

SHAYLIN HEALY

Open Book

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Contents

1	Preface	1
2	What Happened to Tyler	3
3	The Reflection	4
4	Diary Entry 1.10.22	5
5	what_would_paris_do_1-17-22.html	7
6	W.H.T.T. 2	9
7	how_to_buy_drugs_online_1-18-22.html	10
8	good_men_die_i_choose_to_live_1-21-22.html	19
9	Unwanted/Ectoplasm	22
10	forgive_me_1-29-22.html	25
11	W.H.T.T. 3	28
12	everything_is_real_2-3-22.html	29
13	W.H.T.T. 4	32
14	Little Match Girl	33
15	Diary Entry 3.1.22	35
16	i_know_a_spot_3-20-22.html	37
17	W.H.T.T. 5	39
18	blue sunshine	41
19	bad_habits_4-5-22.html	42
20	y_would_u_play_w_ur_life_4-25-22.html	45
21	W.H.T.T. 6	48
22	Nightmare	50
23	bloodthirsty_times_4-28-22.html [UNPUBLISHED]	52

24	W.H.T.T. 7	55
25	on_self_care_5-11-22.html	56
26	W.H.T.T. 8	59
27	Siu-Yin	60
28	ashamed_5-26-22.html	62
29	W.H.T.T. 9	64
30	Diary Entry 6.6.22	66
31	W.H.T.T. 10	67
32	Neighbor's dog	69
33	the_bellevue_bubble_6-10-22.html	71
34	my teenage	75
35	*INTERVIEWS FROM THE ARCHIVES: RAPE CULTURE IN HIGH SCHOOL*	77
36	shays_thoughts_on_the_panopti- con_6-22-22.html	82
37	W.H.T.T. 11	86
38	Innocence/Narcissus	88
39	vanity_is_rage_7-31-22.html	90
40	W.H.T.T. 12	93
41	you_surrender_every_time_8-23- 22.html [UNPUBLISHED]	94
42	W.H.T.T. 13	96
43	talking_about_words_8-25-22.html	98
44	W.H.T.T. 14	102
45	Finally	104
	<i>end notes</i>	106

“But even after admitting this—and I have, in just about every act I’ve committed—and coming face-to-face with these truths, there is no catharsis. I gain no deeper knowledge about myself, no understanding can be extracted from my telling. There has been no reason for me to tell you any of this. This confession has meant nothing...”

Bret Easton Ellis, American Psycho

1

Preface

“If you don’t have anything nice to say, don’t say anything at all.”

Words I was raised by, along with “please” and “thank you,” words that shaped my personality. I often wonder if I am not really a silent introvert by nature, but instead through conditioning. Through words repeated, over and over again, until they saved my life.

I am writing this preface over a year clean from opiates, and I have decided this book is not only a testament to how words saved my life, but a tool in the process of my survival.

When I forget who I am, I have years of documentation through fiction, nonfiction, and poetry to remind me. Everything else is fleeting and fuzzy around the edges. In the real world, my mom tells me I am a mental patient and a drug addict. I can’t disagree with her. But in my writing, I come alive. I have a reason. I am more than a diagnosis and set of labels that identify my functional position in society.

I’ve been planning on a book for years. It started as a poetry book I wanted to write in high school. I would sit alone at lunch,

reading Plath and Sexton and writing my own confessional-style poems about suicidal ideation, body image, and sexual exploitation. In the process of writing and editing this book I struggle with how much I should disclose about the traumas I've experienced.

I once went into shock during my 10-minute break at Taco Time because I started a book by another bipolar woman that opened with a dizzyingly detailed account of a violent sexual assault. I couldn't continue reading. Although I have nothing against the author, it was a story I found indigestible. I cannot create a book I could stomach reading and tell the full details of my experience at the same time, and that's okay.

In intensive outpatient therapy, we learned that the impact of trauma is more important than the actual series of traumatic events, which can often be blocked out by one or more of the parties involved. I feel more comfortable telling the details of how I reacted to the things that are difficult to write about, and the subsequent lessons I learned in self-regulation.

What Happened to Tyler

♪ Changes – Antonio Williams & Kerry McCoy ♪

April 21st, 2019

Autoerotic asphyxiation: the practice of sexual self-stimulation while causing oneself to experience hypoxia, which is believed to heighten the sexual experience. This is usually achieved by hanging, strangulation, suffocation, neck or chest compression, or the inhalation of volatile chemicals.

1

Tyler. Benjamin. Benjamin and Tyler. In his mother's mouth, Tyler had almost always preceded Benjamin, or vice versa. For example: "Tyler! Benjamin! Dinner!"

"Benjamin! Dinner!" felt uncomfortably empty. For Benjamin, a great deal of things felt uncomfortably empty.

3

The Reflection

A girl on a freakishly damp July afternoon
sticky with lemonade and elbow-blood.
Paunched demons in her father's buttons
catch her like a baseball in the outfield
I padlock her kneecaps.
She cowers in her deceitful undergarments.

Stupid girl, what will he think
when it all goes away?
I refer to my terrible mirror
and bury her under it.

January 2018

Diary Entry 1.10.22

TW: SA

Back finally from the worst weekend of my Life. I went down to Kenmore to visit Eduardo and he sexually assaulted me. I lost my wallet, I broke a cartridge (brand new) and had a terrible acid trip to the Bee Movie. I saw red gridlines over everything. I spent all day yesterday trying to make it back to Western. If it wasn't for the nice girl and her mom at the Greyhound station idk if I would've made it back. Now I have to have the most successful quarter I have ever had.

Note: During that trip, I saw his shadow come off his body while he was kneeling next to me. The shadow's eyes turned red and a snakelike voice said "you're lucky I haven't killed you yet..." before he sighed, as if drained, and immediately fell onto his face on the mattress on the floor.

I (temporarily) swore off psychedelics after that experience. The emotional fallout from his assault that weekend was what inspired me to create goodluckgirl.substack.com. I didn't have any friends at university. I had a couple online friends I would talk to over the phone, and my friends back home barely reached

out after I left. I can't really blame them, I didn't reach out either. I needed to express myself in some abstract way, and this was my solution.

what_would_paris_do_1-17-22.html

♪ Im Paris Hilton – Lil B ♪

I used to write stories every day. I won third place in a short story contest when I was nine. After a Google search for “good short stories” I creatively rewrote one of the sci-fi pieces that came up. It was about a cryogenic coffin that a couple of wealthy parents bought to halt the aging process of their son and keep him younger for longer. The story ended with the mother character pushing her husband inside and burying him alive. I received a \$25 Amazon gift card and bought a purple jelly Juicy Couture digital watch with the money.

Instead of churning out another semi-plagiarized fantasy, I’m going to try writing about my real life. I’m nineteen years old. I love Paris Hilton. Paris is a genius businesswoman who hid behind an airheaded façade for most of her life and the public and press just ate it up. I don’t fully aspire to her lifestyle, but her story inspires me a lot. (This was decided after watching her documentary on YouTube in 2020.)

Witnessing creativity of any kind is a deeply inspirational thing—out of fear of sounding like Patrick Bateman, I’m refrain-

ing from going too far in depth about my favorite artists right now. I grew up idolizing Britney Spears and Lady Gaga. When I was in grade school, I made my own dance routine for Work Bitch and spent all of my free time perfecting the choreography in my room for months. I wish I could remember it now.

What would Paris do?

Well, she would write a book.

(With the help of a ghostwriter)

Confessions of an Heiress: A Tongue-in-Chic Peek Behind the Pose sits on my bookshelf next to American Psycho and the copy of 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens my mom bought for me.

American Psycho is a great book about a gay man who really wanted to be straight. I was obsessed with it when I was fifteen and desperately wanted to be a straight man myself.

Welcome to my substack.

Note: It was after publishing this that I found, unsurprisingly, that Paris was a horrible racist. I guess I love the idea of Paris Hilton more than the person herself.

6

W.H.T.T. 2

Three months after Tyler died, Benjamin sat alone on a bench. More specifically, he sat alone on the bench by the front of his middle school, watching his classmates pool together in the 3 p.m. sun.

Angela walked out of the school building with her rolling backpack in tow.

“Hey, Benjamin,” she said.

“Oh,” said Benjamin, as if he hadn’t expected to see her. “Hey, Angela.”

Angela’s brief stop was much too brief for Benjamin’s liking, and he gazed wistfully at the back of her fuzzy blonde head as she shrunk out of view. By the time she completely disappeared, Benjamin knew there was no reason for him to be sitting alone on that bench any longer.

So, he got up and began the long walk home.

how_to_buy_drugs_online_1-18-22.html

You have been warned

♪ The Fold Up – Corbin ♪

Today I smoked my last cigarette. I started smoking when I found out one of my childhood online friends was shot and killed early last year. I smoke Newport 100s and my mom smokes American Spirits. We started smoking together after I got out of the hospital. I smoke Newports because they remind me of Newport High School, and I hated Newport High School. My morning cigarette is one of the only reasons I get out of bed in the morning. But not anymore! I am releasing myself from the shackles of my vices.

I am very online. I don't know if it's because of social anxiety, insecurity, or a combination of both. I used to love going on Omegle by myself. I sold pictures of my feet online when I was fifteen.

I'm also quitting weed. I started smoking every day junior year. I would smoke joints in my car before class and hit my wax pen in the bathroom. People who are dependent on weed to eat and

sleep will generally deny any problem with their dependency. I'm guilty of this.

Edit: I lasted a few days without nicotine after posting this, and a couple months without weed.

This is not actually about how to buy drugs online. No, you're about to read a lot of very personal information. It may be triggering because I'm going to be talking about sexual assault.

After I came out as gay, I was violently raped on the 4th of July in 2020 by someone I considered a friend. I was injured for days. I stole acid tabs from him and did them by myself. I cried every day for months.

I hated myself for letting another person hurt me so badly. I lost 30 lbs. I got addicted to molly cut with meth. I crashed my dad's Honda Civic at 104 mph trying to kill myself during an episode of meth-induced psychosis. I spent two weeks in the psych ward.

I only had four stitches over each eye. When the paramedics found me, they thought I was dead. When they found me, I said, "your third eye's just a fuckin' hole in your head, right?"

