

I. For Someone Placed Their Gaze Upon Me

The sky's are blood red,
For someone has heard me,
My shame is no more,
For someone can see.
See the fatalities in their speech,
With every utterance they spew.
My bird now crawls and the worms grew wings,
For someone placed their gaze upon *me*.
I only saw this moment between realities,
between a stressful evening and a stressed morning.
The image that flashed before my eyes,
The image of days without mourning.
This moment was not like unto any other,
Yet it wasn't a kind of strange you flinch at,
It is a strange you linger on, swallow, and appreciate-
for you are full.
My belly, always empty, is now full-
For someone dared to harp onto what /had to say.

II. I paint a ceiling that never hangs over me

I paint a ceiling that never hangs over me,
concealing my nude from the rude neighbors just above.
I paint a ceiling that sits pretty for me to gaze at and wonder what if-
What if the roles were switched-
And the dust seeping through the holes in the roof, land on the perfectly barbed and
quaffed hair, you wear, and not in mine, that twist into knots not meant to be
intertwined?

I find it fascinating.
How, although we live so close, we are always far apart, you start at the finish line, and
my race is a circle that keeps going around never to end at the finish line.

I paint that ceiling.
I wash it too.
With every utterance, I scrub and scrub.
While you sit pretty and lay below it, never to analyze the wise strokes put into that
job, never to look up, at that grandiose creature I sculpted just for you-
and although I say I paint not for the work to be seen, deep down I want you to see-
see what I made for you.

See the way my back aches for a break as it breaks and contorts to just hover over your cover never to actually touch it, just come close enough to finish the job.

I try to paint mine.

I try to dip my brush into the paint can of supremacy and systemic favorability, but that color never seems to be enough to gather on my brush, so now my wall is speckled with streaks of hope, and realities meet with nopes, nevers, and not yet's.

III. Don't mind the holes in my socks

Don't mind the holes in my socks-

My feet just ache to be free.

Free from the shackles society places on me.

The constant walking from my factory job,
has my feet screaming for air-

Screaming to break free from poverty.

Don't mind the critters that inhabit my abode,

These walls are all they know-

And it would be rude to force them to pack their things,

Because the homeowner wants to capitalize on capital too much to afford anymore.

IV. Classist Ostrich(ism)

I reach into the pockets of the unworthy,

untethered for the riches are all but a notion of the seemingly deserving.

It's unnerving to know that some will still disagree,
even though the evidence is apparent as can be.

It appears in the neighborhoods and cracked pavement sidewalks walked on everyday.

To stay and witness, the constant battle of fitness so far from physical,
so far from personal,

so far from typical-

would ask too much of the critics,

would ask too much of the fittest.

If we were all built the same, would we be in the same place in the race of strength, and stamina?

If we all bench pressed everyday, would we be pressed at the broken bench in which we lay our heads on?

I wish to examine a world in which the mind isn't consumed by its own greed, always in need of more than what it needs.

But alas the world in which we live isn't as flat as it seems, we are overtaken by its complexities and multiply it even though we don't have to.

We adapt to the ways that were, and still are, and have to let go of all morals to survive, for the people before did and so now we are forced to as well, for anything else is unwise.

Some people are too far gone, they've become capitalistic sheep, still obeying the rules of the long gone shepard.

Even though the shepard didn't teach them their ways, they obey and obey, and wouldn't dare to sway from the norms of the day.

If the roles were switched, which of us would listen to our cries?

The mind is but a concept we are unable to conceptualize.

We hypothesize that equity is needed, but equity is one sided.

In agreement we don't plea for change, but scream, for our own self-interest in exchange.

We criticize the critics for they are unfair in opportunity, but hypocrites are we as the pharisees, for we fail to see the fatalities in our speech.

Irrelevant is our plea, for if we were in each other's' place, we wouldn't make the mistake to share-

for the world is unfair in manner, yet fruitful in manna,

abundant in riches, yet stingy in its habits.

It would be unwise to turn a blind eye to the way the world is.

People care too much for themselves that they forget everyone else, and I'm afraid there's no other way to live.

V. The Milky Way

I live in the milky.

But not in the way that accentuates my dark chocolate, but in a way that suppresses its richness under its colorless folds which holds my love for myself,

and my love for everyone else-

Because after a while, the milk seeps into my pores, until I can't breathe anymore.

Drowning in the milky way, way beyond my comprehension, too small to realize what was truly happening, too suppressed to ever know the truth.

I ought to believe there is a world, a galaxy beyond me, that holds the secret to connection- connecting affection between two dots that dare,

not positioned right next to each other to create a picture,
not of the norm,
but of the beauty that forms when we explore more of the ways we are all the same.
I frame myself in an all white background,
The sound of me, too jarring to see,
but it bleeds into everything around me ever so slightly.
The painting hangs on my wall,
I can't see it at night,
I can't see me,
but maybe that is how it was meant to be.
If the light is too frightening, then maybe the dark would fit.
The thought lingers, but in the end the light still flickers in-between, between the
things I like, and the people who like me, for they see me in them.
It seems this is how the mind makes sense of the little information it is given.
It sees and compares and neurons fire,
but after a while it's gets tired,
and so it assumes and fills the gaps with things familiar,
and now we're all clones of ourselves,
drones, robots, AI mimicking what its given,
reciprocating everything,
even things forbidden,
because after a while,
something you utter jumps out at me,
and I see you are too comfortable around me,
because now you assume the things you can do,
because everyone one else in the room you happen to be standing in, is standing the
same exact way,
but ultimately slightly different.
We don't get the luxury of being treated the same,
and for that I blame the milky way,
the way that always was,
and somehow still lingers today.
I wallow in it,
swallow it,
I have it for breakfast,
and go on with my day acting like nothing happened,
for nothing ever happens.

