thoughts on
writing friendship
trying to move on

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The night is full of stars and she is not with me.
This life can be called free paragraphs. Fossils. Flattery. Failure. Continuum.
I bought an IBM Thinkpad back when a laptop without internet access was an honest to goodness real thing. I lived with my aunt, had no friends my age, and held the tv show Sex and the City up on a life goal pedestal. The latter was the reason for the Thinkpad. I spent an entire month's extra money on the eBay bid, and I won. The day it arrived, I did not even open the package when I first saw it on the kitchen counter. I slipped it under my bed, as if it were porn, so I could enjoy the unwrapping of my toy in private.

The screen cast a bright whiteness on my face and chubby thighs. I probably wrote about high school. Being just 19, it was not yet ineffectual to dwell on times spent in those halls. I typed with vigor. Thoughtlessly, joyfully, in my underwear, in the middle of my bed, in the middle of the night. My short little legs twisted up like a pretzel as close to my chin as my fat would let me, just like Miss Carrie Bradshaw. Triumphant by the third paragraph. Flashing forward to the glory people would bestow upon me after reading my prolific book.

This book? Oh, it only took me one long night to write. It just poured out out of me. Growing up neglected in a suburban bubble devoid of music other than what played on the radio, I knew no better. I thought greatness was inherent. Complete, given fully formed by God at birth, or simply non existent. The concept of hard work, of 10,000 hours, of relentless investment, well these were not on my radar. God would take care of me. My parents should have taken care of me. I don't want to fend for myself, unless it is easy and rewarding. Like eating.

Three days after my Thinkpad arrived, I accidentally knocked it off of my bed in the middle of the night, and
could never get it to turn back on. To console myself I rented Almost Famous. Then I decided writing with a pencil was the only way to become the writer I was supposed to be. I was going to be that hardcore. The book wasn't pouring out of me due to medium, not process. Some time later that year I discovered many Woody Allen films and thought, of course, typewriter!

Starting is the worst part. Pushing your limp into motion. Unsure of whether anyone will be persuaded to pay attention. Worried you will not make any sense. Starting is the worst until you finish your first session, finding yourself stuck with a thousand gibberish swordas. Words on the tips. Deciding yet again to push forward.

I am trying to remember if I ever truly enjoyed writing. If I ever finished more than an email in a day.

I have made about 50 zines in my lifetime, but none have been a garden variety serialized perzine. Partially, because I do not think I have a terribly interesting life, and partially because I like to write in often abstract, poetic prose. Usually about my never ending heartbreak in a tone similar to spoken word. Everything else is book report writing or straight up diatribe. I avoid such work.

Welcome to the experiment in which I try to bridge together all my types of words. Full disclosure: I have already stopped twice in the time it took to compose that amazing opening paragraph. Once to put on a 90's playlist (lots of Cranberries + Weezer) and the other to play with text fonts. I should probably just use my own hand writing. I always like that in other people's zines. It feels more personal. More deliberate.

Chicago Zine Fest was last weekend. It was my first time tabling at such a huge event. It was also my first time sharing a table, because they only sell half size spaces. I think I hyped up my expectations of the outcome of sharing a table with another zinester to semi epic proportions. On the drive up from Nashville, I convinced myself that I was going to have a chubby punk vegan table mate, and we'd read each others zines all afternoon, take turns buying each other coffees, and generally become best friends. Hey, I'm in the market for a best friend. We'll get to that later.

For some reason I was placed in an all dude row. The guy to my left reminded me of an even more intense version of Dick from High Fidelity. So particular about which zines people could touch, constantly reorganizing his stacks into evenly distributed piles, so nervous being alive that he couldn't even eat his lunch wrap on the table (it had to be hidden out of sight, save for his hurried bites). The guy to my right was one of those dudes That was constantly scratching his chest and raising his arms so that his little belly would pop out of his shirt. WTF is that?

Alas, no friends made at my table, but I still sold a bunch of zines and got my work into the hands of a new city. That always feels productive and worthwhile.