That's a Lil Ugly Mane lyric. I don't think the paramedics knew Lil Ugly Mane, so it went over their heads.

I remember how shocked I was to find out from a police officer that there was methamphetamine in my bloodstream when I crashed. It explained a lot though. Did you know 1 in 3 people who use meth end up developing psychosis?

I'm going to try to describe what psychosis feels like.

I almost killed Eduardo last night. He'd been dropping hints he was going to traffick and murder me. An online friend had told me weeks earlier that a bottle of Visine eye drops is lethal if emptied into someone's beverage. I marked "Visine" down on the shopping list in my notes app and immediately remembered

that my phone was tapped by the FBI and there was no way I could go through with the plot without getting caught.

I became convinced that he had a gun and was holding me hostage. Sitting on his mattress, I randomly incant a poem I remember writing in middle school.

“At two years old / she sold her soul / for four shiny dimes / nothing less, nothing more / when the Devil came knocking / she opened the door / he said repent for your sins and pray to the Lord / she closed her eyes and dreamt only of war / oh, he left her body cold on the floor / and from her corpse, Death himself was born.”

In the morning, I think my parents have been killed. My mom is texting me but I’m certain someone has stolen her phone. She says she ate Jack in the Box for breakfast—she never goes to Jack in the Box.

I promise to meet my “parents” at Outback Steakhouse for lunch. I have no intention of going. I set my Google Maps to go straight from Eduardo’s house in Kenmore to Bellingham, which is about an hour and a half away. The speedometer climbs over a hundred for the first time in my life as I swerve between cars on the freeway.

There’s too much traffic to be driving this fast but it feels like a challenge, like learning a video game I’ve never played. I think about my dead parents and feel more free and powerful than I have ever felt in my life—like I’ve taken every single drug and achieved a new level of superhuman awareness.

I’m being followed by strangers in cars. I get off at a random exit and pull up to a gas station. I buy two cans of mint tea because my debit card is being watched. A man with a snake on the back of his hoodie tells his kid to hurry up in line. I know he’s talking to me. When I get back to my car, I sense that the

gas pump has been tampered with. Always one step ahead, I fill the tank with premium.

The car sputters and trembles and groans. I blast Industry Baby by Lil Nas X while I switch lanes, smoking Newports and laughing maniacally.

I recall my roommate telling me in a nonexistent email that there is a gas leak in the building.

I quickly shower. I coat my hair with heat-protectant spray and straighten it wet. I don't want my hair to burn off. What if there's an open casket? I pop another molly and get dressed. I wear a white jersey I borrowed from my mom's closet with red Chinese print around a flying dove.

My mom calls me. I'm surprised she's still alive, but pretty sure she's being held hostage and Outback Steakhouse is a trap where me and the rest of my family will be killed. I tell her that I love her. She tells me to make myself some tea, since I sound stressed out. I take it as code for something more arsonous.

I leave the gas stove on before I pull the fire alarm and walk away from the dorm, leaving my phone behind. It's just me, the Civic, and God now.

I haphazardly speed through campus, pulling in and out of random parking lots before I find myself on an empty road. I flick a lit cigarette out the window and imagine the scenery bursting into flames.

The steel barrier guarding a bend in the road hurtles toward the car. I push the gas pedal to the floor and scream, "THANK YOU! I LOVE YOU!"

It might've been my last prayer. It might've been a deranged call to the imagined hidden microphones placed throughout the car. I crash into the railing. The car flips over three times and flies through somebody's shed. I black out.

I'm dead and the hospital is purgatory. My mom's jersey is cut away from my body. I feel like I'm tripping on acid and become convinced the hospital food is packed with hard drugs.

Not only is the food packed with hard drugs, but the toiletries are too. I choke down a bar of soap in the shower, thinking it contains more meth. I believe my heart will stop if I come down from this high. It burns the inside of my mouth.

There are people in the walls trying to blow up the building and they're communicating with me through the television in my room. They tell me that my cat has been killed along with the rest of my family. A soccer game is on and the poor signal makes it look like they're all running around on fire. I think it's news footage from the dorms.

"Did anyone get hurt?" I frantically ask a social worker. "There was a gas leak...I didn't mean to hurt anybody. I pulled the fire alarm."

I'm notified via letter almost immediately of my suspension from the university. (This was not a hallucination.) I refuse to eat. I find hidden messages in my meal ticket and throw my tray at the wall. I spit medications back onto a nurse's mask. I threaten to sue the hospital if they don't let me outside for a cigarette.

Naturally, I'm placed in solitary confinement. There's nothing quite like the hell of being locked in an empty white room. I try to run through the bolted door at full speed three times and cut open my big toe. I can hear the nurses laughing at me. Doctors ask probing questions and look at me with amusement and concern. Under his mask, I think one of them is Bill Clinton.

Hallucinations tell me I'm a domestic terrorist. They tell me that I will be executed, and a movie is being made out of my tragic life starring a starved Justin Bieber in drag as myself. I

have visions of burning buildings and smashing windows. I see myself being drugged, raped, and beaten by countless men I know.

Things get worse in the night. The dark floor is blanketed in broken glass and thorns. My flesh is peeling off of my skeleton and people in the walls convince me I need to break my skull open on the blood-soaked linoleum to end the suffering. When I slam my head on the floor and don't die, I believe that I am here for eternity as punishment for my sins and my real body is in the mangled Civic, decapitated and eviscerated beyond recognition.

I recall bad acid trips that I thought felt like Hell, and find it amusing how little I knew of what Hell really was at the time.

I lie down on the floor because I think the mattress is packed with the bodies of small children. I can hear them whispering to me as I try to sleep. In the early hours of the morning, I talk to the "Blue Boy" just outside the door and beg him to set me free.

I finally accept the hospital's cocktail of antipsychotics and benzos after a total of two days in complete isolation. (It feels cruel that they would leave me alone in there for so long. At the same time, I understand that they had no other option. I threw a wet washcloth on another patient's bald head because I thought he was the devil. I spit on a nurse. I'm lucky they didn't end up sticking a needle in my buttcheek.)

The person in the mirror in the bathroom upstairs is a stranger with two black eyes that glow like embers. A nurse has me step on a scale and it reads 98 lbs.

I become possessed with the spirit of DMX and passionately recite passages from a copy of the Bible to patients coloring with markers in a deep, throaty voice.

One of them takes a drag of an ink cartridge like a cigarette. There are no pens here, only the cartridges. He tells me his name

is Gabriel. I'm convinced that he's actually Babytron. I give him a hug because he looks sad. I look out the window and wish I could go outside.

A sweet woman named Lolibeth complains that even prisoners are allowed to go outside.

There's brewed decaf coffee and Lipton teabags in the main area. I look for signs in the coffee grounds at the bottom of my paper cup. Every mundane action—showering, brushing my teeth, washing my hands—is a life-or-death test of my character.

I try to comfort a crying new patient and she asks me if I'm Gabriel. She's talking about the angel. She thinks she might be dead too. "You don't understand," she tells me. "They're going to blow the whole place up. We're all going to die."

"I had those same visions," I say. "We need to have faith in Christ that we're going to be alright."

My best friend in the hospital is Aaron. He raps Eminem songs by heart, and that's the closest I'm getting to the music I usually listen to. He teaches me what PLUR means. He goes into solitary quite often. I'm angry because I don't think we deserve it.

I think about Paris Hilton's documentary and how she was forced into solitary confinement at that legally questionable boarding school. She talked about how she spent her time there imagining a successful and independent future far away from all the suffering she couldn't escape. I tell Aaron my rap name will be goodluckgirl.

I read the list of patient's rights posted to the wall and find three typos.

I Dutch braid two of the other patients' hair while we watch a movie. One of them, Tiffany, tells me that she wants to name her daughter Shaylin one day. I never see Tiffany eat once. One

morning, she opens her mouth to reveal a chipped tooth. She tripped and fell in the night. "I didn't even feel anything," she says.

A tall man that looks like Jesus Christ draws a portrait of me with an orange marker. He tells me about the time he raped a woman while she was sleeping. "That's not good," I tell him.

"I know," he says. "I kill rapists now."

He won't stop talking about the time he saw a xenomorph. I'm really into it.

"That guy saw a xenomorph!" I tell the other patients, my eyes wide. I don't even know what a xenomorph is.

I ask a nurse if I can order Domino's for everyone in the ward. "Put it on my parent's bill," I say. She promises to get back to me and never does.

A man named Keith touches my ear and asks me what I would do with one in the chamber. I say I would play Russian roulette. He daps me up. I promise to go to Vegas with him for my 21st birthday.

There's this Vonnegut line from Slaughterhouse 5 I saw on Instagram: "everything was beautiful and nothing hurt."

I remember how the broken glass and twisted metal glittered in the sunlight that day. I remember warmth from the scattered flames and bright blood splattered over everything like paint. I don't remember any pain.

It felt like mercy. I remember I felt grateful. I try not to forget how grateful I felt.



good_men_die_i_choose_to_live_1-21-22.html

Have you suffered enough?

♪ Change - YoungBoy Never Broke Again ♪

Today's menu: Magnesium. Alkaline water. Garlic butter pasta. A tangerine. Lithium. Risperidone. Propranolol. Hydroxyzine. Trazadone. Benadryl. Orange juice. A can of Sprite.

"If you haven't done everything in your power to change, you haven't suffered enough."

How to publish a book. How to get a Xanax prescription. How to become an acupuncturist. How to take out a PPP loan. How to Save a Life by The Fray.

It's kind of a selfish song. Nobody can save a person from them self.

A psychic told me I wasn't going to live past 25 if I didn't change my lifestyle. At the time, I felt secretly relieved. You could see my ribcage. I liked the feeling of being frail. More than that, I liked the attention. I liked the psychic's concern for my wellbeing. And I wanted to die as soon as possible.

Dying is easy. Dying is not painful. Dying is like sleeping.

Dying hurts. The earth is dying. My cousin died young because he refused to trust doctors to treat his cancer. I only met him once.

Is it graceful to accept your death with open arms or is it selfish? It's 3:09 AM and I can't stop shaking.