VI. What is the Hood?

What is the hood, but an agglomeration of traumas and fears passed down for
generations upon generations?

As I walk down my street, I am careful not to step into the crack that perpetually clings to the pavement.

I close my eyes as I walk past the chalk of the sidewalk, because I ought not to see beauty in this scenery.

My head held low as I glance at the houses and the old women that have found home on the front porches everyday.

Today I said I would say hello, but I ought not to speak, because the fear of what I hear is all I hear, and I am scared of what she will do to me.

I don't say hello, even though I know she means well, because I ought not to see beauty in this scenery, because I was told it is not pretty.

I was told it was not pretty, because its rear end is all they see.

They never glance up at the grace that surrounds its face.

I was told to shake and quiver as a car drives down my street, because someone bad is in there,

someone I ought not to meet,

someone that lives a couple blocks down from me,

someone dangerous.

But today, I dare to see the beauty that perpetually surrounds me.

Today, I *dare* to see my community.

VII. I feel beautiful, something's wrong

I feel beautiful, something's wrong.

I don't bear the shame of yesterday, in the way that I once did.

I don't bear any shame at all.

I don't wear the weight of the world and the mask I use to hide my face anymore.

After a while, the sensation of breathing was unbearable, and the mask, uncomfortable as it sits on my bumpy face, covering the same thing it causes.

The mask slowly sucked the life out of me, but with it on, it felt like the only way to live, for shame was too much a burden to bear, and one I would dare to share.

I wake up to the realities of the world hitting my face, as I race to get out of the door.

I was late.

I had forgotten my mask laying on the floor.

I don't wear it out.

People stare, but I fail to care, for I wear not the mask I put on, but the face I bear.

I try to face the faces my face faces, as I fasten my seatbelt on the roller coaster that is the day.

My minds says to unbuckle the seat belt, and jump, but I fail to listen for it's why I need a seatbelt in the first place, only to ride the carousel that truly is the day, disguised as a rocket ship, accelerating with my heartbeat, drifting with my mind.

It feels sweet to indulge in fantasies, every once in a while, calming and distracting, perceptually enacting the dreams believed to never be true.

It distracts me from the disorder that happens around me, dysfunctionally functioning everyday, it hides the ugly truth of the way I used to feel with the way the mind bends to belief.

Believing the things seen, and discerning, discarding the things not seen, seeming too good to be true.

And Maybe I am still dreaming, the feeling, ready to leave in a moment, maybe the swing will fall to the ground, breaking every bone in my body, without warning.

And maybe there is something wrong.

But it feels beautiful to feel beautiful-
a feeling I haven't felt in so long.

VIII. Poetic isn't it

I was a perfect picture not long ago, until I was snatched, and smashed into tiny little pieces that lay dormant until someone picks a scab I tried hard to heal. I feel the push and pull as my head tries its best to stay in place, on a stool with one leg nearly about to break. I shake and quiver, I ponder the thought of them seeming me in a light that was too bright for me to hide beside. I shake and quiver as my head tries its best to stay in place, tears fall down my eyes. It hurt. But I couldn't tell which part. The feeling in the moment, or the feeling I felt hours later. I saw them stare at me. I tried my best to look back, my head tried its best to stay in place. My mind was long gone. It had gone on a stroll. My mind was never in the moment. My mind was visiting the neighbor's. Stealing their cars and parking them in our garage.

I was once a glass window. Everyone thought they could see right through. Now my frame is bent, and fiber's spent, and I don't know what to do. I tried to glue it back together. Glue me back together. The pieces wouldn't stick. Just my luck. Today's an awful day. My boss yelled at me. I didn't do it. I just stood there, and took the fall, for a shove yet to be pushed. And then my car tire popped. Two of them actually. You know something about possessions, they never go away, no matter how much they disappoint you. No matter how much worse your food at the 3 and half star restaurant tasted. No matter how much thinner the fabric on your prom dress is, they never go away. They linger. They stay in your mind. Book a room, stay a few nights, and leave you a little gift. Stollen sheets. Stolen toilets. Stolen beds. The room is now empty. Your mind racing, trucking, jamming into a wall. Your heart beats a marching band. Your two cents a lottery, your state of being revealing more and more of your whereabouts. You scream inside, but no one can hear. You scream nonetheless.

I was once a barricade to my own self. But now the frame reflects back at me. It was a mirror mirroring me before, and still remaining after. I like to listen to music. Something someone somewhere may not know about me is I like to block out the noise around me. I call it an isolating voice. I call it what it is. My head still held still, I try to walk past

them. My 4c, forcing eyes upon my presence. I wish it would stop, my cracks grow too deep. The glue doesn't work. I tried tape, I tried force. I tried fire. I tried pain. Wait. Sorry. I was real a moment ago. And now I am not. A puzzle a moment ago, an impossible riddle now. The pieces, too small to collect. The portrait of me once whole. Still a portrait even in pieces. Poetic isn't it.

IX. Culture

Culture is a plague, a fight to the death, a game of strategy and luck.
Culture is often glamorized into what is within you so small it bears little meaning.
I'm ten percent Ethiopian but you wouldn't know.
You see my culture as one of two dimension.
You see my culture as the cracked pavements and torn rags I embody.
Culture to me is a projection of privilege, and culture is flexing its muscles at me.
Culture, branching farther than your roots,
is the dinner you eat, and clothes you wear,
the neighborhood you live in,
The school you go to.
Culture is a plague; a fight to the death.
Culture is a gun and minorities are the target.