I have been doing a lot of writing in the past few weeks for various zines I wanted to debut at CZF. One piece was about horror and loss for a feminist zine I edit/publish called RIPE WITH RAGE, another group of pieces is for a perzine called Free Paragraphs. No matter the intended topic, I end up touching on my recent best friendship break up. Recent as in about two months ago. My impression is that it will be feeling recent for years, but at some point I have to change
the language. I am in fear of becoming that person that only has thoughts to share on one subject. I am in fear of becoming boring. Actually, my worst fear is that I am boring, and no one is telling me.

So, the BFF. We had been friends for just about 12 years. Started as roommates in our very early 20’s, separated households a year in, did the long distance thing in varying degrees of closeness for about 6 years, and did the last 5 inseparable in the same city again. I moved to her city, and when I did, I was a mess. Coming off of years of depression, isolation, and all sorts of emotional turmoil. Nashville was a fresh start. She was the heart I could link up with to bear the load of rebuilding a life from a place more feeble than scratch. She welcomed me with open arms, as if no time had passed.

I have a tattoo on my arm of an owl sitting in a gorgeous cherry blossom tree. The roots of the tree are everywhere, and within them is a fox whose very veins are embedded in the roots. Best friend and I had been planning to get a joint tattoo for years. The appointment was the catalyst for our break up, because I had to clear the air before we went into another realm of permanence under the needles. We both kept our appointments, but traveled separately, and left with completely different marks. Perhaps even different ideals.

My first three years in my new city were focused on reclaiming my independence and building basic life skills. I was so out of practice relying on myself, and uncomfortable with the constant social aspects of single life. In the beginning it was such a production just to get myself to go inside the grocery store. There would be the choosing of the outfit like armor, driving around the parking lot and frequently leaving because I felt like I had done something noticeably awkward, having to re-approach later in the day, panic attacks before I walked in the door, forgetting everything I needed once I was in the store, sweating throughout the entire process, feeling like a failure walking out because I felt ashamed about my emotions.

Things got better pretty quickly with practice and self inflicted aversion therapy. But, for context purposes, this was my level. Making friends, mingling at parties, volunteering, etc. None of that was in my grasp. I had one best friend, one long distance partner, and my dog. That was often more than I could handle, yet I was lonely. I still wanted more people in my life, some casual, some not. You know, a balanced social circle. I wanted it badly, but did not yet possess the courage, skills, or opportunity to make such a circle for myself.

You can imagine how such a person, with desires far exceeding their compensations, would be protective of their best friendship. This one special thing I was convinced I could not live without. I put much pressure on it to fulfill me, all the while also giving in to the pressure to not rock the boat. To be pleasing. I never lied or misrepresented myself. I just suffered a lot behind the scenes, unsure of whether my reactions to her were because I had trust issues or if my best friend was a little inadequate or inconsiderate. Looking back, it was probably both. In another place I wrote a lot about how our friendship was wildly untested. We didn’t have fights. We didn’t practice for the big one. Some of that is certainly my fault.
This part is supposed to be about demons. Why this friendship loss is particularly hard in the context of previous life events that have shaped me. AKA everyone leaves me. AKA it's all my fault. How my relationships feed my writing. How they stymie it.

So, demons. I am a fatherless girl. Textbook symptoms of this plague me, such as depression, low self esteem, aggression and anger. I cling. I never learned how to be in a nonsexual, intimate relationship with a man. I never had that reassuring mirror to return my glances. My questions. My awkwardness at 11 or 15 or the whole of my 20's. My father taught me rejection, that something was wrong with me, that I was unworthy. And all of this from a distance, never taking the helm of my puppet strings. It is impressive how the mere absence of someone hurts more than the lifetime of pricks you would experience were they constantly around.

My mother is mentally insane. One surrogate parent passed on. The other is a bigoted, holier than thou Catholic, which is as good as dead to me. My estranged sister drinks their cool aid and a healthy dose of her own. None of this bothered me too much the day before the reckoning, and now I cannot stop myself from tilting. From laundry lists. My therapist says lists are good. They are a playbook for past deflections.

I wish this life did not require so much atonement.