I hate America. I love America because I love McChickens. I love The Amazing World of Gumball. I love rap music. I love Britney Spears.

I'm writing this instead of doing my homework. Sometimes I wonder if I've suffered enough.

I don't think I have. I talk to a therapist once a week and a psychiatrist every two weeks now. They ask me if I have any suicidal thoughts. I always say no. I don't know if I'm lying anymore. I suppose that's a good sign.

One of my closest friends attempted suicide a while before I did. When we talked about it, she said something along the lines of "I do everything for other people. Suicide was the one thing I was doing for myself."

I'm trying to teach myself how to live again, which is why I'm writing like this. It's 3:48 AM and I'm crying for no reason.

When I got out of the hospital, I committed myself to becoming healthier. I started doing yoga and stretching every day. I went on long walks. I ate three meals every day, something I haven't done since elementary school. I gained back the weight I lost.

I can feel my health starting to decline now that I'm at school. Lately I've been eating one meal a day. I haven't been exercising much. I wake up at noon.

But things are still better than they were before, mostly due to the handful of pills I knock back every night. I avoided psychiatric care when my mental health was at its worst because

I thought I could handle all of it on my own. I was basically forced by the government to take my meds. Eduardo told me it was sad that I got to that point.

It's sad that I got to that point. It's embarrassing. I'm sharing it because I know I'm not the only one struggling. This isn't a lecture on why you should go get help. I know how it feels to be so deep in your own misery that you ignore any helping hands because you can't stop seeing death as the only way out.

The ironic thing is that living with that mindset opens your life up to experiences a lot worse than death. It's a lesson I still have trouble learning.

Unwanted/Ectoplasm

Like the young tree, I am untouched.
Stitched into the earth with a needle and thread.
Consider the windless nights, the loose soil.
The apples melt every winter.

I am innocent like Icarus
and the sun.
The fault was in the wings,
the wax, and the lie.

The untouched young tree, touched at last!
Carved with four forgetful letters.
So goes life.
There are no seasons left.

Stupid,
that's what he was.
For when Icarus

dropped out of the sky

blinded with victory
and sunlight,
the water met him
and he cried.

February 2019

I have no languages.
My tongue turns
like a suckling pig.
My ears are closed.

I am the solemn headstone
before our ill-conceived
idea, my beautiful
daughter.

Maybe they will chip
away the marble, break
my bones and loot
her mausoleum—

I wanted to bleed
like a woman,
cherry-red
and syrupy-sweet.

I make the bed
and lie alone.

I might be cold
all the way through.

September 2019

forgive_me_1-29-22.html

TW: Sexual assault, miscarriage

♪ GRACE .. - BennY RevivaL (SoundCloud) ♪

When I was sixteen, I hated my mom. I was angry at her all the time. I hated her for being too strict, too controlling, too militant. We constantly fought.

Now that I'm a little bit older, I have a new appreciation for her life and the way that she raised me. I'm starting to see her as a woman and a human being, not just my mother. I've also spent a lot of time thinking about generational trauma and our family tree.

My mom didn't have much growing up. She worked in a toy factory when she was young. Her older brother caught a fever as a baby and became disabled. When he was very small, my great-grandmother took him out onto the streets of Hong Kong and left him there. My mom's family simply couldn't afford to care for him.

I think about the scared little boy who would've been my uncle. I think about the beggars I've seen in the city missing arms and legs to debt collectors and wonder if that's where he ended up,

or if he died before having the option. I think about the rage in his spirit that lives somewhere in my bloodline. Research has found that trauma is passed down through the DNA. I believe that's the physical manifestation of generational curses, but you don't have to agree with that.

Raising me was a huge sacrifice on her part that I don't think I'll ever begin to quantify or repay. I was given the childhood that she had dreamed of. It wasn't the childhood I dreamed of, which is where we found a lot of conflict.

She never had the chance to truly heal from everything she'd lived through, so her demons always lurked around the corner from home-cooked meals and carpools to lacrosse practice. Despite understanding her better now, sometimes I still feel angry. It's the hardest to let go of things I never got an apology for.

Some say that forgiveness is an essential part of healing. I used to think this way, but I'm coming to understand that some things are called "unforgivable" for a reason.

My rapist was my first kiss at age fifteen. During that kiss, he did things that I repeatedly told him not to do. I assumed that was normal.

At the time I had yet to fully recall the violations of my childhood, all of my cries that had fallen on deaf ears. His initial assault brought back those feelings I had locked away, and it almost felt like I had come home for the first time, like I had finally touched the source of the darkness I'd been harboring for so long. Flashbacks haunted me and I cried for months. I believed that meant I had fallen in love.

One of the few times we had sex at age sixteen, I miscarried a few weeks later. When I asked him if he wanted to see me to talk about it, he left me on read.

The last time, he assaulted me to the point of injury and then raped me. This was days after he apologized to me (profusely, might I add) for the first time he hurt me. It didn't feel like home and it didn't feel like love. I was painfully brought back to earth, where the truth hit me like a bullet: it was never love. I had mistaken the familiarity of fear and powerlessness for true connection.

He had called me his best friend. One of the first things I said when we spoke a few days later was that I forgave him. I thought I needed to tell him that, needed to believe it, in order to heal from what he did to me.

Looking back, it was just a way for me to take control of the situation by absolving him of guilt and blaming myself. I would listen to Blame On Me by J.I. on repeat and hate myself for letting him get so close.

It was only recently that I realized I don't have to accept his apologies. I never needed to forgive him. I needed to forgive myself.

W.H.T.T. 3

The walk was not that long. It could have easily been a long walk, but Tyler had once shown Benjamin a shortcut through the greenery that whittled it down to more of a medium walk. Benjamin did not mind long walks, but he still took the shortcut.

It involved crossing through one old woman's backyard to the forested area behind her house, and from there it was a few steps before emerging onto the next street. Neither Benjamin nor his brother had ever spoken to the woman, but she idly watched them trespass into her yard nearly every day. When school started again in the fall, Benjamin walked alone.

The woman assumed the older boy had gone off to college.

everything_is_real_2-3-22.html

♪ Flight319 - 070 Shake ♪

Both of my parents come from Catholic families, but we never went to church when I was young. I was annoyingly atheistic in middle school. How could a benevolent all-powerful deity exist with so much suffering? It was pretty simple to me. God didn't exist.

Nowadays, I pray often. I gravitate to the figures of ancient Chinese mythology because my mom raised me with those stories alongside the stories in the Bible.

While I disagree with some of the institutions of Christianity, I respect the role that religion plays in my family history. I also appreciate what Christ represents for humanity.

There used to be a small figurine of Guanyin in my room, a Chinese goddess or bodhisattva of mercy who was once a male figure. A couple years ago I took acid and her face started morphing into different human faces very quickly in flashes.

I didn't think much of it at the time, but a few months later I found out that some depictions of Guanyin show her with eleven heads.

It could have just been a coincidence, but part of me really wants to believe I saw something real. I spent months praying to that statue for mercy when I was traumatized and felt myself losing grip with reality. I crashed my car at over a hundred miles per hour and got exactly four stitches under each eyebrow with no other injuries. I told the other patients in the psych ward that Guanyin had saved me. I still think she did.

44 has more significance to me now. The great thing about angel numbers is that every single website says something different about what they mean. I think that's a sign, if anything, that you have to look within for the true message. Or maybe it's all bullshit. (I struggle a lot with what I believe.)

The last time I did acid was a few weeks ago. I saw hundreds—maybe thousands—of red and green gridlines over everything, like laser beams. I'd never seen anything like that before. People always say “we live in a simulation” and I used to think that was kind of stupid. I'm not so sure anymore, honestly. Sometimes I still see these gridlines when I close my eyes, or if I'm sleep-deprived. I don't want to sound crazy though. (And yes, I know that the clinical term for this is HPPD.)

During that trip, I came to depressing realization that I was nothing more than a playable avatar for the overlords who created this plane on their universe-computer, trapped in a digital cage and at the mercy of the players.

My intention with writing about my spiritual beliefs and experiences is not to push them on anybody else. I know they're pretty eccentric and that would be ridiculous. Everyone worships something. Entities, political ideations, philosophies, scientific theories, money, power, other human beings. Some people worship themselves.

As much as I find comfort in imagining a colorful spirit

universe hidden just beyond the human eye, I am still skeptical. Sometimes I want to write a Tyler Durden-style manifesto about how everything is worthless and God is dead. But I have a yin-yang tattoo representing the Dao on the inside of my wrist for a reason, and the most important thing I've learned studying Daoism is that balance is everything in spirituality.

W.H.T.T. 4

Manicured lawns and birdbaths hung from the cold sky and Benjamin made note of each well-kept flowerbed he passed on the sidewalk. His favorite was the violet-and-white-rose arrangement on the house with yellow drapes. Before his brother's passing, he never paid attention to flowerbeds. Now, he considered them one of life's better offerings.

This was something he hoped to never say out loud.

Despite finding solace in his newfound preoccupation with suburban flora, Benjamin very much missed walking to and from school with Tyler every day. He could recall only bits and pieces from their many conversations shared on these walks. Most of the bits made him smile, and they also made him incredibly sad. He often contemplated his infinite forgotten exchanges with Tyler and found it quite frustrating that most would remain lost forever.

Little Match Girl

Only you can see
what lies between my teeth
the nights I didn't sleep
the bruises and the paint.

I'm your magnum opus
scribbled on paperback pages
and bound with cinnamon gum.

The orchid moon whispers
into God's black flesh:
"Was it you who set
fire to my footprints?"

Drowning under pavement
it's me holding the matchsticks
every single fucking time.

Maybe the truth

is written on an old
gum wrapper somewhere
in the Philippines
where my mind searches
for that white devil that
never stops laughing.

I wonder if I become a woman
at two, between
Manila and Christmas or
at five, in a stranger's
shopping cart.

This season, every girl will learn
how spiders come out in the dark.

I wonder if the truth knots itself
in my stomach
in padlocked kneecaps
in the well of furious water
that churns through sleepless nights

Was it you?

