**SUBTLE LISP**

*Written by:* Nick Givechi

**For Alexandria** *who touched my heart so deeply*

*that the Ghost of Us still vividly haunts me*

# SHATTERED FRAGMENTS

What our hands do

is a direct reflection of

how our hearts feel;

therefore,

if everyone were treated with consideration from the beginning

maybe our hands would reflect our hearts differently, perhaps more accurately.

But, until then, it stands to reason that the most dangerous weapons with which we are armed are the shattered fragments of the human heart.

# FAIRYTALE ENDINGS

Every time I see any woman look at her man

with loving eyes

I feel repulsion.

I find myself praying that their fairytale will end painfully -- that the love in their eyes will burn out,

and

I’ll be there to see it give way to the reality I know: the reality that she taught me.

That forgiveness is a Grimm hope.

What makes others more worth of that than me?

# LOYALTY / UNNERVING FRAGILITY

To say that my fragility is unnerving

is as if you, unexpectedly, slit a warrior’s throat as he let his guard down during peaceful times,

just to claim he died unwilling to fight.

At the first sight of blood,

a fragile man

would have relinquished his conviction to love in the interest of self-preservation, and faded away, quietly; but with

inhuman resilience

I still bleed your name, long after a fragile man would have surrendered to the mortality of this relationship and became a memory.

You are confusing fragility with the honor of commitment, My Queen. I intend to follow through on a promise of forever, even if these poems are all I have left of you,

for better or worse, through sickness and in health, until death do us part.

# LOVE ISN’T A CHOICE

Unlike you, when I said I love you

I didn’t mean “until I see parts of you I don’t like”.

When I said I love you, I had already seen your darkness, knew your insecurities, heard your voice tremble in admittance of your fears, and I knew there may come times that I’d have to be the strong one -- in the times that you’d need me.

When I said I love you, it wasn’t a mission statement; it was a state of being.

I meant it was my primary, encoded function -- because missions can be abandoned;

but loving you is who I am,

even when you decided that “I love you” stopped meaning to you what it meant to me,

and I was left to feel this for you,

alone.

# THAN TO NEVER HAVE LOVED AT ALL

Love is exactly like gambling.

If you never bet everything you have, you’ll never win as big as you could;

but, it’s not a guarantee…

and, with every losing hand, we learn to bet significantly less next time,

with the full expectation that we’ll lose that, too

just to stay in the game

for one more round,

until we either decide to risk our winnings and bet again,

or go home, content with the mediocrity of what we have, and not the dream of what could have been

had we risked it all, and won.

# EULOGY FOR A SUBTLE LISP

She used to love the way I had a subtle lisp every time I let my guard down: in the times I would let myself speak comfortably around her.

Now, I hear it whenever I talk, and I hate the sound of my own voice,

because it

reminds me that she’s gone, and, while some people are lucky enough to make new memories

by simply avoiding

the things that remind them of the one they loved,

where can those like me go to forget ourselves, and that someone once loved us for the things that we’ve tried to hide from the world?

My comfort carries the scar of her name, so I don’t let my guard down to lisp anymore.

# TRACES OF YOU

I’ve been drawing a portrait of you.

It’s the most time I’ve been allowed to spend with you in our separated months, and, (through the fresh ache of seeing your likeness slowly take shape again) with each passing line, I found myself crying tears of relief that I could still almost draw your eyes from memory.

The scratching of my pencil is the closest I’ve come to touching your face

(and the longest you’ve looked at me, with impenetrable love) since the deep freeze, which turned us brittle and shattered my heart.

But,

the unwashed graphite smudges on my hands remind me that time travel may yet be possible,

since traces of you are slowly reappearing

on both

this paper and my skin.

# HIGH PERFORMANCE

I thought

the woman who fell in love with me would know how to drive stick shift.

I thought

she’d know not to expect me to automatically switch gears when she threw my emotions

into full throttle, and

I thought

she wouldn’t assume I’d figure out how to come up to speed in the clutch.

