EVEY in orbit

the cold months

NO.2. Secular Witchcraft, Being 36, Community, Boundaries, Trusting Myself, Friendship is Hard, Magic
NOVEMBER

There is so much to say, but none to say it to. I'm feeling rejected by a friend I indecisively parted ways with. I'm feeling left out. Passed over. I'm worried you are better off without me. I'm worried you hate me. I'm worried you don't. I'm angry that in the end you so expertly killed me with silence. I'm angry that I believed you for so long. I'm angry that I hugged you goodbye. I'm angry that I am filled with fear. I'm angry that your life goes on. I'm angry that I cannot escape the endless comparisons.

Isn't that ridiculous? I have so many answers that require questions. And, I am doomed to have them cast shadows on every wall in my head until I figure out how to transcend the triggers, or perhaps repent.

It is so hard to deal with fake people. To be jealous of a fake person, because you are having a low day or a moment of insecurity. It's so hard to feel rejected by a lifestyle you rightfully decided didn't fit after trying it on. I read it takes a month of grieving for every year you knew someone. Though I am firmly planted in the hibernation and slow shadows of winter, spring is out there somewhere and soon enough I will be bursting at the seams. I will reclaim my city, my movements, my community. I'll have had the suffering and the solid bits of scar tissue will be the foundation.

I'm shaving my head on December 31st. I'm burning the cycles of the moon into my arm, because the mark there now is a promise I made to myself and already fulfilled. It's satisfying to cross off a list. To cross off. To change my fucking mind.

I'm rereading the Harry Potter book series, because it is November and I need a story to follow as I knit. Also, because it always was and always will be mine. I'm drinking a tea of turmeric and ginger each morning. It is cleansing, or maybe not, but it tastes good. I take baths under constellations I drew on the ceiling. They float on walls swept with chalk.
as dark as ink. I practice at an altar of leaves and knives and owl feathers. I am my ritual. Celebrating and unraveling previous versions of myself. Wildly engaging with my core. I am my warmest embrace.

When I can't organize my thoughts into writing, like I am trying to do right now, I do a multitude of things. Eat, of course. This time dark chocolate covered almonds as big as my fingers. Music. This time nothing but the sounds of open windows. Often I scroll a muse's feed and free associate until before I know it I am lost in the metaphoric weeds. A place I always want to be.

I see a hot mouth releasing fangs, my body exposed but out of focus, birds or a winged man escaping from the windows. Some lecture about how we keep the dead alive by carrying them as ghosts inside. I think we are the ghosts. I also think we are alive. Folds of parchment, brittle, covered in charcoal eyes. One mouth now, holding a bullet between the teeth as she holds the birds. One in her hand against her breast, against her caged ribs speckled with stars. The other held in suspension covering her face. A spectacle. A scar.

Do I really need to make a zine about the cold months when I've already posted all my questions and answers to be picked over like petals? A heart beating in open air and washed under faucets. Her arrow at the ready, my lighter set. Buds taking their sweet time to turn pink from red.

Someone in my neighborhood now has a drum set. The ice cream truck is out because it's bizarrely 80 degrees. I live close enough to a public park with a baseball field that the shouts make their way to my window on game nights and that crack of the bat makes me feel like I am 10 again. Playing baseball in my local PAL league. It's the last year that we play with the boys, on one team, with the same equipment. The last year before they pull us to the side, and some girls stop playing entirely, and they give us a bigger ball. A bigger ball that isn't actually softer and has scientifically been proven to be harder to hit because there is less time for the hitter to react. Softball isn't women's baseball, it is an entirely different sport. This is hardly our first lesson is sexism.

I live on a hill in an area of hills. Sitting in front of a window I only see trees and power lines and the lights from another hill's road. Sometimes I pretend those lights are an airplane that's about to crash.

I want to move to a place that has rocks big enough to live under. If I can't move there permanently, then at least I could holiday there every shitty anniversary. Of which there are many by the way, because the older we get, the larger the collection of relationships gone wrong. My phone wouldn't work under the rock. Defensive gestures would not penetrate the rock. And you, well we'd have to rely on our strings.

Today I bought a car sitting on the toilet and Saturday I pick it up from a vending machine. True story. What a time to be alive. Still working on my Christmas tree issue: it won't stand up on its own. Lot of good my solid oak bullshit does when I chose a tree whose trunk is apparently too soft. And, I bought a blanket from a thrift shop that looks like something my grandmother could have made if she knew how to sew, was generous, or liked me. I'll put it on my couch and let others draw their conclusions.