June 2020

Diary Entry 3.1.22

TW: SA

I have a lot of work to do and the week has just started. I feel so low and depressed. This is day 1 no oxy. It's gonna be hard because the oxy is right there but I need to clear my system out to avoid withdrawals. From now on I will only use on the weekends. I'm afraid I can't control this addiction. I'm afraid it's already controlling me. I can keep self-medicating and numbing the pain but that won't make the wound disappear. Am I really so broken? My childhood wasn't even hard. My parents are good people. Is it all because of Peter Cordingley in the Philippines when I was 2? There's no instruction manual for getting molested at that early of an age. There's not many stories I can find that relate. I'm afraid to talk to [my therapist] about it.

I don't wanna be a junkie but I'm afraid I'm turning into one and I don't have a choice. I don't want to die. I'll be careful. 15mg a day, no more than that. I've put myself in a very dangerous position. On Monday I will completely stop doing oxy until Friday and try to commit to doing it only on weekends. If I

can't do that I desperately need to stick to 15mg a day.

Note: I did not stop using for a single day after writing this. I continued to make promises to myself that I couldn't keep because I thought it was possible for me to be a functional addict. In a way, I was functional. I kept my job. I passed all my classes for the first time after flunking my first year of university. But I told myself I would limit myself to half a pill a day, and I couldn't even do that. Maybe some people out there can use opiates in moderation, but I am definitely not one of those people.

i_know_a_spot_3-20-22.html

♪ Close – Bladee ♪

During the first few months of the pandemic, I would walk every morning to smoke at the spot under a bridge about ten minutes from my house. There's a small bench tucked under there and the back wall and bottom of the bridge are covered in graffiti. You can hear Coal Creek rushing underneath. It's gorgeous and secluded, surrounded by lush greenery on all sides. Sometimes the sun hits just right and you can see ribbons of light illuminating the dust in the air from between the branches.

I have a lot of memories there. Not all of them good. I had one of the most difficult conversations of my life under this bridge, with my former friend the day after he raped me. I had gone into it with a taser in my pocket thinking I would tase him and push him into the creek or something, but the most I could manage was a couple punches to his head while sobbing uncontrollably.

One summer I came here with my neighbor Rachel, who I grew up with and love like a sister. I dropped my water bottle down the steep cliff into the creek and as I was saying "let's just leave it there," Rachel was already halfway down the ravine. It was

then that I realized how much braver she was than me, and I followed only to bust my ass and slide all the way down.

I talk to my dead friend under this bridge. I've cried countless tears and smoked countless joints and cigarettes under this bridge. Sometimes I dance by myself. There's something so calming about the sound of the water and the way it feels hidden from the rest of the world. I feel lucky to have found a spot like this.

Even though my family moved out of Bellevue last year, I made the trip today to come back to the bridge and smoke and talk to myself. I talked about how scared I am about the future, about my regrets and my shame and my secrets.

I yelled "Thank you! I love you!" out into the ravine because I think those words might've saved my life. I'm hoping they'll save my life again. I heard a huge rush of wind immediately afterwards. Coincidence?

Probably. A part of me is always going to want to believe that the universe was responding to me. Maybe it was saying the same thing back.

W.H.T.T. 5

Autoerotic asphyxiation was the new hot topic in their small town, but Benjamin didn't hold his brother entirely responsible for that. Lorraine, his mother, played a significant role in its recent infamy— "history's best-kept secret," she called it. She had single-handedly turned an isolated and unfortunate incident into a local sensation.

Lorraine had appeared on a local news segment to talk about what happened, and Benjamin felt increasingly irritated with every minute he spent watching it. The last bit left him especially incredulous—she had looked directly into the camera and said, "Talk to your sons. Don't let them slip through the cracks, because no parent deserves to feel the regret I feel today."

At first, Benjamin could not articulate exactly why he found this statement so bothersome. After some thought, it became very clear to him that his mother was making Tyler's death all about herself. In truth, there was really nothing she could have done to prevent what had happened. Tyler's death was an accident. There was no awareness to be held, no responsibility to be taken, and no lesson to be learned.

All Benjamin could think was of how embarrassed Tyler would be of all this publicity. Dying with your dick out is a nightmare in itself, but your mother broadcasting it to the world like some sort of pressing social issue was a decidedly more horrifying prospect. Benjamin hoped, for Tyler's sake, that there was no life after death. Or at least if there was, it would be somewhere far, far away from home.

18

blue sunshine

another cold night
alone on purpose
or by design?

ashamed of
reasons written
between the lines

another blue pill
feels warm
like sunshine

March 2022

bad_habits_4-5-22.html

♪ Someone Like You – Mac Miller ♪

My weed habit was finally dead, and I'd never felt better. That's because I replaced it with something new: railing blue lines of fake Oxycontin.

I wrote an article a couple years ago for the Bellevue College Watchdog about the Washington State AG suing Johnson & Johnson. Johnson & Johnson manufactures opiates and supplies raw narcotic materials and ingredients to major opioid manufacturers nationwide, including Purdue Pharma. Dopesick on Hulu is a really great series about the story of Purdue Pharma and the Sackler family if you're interested. It's a sad story because in the end, justice served was too little and too late. People were already addicted, and fentanyl had already replaced prescription pills.

The first time I tried Percocet was when I got my wisdom teeth out. My mom hid the bottle from me but I found it and filled it with melatonin so she wouldn't notice I'd taken them. It was a feeling I couldn't let go of. I played with codeine and other pharmaceutical-grade painkillers before deciding I wanted to

try pressed pills, because they were stronger and cheaper.

The minimum order amount was 25 M30s. I had never even seen that much oxy in the same place before. I planned to limit myself, save them up and space them out. That went out the window almost instantly. As I withdrew over spring break (a package didn't land on time) I kicked myself wondering why I couldn't have just slowed down.

When I had initially bought the pills, I didn't expect to be waking up on the floor of my dorm room in the middle of the night. I didn't expect to be throwing up multiple times a day. I didn't expect to be shaking and sweating and hugging the oven at work to get warm.

I was ridiculously depressed. Thanks to mood stabilizers I wasn't manic and crashing cars anymore, but I was dying to feel better. I didn't want to admit to myself how much Eduardo's "friendship" really hurt me. I missed smoking weed. It was nice to have a chemical buffer all the time.

I can't smoke weed anymore. My psychiatrist is going to start piss testing me because I told him I started smoking again. He adamantly insists that weed worsens my bipolar disorder. Not smoking is now a condition of my treatment.

I don't need drugs to function. I like drugs. Getting high feels like falling in love. I'm guessing. I don't think I've ever been in love.

I was upset about it at first, but it might've been a blessing in disguise that my package didn't land in time for me to go home for spring break.

I still love the feeling. I wish I had a perc right now. Physical dependency is a different demon. At a certain point you're just using to keep the shakes off.

And of course: The Reason. Why does anyone do drugs? People

have reasons. But I have a lot going for me. I'm at university and working part time. My friends care about me and I care about them. I have a therapist. My parents are supportive. I take my meds. So what's the reason?

I'm *impatient*. I want to feel better right now. I don't want the day-in-day-out of exercising, eating right, bearing the full spectrum of human emotion. I simply did not have the patience. That's my reason.

Last year, I was self-medicating undiagnosed bipolar 1 with weed and Xanax. I barely talked to my family. It was the rock bottom following years of slow descent into madness. After my suicide attempt, I wanted to change. I scared my loved ones and I didn't want for them to experience that again. I had a couple completely sober months at school.

I think I started using because a part of me was afraid of what was on the other side of all the pain I had externalized over the past couple years. Because it'd been so long, I'd become most comfortable in a state of misery, chasing artificial pleasures and empty thrills. I can't figure out what my life would look like if I was genuinely happy. Every time I pick up a habit like yoga or meditation or eating breakfast I can never hold it for long.

In an older post I asked myself if I had suffered enough to make a lasting change in my life. I guess the answer was no.

Now I'm forced to change, since finding another psychiatrist that accepts my insurance is about impossible. Maybe this is a good thing.

Note: You'll notice a common theme in my posts is an unwavering optimism that I am going to fundamentally change and get better very soon, while in reality I just get worse. It's something that I've seen being called toxic positivity.

y_would_u_play_w_ur_life_4-25-22.html

♪ Forever – Dontdodrugs (SoundCloud) ♪

4 dollars apiece. SUPER SMACKERS. I couldn't resist the deal. I bought two fentanyl tests. Sitting in my dorm with [REDACTED] I crush the ampoules and watch the reagents spill into the little pouch. The liquid turns brown on top. Brown indicates fentanyl. But...I'd been doing the pills for a couple of days.

"Well, I'm not dead," I say. "there's probably, like, a very small amount."

We split a pill.

I continue doing the pills for a week. [REDACTED] tests it on her own and confirms what we already know. At first, I don't care. My frontal lobe is on autopilot: sure, fentanyl kills, but most junkies do it every day and none of them are dead yet.

One line from a bad pill is enough to kill you. This realization only hits me after all the drugs run out. I know what junkies reading this are thinking: why didn't I just smoke them? I don't know, it just wasn't my vibe.

I get high and I tell myself I was never suicidal. I wasn't really

trying to kill myself when I crashed the car. I was placing a bet against God and I won big. I see how fast I can go; how high I can get. I gamble with my life. I gamble with my best friend's life. I gamble with the lives of her friends. I gamble with the love of all the people who care about me. I'm not a good person.

Convincing yourself you are a bad person is easier than sitting around and feeling sorry for yourself. It feels freeing—empowering even—to know that your only concerns are feeling good and dying fast. School, work, relationships all come second to your demons.

I've read that there are no good and bad people. All people are neutral and can choose between harm and care in any situation. Everybody will choose both at some point. I believe good and bad people exist, but I like the sentiment. You can't always be the hero.

I did the laced pills because I didn't care. I didn't think it at the time, but I was actively choosing to put myself in danger, which then allowed me to do the same for [REDACTED] and the people she sold the pills to.

It's so important for us to care. Caring starts with taking care of yourself. I know, coming from me that sounds like bullshit. I mean caring about yourself and caring about your life. It's not enough to only stay alive for other people because that turns life into an obligation.

