





Roommates in a ruined city.

Nina Ambesace

One night, there were voices, down-aged and foreign;
no longer my hall, the cold open.

The window was cleaned with something that smelled
of sputnik and styrene corrosive.

Now, with the black mold, and with the dull latch,
come little soft agents to gnaw and to hatch.
I'm thinking of leaving the dishes unwashed.

As June rolls black-lidded along the back steps
with dead-leaded slats and new whine,
they're waiting for me with the ants and the parsley,
the parched-and-then-wallowed black thyme...

The evenings to spend in a sinkhole of shed cells,
the blinds shut to noonlight, till life overfilled swells;
O, at least the poison is mine.

It Might Just Be Wednesday

Nicholas Viglietti

We ain't so important. Hopefully, that eases our flow; beneath the torrid blasts of the vainglorious Sun-God—always shows up, always brash to prove its status: boss. Strong heat grows—just a regular blaze away, kind-of summer day.

The scorch can leave us haggard. No reprieve, and it's not out of the ordinary, for the mess of soul-scrapin' stress in the capital city—the chasm of chill—but there's a spot to alleviate the rot. All the baked brains in town know where stop—let it roll off, no resort, but all relaxation mode.

It ain't far, nothin' but the rip of a few blocks east, out on the fringe, of grid-laced streets. Over, where the water erodes the land under your feet. Ferocious flame spray coerces temporary sweat to take a cool dip in the frosty hunk of a flow—the great, American river.

The aqua in the wide trench of our nation's most patriotic river—true title, and I'm sure it's been printed in some publication, and, I can attest, that it's been confirmed by many wise-winos; the kind that out-live orders from doctors—gets referred to as the *sweet water*.

It runs fresh, straight off infamous slopes of cannibalistic mountains. It rolls like the slow prominence of a Pacific-Union cargo train—on the move, totally correct in its swift run, so watch-out!

“There ain’t no harm intended, you see, but it’ll swallow you, if need be,” advised the Mayor of Goose Town—he’s a valley vagabond, a real river rover, and a sage from older days.

We stood at the rippling shoreline. Then, I seized joy and leapt into the icy drift of uncertainty—the soulful cleanse on earth. Insignificant actions, some move on all the things I can’t escape.

I swam with flow, and against the pull of downstream. I was deep, and a seal’s rubbery coated skull popped out of the water. It shot me a smile and headed up-stream. I smiled back. We were nothing but passing parallel entities in the groove of intertwined infinity.

Huge hits of too hot burn the hang of my shoulders. It’s a languid current, aimed at the ocean—it spits out, next to that city by the bay. Long way of a float to go, but then again, so do we....

On the slim margin of sand, engraved on the contour of the river’s glitzy slither. I’m amazed at the smoke end of a psychedelic pipe; getting singed on the superficially exposed layer of my skin—everything decays, we all meander off into eternity.

Beyond the view of the sunset, in the dying light of the westward horizon line. Neon shades, over my bleary boozed eyes, can see the details in the eternal fade—clarity of faith more than accuracy, I reckon—it might just be a Wednesday, but, for whatever reason, it sips like heaven.



Tomorrow's another day

Frater Asemilen

Whether the day is overladen grief,
Filled with vague worries that'll never come,
Which rob the morning's glory like a thief,
tomorrow, perhaps, is a better one.

When in the swing of things it seems so brief,
These few allotted hours spent in the sun,
With full-green strength as the new leaf is lief,
Now fainted in the night, what's dun is done.

But in my bed, the chief import, is peace,
The tingling stress is left its course to run,
My blanket is the only thing of fleece,
Its warm-weight, i do not flee under from.

Perhaps tomorrow a merry-go-round,
Perhaps tomorrow a burial shroud,
Perhaps tomorrow these varicose veins,
Will walk among the steep marigold planes.