So, can you imagine what it must have felt like to have someone take my driver’s seat without ever needing the manual, fall in love with how I perform, handle me masterfully, then junk me after we took

one wrong turn?

There aren’t too many people who know how to salvage a high-performance man from the side of the road.

# BY MY ‘CIDE

The thought of suicide doesn’t bother me.

It’s the thought that the morning after I accept you’ve moved on;

the day I have to mourn the rest of my life without you

as a consolation prize;

the morning I end the thought of a mortal eternity

without you as my queen,

that will be the day you finally miss me enough to want me back.

And I’ll be gone.

I can’t live with that.

# THE THINGS I DO

They say I’ll find love once I find self-fulfillment.

They call what I am “co-dependent”.

What they don’t understand is that my fulfillment doesn’t come from the things I do;

it comes from the person with whom I share the fruits of the things I do.

So, when that person leaves, I see no inherent value in hollow routine, and, when they tell me to

find someone new with whom to share myself, I don’t think they understand what it meant to me

when I committed

to telling her that I loved her.

# RECIPROCAL WORLDS

Heartache

has made me an amateur scientist -- obsessively reading books of text, written in your handwriting, for something I missed leading up to the first test I failed.

In my lovelorn research, I found myself discovering the fabled madness of traveling through hyperspace --

an endless, manic void

meticulously cross-thatched from endless eventualities of us.

This reality --

in which the ink over your heart,

embedding my name within the promise of “always”, stains your skin --

is interwoven through other, similar timelines, each far more forgiving than anything I’ve ever known.

In all of them,

“Siempre” means something more than

“one bad week, and we’re finished”.

There’s one incarnation of us in which you never left my bed; another, where you never left my arms;

a third, where you (at the very least) never left my life; and yet a fourth, in which the way your pupils dilated after you first called me your King

are still Stargate wormholes,

transporting my consciousness away from the Upside-Down

I’ve been trapped in since

January 24th

when the space between us tore violently in half, leaving me to tumble through darkness, clinging to the vivid memory of our love… hoping it can guide me back to you.

It’s a flimsy comfort to think this agony

is balanced by reciprocal worlds, co-existing on frequencies right in front of my eyes -- none of which I can see, hear, or comprehend.

It’s romantic to believe that the absolute value of your loss is cosmically balanced –

a version of

you, next to me, is next to me, and the ghosts of our happiness still sleep under the same sheets that I share with the emptiness to which

I breathe my goodnights.

Maybe you’re there --

another you, in the arms of another me, happier than I ever made you in the scope of visible light.

How I envy them, because I can’t see what they see:

everything that we should have been.

# WAKE UP THE DEAD

I could wake the dead with each tortured scream, as my entrails are slowly eviscerated – hooked in tow to your words,

taking the path of maximum agony as they detour through my heart and throat.

You extract them, inch by inch, scrutinizing my paling face like scrimshaw, wondering what I could possibly mean when I can’t articulate any better than I can gag and vomit

words,

all in the interest of analytical science.

“I love you” doesn’t sound the same when it tastes like fresh pints of blood erupting from my wrenching bowels --

this never sounded like heartbreak before. It never sounded like “I don’t want to die” before.

It never sounded like anything but “I love you”, because your name was the only sound that I trusted to draw the blood of passion from my sides; never from my jugular.

I love you, Alexandria.

If I must die, my queen, please let me die in your arms. Kiss me before you deliver the final blow, so that my last breath sits on your lips.

That way, if you ever miss me, you’ll never have to scream as loud as I do to wake the dead.

# SIC TRANSIT GLORIA MUNDI

Knowledge is too strong to be destroyed.

So, find a partner who wants to read books with you, and read out loud to each other –

study the world,

and think critically, together;

for, a person’s past is only a limited reservoir of conversational tools -- once you’ve talked about all that has made them, you should, by then, have collected enough resources to construct a foundation upon which you can build toward all that will make you stronger.

