

Monster Mansion, Monster Apartment, Monster Shed, Monster House

Before I was the state champion in archery I took “private” lessons from a man who taught me the difference between shooting to stop a threat and shooting to end one. When we were kids we would play a fortune game called MASH and I memorized the count so I always ended up with a mansion in my future. I always wanted the husbands who, in turn, wanted wives. When you spit in a palmistry and told me one day I would own a pool, I licked my hand in front of you so I could hold you in me. People who are concerned with “power” never really have any. Does one need a certain amount of power to be flippant, or to flip it? When I lay in the Jacuzzi for three hours I don’t think “sad” or “not sad”. It is dangerous to know someone truly, like licking the salt off a battery or rimming your margarita glass with acid. For the most part, I do not force myself into love...

I got eager and finished the horror show alone, even though I promised a flame I would wait. Myself lit only by the blue of the television. I had to close my eyes when the blonde youth painted his face and shot up all the students in the school library. I do not like guns. For weeks I had guilty dreams I was finger-fucking the sociopath. We were at a carnival and I’m three-digits deep massaging his meaty prostate and not out of love. I never knew why we were at a carnival, but that’s just how dreams are. I want to say, “Everything I do is guided by dream logic,” and then—immediately—I don’t.

For awhile I slept with a man who made meth in a shed. We slept in opposite directions because I was powerful. I went door-to-door and sold sad perfume from sad designers. He called truffles “bonbons” and left the wrappers in bed. He said he could get me anything I wanted. They always do. When he was away I took his Percocet and played video games. I kept dropping the controller because my skin was so, so wool.

When the money's gone from the apartment I work for a website under a pseudonym and made lists of "things that were better in the 90s": flannel, velvet, sheer black button-ups. Bubble Tape. Mad Libs. Slime. Clear phones. School shootings.

The men fly me down South. They promise me travel, promise me palm trees and beignets. I never eat the king cake because I'm scared of choking on the plastic baby. I'm scared of spiders, and home intrusions, and "dying with a bunch of shitty poems". At the same time, I'm "not really scared of anything". I'm not trying to be philosophical or play tricks. It would make more sense if the king cake had a crown or scepter within it. By that logic, a murder cake would hold a single bullet. I keep thinking of men. Guns. New Orleans. Brighton Beach. I keep thinking of the phrase, "Russian sobriquet."

Miliy, when we watched *Elephant* and you rewound the scene where the two boys kissed in the shower before shooting up the school, well, I didn't say anything.

"Your complete disregard for human life" "makes me" "nervous".

I loved a man who killed a man and it doesn't "say something about me" or "not say something about me".

Sometimes like a shell
I swallow the sins
of those around me
and prevent them
from their own evils.
I become them.

I once worked for a very powerful man who made me go out to very fancy dinners at Italian restaurants that began with "Il" and French restaurants that ended with "Bistro". I had to wear a suit and say the right words and eat marrow out of a large bone with a tiny golden spoon in my left hand (which is the devil's hand). I was only allowed to speak when he nodded.

What does it mean to be the body covered in the words of others? The tiny, cute captions introducing phrases. The entire perimeter of one's being turned into refrigerator. Like magnets I stick. I sit in the air-conditioned bedroom watching some animation where magical girls with colorful hair fight with no two weapons alike: battles in scalpel, glaive, javelin, blunderbuss, whip, surujin, charkram, axe. Crossbow. Scissors. Gun.

When we were nineteen, my best friend's father left work, sat in the backseat of his car, and shot himself in the head. He was a big collector of roleplaying games, and so I sold his collection on eBay and gave the money to the family. His mother told me to keep something for myself, so I kept the first edition of the *Dungeons & Dragons Monster Manual*. I always wondered why the backseat. I assume this is what it means to "not feel like the driver of your own life". To be passenger...

As a teen I used to go to this mansion by myself where the man had a marble bar on the first floor floor with a fish tank behind it. I always wondered who fed the fish. We used to sit in the mirror room and watch Japanese cartoons on this screen that was projected on the ceiling. You had to lay down in bed next to him to watch. I was always impressed by the magical girl whose weapon was ribbons, and how she turned those ribbons into muskets. Is it easy to make meaning out of soft, sweet things transforming into danger? My body is "not a weapon" but too it is "weapon".