I tell myself I'm not suicidal but sometimes I wish my parents were dead so I can leave without leaving them in grief. This is the problem with living for other people. Suicidal ideation takes your love for your family and friends and gives them your resentment. After all, they're the ones keeping you alive when being alive feels like being on fire.

I hope I can find a way to live for myself. I feel like my substack

is very much an online diary, which I'm not sure how to feel about. I keep writing about the same things. It makes me feel more exposed but less alone. Working on this makes me feel a lot less alone. Thank you for reading.

W.H.T.T. 6

He could not recall exactly when he fell in love with Angela. What Benjamin did remember was the first time he saw her. One of his friends, Mort, had pointed her out as she walked to class. "That girl has a rolling backpack," he snorted.

Mort was not a mean guy. None of Benjamin's friends were especially mean, but some things just begged to be ridiculed. Things like jorts, or rolling backpacks.

The second time Benjamin saw her was a few days later when they passed each other in the hall. He thought her face was very interesting. Everything about her was so waxy and pale she was nearly translucent.

She also had very sad shiny eyes that drooped low at their outside corners. Benjamin had never seen eyes so beautiful. He wondered why she looked so sad. He wondered if maybe somebody close to her died, too.

Weeks passed before they spoke for the first time. She'd tapped him on the shoulder on his way out at the end of the day and asked, "Do you know which room they hold detention in?"

Up close, Benjamin found her even more peculiar. She had tiny freckles covering her entire face and her eyes were flat and grayish, like pebbles.

“No, sorry,” Benjamin told her. “I’ve never been.”

She grinned at him. “Makes sense.”

(His face grew very, very pink when she said this.)

“I’m Angela, by the way,” she added, extending her hand. It was uncommon for students to shake each other’s hands at their school, but Benjamin had since passed the threshold of infatuation and couldn’t care less.

He then wiped his right hand against his jeans and shaken her hand rather limply, because he hadn’t felt his hands were suitable to be touched by anyone in their perpetual sweaty condition.

“I’m Benjamin,” he told her.

Nightmare

I die and it begins.
The bad dream rises
like bread from old nights.

A radio alerts the embryo—
It's raining men! Skyscrapers
melt like sticks of butter.

The tall woman drools soap
and lechers feed like dogs.
I wonder why she looks so grateful.

Zip tied at the wrists,
she kneels along shattered glass
before the moon's judgment.

Starved on my sugar-free lawn,
I mine my skin for diamonds
and find bedbugs instead.

February 2018

bloodthirsty_times_4-28-22.html
[UNPUBLISHED]

See you in Disneyland

♪ Murder Incorporated – Bruce Springsteen ♪

TW: violence

I grew up a sheltered only child. When I was five, a man tried to kidnap me at a Target in Federal Way. My mom was looking at plates when he started wheeling away the cart I was sitting in. He asked me if I wanted candy. I said yes, obviously.

My mom scared him off when she turned around and saw what was happening. For the rest of my childhood, she would periodically show me and my friends an educational DVD called “The Safe Side: Stranger Safety.”

When my family moved from Federal Way to Bellevue, my life became even more insulated. Our house had a security system. Our cul-de-sac had a neighborhood watch group. Living in America scared my mom. Shootings and carjackings and armed robberies weren’t an everyday occurrence in Hong Kong, one of the safest cities in the world.

Her paranoia was something she passed down to me. I was

about nine when I started doing heavy research on American serial killers on Wikipedia. The information I found would keep me up all night every night, but I couldn't stop. I was obsessed with scaring myself.

Richard Ramirez, the most quotable serial killer, once said that "serial killers do, on a small scale, what governments do on a large one. They are products of our times, and these are bloodthirsty times."

[insert connection between mass shooters and American imperialism]

My fascination with violence graduated to Stephen King novels in middle school, along with violent music and violent porn. I was thrilled by blood and guns and videos of naked women getting electrocuted with cattle prods. Twelve was too young to understand some of the real-life implications of that type of media consumption.

In the psych ward, a man named Corey with a tattooed scalp and wide pale eyes tells me a story about how an Aryan Brotherhood leader got decapitated with soup can lids in federal prison for sleeping with a fourteen-year-old girl.

Corey went to prison for stabbing a woman beater. I tell him I think he's heroic. He scoffs. He tells me the first time he smoked meth was when he was eight years old. "I'm a real meth baby," he says.

Somewhere in the United States of America, a mother in a middle-class neighborhood yells at her seven-year-old son for watching an ISIS beheading video on the family iPad.

A group of men wrestle down a prison gang leader, ripping open the flesh of his neck with scraps of metal.

Conspiracy theorists vandalize the graves of children killed in the Sandy Hook shooting.

Nineteen more children are shot to death in a fourth-grade classroom.

My old online best friend is assassinated in the front seat of a Ford Fusion in Louisiana.

We vote. We post infographics. We go out on the street. This is how you make change, I think.

Murder is an American religion revered by cops to dealers to reclusive social outcasts and CEOs. The United States is the kind of warzone that pretends to be a safe haven in an ocean of bloodshed. Most of us know this. We all grew up doing the same active shooter drills. Bloodthirsty times.

W.H.T.T. 7

Benjamin had spent his life looking like Tyler's skeleton. Tyler was big, warm, and tirelessly friendly. Meanwhile, Benjamin resembled a timid unraveled paperclip. With braces.

While being in a sibling's shadow is typically something one would complain about, Benjamin found himself quite comfortable there. Being in Tyler's shadow felt more like being under a heavy blanket in the winter.

Three years earlier, when Benjamin was nine and Tyler fourteen, the Fischer family spent a summer at their cabin on the lake. It was a forgettable summer by any standards, the sort of vacation that might've resurfaced decades later in hazy nostalgia.

In the middle of one of those hot summer nights, Benjamin awoke to Tyler telling him to wake up, let's go swimming—and swimming they went, under those bright summer stars.

Those stars had reflected in the lake so perfectly Benjamin imagined he was swimming in the sky, and Tyler played the Scary Movie 2 DVD in the quiet hours before their parents woke up. It was Benjamin's first R-rated movie.

on_self_care_5-11-22.html

I feel like the last person who should be giving anybody advice. I don't have a skincare routine (and I need one), I don't do my homework, I don't eat all my meals, I don't exercise.

I can point to times in my life where I did those things, though. When I was in middle school, I ran a cutesy Wordpress blog called Hapabunny where I reviewed beauty products and wrote workout routines. The website was an imitation of other lifestyle blogs I'd seen in an attempt to get free samples and discounts on skincare and makeup.

I wanted to make a lighthearted post, and maybe try to return to my girlblogger roots...

This is my current self-care routine.

- It's day one no cigarettes. I am once again trying to quit and replace the habit with something healthier. I want it to be yoga. I took a yoga class at community college for my PE credit and it became my favorite form of exercise. Even just basic stretching makes such a physical and mental difference.

I stopped doing yoga for a long time, probably longer than a year, but got back into it during my 2 weeks in the psych ward. I would always wake up early and start my days with a few sun salutations because that was all I could remember. It made the hospital feel more like a spa retreat or something. Nowadays, I try to follow trauma-informed yoga videos on YouTube. Yoga With Adriene is a good channel to start with.

- Over the weekend, I meditated for ten minutes in the morning and I was able to get an essay finished in the next few hours. This was a big deal for me because I usually can't get any work done until the sun goes down. Binaural beats help me a lot with filling the silence, which is what makes meditation so uncomfortable for me. I want to get back up to thirty minutes a day, which I was doing for a couple weeks at the end of high school. The hardest part of meditation is forcing yourself to do it and fighting the impulse to distract yourself.
- I tried my first açai bowl this quarter after a weekend drug binge. I felt fucking amazing after eating it, so I'm hooked now. I like to get the tropical one with mango and coconut shavings...so good.
- If I miss the bus to class—even if there's another one coming in ten minutes—I skip class. If I don't want to do an assignment, I'll wait until the end of the quarter to do it. Sometimes you have to put your mental health first.
- I've been talking about this for a long time, but magnesium supplements are the best. A lot of the magnesium you buy at the store can't be properly absorbed into the bloodstream and is essentially useless, which is why I look for magnesium glycinate specifically. It's great for anxiety and mental

clarity, helps with period cramps, and literally regenerates the brain via neurogenesis. A lot of you could use some neurogeneration and I'm not even saying that to be mean, if you've done a lot of drugs for example your brain needs to heal. I've honestly been slacking on taking my magnesium but writing this out reminded me that I need to start again.

Like I said, I don't know if I would take my advice. Except for the magnesium. If you take anything away from this post, let it be the magnesium. And meditation. A lot of people say that they can't meditate. That's because most people think that meditation means you aren't supposed to have thoughts. One thing that's helped me overcome that is visualizing my thoughts as clouds passing by in the sky, and trying not to get attached to them. It makes meditating a little bit easier.

W.H.T.T. 8

A car passed, pulsing with the muffled bass of loud, grimy music. Benjamin only caught a glimpse of its passengers—high school boys, a few faces which he could recognize but not name.

He often wondered how the high schoolers regarded Tyler and his death. There was the obligatory collective grieving period in the immediate weeks after, but he was sure the majority of students had moved on completely by now.

Benjamin could imagine what lingered still—the whispers, cringes, uncomfortable chuckles. He knew enough about teenagers to be sure that in roughly two years, Tyler's death would no longer be a tragedy. It would be a joke.

He couldn't bring himself to care much about that at all.

Siu-Yin

The little swallow wails
and for a moment I think
an owl has gotten in.

She drowns
in the lines on my palm
I am the jaded stone

her heartless daughter
ugly and marbled
with mutton-fat

my cold hands
the nest to which
she will always return.

January 2018

Note: my mom told me she wanted a poem for her birthday this

year, 5/16/22. I wrote this old one on the back of the envelope I put her birthday card in. I initially wrote this poem after my mom went through my email and found the PayPal receipts from the underage work I was doing online. I remember sitting in my room that night and listening to her weeping in the bathroom. I walked over and held her in my arms while she cried. Her name is Siu-Yin, which means “little swallow” in Cantonese. My name is Hay-Hao-Lum, which means “precious jade.”