Only then can you start to build an empire, infinitely toward heaven.

However, let the student beware: all glory is fleeting, for even the majesty of Rome was consumed in a neglected blaze.

Know this:

nothing is too strong to be destroyed.

# WHORECRUX

I once thought I was polyamorous.

As it turns out, I’m just fiercely monogamous, with a standard of romantic criteria so high that the world laughed at

the list of things

I wanted

out of just one person,

jokingly suggesting that I needed many women to satisfy me,

then getting mad when I took their advice.

In spite of their preference shaming, I now know that fairytales do exist.

I no longer need the identity I once adopted, when they convinced me that the identity I *wanted* was a pipe-dream.

I now have her; she is all the pieces of myself

I’ve been storing in many women.

I feel safe investing it all in her.

# AUTONOMY OF THE HUMAN HEART

My heart never told me she had a tattoo of your name.

It was a hasty decision; she thought I wouldn’t understand.

I took a deep breath and told her, if she loved it, she’d wish she committed to it earlier,

because, when something is worth so much,

forever isn’t long enough.

Surprised at my understanding response, she hugged me tightly, and, in it,

I felt your presence

etched into her skin.

I asked if it hurt.

“In the best way”, she whispered, “and not for long enough.” **EMANCIPATION**

Born into captivity, I have longingly described a world beyond the limits of my inherited domestication.

And, so, the Cage so loved the Lion that it set him free, knowing,

someday, his Pride would find him.

I can finally hear her roar my name.

# THE GHOSTS OF CONVERSATIONS PAST

On the days I feel memorable, it’s easier for me to leave you alone, knowing I’ve told you how I feel.

On the days I don’t, I keep pouring my words like invisible ink on your blank

stares

until my insecurities

speak volumes

because I can’t read your silence.

# WHAT’S MINE IS YOURS

Yesterday,

a woman who wasn’t you tried to call me baby, and its intended endearment

came gift-wrapped in such a violent nausea --

in my head, it was

the isolated, discordant sound of

somebody slowly ripping open

the carefully chosen paper which you artfully crafted around a thoughtful gift --

inherently, an arbitrary word, one many men have worn; yet, this one, amplified to a perfect sentimentality by its custom-tailored frequency to the excitement of your voice, as it leapt from the box into my ears: baby, a word that meant

so much when you had picked it out as the perfect fit for me,

only it wasn’t your excited eyes waiting for my reaction; baby, it was hers:

your gift, unbeknownst to her, sullied by her presentation.

This surrogate Santa waited, with arms wide open,

as I choked back the disappointment that you and I being together in this moment went up the chimney in ashes, as I slept

before I could say goodbye.

I wanted to snatch the word out of her mouth without thanks, to scream “how dare you take credit for this!”, and take it back to Baltimore -- wait on your doorstep, keep it warm, next to my heart, until I could give it back to you, and thank you properly.

Even if you don’t want it, Allie, it’s still yours to give --

no one wears its sentiment like you,

and I’ll only wear it for you,

no matter how ugly it makes me feel to wear it without you, now.

So,

it seems compliments have become my trigger.

I can’t process words of affection anymore without feeling a phantom itch in the emptiness where

I used to have a leg to stand on with you, before you cut me to the ground for a series of missteps.

And now, unfortunately, those who care for me -- me: a veteran of love, an amputee of reckless passion -- have to gently dance around unseen landmines of what you may or may not have said to me.

To calm me,

they keep telling stories of fields,

reaching to the horizon -- full of beautiful, exotic flowers which carry promises that I may take one home as my own: fields in which I won’t lose my mind next time; but, it’s easier to see disturbed earth when the decorative landscape is cleared away.

You’ve shown me the map of scars under which you’ve buried your dangers.

Baby, I wasn’t born yesterday.

You wouldn’t have done that if you didn’t want me to find hidden treasures in you.

I treasure you.

Yesterday,

a woman who wasn’t you tried to call me baby.

I told her that word wasn’t hers.

It was yours, and mine.