Today also involved taking everything off the walls (it seems) and putting the pieces back together. Dragging my idols out onto the lawn and changing colors right in front of them. Eating fries that taste like the freezer: Getting caught in the sun spots. Burning. Reinventing. Hacking away at the list, peacefully. Productively. I think we place too high a value on productivity. I'm supposed to be knitting right now. Hydrating. Toiling under the lights, incandescent, trying their best to be a good stand in. I'm supposed to be not putting pressure on myself, which is a very tall order. I'm supposed to be honest and humble, because I have broken ties with people. Dishonor. Or they did. I am still not quite sure on those facts. I am basically supposed to steer clear of the water until I am sure of the depth, but also swim because my body needs water. I am a
woman, so I am used to having unreasonable expectations put upon me, but come on!

I think about writing songs. I know nothing about writing songs.

I have thought many times on the days leading up to the anniversary of the first whole year. Should I send a letter, return your keys, set fire to the tree I buried the relics below? If I could truly muster the magic I'd send every owl in the realm to perch on your fence, your truck, all those boxes of land we tilled by hand. Hands that stayed empty during a harvest night I add.

This is a journal and a conversation already in progress. Context is tricky. And vital. I never know if you are talking about me or just to me. Or I guess there is also neither. I don't really have much to download. Just came to light a tiny fire in the face of the many dark nights ahead. Unpacking and repacking boxes. Unsure of what will be required of me, so I bring everything.

Mystery bleeds into lines. Romantic. Careful with all that unknown water. The depths are potent. Poisonous even. Sour. I feel like a different person than I was 10 days ago although not much has changed. I shed skin like a motherfucker. My back is razor sharp now. I filled my house with plants, which may be a foolish thing to do in winter. Green seems necessary right now. Hope and earth resting in little plastic buckets, tested by long drought with a few intense watering periods. I'm anxious to see which will survive.

This is the strangest holiday season I have ever had. And I've had some rough seasons. Been homeless on Christmas. Living with strangers. Poor in my pockets, in connection, in spirit. Everything is relatively fine. More than fine. I just can’t locate my usual holiday cheer. Thus I haven’t yet practiced any of my traditions. Not even having a cookie party this year, mostly because I do not want to deal with the weird Facebook etiquette people have adopted concerning events. Interested is not an acceptable answer to an invitation. Anyway, life without ritual feels meaningless and a tad pathetic. My sense of community has suffered from friendship loss. Rebuilding takes more time than I think anything deserves, much less myself.

I was just about to quip that I don’t even give myself the time to take baths, but this is no longer true.

DECEMBER

I know it is cheesy to truly discover the magical healing powers of soaking in the tub at the ripe age of almost 36, but this is exactly what happened. As a fat body I have always kind of looked at my tub, muttered a wistful someday line to myself, grunted and went along with my day. The tub wasn’t for me. Just like rock climbing, aerial yoga, and hot pants. On the coldest day in December I decided that however awkward I may look or feel in my tub, I could try to enjoy a soak. So I did. I lit candles, took a cold apple cider with me, and sunk in shallow waters. It just so happened to be a full moon night. It just so happened that my bathroom window let in moonlight directly into my little pool. It just so happened that magic, and what being a witch without a coven or creed or a validating mechanism meant to me, and what my practice could look like had all been swirling in my head for many months. Perhaps years. And, this bath, it provided a huge aha moment.

You see, my X best friend of over 10 years was a witch, but she wasn't very inclusive about it. The only way you could participate in witchy things was to ask her for help, center her experience and expertise, always be subservient. I sort of avoided the topic and pretended like I didn't care, because I hated the way I was treated as a perpetual beginner. Identifying as a witch was so strongly hers that it could never be mine. I chalked it up to the price of friendship.
In the year since we parted, I have experimented with a few things in the "her column," but witchcraft was the most stubborn to reclaim. I obviously experienced some trauma from X and thus closed the door to spirituality. A door, might I add, that was hard to reopen the first time as I was considering delving deeper into witchcraft because I grew up Catholic. Talk about trauma. Something about that bath smoothed all my edges and gave me a safe space to drift and acknowledge how I had arrived at this moment. I realized that I have been cultivating a practice for years without naming my rituals. I naturally set intentions and attempt to let go of bad energies in time with the phases of the moon, I grow healing plants, there are many altars with bits of personal historical objects and pieces of rummaged nature around my house, I collect in jars, I talk to animals, my years starts in February, I believe humming has healing powers. The list goes on.