She didn't like the poem. She called it manipulative. Maybe it is manipulative, I don't know. I don't write much poetry anymore. It's all I had to give her.

ashamed_5-26-22.html

♪ DEAR GOD – Lil Bo Weep ♪

I've spent a lot of time wallowing in shame. Ashamed of the ways that I cope, the reasons I cope, words said in anger, words said in love.

Some people should be ashamed of themselves, and I wonder if they are. I wonder if I'm one of those people. Shame makes you a slave to the real and imagined judgments of people who know you and people who don't.

Does shame make people better? How much value does self-awareness really have? Some big questions I don't have the answer to.

This isn't a very good post. I'm not in a very good place. I can't seem to let go of the past or my childhood, which feels like swimming in shame and fear and disgust. No, not swimming—frozen in a block of all of it. I want to forget everything. I want a Xanax. I want a lobotomy.

Shame and depression go hand in hand because both keep you trapped in the past.

Shame is the reason why people feel the need to apologize, and

at the same time the reason why some people never apologize.
I might delete this later.

W.H.T.T. 9

“Benjamin Fischer! Is that you, sweetheart?”

He recognized the shrill as belonging to his insufferable neighbor Mrs. Page, who stood a foot below him with a small, frowning dog wrapped into her overcoat.

“Hi, Mrs. Page,” he said.

“Tell me, darling, how is your poor mother holding up? I haven’t spoken to her since June.” She attempted a concerned expression as she said this, but her heavy-handed Botox job enabled her only to look mildly confused.

“She’s doing alright.”

“Oh, I hope she is! I saw her on the morning news the other day—I literally had chills. You’ll tell her I said that, won’t you?” Her dog wriggled in her arms and gave Benjamin a pleading look.

“I sure will, Mrs. Page.”

“And be sure to let her know my door is always open, if your family would ever like to join us for dinner or, you know, if she needs anything at all. Someone to talk to...” Benjamin sensed a somewhat rehearsed sincerity in her voice and wasn’t quite sure how to feel about it.

“Thanks,” he started. “Yeah, I’ll let her know.”

“Good. Take care of her for me,” Mrs. Page quipped before planting a wet pink kiss on his cheek and walking quickly away, cooing at her distressed little dog.

Diary Entry 6.6.22

♪ Let It All Work Out - Lil Wayne ♪

I remember how I felt right before I crashed and I felt nothing but love and gratitude. I didn't feel pain. Not even a little bit. So there's nothing to be afraid of.

W.H.T.T. 10

Lorraine's BMW wasn't in the driveway. Benjamin was rather accustomed to arriving to an empty house these days, but still he dreaded that moment—the one right after he locked the door behind him and stepped into the foyer. He dreaded this moment because of how suddenly huge and silent everything was.

It wasn't literally silent. The refrigerator hummed, birds chirped and leaves rustled against the windows, but these sounds were endless and empty and brought him little comfort.

The silence in the days and months after Tyler's death was unlike any silence Benjamin had experienced before. It was suffocating.

There was a floor-to-ceiling mirror next to the front door in which Benjamin examined himself as he slipped off his shoes. He hadn't gotten a good look at a mirror in weeks. His reflection was slightly unfamiliar—he looked sicklier and saller than he felt. Whether this was a good or bad thing, he didn't know.

"I'm doing okay," Benjamin said aloud, trying to sound cool and unaffected. His voice wavered when he said 'okay' and he almost pitied himself.

“Well, you don’t sound okay!” he mumbled in his high-pitched impression of Mrs. Page. “Come here, boy!”

Benjamin made his way up the stairs and it was only once he reached the top that it occurred to him Mrs. Page hadn’t even asked how he was doing.

Neighbor's dog

My toes and
I break rocks
on the way home.

On my horizon—
a nearby door.
The god barks

from her bridal window
a wet black button
between blinds.

Everyday she does it.
I think she might be retarded.
Dog

knows this day has stomped on me.
She tells me
I am not model material.

Dammit.

That bitch

knows everything.

February 2018

the_bellevue_bubble_6-10-22.html

♪ Let It Go – The Neighbourhood ♪

I spent most of my life growing up in Bellevue, Washington. If you're not familiar—when I told one of the regulars at my job in Seattle that I used to live there, his eyes lit up. “A lot of rich people,” he said. “That’s where I go to rob.”

When I moved to Bellevue from Federal Way, I felt like I was in paradise. Everything was clean and tidy, the houses were huge and well-decorated, the streets were wide and safe. I was aware that a lot of my classmates had more money than I did, but it took me a while to understand that just a few miles from the bubble I was in, people were dying in the streets and starving and struggling.

My mom had brought me up to see them as the people who break into our cars, who sneak into our neighborhoods to terrorize us. I think it's easy to forget about all of these people, avoid making eye contact with them, pretend that they're not humans like us. The reality is that in order for us (the privileged) to exist in security, there is a human cost. The human cost is everywhere if you just look.

Psychedelics started making me see Bellevue and Medina as quiet little hells because of the willful ignorance that permeates every inch of these manufactured bubbles. When you grow up surrounded by privilege, it's a lot easier to focus on the people who have more than you—on your envy and jealousy—because it distracts from the guilt of unearned advantages.

For example, I met a girl from Medina while volunteering at the Bellevue Library who received \$2k a week from her parents as allowance in high school. When she told me about it, she said that some of her friends received \$5k weekly, so she didn't feel like she was *that* advantaged.

There are a lot of examples of this kind of attitude from Bellevue kids, including me talking about this right now. It's the influence of the bubble we grow up in. This is the sort of attitude that makes people billionaires, which is to say it's a double-edged sword. On one hand, you're motivated to get richer. On the other, you position yourself further and further away from the realities that most people experience on a daily basis and grow to absolve yourself of responsibility.

Because the truth is, you are responsible. Not just in a "all humans are responsible for the common good" sort of way. The greed of the wealthy siphons directly from the poor.

I've gotten so many second chances afforded to me because of the position I was born into. Sometimes I want to throw all of it away because I feel like I'm undeserving. Then I think about how one night in the 70s, my mom's grandmother was forced to cook the family dog because they had no food during a festival. It would be ungrateful for me to throw away all of the opportunities my mom left her home country to give me, and it would be a slap in the face to people who care about me and want to see me do better.

Is privilege something to be grateful for? I'm grateful that my basic needs are met. Outside of that, privilege is something that generally stunts your ability to assess risks, work hard, and feel empathy. This is why most people in power are so thick in the head.

Now that she's secure, my mom is uncomfortable dealing with the less fortunate. She feels threatened by them. I think that with success comes a great deal of fear that neutralizes compassion. Fear, envy, arrogance are all hallmarks of the Bellevue bubble that often go unspoken for. On acid and shrooms, I felt like I could see those demons in the air.

I feel like you can't really talk about Bellevue without talking about Asian privilege. Yeah, Asian privilege. I see my peers talk about the model minority myth a lot without even acknowledging the obvious: the model minority myth was designed to put down other minorities. Even the #StopAsianHate tag became a vehicle to attack black people.

My Chinese neighbors once either nearly called the cops on a CenturyLink car because the driver was black. They didn't want their daughter going to a specific mall because they saw a group of black teenagers hanging out there. Asians, specifically wealthy East Asians, are white-adjacent and I don't see that discussion being had often among my more privileged Asian counterparts.

Of course, as tensions between China and the US worsen, things could always change. The history of anti-Asian racism in America is very real—the largest mass lynching in American history was of Chinese men. But calling back to that is almost like calling back to discrimination against the Irish. So much has changed.

There's a lot to say about Asian culture and academic culture

that comes to mind when I think of Bellevue. I'm lucky that my parents support me in my career choices, I know a lot of Asian kids don't have that. My friend Tony wrote a great piece called "A Word of Advice to the Privileged" where he said something that stuck with me:

"The one piece of advice I have for privileged people is to: do what you ACTUALLY want to do. Don't live for other people. When you grow up with a silver spoon, you become dependent on your caretakers. They provide the comforts, and you do the bare minimum. It's a miserable existence, one that makes life barely worth living."

my teenage

the best years are a candle
burning at both ends
every day blowing trees
at the park where we used
to suck on stolen plums before
it became so hard to be young

waiting to forget your face
lip gloss and bedroom eyes
slow learner, failed my exams
desperate for attention
U only love on me after sundown
Tell me why you only
love on me after sundown

thinking about her body
while i light up again
nobody fucking with me
but me, alone again

my teenage ain't dead yet but
i wish i was something different

April 2020

INTERVIEWS FROM THE ARCHIVES: RAPE CULTURE IN HIGH SCHOOL

While I wrote for the Bellevue College Watchdog my junior and senior year of high school, I did a series of interviews of other Running Start students focusing on consent and sex culture in their high schools. The story was never published because my editor deemed it inappropriate.

Sexual violence has had an immeasurable impact on my life and I truly believe that the things we normalize earlier in life become patterns that affect us all well into adulthood. It's not easy for me to write about this subject, but I thought I would finally share this story because I think it's one of the more important things I've written.

Running Start students discuss sex and consent at their high schools

*Quotes have been modified for brevity; all names have been changed.

Over the course of this past week, I've been approaching Running Start students on campus and starting some open-ended conversations about sex and consent. Here are the seven

perspectives I decided to share:

How would you describe the general attitude about sex at your high school?

AMANDA, 12th: I think people are open about it, it's not really taboo.

MIKE, 12th: I mean, I don't really talk about it at school. Some people are pretty open about sex.

SUSAN, 12th: I kind of feel like everyone's banging everyone.

JOHN 11th: I believe it's a normal thing for kids to have sex, but a lot of kids frown upon it.

ELIZABETH, 12th: I feel like you have to do it in order to be popular or cool. If you do it too much, you're considered a slut or something. Then if you don't do it enough, you're a prude.

TYLER, 12th : I would say it's a conversation between each other. It's a pretty reoccurring conversation. Like, "Dude, I might get some head tonight."

MIA, 11th: The more people you deal with, the higher status you have. For guys, not really girls. If you're a girl and you sleep with a lot of guys, you're a hoe.

Do you see victim blaming or slut shaming as a problem at your high school?

AMANDA: When a rape case happened at my high school, a lot of people were like 'oh, she's making it up' or 'she was drinking that night.'