# AN UNCHANGING TRUTH

I read once

that there were some ancient cultures that never assigned a word to distinguish between blue and green --

I guess

“green” wasn’t a descriptive priority.

I read once

that the prioritization of assigning words to colors, so as to assign those colors to images,

was based on how frequently ancient writers

found that they needed to facilitate the appearance of certain, recurring images;

so, I guess no one felt the need to tell green stories.

But,

I have read about war;

I have read about anger;

I have read about wine and bloodshed.

I have read, and read, and read until I saw a pattern,

then I realized

certain colors receive higher priority in our writings, not because we’re unoriginal, and not because we have

nothing else to say,

rambling, just to hear ourselves

talk

but because we’re all uniquely human,

green behind the ears for the time we spend alive, but we’ve long since had a truly fresh story to tell, there’s nothing remarkably green of the footprint we leave behind.

We are human:

a trait we overlook when we speak of what we share with our ancestors.

And, as long as we experience a human life, we experience a basic humanity, much like our ancestors.

A humanity uniquely defined by our capacity to love each other so deeply that the emotion effectively

bookends itself –

used to describe both the taste of wine and blood, lingering on our tongues.

We are both victor and victim: that which nourishes us

also destroys us,

one love poem after another.

So, while it may be wholly unremarkable that yet another poet has written more, loud, biased poems on the paved subject of love,

read on.

Perhaps in an endless sea of blue, you may find some green words.

# DISTRACTION

Sometimes, I laugh louder than I should, so that even my sadness has to cover its ears.

I don’t want it to hear you say you don’t want me.

# LESS THAN WORTHY

Never in my life have I been so overwhelmed with the desire to spend every, waking moment near another person --

her smile gives me life, her voice makes my entire body shiver,

and, in her absence, her presence echoes, so, I write her love poem, after love poem, after

love poem,

because she stretches the bounds of my heart so much faster than I can satisfy the need to tell her I want her to lie in my arms, so I can learn new words for love as they appear in Braille all over my body.

No words are ever enough.

And, in the time it took to write this, it no longer seems worthy for her eyes.

Her volume has grown, and all I can do is try again since

the solution must be more potent than only

one part poetry, diluted against infinite parts time.

# WRECKLESS

My body is a used car:

good enough to get my soul from point A to B; but, the Father will only entrust me with something of relatively little value

in my formative years,

knowing that, someday, I’ll total myself.

On that day, I will learn the meaning of life, because I will finally know the value of working to replace the convenience

I once took for granted,

when I was alive: young and wreckless.

# A DIFFERENT DEJA VIEW

What if Déjà vu isn’t the memory of a different lifetime; but, rather, a lateral warp to the same moment in a different timeline?

What if Déjà vu is just our minds recognizing a potentially fatal skid, and maneuvering skillfully into a multiverse that doesn’t end

in collision,

always hoping to navigate just a little further before getting totaled against the concrete median of mortality?

# REACH ONE, TEACH ONE

I once asked a room of my friends who their favorite teacher was.

Based on where they were born, what schools they went to, and their individual strengths, no two answers were the same. The phenomena came to no one’s surprise, since the stakes of answering were too low to be of Earth-shattering consequence.

We all agreed that -- as long as people could grow into productive, helpful, loving members of humanity -- the teacher had successfully done their job, no matter who it was.

The lack of hostility was a religious experience.

And, so, I tell you that,

though Christ professed the lessons of love very well,

I never took the specific classes

which He taught;

yet, I still learned them --

in other ways, in other schools, by other people.

because there is no monopoly on truth, no boundaries drawn around salvation.

The beauty of properly taught truth is it has no ego; therefore, it doesn’t change with voice.

In fact, a different voice may provide a more relatable experience for those who experience life in other ways:

in other schools of thought,

at the mercy of other people,

for the lesson is more valuable than the idolatry.

# POLYGLOT

Before I spoke Farsi,

English was my first language.