Toward the end of Nashville year two my EFF quit her day job to become a personal trainer. I became her first and biggest customer. We worked out almost everyday together, benching and squatting the weight of people clear over our heads, and basically having talk therapy sessions in between sets. It was bliss. The bonding was off the charts. It was also incredibly empowering and beneficial to my health and confidence.

Year 3 into 4 was a mammoth sized growth spurt for me. The last lingers of my teenage dirt-bag-dom were shaken from me. I lost a bit of weight, enough to lift the shame and appreciate my body. I got hella strong. I also discovered fat positivity, and took it immediately and irrevocably to heart. The small business I grew from nothing was a full time income, my partner and I married and reunited our household in Nashville, I sold my zines at my first fest and became part of that community. I shaved half my head and wrapped my 300 pound body in tight ass clothing. I danced, IN PUBLIC. The plan for Nashville was simply to get better. Even pessimistic old me had to admit that was happening.

The best friend's life changed too. She went back to work, which put an immediate road block smack in the middle of our routine. She always referred to us as platonic life partners. I always said that going to the gym, getting high on those endorphins, pushing each other to kill the parts of ourselves we wanted to be free of, was our relationship's version of sex. When the sex ends... well, you know.

Our little friendship utopia was no longer attainable strictly from scheduling conflicts. We did our best to make time for the gym, and we even strung together some months and weeks of normalcy, but once the crack appeared it only grew deeper. Divides started, and with all my heart I know we both continually tried to find the remedy. I wish we had just put our emotions on the table then, made some sort of contract we could place our trust in, and let life
circumstances run at their wild without sweeping us up and away from each other.

When we went to the gym she'd make a beeline to the mirror to pinch her fat and share her disgust. I was just happy to be there to move my body around and challenge my muscles to lift things. When I would push back about her body hate she would call me sassy, and ignore the point. We had the same goals on paper, but our hearts had grown apart. The gym was no longer our temple no matter how many times we would go. Despite the huge shift in stability, I think we could have adapted to not having our gym routine, eventually, and if no other changes plagued us that is.

Of course that did not happen.

Year 4 was revolutionary for me. I rebuilt the shit out of my self esteem, body positivity, and confidence. It all started with a new friendship that sort of fell into my lap, and with it brought more people falling into my lap. Diverse women who I could not believe were inviting me into their life. Seeing myself through their eyes was another moment that saved my life. I also found my birth doula calling during this time. I went to professional workshops. Me, the woman who would cry about going to the grocery store just 3 years ago. Me, the woman who once spent a year of her life only leaving the house every 6 weeks. Stepping outside after being indoors that long, the amount of air and the breadth of the sky, it makes you dizzy. Year 4 I came into my own by way of adventure.

Year 5, last year. The EFF is not having the best of times. She is super successful at her job, half way to being able to quit with enough money saved to open her new venture. But, it's hard work with long hours and endless drama. She's not able to be as social as she wants, as healthy as she wants, or as accomplished in other areas of her life as she wants. She expresses this to me and I vow to find more ways to support her.

I am doing good, happy to have a few friends, but a little restless to break out into the world even more. Volunteer, get involved, meet new people. The friends I have are great, but aside from the bestie, they aren't really my people on a deep, soulful level. EFF needs fresh blood in her life as well, so we start going to community meetings. An orientation for an LGBT organization. A craft night hosted by riot grrrls.

It seemed like a great idea. We did everything else together. What could go wrong? There seemed like only good vibes to gain, and if I had the choice again I would have chosen the same.

We both join Nashville Riot Grrrls, a new feminist group. At that first meeting, they christen me their zine kween. Flashing forward through the next 6 months: I host a bunch of zine nights, put out a monthly zine, and become an integral group member while EFF does not get involved. Reasons explained to me group is drama ridden, disorganized, and a pointless time suck. Reasons given to group members: work schedule but I REALLY want to be a part of everything so keep inviting me. I also make friends with about 20 group members, some of which I independently start hanging out with which naturally leads to them taking up roles in my close circle. EFF is also friends with most of these people, but since she is rarely present for group events and doesn't hang independently, most of the friendships are by association.
The pivotal issue here is we made mutual friends. Lots of them I also am closer to some of her friends. People I knew at parties for years, but due to my varying degrees of awkwardness in Nashville years 1 - 3, I never talked to very much.

