciousness.”

My voice starts rising with what you could mistake for confidence in what I’m about

to say, my inflection almost convincing myself that I know what I'm talking about:

—“With all life’s confusing victories, haunting heartbreaks, and nights full of vibrant conversation and multi-liquored cocktails, it’s hard not to feel like Gatsby. To remain a protagonist in my nonfiction, I disengage from pen and page to live and experience life. Hopefully, three months from now, I’ll be writing beautifully ironic prose with witty allusions about the three months that preceded the writing.”

I look away from her eyes. Her magical, mercurial eyes. Staring at me like God or Eckelberg. You’d have to ask her which one she believes in. I look to the green candle burning next to the MP3 player. The candle sits on a collection of prose/poetry I wrote to impress her. The same collection got into the hands of medium-sized publisher who got hard over it. Then, without process or thought I start again:

—“There is a danger though. There’s always the possibility that three months from now, I’ll be doing the same shit I am now. Drinking shitty liquor that punches you in the liver like a prizefighter. Snorting various white powders ‘cause the bottle isn’t enough. Smoking too many cigarettes, pot, cigarettes dipped in cocaine. Still not shooting, but getting high day-in, day-out. Letting the luster of an idea fade, becoming one of those dreams differed. ‘Til one day my nose is too clogged to get the powder in my bloodstream, so I get a spoon, a string, and a prick. If that happens, I’m gone. It’s happened to friends, they’ve become the walking dead, their dreams imploded, lying flat on the floor of their swiftly fleeing souls.”

TRACK 3. STRANGE VINE - DELTA SPIRIT

It’s such a strange vine wrapped around my neck bone
The sun came while you were shining
The tide flew when we were writing a symphony in the key of D
Songs that had lost their luster finally they found their color.

—“But that’s terrible. You’re actively seeking self-destruction. You don’t have to be a fuck-up to be a writer. You always say that stupid Hemingway quote: ‘Write drunk: edit sober.’ Well, take some of your own goddamned advice. You’ve been consistently

intoxicated or inebriated for nearly four months, destroying yourself with a smile. Giving death the finger six feet from his own door. Yes, you're right. F. Scott, Kerouac, Bukowski were all raging alcoholics, but they didn't have a penchant for powder, or that lazy grass you're always on. Plus, Kerouac and Fitzgerald died tragically young. Bukowski should have died tragically young but was saved by some deranged woman that took his shit. You don't have to try and be them to be a writer, be original. You're better than this."

Her tonality shifts from intense to inquisitive:

—"Think about it. When was the last time you went a day stone-cold sober? When was the last time you were so tired, you could barely hold yourself, sober, sleeping all through the night? Not this chemical-induced confusion you avow to need to sleep properly. For fuck's sake, Jay, look at the bags under your eyes, big as a baby's fists. Most importantly, when was the last time you put more than three goddamned sentences on the page consecutively?"

Again, I know she's right, but I try not to show it, and I see she can see that I know she's right. Then, again without thinking about what I'm saying, I start:

—"Maybe this time I can't stop! Maybe I've passed the tipping point!"

I say this as flatly as a human can in regards to their accelerating mortality. She looks straight at me so hard, I can see myself in her eyes.

—"Aren't you afraid you'll die young?!"

She pauses, reconstructs the question she intended to be rhetorical into an inquisition of genuine curiosity:

—"Do you think you'll die young?"

She says this staring straight at me, her eyes doughy as usual but wide and more alert than normal. She refuses to blink.

—"I... I... I've thought about it before. I just... I don't know."

I pull my eyes away with the last word. She open-palm slaps me as hard as she can. This makes me momentarily cross-eyed with cuckoos spinning 'round my head. I understand her intent, after several seconds of mental recomposition. My eyes heavy as boulders. I pull them off the floor back to her eyes ablaze with blue fire.

—"What the fuck, Jay! How can you talk like that? At the very least, lie to yourself like

you do about everything else. Lie to yourself for me, Jay. What about me? What would I do if one morning you didn't wake up before me like you always do? So I decide to let you sleep and walk to the kitchen to make us coffee, light our morning cigarettes. I come back into our room to wake you. My morning lulls receded; I realize you're not breathing."

She's speaking steady as a metronome with circumscribed determination. Hiding behind the veil of determination, a remote quiver, her playing out the scenario in her mind's eye.

—"What if we had kids, Jay? What if they found you face-down in a pile of your own piss? Me in the kitchen too busy with sliced apples, sack lunches, making granola with yogurt, my mind wondering when the fuck you're going to get up, give me a hand! What about that?"

She punctuates in a way that allows me to infer it's my turn.