I think I am lucky that I came to witchery later in life. I didn’t have a pagan phase, I’ve never seen The Craft, I wasn’t a goth. There is nothing wrong with any of those experiences. I am just grateful that there is no dogma, fashion, or habit to unlearn. I am serious because I know myself. On the flip side, there are so many books to read, so much curiosity to satisfy. I tend to drown and retreat in the face of feeling irreversibly behind. I feel like everything is ruined a lot. All I can do is remind myself that the dark voices in my head are insincere and I must remain bound to the light. And also that my practice is entirely self-determined and right for me.

If you are into witch talk these are podcasts I recommend (in my fairly limited experience): Practical Witches, Witchcraftsy, Dream Freedom Beauty, and PDX Witch Guild. PDX is pretty rad as it is just a small group of secular witches that chat about topics and share their experiences. Sort of like those mid morning talk shows like The View. The guild includes Alex Wrek who is my personal zine hero. Sadly, it only has 4 episodes and seems to have ended abruptly. Alex is involved in a big court case so maybe that put the brakes on side projects. I hope it comes back. I do not have a witch community as of yet, so it’s nice to feel like I am hanging with my people through podcasts. I think about doing a podcast sometimes. Maybe someday.

Despite my increased use of herbs and the protective charms I have made, I have the flu. I’m trying to read about astrology, because I am fascinated, but my brain is heavily medicated. Everything hurts my eyes. I remember having the flu so many years ago and trading texts with a muse like they were vital fluids. Now we are what, penpals? I wonder what will flash before our eyes when we die. I have a feeling it is going to be those people and places we willfully faded to survive. Anyway, astrology. I find it comforting. I find it full of discovery. I am an Aries, Pisces rising, moon in Cancer. I have never read anything about that combination that didn’t fit me perfectly.

These two signs are totally antagonistic. Your Pisces Ascendant gives you an outward appearance which is indifferent and placid, or sometimes visionary. At first glance, you seem flexible and adaptable. You are easily accepted by other people because you are most often appreciated for your empathy and your tolerance towards persons who are more different. You cleverly weave your way through tricky situations, but you never forget the object of your devotion, which could be an idea, a love, a project, etc., and this is what makes you seem so mysterious when people meet you for the first time.

Unlike your Aries Sun, which urges you to take action quickly and to demonstrate boldness at the risk of offending your interlocutors, your Pisces Ascendant is more cautious and dislikes strongly marked differences because it prefers to escape from the painful necessity to make mutilating and illusory choices. Nevertheless, one must bear in mind that beneath Pisces’ ambiguous behavior, your independent and fiery Aries Sun can show up at any time.

Moon in cancer makes me mad sensitive. Apparently, I express readily
and forcefully and with considerable dramatic effect. Advice I should take: You have to overcome a tendency to appear hard-boiled through being too matter of fact. You see the intellectual and sensible solution to personal problems so readily that you don't quite get the emotional turmoil of less intellectual people who feel more and analyze less. Try to see things from the other fellow's viewpoint. Learn to temper your independence with cooperation and tact and with consideration for the wishes and feelings of others, and there is nothing you cannot do.

I wish I could get the last hour of my life back in which I agreed to facilitate more than I can handle. Sometimes I am too generous without much foresight and nasty consequences are dealt to myself and those that I love. An incomplete inventory of my chaos: hosting family for Christmas, still smarting from immense loss of friendship, learning to trust myself again, impatiently riding the road of recovery that I will be on for eternity. My body has taken the hits when my heart could not go on, so there is imbalance to repair. Work I previously did with more resources. More calm. I both love and loathe my inability to quit.

There is a gold side to this coin. I know who I am and I have new aspirations. My home is filled with intention and is fertile for joy. I suffer fools less. I make more noise.

I drank and over ate sugar throughout Christmas (shocker) and I'm still paying for it in an awful bout of lethargy. My hands don't quite feel attached to my body. I'm angry that I let the stress get to me, but I can't blame myself for surviving the only way I know how. Today I am cleaning, clearing drawers filled with the past. I'm preparing for the turn of the new year. Selected blank walls for new ideas to form. Smudging and protective spells to center within myself, within my home. An hour of silence to say goodbye. An hour of silence to be born anew.