The last six months of year 5 are when things went downhill and sideways.

She's always talked shit about people in her life. How they were incompetent, always expecting her to be unconditionally helpful, belittling them for their choices or interests, scolding them behind the scenes for a multitude of injustices. It went way beyond venting. I admit I participated in this mean girls shit sometimes. I wanted to belong, assimilate into my one big friendship that gave me permission to not have any others when I was in the thick of my tough times. But, now I knew these people. I loved some of them.

It was easy to take her side when the other side was just an abstract idea, not a flesh and blood human being.

She also had a fake persona, online at first and then in person. The perfect this or that, when behind the scenes she revealed herself to be just straight up lying. She put what she needed to be seen as above what she truly was. It was described to me as wanting to put your best version forward. I totally get that. We all do it. We all have these snappy internet profiles and plastic facades in certain situations. But, there has to be a point when you are authentic with the people you love.
Again, this had been part of her personality all along. I even used to find it motivating in my early Nashville life when she would be blasting all this positivity online (no matter what was happening offline) I would be like, oh shit, I gotta get my life together this week. Somewhere in my growth I stopped comparing myself to other people as much, so that what they did was simply that. I could be happy for them, I could be inspired, I could be unaffected, but I was not going to compete with or internalize their actions. I am not about superiority.

Now, this constant best foot forward even if it’s a lie shit was too much. And, BFF was tone deaf to my soft addresses of the situation. Why can’t you just tell them you don’t want to do this? Why are you taking credit for that? Her taking credit for creations or ideas that were not hers was provably the worst, especially sitting in a room full of people basically applauding her. I wanted to clap for her success, not a made up version of the success she wished she had because it that success was cooler than the ones she had.

I was devastated when I realized my BFF was a fraud. This person that I had invested in, trusted, valued, idolized even. Our tattoo appointment was quickly approaching, the realizations and connections were hitting me practically everyday, and the few people I trusted to give me feedback were all supporting me in the direction of confrontation.

I didn’t sleep for a week. I made obsessive lists. I wrote out the entire timeline of our friendship. Looked like a fucking court case. Was I unkind? I don’t know. I gave it to her straight, because I trusted that we could say anything to one another. It was the two of us on the couch with my clipboard between us. The timeline queued up, because I did not want to get the dates wrong. She knocked on my door instead of just coming in like usual. I knew in that moment that I was right to prepare for the defensive version of my friend.

She cried a lot. Deflected a lot. Argued that everything I saw and felt was me telling her that I just couldn’t handle her venting. That I shouldn’t be affected by this or that. That she was normal and I was inadequate. Her whole reaction to me that day matched up quite well with a vulnerable narcissist.

We hugged and said I love you at the end. I think I might have even made an awkward joke about remembering me. That tells me that even though I have been shocked for months about the abrupt ghosting, I must have known on some empathetic level that those were the last hugs we would ever share.

So, why did I shred the bonds of a tightly wound tapestry into pieces? Me, the writer too impatient to learn to sew. The scissors, just for a notable tailor, snipping scraps threadbare on the table from the bone. The list, but not the kind you take on a shopping trip. Cold instruments are necessary for such a procedure. Measure twice a day for 12 years, cut only once, as deep as you said our love crept.

Destruction requires no intentions. I know this now that I have reeled up a few. When you put your hands on someone they rarely forget the harm caused.

Our house is overgrown. The edges of the mulched landscaping have all but disappeared into a growing hoard of angry vegetation. The transition is cheap, one bullshit folk song to the next, without much skill. Without jazz. Without a comforting chorus to follow home. I face this scene of confusion every morning as I watch the dogs play across structures laid by better families.
We aren't meeting up on the regular anymore to lift the heavy things. I hate that I cannot take the first steps back to the regimen without my wing man. So, I cling to my emotional workouts. Makeshift and torturous, until I embrace a true alternative.