When you rewind the scene again and again, at last, I felt happy for the two boys who had never been kissed and found each other in the steam before they did that thing that they did. I feel guilty for this softness, finding understanding, consolation in their two bodies no longer alone, moments before they slung those semi-automatics over their shoulders. Why did you rewind that scene? What did you make me feel? Does the world need more hypocrisy or less? I've tried to watch it again, but I can never finish that film. Not everything that is fiction is fiction. Each time I click pause when they pass the other bleached blonde boy and tell him not to go in there, the there being that school. I try not to wonder if I am "lovable" or "unlovable", if I too would be spared.

No one is powerful. Even with safety scissors and enough force you can dig soft metal into the heart. What a sad way to die. Demand all safety scissors must be locked in a safe and thrown into a sinkhole!

(sinkholes are not safe)

I think of the men who have violenced me, and then, in turn, I have fantasies of violencing them back.

RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: I wouldn't be spared.

In *Dungeons & Dragons* there is always a Dungeon Master, or, DM, and when you get injured they say, "Roll for damage!" "Roll for damage!" You take those dice in your devil hand and then...I recall all the ways this body has been damaged.

Once, attacked by a stray, rabid German Shepherd, I stuck my fist down its throat until it choked, suffocated. This brought me no joy to have a creature stuck to my hand like a Muppet. Is there something funny about placing "dead dog" next to "Muppet"? I try not to think of "understood" or "misunderstood". It's not that I looked at my fingers covered in blood, saliva, and thought of all the white boys killing people with hands like mine.

I try not to think about "knowledge is for cutting"
or the syringe in the stomach for Rabies
or the rotten wedding cake, uneaten,
or Lachesis who measures the long intestinal strands of ribbon after ribbon after ribbon.

When I lived in a house I never felt safe, except, maybe, when it was Halloween. Something about the fallen leaves. Quietude. Tiny bars of candy. The cutsiness like a graveyard smash. We create our own significances. I work for a literary agent and someone writes a pitch about the Three Fates opening a bakery in a crime-ridden city. They "rejuvenate" the community. There's too many guns. Everyone debates "realism" and "fantasy". "Gentrification" vs "revitalization". They want to tell me everything either an "is" or an "isn't"...

No one ever taught me the “right way” to hold a knife. Neither hand belongs to the devil. I am inflexible in my desire for the finger to pressed down into the pongee box as the silk seals. It’s okay not to know how to pronounce “guillotine”. When in danger, think of desserts.

Is personal mythology boring because it’s personal or because it’s mythology? I’ve never cocked a bow at another human, although I would if someone were trying to hurt my cat. I love my cat. We create our own systems of value. We create our own rituals to gain power. We put our own words in the grimoire in order for others to find meaning. Mixed messages are mixed because the answer is not easy. It’s not like everything is “riddle” or “not riddle” or “hidden meaning” or “any meaning at all”.

I work for a gardener who is also an artist.
 He wants me to melt all the guns from the city
 down into metal and cast that metal in shovel
 and use those shovels to plant new trees.
 It is the wink, the nod, creating life instead
 of taking it away. It was easy. It wasn’t even his idea. He copied it from some artist
 in Mexico.

Look, I’m transparent: I ate the boy’s saliva because consumption introduces danger.
 I ate the boy’s saliva because it gave me his power, because I knew he would
 never love me, and I knew how each boy like him would become the same men who
 would obliterate me. I was the joke, and then he was destroyed. Mortality doesn’t
 deny power. I would think of the men

and nock
 the arrow
 with the bow
 raised and cock
 feather pointed
 to the right.

For days I would sink an arrow in the yellow bull’s-eye inside the red inside the blue.
 I could do this with my eyes closed with only the air as my Braille. I was always care-
 ful. The man liked to teach me archery until I succeeded him. People seethe. I am

terrified of men, but I will not hesitate to bash back. A long time ago, I lived in many buildings, knew many people. I ate beautiful slices of cake and seldom condoned violence. I was a pacifist in the presence of dangerous men. Still, a warning to future lovers with undisciplined hands: never make assumptions about any person, nor assume my will;

don't mistake me for those who shoot to wound. When I aim I shoot to kill.