I speak Farsi well enough (at, maybe, a 10th grade proficiency);

but, when I form thoughts, I form them first in familiarity, then translate.

To this day, none of my extended family, for whom Farsi is their mother tongue, has ever ridiculed me for making mistakes (even when I make the same ones consistently), for they know I consciously try to speak their language.

And, even when I don’t use the right translation,

they can still see my effort to communicate respectfully.

Before I was a poet, microagressions were my first language.

To those who fluently speak the language of the disenfranchised:

I’m sorry.

I will always try to communicate respectfully. Some things are lost in translation, and, unfortunately,

I’m still

more fluent in the oppressions I was taught.

# AGORAPHOBIA

Illuminated by nothing more than the fading light of day, she watched many orphaned shadows --

shadows cast by the echoing memories of all the deceased demons

which birthed them --

dance lifeless, lethargic waltzes across the room.

She imagined this to be the traditional mating dance of fears which were as equally unwilling to forget the past as they were to fully embrace its reminiscence, as they stared, disbelievingly, into the face of a life they couldn’t pawn off, yet couldn’t truly accept as their own, either.

Their souls were so dried that, in reverence, they could only

quietly weep layers of dust upon their parents’ graves, swaying mournfully over the memories of a painful upbringing -- images so perfectly mummified in time she dared not disturb them,

for fear of freshly awakening their curse.

She found beauty in this unfeeling isolation.

No one new was allowed through the doors;

not for any lack of desire to be accompanied as she froze to death in her loneliness, but only because nothing screams in more pain than

an agoraphobic heart,

at the first hint of light breaking through the familiar darkness.

**MODERN MAN *(out of the jungle)***

As a modern man,

I have been encouraged to be sensitive, and, when I oblige, I’m applauded; but only from a safe distance.

Conditioned to believe my masculinity was harmful,

I have allowed myself to become domesticated by the progressive sentiments of the lovers I have held dear;

yet, though they feed me, I feel they keep me

close to them

out of fascination; not out of love:

a trained beast, just out of arm’s reach, hearing them whisper to each other:

“Marvel at how he learns tricks, child, but don’t get too close.

You know you can never take the jungle out of the animal.”

Can an animal ever learn to be human?

I have been conditioned to abandon all my instincts and senses, travel to the fringe of perception, and leave behind my ancient, primal stereotypes,

with the promise that others like me will meet me on new frontiers.

I live behind bars, now: closer to those I love, but still distrusted and unsatisfied -- highly aware that none of them are coming any nearer to keep me company.

They got closer when they felt the need to break me, when it was necessary to be brave enough to place their hands on me and

make me acceptable;

but, now that I’m in my pen, I can only howl to

lonely winds

for the safety of the pack that never lured me with false promises.

# THE JOURNEY OF A THOUSAND MILES

In my opinion,

we have learned to define Happiness as “anything that matches or exceeds our expectations”.

If this is so,

then, for this reason,

starting from the absolute baseline of unconditional love and basic, equal respect

for all life with which we come in contact,

the closer our expectations get to human limitation, the smaller our margin of Happiness becomes.

For this reason, I am of the opinion that the lower we keep our expectations, the happier we allow ourselves to be.

And, for this reason,

I will allow myself to believe

I am exactly as I should be when I am at my weakest, that way I will never be disappointed in my efforts,

and I will never berate myself for trying at all.

As long as we start with love, no step forward should ever go unappreciated as less than enough.

# URNED RESPECT

I see a lot of tourists taking home sacred souvenirs from the ledge where I come to forget life; but their mantles are the last place

I want to see my struggle,

since suffering in solitude was always a better option than being bound to their phony, social contracts.

And they wonder why I ran screaming from the unbearable pleasantries of their homes.

Now, it seems everyone wants to come here to take a piece of mentally instability back, waving “I’m crazy” over their heads like a crest of arms sailing into

every confrontation,

they think it’s synonymous with tough, resilient, and brave; that’s what it made me, not what it is:

if you don’t understand it, leave it be.