You cried so much when I told you how fake you'd been. Disingenuous. How image could not be more important than honesty. That Mufasa was just a beautiful cartoon, no longer the sage ruler of a kingdom. That you lost my loyalty in resigning your own. My calculations brought us within a fingerbreadth of your bones.
Gracelessly, you disappeared in a victim rendered cloud. I am haunted by mental pictures of you lowering your self to your subjects as they pat you on your greasy flat head. The effigies donated to the Goodwill. The empty space you'd rather fill with what I would certainly deem squalor.

I did not tell you to fuck off. I ended nothing but a well received, deceitful performance. I regret no moment as an artist. As an object of risk. I regret no words as a writer. I will deliver myself. I challenged you to rise to your own occasion. Fit your mold for once. And further, to break it. Except, I guess I didn't, and perhaps you were smart to cut out early enough to dodge the reverb. The challenge is really for me, and I had to make sure that my effort went into the real work, not just surface competition.

Someone told me that you're wearing wildly colored pants now. You do the yoga. That's your stance now. Far be it from me to dissolve the thread of that pattern. Costumes are no longer my burden. I love you and I release you. I release myself. Death to every puppet.

This is my first substantial break up of any kind. The days after the talk I was relieved that the confrontation was over, indifferent to the outcome, and unprepared for what went down. There is not much fact left to print. She declined a follow up conversation, canceled our joint tattoo appointment, and said she didn't know if she'd ever be able to process what I said. All of that through email. A week later she and several mutual friends unfollowed me on social media without a word as to why. That was two months ago. I used to have a best friend is the name of this song. It will always make me cry.
I was not expecting the silence. The ghost you became. The ghost I have accepted. Defriending me on Facebook as a means to make a closing statement. You know defriending is not really a word, right? It’s underlined. It’s dangerous. How fucking preteen level petty! I just turned 35. We live 5 minutes from each other. If we had kids, they would go to the same school. Again, is this really happening?

I also wasn’t expecting to feel so relieved, but life is lighter. The weight I carry is strictly my own. I move unhindered, rid of the never-ending competition. Good riddance to the fake smiles and awkward hugs at my events. Goodbye to you trying to turn me against my friends, because you are so insecure and threatened. So worried they would see through your fake facade like I did. So worried you would lose my praise. Never again to the pedestal, to the status without intimacy, to mistaking loyalty for trust, to the molds I was never meant to fit.

On my worst days, I think it’s going to be a long time before I venture out again to the middle of a bridge. On my best, I dream about moving there. Taking up residence on the weakest plank. Enduring the open air without expectation. Sleeping deeply. Bravely waking to my own reflection. Willing myself to make the necessary waves. Thoughts of jumping; a meditation.

The artwork in this book is a compilation of imagery I have had on my walls throughout the years, including two pieces I had hanging on my bedroom door back in our shared flat 12 years ago. I took every reminder of her down the day we passed one month of silence. Most of it I donated or threw out. There is one framed art print left; half of a heart that I painted last Christmas, the other half she has. Or doesn’t. I don’t know the rules of break ups.

I believe this break is final. We have two close mutual friends that are still in both of our lives. We are proper adults, no one is sharing details around, which has been a blessing. But, they both offered some observations. One tells me that she thinks it’s just a rough patch in a lifelong friendship. The other says she thinks the best friend felt like I was saying she was a terrible person and to kindly vacate my life. I don’t know. Every day of this silence hardens me more. I know I hurt her feelings with my truth. I hope she knows she broke my heart by becoming a ghost.

I believe to be a good friend you have to listen without judgment. I also believe to be a good friend you have to be true to yourself, or else any value you provide to another person is built on shaky ground. It’s so hard to know you broke a vow for yourself, at a cost to another, without punishing yourself.

Cutting the limb of this friendship off was my first step in this new stage of my evolution. I think most of my regret isn’t because I want things back to the way they used to be, or even that I believe a better version of the friendship exists somewhere down the line. I’m just scared out of my fucking mind. Daunted by the path I must take alone. I am doubting myself.

