



**AFTER all the
SHOUTING**

H.s.f.B.



**for mom.
sorry.**

Our Vices

The cigarette burn on the car door,
the easy-chair,
your lungs
and your fingers.

We are our vices,
and we cannot be contained.
We are the plume of soot that bursts
from the fireplace.
We singe your skin, and spread,
and stain.

We are our vices:
The burning bag of shit,
the foot that stomped in it,
the stain on the stoop where were are leaking,
leaking.
We are the foul scent that lingers.

It sits like lead in my veins.
I cannot rise, cannot run.
I can't eat.
A mouth full of lead,
a mouth full of shit,
I sit
and stain.

I am your child,
and I am innocent,
I am the will to rise, come morning.
I am delivered from your trespasses,
but I am all your vices.

2.

Here I am!

I write with lipstick on your bathroom mirror.

Here I am,

I sharpie on your legs while you are sleeping.

Here I am,

I write with tears and spit, whispering into my fist,

Here I am! Here I am!!

Not ugly enough to remember.

Dissociation

I am an unperson.

A pseudo-human, only.

If I try, I can sink

deep down into the floor

where no one can see me at all.

And if you can't see me

and you can't smell me

then you can't blame me.

It's not my fault

these pieces of me pile up around.

Oh, no...

I'm sound asleep.

Julia

winter to spring, summer to fall.
is this my world? it changes all the time
but i have seen it all.

and every week you call,
no consolation to your crime— gone
from winter to spring to summer to fall.

on the darkest nights i crawl
into your room, to see your things, to find a sign,
but i have seen it all.

so let's go for a drive! some coffee! anything to stall
the bitter flood that's coming, a scalding brine.
you're still running, winter to spring, summer to fall.

in your waiting arms i wonder at your gall.
too scared to leave, too scared to apologize.
you've forgotten, i've seen it all.

the seasons change, i'm not the same
and you're still a liar if you're here at all.
gone from winter to spring, summer to fall.
maybe you'll try, but i have seen it all.

6:30, still sleeping

Talk to the hand:
the hand over my mouth:
the mouth that bites down hard:
as hard as a heart can beat:
and i beat against this shell:
this shell that you call me:
but i am a vacuum:
and i'm only alive when i'm breathing:
eating:
shitting:
retching, wretched:
thinking, thinking:
but i already know it all:
i know that i am terrified:
failing:
every organ dies:
i lay braindead:
rotting in my bed:
your mouth is atoms:
your words, vibration:
so talk to the hand
because the face don't want to hear about it.

White Girl

brown is an ugly color.
the color of dirt, the color of shit.
who are you?
i don't recognize the shape of your nose,
the slant of your eyes.

white is an ugly color.
it's sick and it's twisted
and too stark on the page.
who are you?
what colors did you come from?

teacher tells me,
we are all human.
we are all beautiful.
we are a rainbow.

but i'm not red.
i'm not yellow.
i'm not green.
it's all black and white.

pale, skinny blonde girl.
white girl.
she wants to play with me.

who are you?
where did you come from?

juelz quillen,
no one says his name right.
he taught me how to cast the fire ball jutsu.
his dad isn't around.

white girl tells me
about getting her ears pierced
and going to florida.
who are you?
where did you come from?
your hair is so nice.
i tell her
about

dying my dad's dreadlocks with chalk

who are you?

where did you come from,

white girl?

nappy haired white girl?

black is beautiful, brown is beautiful

says my aunt

says my father.

it is, it is, it is.

you're mostly white.

who are you to tell me what i can't say?

my grandmother doesn't listen.

little white girl cannot see

that come family photo time, on either side

i stick out like a stain

and every word i say rings empty.

shut your mouth, nappy haired white girl.

Mother

When my mom became my mother,
at first, I said it with affection.
Mother. My mother.
Don't talk about my mother.
How honorable.
How chivalrous.

My mother is addicted to methamphetamine.
My mother likes to collage.
My mother would love that T-shirt in the window,
it makes no sense but it's funny.
My mother. My mother.

She's still Mom.
Ma.
My mom.
This is the name I give her, in the quiet moments.

My best friend, he hates his mom.
Mom.
His mom.
He loves her, but
she doesn't know him.
She gives him panic attacks.
He's so afraid she'd spit in his face if she knew.