Meanwhile, I die in vain,

watching them

scavenge my sanctuary --

the only place I never wanted to be, the only place I found any solace at all, in the days when it was too edgy to be me.

That’s enough to make a man crazy.

# DISSONANCE

Vanity is not a concept

that my depression knows,

which is to say

I look at mirrors the way I look at all the beautiful people:

that I may, objectively, marvel at the beauty

of a person who looks like me,

but doesn’t have to feel like me.

I envy him -- how fortunate he is to not be real.

# THE AMERICAN DREAM

The media loves to regale us with stories of relentless perseverance -- I could mindlessly recite all the bedtime stories

of which celebrities were down to

their last dollar

before they struck gold;

but, the narrative only speaks of miraculous discovery; never meticulous blueprints of hard work.

This is to say, I grew up believing

abject poverty was my golden ticket to fame,

because all I’ve never known of success is how to sacrifice for my dreams, but never how to plan for my goals.

# ANATOMY AND METAPHYSIOLOGY

If the brain ever convinced the lungs to be a part of the Nervous System, the body would stop breathing, and die.

If the lungs ever convinced the stomach to be a part of the Respiratory System, the body would stop digesting, and die.

And, if any religious system of belief ever convinced any other religious system of belief to be a part of a school of thought

that wasn’t in their nature,

the body of God would cease to be complete, and die.

Just because it doesn’t serve your purpose, doesn’t mean that it doesn’t serve any purpose.

Let it be.

# HIDE AND SEEK

The funny thing about Happiness is that it doesn’t know how to be an adult; you have to learn to play hide and seek with her.

Only then will you learn to find something in the innocence of looking through all the wrong, dark corners, with playful eyes.

Remember, children know better than to hide in broad daylight.

Look closer, listen for her laughter, and, above all, don’t forget to giggle when she does.

# USER FRIENDLY

In a world which so heavily favors the sugary language of sales, do not confuse yourself:

actually being a good person requires a painful amount of empathy; not hurting someone’s feelings simply requires studying a policy handbook.

Policy must be a hell of a condiment if it can make the taste of bullshit palatable; but, then again, being User Friendly

doesn’t necessarily make you human enough to gag.

# FIN

Time makes piranhas out of goldfish,

and that last fish in the sea is going to have a hell of a time telling all her weary suitors:

“Turn back, boys. You probably missed someone traveling this merciless path

down which you came;

so, I hope you have another lifetime to scour all of your old footsteps, because I can only choose one of you, and I really appreciate the rest of you

as friends.”

# CLIMATE CHANGE

I think it’s important

to stop using words like “human extinction” --

it’s not relatable, and doesn’t scare people enough.

We should, instead, start telling each other that nature is going to “discontinue our brand”.

Congress would get so many angry letters from over-privileged white women demanding to speak to

the management

that something might actually get done.

# NO LUST LOST, NO LOVE FOUND

Imagine how much different pornography would be if something as simple as a “request to watch” button were uploaded to every link.

Even if approvals were controlled by an automated system, and not the stars of the videos themselves, the fact that world would now have to wait a whole fifteen seconds for a message

saying

“you have received consent” may start to subconsciously rewire our sense of entitlement.

Such a simple gesture.

Maybe, in time, we can even politely deny

1 in every 25 request, just to teach people how to move on immediately after rejection.

# A FAMILIAR HELL

We live in such a broken world:

we’re beautiful souls, damaged so badly that it’s easier for us to give our bodies away mindlessly to those who will continue to abuse us --

because, life is easier when we can identify patterns.

After becoming accustomed to anger and apathy, true, unconditional love looks suspicious and foreign:

a language we can’t process, and don’t have the patience to learn.

We hear sincerity like it’s a highly-evolved form of manipulation So we instinctively bite the loving hands which reach for us -- believing that, because they’re not honest about the red flags we’re so sure they have, it must all be a lie, so we fall back

into the arms

that sincerely promise to break us.