MIKE: I don't pay attention, honestly.

SUSAN: Slut shaming, for sure. I feel like whenever something happens to a girl who's considered a 'slut', people assume that she deserved it.

JOHN: It happens, but the person who is being slut shamed is in total control of what they're wearing. They can change in an instant, they can change the clothing they're wearing.

ELIZABETH: I feel like the victims won't say anything, so nobody would know. Because they feel like they did something wrong.

TYLER: For sure. My school is pretty bad.

MIA: It's definitely an issue at our school. At our last homecoming, people weren't respecting each other's personal spaces and people didn't want to come forward about it, because they thought they would get blamed by everyone.

Do you think that the idea of consent is taken seriously by students at your school?

AMANDA: I think a lot of people are really confused by it. There's this idea that no means no, but it's a lot more complicated than that. For example, being pressured into sex, or the influence of drugs and alcohol. I don't think people understand that.

MIKE: I feel like my friends would take it seriously. I don't know, though.

SUSAN: It really depends the person you talk to, and the crowd that they're in.

JOHN: Yeah, consent is everything. Once you give consent, if afterwards you say, 'I actually didn't want to,' that's your problem. You gave consent in the beginning, so you can't go back.

ELIZABETH: Not seriously at all.

TYLER: I take it very seriously. It's not a one-way thing, both people have to say yes.

MIA: Not at all.

Have you personally made a judgment about another person for their perceived sexual history?

AMANDA: Yes.

MIKE: I think I have. But that was mainly based on rumors,

though. So it was shallow judgment.

SUSAN: I mean, it's always in the back of your mind. But then you think, 'oh shit, I shouldn't be thinking that.'

JOHN: Yes. Definitely.

ELIZABETH: Yes. Oh yeah.

TYLER: Not really. I think I've called people names just because of stuff people have told me. Like, "she goes around the school" and stuff.

MIA: Yeah.

As an end note: I hope that readers will find this discussion thought-provoking and take a moment to reflect on your own experiences, actions, and judgments. High school is a place where everyone has the opportunity to discover and learn to understand their own sexuality—it's natural to make mistakes or use poor judgment. Dehumanizing the people that you want to have sex with is the gateway to victimization and assault. To any high school students reading this (especially guys), I urge you to hold yourself and your peers accountable for creating an environment that everyone can feel safe in.

* * *

Revisiting these interviews, all I can think about are the stories I've heard over the years and my own story and how deeply serious this cultural disease is. It may not seem like it on the surface, but so many lives are lost to people's ignorance on this subject.

Some of the responses are frustrating and they should make you angry. I guess there's a part of me that's afraid as coming off as a militant feminist but this shouldn't even be a feminist issue. The attitudes we see in these interviews affect everyone,

including and especially male victims who have little to no support.

shays_thoughts_on_the_panopticon_6-22-22.html

♪ American Star – Lil Wayne ♪

After 9/11, National Guard troops were stationed in airports across America. However, they didn't have any bullets in their guns. I found out about the term "security theater" from a CollegeHumor video I watched when I was in middle school. It's stayed in the back of my mind ever since, and I just read a couple articles on the subject by Bruce Schneier, the security expert who came up with the term.

Schneier makes it clear in his writing that security is both a reality and a feeling. Security is about trade-offs.

"We all get to decide, individually, if the expense and inconvenience of having a home burglar alarm is worth the security. We all get to decide if wearing a bulletproof vest is worth the cost and tacky appearance. We all get to decide if we're getting our money's worth from the billions of dollars we're spending combating terrorism, and if invading Iraq was the best use of our counterterrorism resources."

He says that humans tend to make these trade-offs based on

the feeling of security rather than the reality of it.

It's no secret that fear controls us in America like nothing else. Fear of terrorism, fear of surveillance, fear of white supremacy, fear of white genocide, fear of the IRS, fear of immigrants, fear of criminals, fear of politicians, fear of guns, fear of hate, fear of the police, fear of the military.

So what if tamper-proof seals on over-the-counter medicines don't actually protect your medicine from random poisoning? We're all desperate for the feeling of security, and we take what we can get.

The Office of Justice says that a stronger police force generally leads to crime deterrence due to increased perceptions of arrest risk. However, that's like Kellogg putting out a statement that Frosted Flakes prevent stomach ulcers. It's debatable that policing actually prevents or stops crime. You can do your own research and draw your own conclusions, but in my eyes it's just another form of security theater that leaves blood on the ground for the benefit of the audience. The same could be said about the military.

Fear controlled me for most of my life, and it almost killed me. Losing touch with the barriers between my primal brain and reality during psychosis actually taught me a little bit about how the omnipresent threat of surveillance that hangs over all of our heads can quickly become urgent inside one's mind. I'll try to explain.

Let me start with a man named Edward Snowden. Just kidding. I think there's a collective understanding that nothing is truly private. Somebody or something is always listening, recording, keeping tabs, collecting data.

I was acutely aware that my every move was being monitored by some large and powerful group of people that could track my

location and every purchase made on my debit card as well as see my phone screen, computer history, and every password. I saw their agents signaling to each other in passing cars and heard them whispering to me in the gas station.

In the hospital after crashing my car, I hallucinated a nurse telling me that there were “cameras everywhere” and imagined microscopic lenses and mics hidden throughout the hospital room. I thought my doctor was Bill Clinton and somehow drew the conclusion that Epstein was behind all of it.

The United States government became a godlike entity in my mind, controlling my heartbeat and monitoring my thoughts through a “chip” imbedded my hand that I would discover half a year later to be a tiny piece of glass.

I guess my point is that growing up in America conditioned my subconscious to perceive the government as something with otherworldly power. In a way, that’s the reality. In another way, it’s an illusion. Two things can always be true at once. There are a lot of times when feeling “secure” crosses the line over to feeling watched or persecuted. I think this is one of the most widespread concerns in our country. Half the people living on the street are under the impression they are targeted by the government in some way.

If national security is theatrical in nature, who’s sitting in the audience? Who’s on stage? And most importantly, who’s behind the curtain pulling the strings? I’m looking for the wizard of Oz.

I think the most memorable thing about the wizard of Oz is that he was just some guy. It’s interesting to think that a group of flawed humans like you or me have created a sphere of influence so powerful it is often mistaken for something reptilian or vampiric or alien. Sometimes it’s hard to believe, which is why fantasy becomes so appealing.

But conspiracy theories like QAnon just lend even more power to the powerful, and part of me thinks that they were literally propagated by the CIA to spread fear and distract from the very real atrocities under the government's belt.

*input from @playblondd

W.H.T.T. 11

Tyler died weeks before his graduation. To say the summer that followed was difficult for Benjamin would be a criminal understatement.

It was the first night after Tyler's passing that he suddenly recalled, in painful detail, that midnight swim years ago: the stars on the lake, *Scary Movie 2* on DVD. The very next morning he awoke to Tyler telling him to wake up, let's go swimming—and opening his eyes to an empty ceiling, Benjamin could not understand why.

He could not understand anything.

In the weeks and months to come, where he expected to transcend the textbook stages of grief but instead unraveled into a person he could no longer recognize, Benjamin found himself on precarious terms with reality.

He did a near-flawless imitation of a boy going through the “healthy grieving process”, a term to which Lorraine referred almost religiously. Benjamin ate here and there, he spoke freely and fondly of his older brother, he smiled at his relatives and hugged them tightly when they wept; this was but a performance

in his vain effort to feel normal despite nothing being normal at all. Most of the summer he spent sitting still, either in his bedroom or the dining room, he held emotionally significant conversations only to forget them seconds later, he found himself dreaming while still awake. He always felt cold. Every night he cleaned off his brother's Bose headphones with a tissue, just in case he showed up the next morning and wanted them back.

During this time period Benjamin considered his brother's return not only plausible but inevitable. He mentioned all this to no one.

Innocence/Narcissus

I remember the story of Icarus
pinned under the ocean surface
like a lock of hair, bleeding feathers
as the sun dashed into the dappled wet black
between the trees and the beetles.

I remember a time when I could breathe,
when I stood on the sidewalk and
saw the sky without wanting to touch it.

May 2018

The primadonna hides
a white flower in her fist.
Got confidence to bleed advice
but she hears
shattered glass at red lights.

Pretty smiles freeze on

chilled surfaces. A cracked mirror
is still a mirror. Black
mold hides under porcelain
And I scrub, scrub, scrub

until the bathwater runs vermilion.
Your fucking fingerprints
on my skin. So many
papercuts. She said I'm one
to drown in a reflection.

Money bought me a mattress
and stole my sleep. The
stairway to heaven was
built with bad intentions.

Do you have bad intentions?
Nobody does. Maybe I do.
I intend to fill my face
with flowers and sleep
until they wilt.

May 2020

vanity_is_rage_7-31-22.html

I've been chasing beauty my whole life, and I'm never catching up. I realized this staring at myself in the mirror, my face dripping with blood from the countless pores I picked open over the course of an hour. This is routine. I have acne, I mess with it, it gets worse, the cycle continues. It's been like this since I was in middle school.

The subject of the consequences of beauty standards for women is a dead horse I'm not going to beat. Society has done a number on everyone and it's the most normal thing to hate yourself.

I don't want to preach about self love because I've been attempting to love myself for the past couple years and I'm still not "there." I have some problems with the terminology of self love. Dove and the rest of the beauty industry has framed it as loving the way you look.

I think that I love myself, I just don't love myself in a healthy and acceptable way. I love myself so I take drugs to make me feel better when I'm sad. I love my face so I pick apart my imperfect skin. I love my body so I skip meals to keep it the same.

I love myself the way a little girl loves one of her dolls. One could argue that it's not real love, but then what would you call it?

*CW: Uzi reference

Maybe rage. This was the main realization I had looking in the mirror. I was so angry at myself for not being perfect. It's such a stupid thing to care about. There are people dying and I'm losing my shit over some acne.

In childhood, the picture of vanity in my mind was a beautiful woman fixing her lipstick in the mirror. Getting older I see vanity more an exercise of self-punishment, spiteful and enraged. Some of us are more afflicted than others, but we all fall victim at some point.