The Sort of Optimism I Still Struggle With

Richard LeDue

The sun shines brightest through closed curtains,
teaching me darkness doesn't exist
without light and that my shadow
can sneak alone or be party to a stubbed toe,
while I look outside, hoping to find
the sort of optimism I still struggle with accepting
dwells inside of me,
perhaps put there by realizing I'm more
than an empty bottle keeping my secrets
the morning after, and the undrunk whisky
nourishes me enough now to feel
a spirituality that isn't god creating life, but life existing
for millions of years (some long lost while others
never dreaming of becoming that).

So once I'm sure the world's distracted
by a new type of burger, the president telling
another lie, or a car they'll never have,
and I'm confident no one will notice me,
I press my palm against the window
and shake hands with my own soul.



end like that

Will Vincent

u and I don't rly care so
let's go like patients etherized on
fentanyl cut with the
heroine's heroin
we'll sup at the trough
in the pig city
speed twrd the APEX
turbochargers' blue flame
until we're perfect

sucking dollar store swords
coated in sour powder
we break into the hotel
to live a little
cupped by the double Os
in the Roosevelt's red sign
we dangle our legs
with the biker kids &
thick beards braided

ideologies embroidered
across our shoulder blades
sharpened from where batwings
severed at birth
we swim with the current
dwn twrd the sea
with um the hurricane

named after Clinton
jk it's just so easy to lie
like the weather channel
wants to be an actor too
L.A. falls again
rises w/ new heat
late summer we flow again
in the river of cars titanium heavy

rare metal rage dissolving our souls
in traffic wit loud trance
thumping 808s
informational radio programs
tragedies abroad listed details
humanist pod wave in cold hail
crows tactic in the streets

suddenly too many to ignore
raccoons festooned in bathrooms
gorge bliss n' trash
damn am I rollerskating backwards
twrd Venice tracing the infinite
over the road reflectors
it's the perfect curve
the highway's exit slope

when my retina gits
burned by another billboard
lawyer fantasias grinning
with obvious irony
in this way the saccharine leaks
& itches just under the skin
like a mummy scarab

dumb enough to describe it
caught Duff's eyes as she sang
abt Hollywood & Vine or Cyrus
twerking with psycho teddy bear
somehow past cool even Timberlake
can't dance his way out
Chalamet finds a Kardashian
so I climb with strangers

& let them hold me
in the rope's tight embrace
to let them kill me
if they want to
super-dunking
in the sensory

deprivation tanks
while the Lakers
game transports you in VR
to the courtside minus coach's sweat smell
I dig my hands deep into pockets
in the dense SEAL
blubber cloak
sew on more scales

we wait for crab rolls
as the ferris wheel seems to hasten
its wheeling unicycle ride
for pink sun gods
over the pier
tourists buried in margaritas
laughing & one kicks a pigeon

it is on now
u think the weekend never ends
the weekend terminates
the shadow line
where sunlight meets dark
in the moon's desert craters
even Brecht, in Hollywood Elegies
can't help but make dying sound fun

the kids bro-game
another droid war
for comedy TV
somehow the most important thing
is to render
each grass strand individually
to make sure the hair moves just so
in light or wind



my dying wish

Miranda Faria

Momma just before I go to bed, I have a question:

Do you think everyone is skinny in heaven?

I'm just trying to understand what eternal happiness entails.

Does everyone get their everlasting wish of being paper thin? Do angels have rock hard abs? The renaissance paintings must've had it all wrong, then. If heaven is timeless then is everyone's metabolism just fast?

Momma can you tell me please, can you eat whatever you want in heaven and still be skinny? No, of course not, gluttony is one of the deadly sins, I know that momma. One could never consider themselves religious and have a third slice of cake for dinner.

Momma I wonder if there is plastic surgery in heaven? And what about those who couldn't afford it on earth? Will the poor and hungry be blessed with the ability to look 20 again? Or does God's magic kinda do that for them?

Tell me momma is everyone in heaven pretty? Do they get their crooked teeth fixed at the holy orthodontist? Their hair died and straightened at God's salon. Their ends trimmed. Their pussies waxed. Their cuticles pushed back. Their under-eyes filled. Their jawlines filled. Their neck. Their ass. Their Cupid's bow and collar bone.

