

diary entries (editor's note: undated)

[1]

after my suicide (attempt), i left school and relocated to berkeley, california. i don't want to live in berkeley, i complained to my friend S. i don't want to become that bitch. S looked at me, unimpressed. do you own birkenstocks, she asked. i nodded. and your parents, a house. nod, again. is it true that you possess two closets and three pairs of doc martens, and consider yourself to be a member of the upper middle class. i looked at her. you are already that bitch, she said.

my mother was worried that i would be too lonely in berkeley, and, left to my own devices, actually commit (this time) to something else of equal stupidity. she called me often, cajoling me about what i was doing, or lack thereof. our conversations took the same turns: what do you have planned today, pause. have you seen any friends, pause. the dog is constipated again, and had an accident in your father's shoe. my mother kept the same schedule, toggling the park, ranch 99, and her doctor's office with a kind of content consistency that made me alternately depressed and relieved. under her persuasion, i signed up for yoga class, buying a seventy-dollar rubber mat with her credit card. i got a babysitting job and medical marijuana card in rapid succession. three times a week, i woke up early and made my way to the city for work, then stumbled back to berkeley and pretended to work on a book. i pretended to do a lot of things: earning money, writing, stretching my spine in downward dog. despite (or because of) what i told myself, my life took on a routine and began to resemble that of a sane person's.

not long after i got settled in, A got in touch. we had been rivals in high school, alternately friendly and fiercely cruel in a petty auction to outdo the other as the loudest, most arrogant pseudo-intellectual of our suburban purgatory. by the beginning of senior year, we ran the model united nations club together, and everyone was convinced we were either dating or related (a spiritual relation that transcended our obvious physical differences). A was now a junior in college, the same he'd always been, he said, just funnier. he invited me to a labor day party, to be held in the house he shared with some debate friends. i arrived a full twenty minutes early, tightly wound by a late-afternoon cup of coffee that i had chugged to stave off my hesitation. while i stood in line at the grubby starbucks on shattuck, a chinese boy tapped me on the shoulder.

are you ---? i looked at him, and considered lying. oh, i know you from ---, he said, sliding the name of my ex-school the way one would hermé's, or andover, or uptown. i took pleasure in the fact that i was unable to recall ever meeting him. i considered asking him how he knew me, but before i could, he laugh-spat and told me that i sure had a way of getting around. my cheeks flushed, and then rang. i wondered if he was a late-night mistake, or a member of my personal execution squad, or quite possibly, both. i drank my coffee and looked out the smeared window while he mansplained our school's newest ranking in usa today.

when i arrived at A's house (finally, but not late enough), he was not home. this was typical A, who checked his text messages as a pregnant person might their period tracker. (i think A might be the only person the national security agency might one day have trouble locating.) his housemates were still getting ready for the party, evidenced by the tepid r&b playing on their stereo. i was given a beer and allowed to watch them pour vodka into a fruit bowl. sometime later, when i began to feel the

alcohol and was considering retiring to the porch with my joint, A showed up. panting, he ran a hand through his hair and immediately set to the fridge for a bite to eat. my attempts at enthusiasm were not returned, but he turned to his friends, and with a queer little smile, introduced me as an “old friend from high school.” do you want a hit, i asked A, i think i’m going to go smoke on your balcony, if that’s okay. nah, he replied, and though i wasn’t sure which question he was answering, i decided to chastely look the other way. ok, i said. i’ll be on the balcony.

the rest of the party passed in a blur. at some point, i was joined by a bong, and a steady trickle of smokers who wandered out to take a break from the party inside. finally relaxed, and proffering weed for conversation, i became the unofficial guardian of the smoke station, a position which i continued for some while. out of nowhere, A showed up, clearly a little drunk, with a girl at his arm. ---! he called out, using the name i had discarded since high school. you have to meet S. to be honest, i don’t remember those first lines of exchange between S and myself (two S’s! how serendipitous, i must have remarked). she said something calm and self-actualized like, that’s a big bong you got there, and i replied with something witty, i’m sure. before i knew it, we were smoking away and drowning out everyone else at the party.

[2]

the first crash came when i stepped off the bus. the sky, a swirl of greys and off-whites, as if an opaque parallel of the pooling cement below. construction blocked off the road leading into the condominium complex where i was staying, and machinery, pregnant with the still-wet of fresh mud, gazed upward. but it was a thunderstorm with all of the props and none of the actuality. is a

thunderstorm still a thunderstorm if there is no rainfall? shuddering without the expectant release. thunder, like the itch of an aborted sneeze. walking toward my room, above which grey clouds concentrated, as if an epicenter of the not-yet-storm. (it did not strike me then that this could also have been the aftermath of an already-there-storm. all the evidence pointed to this possibility: the already-wet ground, the silence which stretched between the claps, the moist paper bag which i clutched under one arm.)