I am judging the shit out of my character, too. I know I would not have confronted all of this if our gym routine were still intact, because I place a high premium on my continued health rehabilitation. But, would we have even gone down this path of separation if that foundation was never decimated? The guilt plays tricks on my mind.

I also borrowed some wings. A friend who had just gone
through a my breakup offered invaluable council leading up to my confrontation. In my weaker moments, when I just wanted to let all my concerns go into the wind and free myself of having to come to grips with the state of my relationship, I decided I was going to live up to the conviction I conveyed to her. A conviction I had trouble maintaining in direct relation to however long it had been since we last talked.

I am proud that I faced a wrong when I knew I was risking the loss of my better half. I do not always feel great about how I got there though. Did I abandon my friendship too soon? Is abandon the right word? I mean the last line of my response to her email was I am always here if you want to talk. Why can't my answer of no to that question put it to rest? Did I do this entirely for myself? Do I use people? How wrong was it to expose the lies of one friend to another friend in that final hour? Pounds of justification aside, that was a straight up betrayal. My methods have left me wrestling with many questions that I am trying to work out in therapy.

This was exhausting to explain. I am putting this account out into the world knowing that I will revise and recompose the story as my emotions and intellectual understanding grows. Change can be comforting.

Don't think there is too much of a moral to this story. Communicate, I guess. Re-calibrate your self focus a lot. Be more centered, more compassionate, less reliant on others opinions of yourself. Know that you are strong and brave and capable, and life's challenges are ever evolving. There is no point at which you have done enough growing. If you are having a hard time finding a parking spot at the grocery store, re-approach.

I think I have come to the conclusion that I just cannot handle friendships. I further think that this is exactly the struggle I should be having 8 weeks post my best friendship breakup. And, I will admit that I have done no research to investigate whether or not this is true, standard, or acceptable. Not even a quick Bustle article. The process will be had raw, and from this point on, quite solitary. My friends were all incredibly accessible and supportive in the first phase of this, and they still are, but I am having trouble leaning anywhere in their direction.

My pain has turned me temporarily bitter with a trigger happy sensitivity. My neediness is insatiable. Despite the irreconcilable differences, I need my best friend. That familiar person, back in their usual role. Dependable. In actuality I am not craving her at all, but an older version of myself with less awareness. Until this need passes, I cannot pursue closeness with anyone.

I feel like I have lost everyone. Less snowballs.

Healing isn't linear. You'll have the best day through the bad weather and deck yourself clear and concise through the rainbows of Summer. There are two signs on my wall. One that says: I am about lust, empowerment, and discovery. The other says: I am about heartbreak, rebirth, and power. I feel like I might have meant the same exact thing, but chose my words within the conflict of different days.

Every well meaning person says take your time. Time will heal. Time will make a difference. Time will change. Yeah, fine. I fantasize about running.
If I got into my car right now, I could trace my way back to my old city, and it would take me in its pavement arms, no questions asked. One long night on the road, probably listening to Nebraska. Avoiding the state troopers. I could wash Sylvia and Sara and Sally from my skin at every rest stop on the way. 1200 miles and a few tanks of gas and I could back myself up to the location of square one. Sounds almost like defeat until I muse on the possibilities of second chances and the benefits of solitude. Until I remind myself that I am smarter.

I sound like a bad country song waiting to happen. Another turn at wasted time, in line for a replica of previous scenes.

I am having trouble unpacking my responsibility. Whatever lines existed have withered away. While I know my words were true, and that the discomfort had been mounting for almost a year before I took the risk and said something, I am dealing with a lot of regret. Wondering if I made a mistake, not in having the talk, but perhaps in the way I handled the aftermath. We were supposed to talk again. You promised.

Another sign on my wall: your friends will carry you home.

I want to deactivate my Facebook profile, because I am so tired (and perhaps ill equipped) to deal with the online personas of people I know. People who are not as confrontational in person. Not as content. Not as focused. Not as witty. Anyone can write a damn sentence in their pajamas between tears and Netflix and seem like a bright monument of adulthood. I’m just done with appearances, my own included. Don’t even get me started on narcissism.

But, if I leave Facebook won’t I feel more disconnected? Stay for the event updates and just take a break otherwise. Only check it every other day. Moderation is my least favorite concept.