Or am I meant to find a way to love those here on earth? Tell me momma am I meant to despise my cellulite so my baby smooth angel legs feel better in the clouds? Is loving them now in vain?

Momma, how come God gives me no longer than three seconds in the mirror before I notice all my flaws? Do you know what happens when you look for longer? I make it to ten seconds and I start to notice I have grandma's mouth. 20: and daddy's posture. 25: and your eyes momma!

I stare at that mirror momma, and thread my eyebrows with the fine line between conceit and propriety. And cut my nails with the sharpness of my realizations. I stand tall on the scale and measure the weight of all of my discoveries:

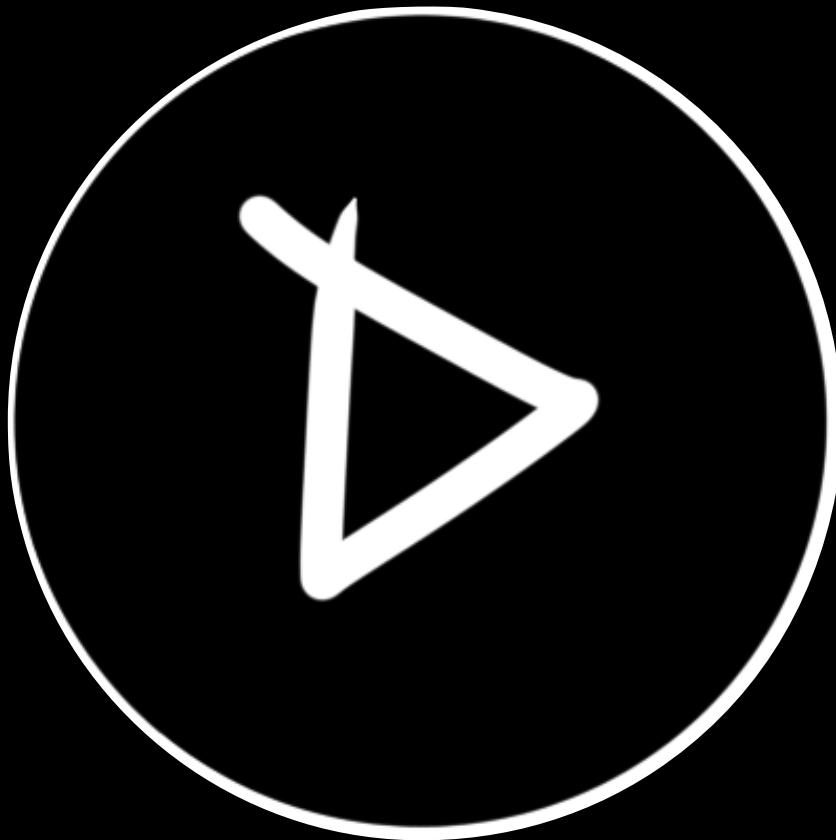
Momma, here in the bathroom sink, I find eternal peace with pieces I am so desperate to fix. In front of this melted sand I vow to more quickly count each one of my moles before I ever count my calories. If I feel hungry I should eat and if I don't I will lay on the grass, look at the clouds, and ask God, pretty please, never ever let me forget my body in the sky. Let me remember crooked lines and bad breath. And momma, when I start to go, just before I meet all those pretty people up there, let me think of my hairy arms, big knuckles, round face, and anything else that might make me smile.



A decade in 3-word sentences

Jude Jones

Learning to parent. Making many mistakes. Co-parenting with ex. Prone to paranoia. Nothing terrible happens. Mental illness abounds. Stable, happy marriage. Great achievement unlocked. Lost my uterus. Gained much weight. Changed my name. Said I'm non-binary. Quit many jobs. Got some glasses. Stopped feeling suicidal. But not forever. Life got hard. Can't manage stress. Psych hospital helped. Still love spouse. Adopted a cat. Daughter is happier. She's changing schools. Feels quite anxious. Anxiety always present. I can help. I'm not working. I am writing. Writing is life.



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