TRACK 4. SOMEDAY SOON - HARLEM

Someday soon, you'll be on fire
And you'll ask me for a glass of water
I say no... You can just let that shit burn
And you'll say, Please, please, please put me out
I promise not to do it again
Whatever I did to you.

Again, without the advantage of knowing what the fuck I am about to say, I begin:

—"You don't know what it's like to be in my head. When the winds blow at the cooling twilight, I'm all by myself. Sometimes it's about death, or lack of life, or the horrors of Darfur, the homeless of L.A., all that esoteric humanitarian shit that is always around. Mostly though, it's about you. You running around with all those pretty things you call friends. It's nights like these you won't answer your phone or so much as burp in my direction. It comes from you being so damn indecisive. You can't figure out if you're in love with me, or if you just love the pretty words I paint you with. If that's the case, then you're in love with yourself. What about you, Daisy? What are we doing right now, all the same fucked-up shit we normally do? And I can write when I'm doing this shit!"

I stop and slow down. I look up at her and talk as softly as I can, trying to remember what it's like when she refuses to sit in the same room as me.

—“The only time I can't write is when you're messing me around. You know you're playing the actress in the title role of a movie called 'Jay's Self-Destruction.' You wanna know why I haven't written a word in three months? Because I've been with you... I've been trying to appreciate you being in my life before you blow away like Remedios, a flower landing on different hipster boys' shoulders, melting their hearts like butter. Laughing with your head on their shoulder, or in their lap, then crying in the street a week later, because your puppy love died. Then you crawl into my bed, because you hate sleeping alone, and me all fucked-up because I'm afraid of losing you.”

TRACK 5. OUR DEAL - BEST COAST

I wish I could tell you how I really feeel

I wish I could tell you, but that's not our deal.

—“There's nothing more that I'd like to do than lay in bed all day getting stoned, watching movies, playing our favorite songs for each other. Then we would go out and eat breakfast, drink mimosas, and waste lazy Sundays on the patios of our favorite bars. But you're a fucking flapper that time-traveled from the 'teens to wreak havoc on boys prone to broken hearts. You're a fucking muse confused out of your pretty little head. You just want to experience everything at once and separate. You couldn't make up your mind if you were held at gunpoint.

I take a breath.

—“But I would never change anything, because then you wouldn't be the beautiful mess that you are. I love your ethereal curiosity and your ode against boredom. I love watching you love life, your eyes full of shiny gold flakes. I love when I wake up half drunk and you whisk me out of your apartment. I normally drive home and write poetry on how I think you're oh-so-beautiful and very smart. But I never show it to you because it's bloated and it sucks, like it was written by a crooning fifteen-year-old. It's normally about your lips and your brain. And how I could give two shits about your mole that all the other boys like—they say it reminds them of Cindy Crawford. You are innocence experienced, and all those other boys don't understand that the mole isn't the most uniquely beautiful thing about you—it's your voice, your voice is

full of music. Beautiful, but pointless, its only purpose to exist as beautiful, but pointless in the endless procession of the universe like everything is in the end. But without these little human eccentricities that make life beautiful, who would want to be anything at all?”

TRACK 6. LYSANDER 7 - GIRLS

You could act precocious, you could be ferocious
You can run away from me and hide
But I'm not gonna worry, I'm not in a hurry
You will come around to me in time, 'cause love is everything that you need
It always comes back to love, kissin' and a-huggin' is the air that I breathe
I'll always make time for love.

—“Don't make this about me!”

She yells in a whisper. Not quite crying, but you can see the thought crossed her mind.

—“I'm not! But you're part of it, and for you to think otherwise would be you lying to yourself. I'm not asking you to change me, just like I'm not asking you to change. If anything changed, then we wouldn't have those moments of irrevocable us-ness when we make those stupid little jokes no one else get, or when we kiss stupidly. I love that it's difficult for other people to be in the same room as us because we forget they're even there! It's then, then that we fucking rule.”

—“I love you Daisy, and I know it, and I don't care if you don't, because this isn't going to change anytime soon.”

She looks at me with big, sad eyes full of water, but I can't help myself. I jump on her, and we have passionate but gentle sex. We didn't bother putting on music. I kiss her neck as she breathes in my rhythm. My mind goes blank. I forget about writing, or dying young, or where she might be next week. I want time to stop, but life isn't fiction, so I kept kissing her neck, holding her shoulders. If time stopped, this moment wouldn't continue and I could never kiss the other side of her neck, or cup her breast in a different manner. She wouldn't continue to breathe and we couldn't listen to the music. I would never be able to set eyes on her for the first time of the day, or kiss her as I press against her hips. I let the thought pass and close my eyes. I continue to kiss her, listening to the music of her breath and believing in love.