I am buying New Kids on the Block tickets, because fuck yeah I am still alive and in the business of fun. Making zines about my broken heart in an attempt to heal, pass the time, and be a small part of someone else’s healing process. Trying to freshen up my look with new glasses. Fantasizing about shaving my head, and experimenting with more androgynous clothing choices. Learning to screen print. Working on myself basically.

I am resting a lot, which I feel defensive about. Rest is not the same thing as being lazy. It also comes in many forms and should not be judged. You might do yoga or garden. I binge tv and edit photos. To each their own. I am also being selfish with my time. This is a struggle, because I have a fear that I am missing out on social gatherings and adventures. I tried to fake it for the first few weeks after the break up, figuring I could overpower the effects on my psyche with sheer willpower. Nope.

I made this depression announcement on my social media to address what I thought might be perceived as antisocial behavior.

Depression has laid its heavy hand upon me, and I just wanted to acknowledge this here. I am used to my own up and down cycles, and have learned to ride the waves without much stress or damage to my general life. Three separate rogue waves blasted me in the
last year, the last of which has me in a constant battle to keep my head above the water. It also has me second guessing a lot, in particular, relationships.

When you are in the struggle, it is hard to figure out whether people notice or not. I feel like I am socially at a half withdrawl. Straddling the line between giving myself space and time to heal, while also maintaining support networks and community connections, plus remembering to wash the dishes is exhausting. Sometimes, the space I take is unbearably lonely, even if I have chosen it, and the fear that the space will become permanent haunts me. Sometimes, I force myself to socialize, and despite the warm reception, I walk away feeling like a failure for some insane reason that probably does not even exist. My big sad brain tends to internalize a lot more than usual. I cannot trust my read of situations. I feel like a burden. Snowball, snowball, snowball. Long day in hell.

All of this is to say that if you have noticed a change in the manner or frequency I interact with you, please understand that I am in the shit. Please talk to me about any feelings you may be having. I promise I can handle them, and I even welcome them. My initiative is just underground at the moment.

Oh, and don't worry. I am taking care of myself and leaning on the appropriate resources. I just don't see the light at the end of the tunnel yet. I needed to share to inform, and also to take the pressure off of myself to snap back. Any day now is technically true, but is full of tension. I prefer at some point. I have hope.

A lot of concern was expressed, so much that I started to feel weird. Of course I appreciated the outpouring, and the love was validating, but some people seemed to think I was worse off than I am. Depression isn't tears for me. It isn't something you can wrap your arms around. It's a huge filter on my excitement meters. It takes so much energy to participate in my passions. It takes so much energy to fight my vices, like oversleeping, overeating, over-isolating.

I have been cleaning house online. It started with deleting old blogs that I was never going to return to. I scrolled through many pictures and recognized a look in my eyes that I have not seen in a good long while. I remembered how legitimate taking smutty self portraits made me feel, and that this feeling was exponentially more intense when I posted them on a blog I made for my other X.

Then I went looking for the breadcrumbs I knew you had left: your blog for me. Not at all surprised to find it had been kept up fresh. See, I'm desperate to refill the cup left empty. I'm desperate for that new relationship energy. More reasons why I cannot trust myself within relationships right now.

For people that know me, please don't freak out. I am not going to go getting involved with someone who is bad for me. However, I am not above setting our insides on fire for a limited time as a sort of shock treatment therapy. If the lines are drawn, understood, and agreed upon, is that not a fair exchange regardless of the powerful charge of the current? It's okay if we both label this fun.
I opened her blog and this is what happened.

I want to emphasize some old school thing. My preamble includes back in the day, but then I start second guessing my choice of word play. Will the reader understand I am talking about 15 years ago? Will they understand that my life is both wide and deep? I replace the day with the year 2001. The imagery deflates like my ass on a gas station burrito. We will never not hear Space Odyssey.