If beauty is pain, vanity is rage. I'm afraid of the implications of my own anger towards people who've hurt me throughout my life. It feels more comfortable to hyperfixate on my own flaws than to grieve the flawed world we live in.

I know I said I wasn't going to bitch about beauty standards, but I'm going to anyway. As a girl, you learn through media that you don't have a place in the world if you aren't pretty. If you aren't pretty, you're nothing more than a punchline to someone else's joke. "Self-love" marketing campaigns tell us that our imperfections—acne, cellulite, extra weight, aging skin—are all beautiful and sexy. It's so exhausting that men also have the same flaws but aren't patronized into "embracing" them.

I spent the better part of the last decade trying to make myself as palatable as physically possible to the male gaze. It's been a tragic waste of my time. If I could talk to thirteen-year-old me, I would tell her to stop shaving her arms and start eating lunch.

I didn't expect this to turn into a feminist rant. Alas, here we are. In a perfect world, there would be no reason for us to be vain

and insecure and enraged. For a lot of us though, it's how we navigate a society where beauty is considered the cornerstone of femininity.

Thanks for reading shaylin! Subscribe for free to receive new posts and support my work.

W.H.T.T. 12

Take care of her for me.

He carefully closed his bedroom door and sat down on the edge of his bed.

Benjamin couldn't get her voice out of his head. There were things he'd rather be thinking of—the pins on Angela's rolling backpack, Mort's birthday party on Saturday, the math test on Thursday. Instead he sat with the door closed and listened reluctantly as Mrs. Page repeated again:

Take care of her for me.

Take care of her for me.

you_surrender_every_time_8-23-
22.html [UNPUBLISHED]

“You let other people try for you, but you don’t try. You don’t try to get better. You surrender every time,” my mom says.

It’s almost been a year since I landed myself in the psych ward. A year of counselors, psychiatrists, group sessions, DBT, trauma education, blood tests, piss tests, more pills. Yoga and sound baths. Meditation.

Every day this summer, I wake up at 8 a.m. to go to a treatment center where I learn DBT skills and journal and make art with a group of fellow mentally ill people until 3 or 12 p.m. Then I go to work—either Taco Time or MOD Pizza.

I’m grateful. I know not everybody gets the chance to receive the care they need for their mental health. At the same time, I feel desperately hopeless.

My mom says she expects me to die any day now. She asks me what kind of funeral I want. This is because she found a bag of ketamine in my bedroom.

I wish I was better at writing. I wish there were more words. I wish I could write about how I feel without the sensation of

dragging my fingers over a cheese grater.

My mom kicked me out of the house in the middle of the night and changed the digital lock on the door because I wouldn't let her look inside my purse. (I had a pen in there)

I'm not going to sit here and say that there's nothing wrong with smoking weed and having bipolar 1. It's definitely not a great combination, and I have an addictive personality.

It was the right decision to make me leave. I was breaking the rules of the house. I also needed some space to smoke in peace.

W.H.T.T. 13

Benjamin's bedroom was neat. He did not consider himself an especially organized person, though he made his bed every morning and kept all his laundry in the hamper. The features of his room were sparse—a bed in the corner, a desk with a lamp, a chair, Tyler's headphones.

Benjamin did not consider himself a minimalist. In fact, the thought of using that term to describe himself had never once crossed his mind. He just didn't have a lot of things. His parents stopped buying books and toys for him when they discovered he would just let them collect dust at the back of his closet. "Why don't you play with those toys we gave you?" they would ask. "Why don't you read those books?"

He didn't know. Benjamin did not have many hobbies. Whenever he found himself alone, he would often just sit and listen to music. This had been his case from a very young age.

In the same way his brother did, Benjamin found comfort in music. Tyler had better taste, but would always indulge Benjamin's recommendations with enthusiastic praise. When Benjamin heard a new song he especially liked, a small part of

him still made a mental note to show it to his brother later.

Sometime soon, he would ask Angela what sort of music she liked. They could share earbuds and listen to it together, on the bench by the front of the school.

Benjamin thought that was the most romantic thing in the world.

talking_about_words_8-25-22.html

I was looking for a tab. It was the last one of the tabs I stole from my rapist two years ago. They were made of fruit roll-up and so strong that the last time I took one, I became convinced I was a woman named Linda Lyon Block who was executed by the state on the day I was born for shooting a cop. I wrote "I AM LINDA" in a notebook and thought I had just broken the matrix.

I had packed it away in a case of Cantonese learning CDs and finally found it today before work. I took it half an hour before my shift ended. I was expecting to see God. I think it was an act of self-sabotage, just like a lot of my acts. Acid doesn't react well with my bipolar brain, which is prone to psychosis. I get intense Hell-alien-apocalypse visuals and sometimes cry for hours on end. I wanted to feel something.

On the bus home, I realized I wasn't tripping nearly as hard as I had expected. I felt more like I was on a low dose of shrooms. One Google later and I learn that LSD loses potency very quickly when not stored properly.

At first, I'm pissed off. I wanted to cry my eyes out. I wanted to become possessed by an ancient demon. I wanted to gaze

upon the bars of my galaxy-enclosure-prison and thrash myself against them in agony.

When I got home, my mom said I had a clarity about me I usually don't have. She complimented me for it. I thought, what a fool—I'm on drugs.

If you've done psychedelics, it's impossible to deny that they have a certain profound effect. Some call it healing. Healing is a very loaded term for me. I resent the word, actually. It makes me feel like a failure. Like I'm a bleeding gash of a person and I keep fucking up the stitches.

But I've obsessed over healing, studied traditional Chinese medicine and read *The Body Keeps the Score*, and I'm tired of feeling like I have nothing to show for it. Part of the reason I feel that way is because of my family. My parents are boomers and I'm an only child. They were never equipped to handle someone as volatile and unstable as me.

Healing is not linear. You hear that all the time. Healing is *inherent*. When you get a cut, you don't have to tell your finger to heal itself. It just does it. Your body and your brain are always in the process of healing automatically. That thought is very comforting to me. Despite all my self-sabotage, I have healed from things I never thought I would survive. I can say that now.

I'm pleasantly surprised by this tab. I mean, I'm writing. I shed a couple tears but nothing crazy.

I wanted to get the word "mercy" tatted on me for a long time but was worried it would make me look like a Justin Bieber stan. I like some of his music, but not that much.

I think about mercy a lot. I have recently become more mindful about killing bugs. There's a quote I like that goes something like, if a bug comes into my space and it's not disturbing me, I let it be because if I end up in the wrong place at the wrong time

I would want to be offered the same compassion.

The world has been very kind to me in most ways. What's unkind is why living is so hard.

I'm talking to my cat, and she's telling me that love is the answer to everything so I'll take that as a sign that I should stop writing and just hang out for a while.

Note: this whole post was talking shit about that old tab, but it really kicked in when I stopped writing and the next thing I knew—my whole body was shaking uncontrollably at the cash register at the AMPM by my house. I also decided this was going to be my last ever post on goodluckgirl.substack.com.

I talk a lot about drugs because my life became centered around drugs after I graduated high school. For a lot of people, like my mother potentially reading this, it's really off-putting subject matter.

I find myself disgusted when I think about the money and time and heartache that would be saved if I had just stayed away from substances. I still remember the day I first took those tabs from Arley.

I had texted him earlier that day telling him that we needed to talk. When we met up, neither of us said a word for about five minutes. Then, he asked if I wanted to see the tabs he'd got from his brother.

I put them all in my pocket.

"Hey, I need to sell those," he said.

"You raped me," I replied. And that was the end of that.

The trip I had while writing this post was probably my first truly positive experience with LSD. It was a poetic ending for a story that began in such an unfortunate way. As corny as it sounds, it was incredibly healing. I do not recommend psychedelics though. They've had a net negative impact on my

life and the way I see the world. Most of the things you “learn” from psychedelics you can also learn through meditation and simply living the right way.

W.H.T.T. 14

He'd been sitting for quite some time when his mother came home. Benjamin had decided to eat the silence and forego his music while he did so, staring at an invisible spot on the floor.

Lorraine busied herself for a few minutes. She set her bulky grocery bags on the countertop and organized the fresh fruits and vegetables into their designated refrigerator drawers. She tucked the peanut butter in the pantry and the laundry detergent in the cabinet above the washing machine. Then, she climbed the stairwell and nudged open Benjamin's bedroom door.

"How's it going, Ben?"

Benjamin looked up, his face as pale and mournful as a full moon. In that moment, he had no words for Lorraine.

"Oh, no, baby," she said.

Briefly, they held eye contact in the same way two small children might hold an incredibly heavy and delicate vase, which is to say with intense care and a sense of something catastrophic to come.

Lorraine went to her son's side and clumsily wrapped him in her arms, resting her chin on the top of his head. He was

significantly taller than her so they sat at a rather awkward distance, but neither cared to notice.

Benjamin buried his face in his mother's shoulder and moments passed before she realized that he was crying very hard.

45

Finally

A diamond!
I cry out
buried in my knuckle

the sharp edge
draws blood
from my fingertip

for six months
it lay there
disguised as a bump

The YouTuber
declares
“It’s fake!”

How could it be?
a splinter of
windshield

FINALLY

from the day
I died
like Paul Walker

and stood up
again, like
Jesus Christ.

December 2022

end notes

I write this standing behind an undisclosed hotel front desk in 2024, now a licensed esthetician. I've been in a relationship for over a year. Not at all where I pictured myself now almost two years ago, when this book was all put together for the first time.

When I say I'm a licensed esthetician, that doesn't mean I'm practicing. The job market is rough out here. I graduated beauty school in October. Yes, I dropped out of Western. I was so close to being done. I couldn't do it anymore. Studying journalism felt like a mistake for so many reasons.

I am also two years clean from opiates, not counting the time my ketamine was laced in 2022.

I still smoke weed and nicotine every day. I don't attend any NA meetings, and I don't have a therapist. I have a new substack.

Maybe words saved my life, and maybe it was my seatbelt.

Maybe it was the molly.

Maybe it was my mother.

I hope to one day write a book about something other than myself. Hopefully my journalism education will pay off and make it happen. Thank you for reading my first book.