We trust the unrestrained evils of weak hearts over the temperance and understanding of loving ones, because a familiar Hell scares us less than the uncharted wilderness of happiness,

so, as a result,

love dies, cold and alone, in the gutters, watching as lust turns their forever homes into war zones.

# HARD RAINS

I feel as though my mind is a thunderhead -- everyone watches in amazement from a distance;

but, when the storm rages in, looking for any of the voices it thought called him

“lover”

it finds no one stayed, and openly weeps in the streets in an attempt to wash away the filthy footprints of everyone who now locks themselves away to save themselves from the intensity of flooding emotion.

# WATCHING ME

I shouldn’t have to wake up every morning only to struggle with my self worth and a reason to get out of bed, until the alarm clock

screams

“lazy!”

at the top of its lungs.

No. False, alarm.

Lazy implies that I’ve shown Apathy in the face of Optimism; but, Time has only one direction, and no memory of the past, so how can you call me lazy when you can’t recall how failure feels?

Time doesn’t have to go one day wondering if anyone notices it pass by -- the world has created such a dependency on it:

it is our greatest celebrity, idolized on our walls, as we refer to our

Time Frames

with every mortal breath.

But, when I break, watch how quickly I get replaced, in comparison.

Don’t call me lazy.

You have no concept of what it feels like to feel unimportant.

# MONOPOLY

I wish America was as easily solved as the actual board game of Monopoly.

Like, dudes, seriously, this shit has gone on far too long.

We’re bored, broke, and frustrated, and no one but the bankers are having any fucking fun anymore; so, I’m gonna flip the board, and we’re all heading

outside where

noone owns shit.

# KNOW THE VISION / NO DIVISION

At some point, everyone must learn to make the distinction between *what* annoys them and *who* annoys them.

Even the most annoying people can speak important truth,

and it’s important

to not throw the baby out with the bathwater.

# HOMEMADE

I was raised in a home that spoke in thick, Iranian accents. You’d think I just wouldn’t hear it anymore, but I do.

It sounds familiar.

It sounds like the people who loved me.

So, to the stranger at Taco Bell, thank you.

I’m countless miles from home, and too poor to eat properly, but today’s lunch will taste just a little bit better

because you made it sound homemade.

# TRASH

She said

“I’m trash. Loud, confused trash.”

Never in my life have so few words sounded like the high fives of tomorrow’s frat boys, and the accolades of their future, bar stories.

Never in my life have I felt more heartsick over something that hasn’t happened yet.

Who taught you this trash?

A trash can is only a trash can

if trash can get in.

# FAITH IN MYSELF

Every day, I jump.

This cliff is jagged and terrifying, but I haven’t died on the rocks below, no matter how often I’ve smashed against them.

They’ll call this insanity. They’ll always tell me to play it safe, but the truth is, for me, there is no safety;

there is only life --

a life that risks nothing for those who risk nothing for it.

I’m torn up.

I’m bloodied, raw, and nearly dead, and I may not be able to stand much longer since my kneecaps have almost become dust from the repeated impact,

but I’ll be damned if I don’t die with the wind in my face, instead of stale, safe cowardice in my lungs, always wondering what if.

I’m going to die waiting, die planning, or die trying, so what if I jumped one more time, and this time

I flew?

# WHAT WE WANT TO BELIEVE

I saw a sign which read:

“It’ll be awkward for the rapture folks

when Jesus comes back, and he’s

liberal, homeless, brown-skinned

and speaks no English.”

No, it won’t.

They won’t feel awkward; they won’t even notice.

They’ll kill him in the streets for the crime of “impersonating a savior”, then stand in a pool of his blood, shrieking to the skies:

Do you see what we have to deal with God?!

Send us the second coming!

# IMAGERY

If art teaches us nothing else, let it be a metaphor for where to draw our lines before the big picture becomes

nothing more than

a big, unrecognizable mess,

and when to step back and accept that nothing more can be done without jeopardizing what we’ve labored to create.