Today it rained. The periwinkle velvet sky hanging over downtown at just about 5 o'clock reminded me of how it felt to tell you about the softness of my day. How it felt to have someone hang on your every word. Reminded me of those balmy Florida nights, when rain felt inevitable like all the time. I'd pace up and down the street on a borrowed phone keenly aware of how I was living the very moments I would look back on. Then I would type away into the night, sending off my emails, falling asleep with anticipation for your response in the morning. Getting off on the mention of poetry.

Generally, we wake up in the same bed, but it does not feel like it used to.

At best I can offer you the anger I laid to rest. Severity aside, you'll hear lust where I don't mean it. With everything to lose I'll wake myself up at night from a dream of pink water spilling over the edge of your bathtub. The deeper you sink, the deeper the red flows. The longer I watch, the longer my book reads.

I almost wavered out of habit, for old time's sake, because it has been too long since I felt much power. But what's the point? Another year older, more packs of rat neatly added to the pile, nothing of value left under the mire. I am tempted to accept your pressing of my button. Tempted to bend at the nod, at the waist, at all of your magnificent altars.

The screen is open. I have resigned to log on for the first time in over a year. I spent my 35th entirely without you. Well, unless you want to get technical and count my nightly scroll of your blog. Last night it was a flower blooming in slow motion, thumbs in mouths, bruises barely seen through thin lace panties.

Makes my room smell of cut grass and the wet mounds of earth lifted up through blades freshly parted. It must have been love starts playing and I'm wearing a ragid baja hoodie in that cave. There is a fire, but it'll be miles before we find shelter.

Two days ago it was a galaxy, stars, and one fist full of tongues tied with satin. Driving an old Chevy, lifting your skirt so high it must tickle your nose. Now I smell honeysuckle, which is strange, because I know for a fact there is nowhere nearby that it grows. I looked. I have walked many miles searching for days of old. Another night it was all plea. Please. Don't I want to take a chance? Don't I want to climb the stairs? Don't I want to swim over you like a frog in water, all limbs, gliding and spread at every angle? Don't I want to get into the tub fully clothed and rub your face raw like a wild panther?

Taped fingers and joints. Dirty bits and smudges. I can already hear the disapproval in your voice. That conversation. The one we have had every few years, about every one of these filthy nights or flirty nights or the nights you freak out and check yourself into the hospital and I spend hours on hold trying to figure out what the
fuck has gone so wrong. That conversation where you call me a fighter. Normally I would take no offense, but in your world every fight produces a victim. Again, we revisit the violence.

Haven't you heard of positive resistance?

The last night I am going to acknowledge is labeled abnormal brain. Godzilla blasting through power lines. Lonely for only you, silver convulsions falling like teardrops from a plush turquoise cloud. Sitting in pile of records, alone, wearing shoes two sizes too small. Getting fingered on the subway in plain view.

That's when I knew we had gone too far, and I tried to make it stop. You looked at me as if all would be well. Regretfully, I held this gaze, this belief, as our thumbprints aligned, until I realized that this joining synthesized the eye of numerous storms. So, I broke your hand, shattered your eye, and kicked you over and over as you fell from the high tower.

Get this through your heartsick head. We are not reliving these nights, because they never actually happened. At best they are flashes from videos, superimposed. Fucked up fantasies. At best they give you breath and warm as you indulge, while you go deep sea diving. There is no smell of seaweed on my hands. I am not your siamese moon. The taste for reinvention is over.

Then I closed the blog and with it the forces of habit.

There is a point in every book I read, where my impatience gets the best of me, and I skim forward a bit. This happens in my writing as well. I start from the beginning of whatever story I am telling, and somewhere in the second act I stroke out. I fixate on some element of the story that we have not built scaffolding for. Untethered, the lines sit there glaringly out of place, but more substantial than the whole of the piece. If I trusted the process, I'd dalete every word outside of this rebellion and start again.

There is a saying: I believe in submarines. I also believe in the corners of a post it note stretched in perfect crumpled unison. I believe in pretend and fair forms of competition. It's all a race, and I am on your side, right up until the moment when we cannot agree on who should be driving. That's my cue to leave, in what I hope you will one day understand, as avoidance of suicide.
I am happy when I do something I like.
I am happy when I’m with someone I like.
I am happy because I like myself.

The End