How do you cope?
He asks me this, in so many words.
How do you cope, my mother loves me but she doesn't know me?
I haven't spoken to my mother in five months.
How do you cope?
Mom used to hold me.
Just Mom. Dad knew too much to not talk about it.
I don't get panic attacks anymore.

My mother is a stepford failure.
You don't get to talk about my mother.
And my mother, like my father's mother, is a ghost in my home.
Dearly beloved, dearly departed, remembered always in effigy.
The living room is filled with photos of my grandma.
I preserve my mother forever, crying in the night
to her old facebook page.

Don't talk about my mom, it's a thing little boys say.
Yo mama's so fat.
Yo mama's so old.
No, Taye, my mama ain't fat.
She used to be, but now she smokes meth and steals bikes,
and hangs with the wrong people in crappy little apartments..
No Taye, my mama ain't old.
She had me at 22, just like your mama would've
If you hadn't been a lucky middle-child.

Laugh, Taye.
This is funny, Taye, isn't it so fucking funny?
My mother, she's a sow and a liar.
At least, if she hit me, I'd know she was there.
But she just holds me, twice a year,
and damn her,
damn her,
she means it.
My mother,
she smokes meth and steals bikes
and she doesn't talk to me.

I do love my mother.
You don't get to talk about my mother.
I fucking hate my mom,
that's something little boys say.

Yeah, sorry bro, Sunday's no good.
I'm having lunch with my mom.
No, man, she's isn't fucking dead.

Disassociation

I am the oyster;
I am the pearl;
Clamping up,
building up
a chitinous shell.
This wad of flesh inside.
Cracked meat,
moldering.
Yet so tender.
pink,
shining.

I'm embarrassed to say

There's a house in your heart where love should live
and you've filled it up with other things.

But love will come home from the war.
And love is a jealous god.
And love will bring the fire,
love will bring the flood.
Love will fill your house with water.
So much love could kill you.

There's a house in your heart where love could live
so you fill it up with other things.

Affliction

Ginger root and candied lime,
nutmeg, tea, rosehip and pine.
Flaccid excuses, victimless crimes.
Salt and the scent of summertime
crashing hard into autumn.

The girl with the happysad,
green, green eyes that shine
as bright as twin half-moons.
I've begun to think we're just the same.
Part overeager popinjay,
part murky, murky water.
Saccharine syrup,
rusting spoon.

I am brought low,
brought low and lowly.
A starer and a sycophant.
I can only hope, next year, you're lonely.
Then turn your eyes to your supplicant.
Maybe I'll taste the sugar in your teeth.
God, I'd eat them every day.
Just say I'm not the only one
rotting fast inside.

Makayla

Eye to eye to eye—
all this blood of my blood,
flesh of my flesh—
hand to hand to hand.
A thousand arms embracing.
Kindness's most secret sister
has rubbed us raw and flayed.

Eye to eye to eye.
The incising moment,
the killing blow.
Now we are neither
angered whales, raking,
nor beaten dogs at play.
Fanged apes are biting, knowing.
People hurt the ones they love.

So long this silence,
favored kindred.
Our hands, still grasping, burn to touch.
I do not miss you quite as much
as I assumed I would.
When our mothers and our fathers die
and all that's left is you and I—
battle-brothers,
boars freed from the sty
I will hold your hand again.

You were half my soul and half my skin.
Tear away.
Love of life has spread you thin.
And for that, I must forgive you.
My love,
my muse,
my twin.

See our triumphs choke and drown
in disillusion, so hard won.
Few among us cheer when all the shouting's done.

THE WORLD



A child is born.
A child is born, screaming, bleeding.
The child is a child forever,
walking in the skin of a man.
The child breathes—
So comes a sick, black cloud.
A thousand flies,
a thousand screaming wasps.
These ants and ticks and locusts
feasting on his flesh, his blood,
the softness of his eyes.
The swarm turned its head as one
and named itself:

THE WORLD.

What is left but bones
for insects to make a hive?
The swarm is proud, and will not crawl,
having made a child's flesh communion.
A man walks
and flies
as a swarm
to the eye of the sky.

AND THE WORLD COMPREHENDS ITSELF.

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