it was only after i came out of the shower, hair dripping noisily down silent tiles, that i convinced myself the storm had passed. under the hallucination of thunderclouds, the hallway took on a chiaroscuro quality that felt cool-blue and echoed, as if silence could sound. i have always been drawn to ground zeroes and the soundless terrain that succeeds them—counterfactuals and the shudder that interrupts a would-be quiet. though blue would seem to promise the clarity of a sunny tomorrow, and even the memory of a stormless yesterday, i no longer believe in such things as “calm,” and “after.” but i continue to mourn for counterfactuals. such as: hair washed with rainwater, or roads that dissolve even though there is no storm.

perhaps because i have been living in such a blue space myself, i can no longer tell the difference between colors or the vibration that precedes them. only hues of blue, which light up the precise locations of where i have been and where i am to go. which is why, when it was time for me to commit to the act of dying, i could not take even that final breath of dignity. little blue pills do not blue blood spill. but, byzantium births palatinate, iris, and so on, until all blood cells turn the purplish-blue of a bruise, or capillaries clotted with hemoglobin starved of oxygen. they say that the color blue emits calmness, i think, like the blue of ice, the silence of glaciers, the muffled crash of bodies bruised by a sinking sea. “if all human hemoglobin

were free in the plasma rather than being contained in red blood cells, the circulatory fluid would be too viscous for the cardiovascular system to function effectively.” what if freedom and immobility—the frozen breath—were but two sides of the same coin?

one must commit to suicide, but i could not take even that final breath of dignity. so i think to myself, curled on that springy mattress the color of deep calm, a sea of capillaries spilling from my arms. my stomach anchored itself deeper into the iris waves, until jellyfish bubbled from acid and what used to be flesh grew itchy with a second skin of barnacle. when i arrive at the bottom of the ocean floor, leaking blue, i found that i could not bring myself to sit with the silence of the vibrations. instead, murky eyes continued to gaze into the foci of the horizon, transmogrifying the landscape into more palatable animations of what i already knew. it was then that i realized the qualifier “blue blooded” is but a misnomer: blood was not really blue, but a palatinate shade that resembled bruises. a language of explanations can only ache, and never touch. the only language of leaking capillaries, or what it would feel like to swim in hemoglobin. thus frozen, i found not release, but suspension.



serum

S considered all the ways that she could lie to her father's friend. when the text had come, at eight in the previous evening, she had glanced at her phone with the distaste one might reserve for an ex, or a brother, or, at worst, a mother. "we would like to invite you over to our house for christmas eve dinner at six pm," the message read. she knew her father had gone out of his way to reach out to his friend, another portly man in his fifties, and that in all consideration she should show face for the sake of being polite. yet she had already made up her mind not to go. it was only when her mother phoned the following day, reminding her that

she had yet to respond to the family friend's query, that S paused to give thought to the brief message. as she mulled over to respond with a delicacy that verged indistinguishably between polite and cold, her phone rang. it was the friend's daughter, a broad-shouldered girl still in her junior year of high school. S had met her on two other occasions, to both parties' awkward disappointment. she had found the girl dull, evincing a mind yet unopened but bubbling with inane questions, to which she had no good answers. though she was none the wiser, S's verbose meditations on philosophy had seemed, to the opposite party, alternately arrogant and full of an incomprehensible folly that convinced the young girl that a humanities degree was truly useless. the phone rang again, and S unscrupulously pressed ignore. *provincial*, S thought to herself, grimacing at the girl's audacity to phone, with a dumb insistence that echoed her questions. like father, like daughter.

it was not a very charitable thought, but of those, S had few. since her suicide attempt earlier that spring, she found herself incapable, in her internal monologue, to entertain little besides a passive-aggressive deluge of self-pity. she alternated between debilitating insecurity and an inexplicable anger that she (wrongly) attributed to a lingering neurochemical imbalance. the throes of S's silent tantrum produced no visible marker, save a small wart beneath her left eye which seemed to grow, to her distress, in direct correlation to her surmounting sourness, making her look simultaneously like a diseased wench and a downtrodden witch. she rubbed at her eye nervously.

she had read an article about a man whose unwashed pillowcases had resulted in a mite infestation on his eyelashes, with as many as ten mites clinging to each lash when he, forced by a sudden and violent eye infection, finally reported to the hospital. S rubbed her itchy eyes. she visualized a mite

colony growing on her lids, their tiny, worm-like bodies engorging en masse, and shivered with irritation. in her vanity, she had recently begun to rub castor oil on her lash line before bed every night, hearing that it would stimulate eyelash growth. S had always been somewhat ashamed of her prickly eyelashes, whose already infantile presence were made virtually nonexistent by her inward-folded eyelids. she rubbed her eyes again, and twitched at the next vibration of her phone. it was the broad-shouldered high schooler, again. S hit “ignore,” and typed out a polite message accepting the offer. thus, a momentary lapse of judgement, triggered by the growing crack in her psyche, resulted in S’s attendance the next evening.