Doesn't take much to bring me back from the brink. A touch of tart berry to my lips or a foot dangling in the sun. I can already feel how big a role
ritual and energy are going to play in this year for me. It's exhilarating. A strange feeling inside that I once thought was vanity or ego has shown itself to be my connection to the raw power of the earth. I am no longer just poetry. However, my words stronger.

JANUARY
First reading of the year for the first new moon of the year. Trying to get my head to at least attach itself to my body. This spread asks about fear and hope, how they each manifest in my life. What can I release from my life to both transform and ground myself? What is my intention and will I be brave enough to make it real?

So many swords. Always a battle.

The nine of wands is one of my favorite in this deck. It is an illustrations of a staircase with a wand on each stair leading up to a golden crescent moon. I pulled this for my grounding card and it could not have been more fitting. The card represents inner strength and stamina. I see the moon as a confidant, an integral piece of my support system. Using the tools of magic I will always have a clear path to her and thus the strength of my energy will remain potent as long as I take the time to ground myself with ritual and rumination. I did a separate single card reading to try and understand the connection I have with my muse and pulled the daughter of cups. A creature that seems simultaneously fragile and powerful. This card may be telling me to open my heart. That there is magic in vulnerability.

I am using The Wild Unknown (just like every other witch it seems.) I am on the hunt for a new deck, something that is more than artistically pleasing. I'm connected to this deck, but determined to cast and catch deeper. One day I will design my own tarot peppered with fat bottomed
mermaids worshiping Freddie Mercury and gender queer poets sailing ships perversely into the pink mouth of love.

My main altar is in flux. It was on a wide, low metal cabinet I have in my studio that stores large flat art pieces, but I didn’t like that setup. I have my trinkets in a box until I find the right space. I’m actually going to be renting studio space outside of my home for the first time, so my current art space will go back to being more of an office/project space. I think I’ll build a wood shelf and put a meditation pillow under it. Metal was the wrong surface no matter how many cloths I tried to layer on top of it. We must always listen to and respect the elements. And seasons.

I am definitely autumn. Like leaves, I am bold, yet reserved, and think that there is great beauty in slowly decomposing on display. I love the depth of color, the trees, the turning inward, the cozy layers. I like that ingrained new year feel September brings. I like how much my friends live for Halloween. I find joy listening to November rain in November rain. The holidays are my favorite time of year, because I’m sentimental and relish the swirls of my memories.

Winter is vital hibernation and a big self care time. I too am more comfortable in the cold, though I do take so many hot baths to kind of melt myself down. I spend a lot of energy healing. February starts my year, which is apparently an earthy tradition based on some seasonal calendar I had no idea existed. I’m consistently amazed at how intuitive my choices can be if I just embrace my natural preferences.

Spring is fun. Motivating. Cleansing and clarifying. I pay the most critical attention to myself during this time. I reinvent. Set the tone for the year. My ambitions take over. I start a lot, finish very little. Definitely Aries time. I love mild weather, but it rarely lasts long. I try to camp and connect with nature during this time, but I’m rarely quiet enough internally to reach a spiritual connection. Spring is anxious and so am I.

Summer is a mixed bag. I always get a depression during this time similar to the Winter blues. I think it is because I find heat and bright light to be oppressive and it burns me out that the majority of the people around me are out there living it up. My body is impossible to escape or cover in the dead of Summer which can present a struggle on those bad body image days. That said, sunshine is fuel and warm nights are the epitome of romantic.

I hosted some friends for the full moon. We made a fire outside and burned slips of paper with our obstacles and fears written on them. Fear of running into X, be gone. Saying yes quickly when I should say no, slowly, be gone. Obsession with food, be gone. January is my least favorite month. Be gone.

Tomorrow I’m going to shave and smooth out my bumps. Take a long bath. Dance and heave and thrash myself against the mattress. Eat mashed potatoes for breakfast.

My skin is smoke and will not tolerate apologies. Having difficult conversations are often the best decision I could make. Telling the truth is actually pretty easy once you make up your mind to open the flood gates. The consequences of letting go, however, are terrifying. There is such grief and fear. It’s never ending. But, you change for the positive with each layer of healing. That part’s exciting.

Tomorrow is the second women’s march. I am struggling to write a sign that encompasses all I stand for, all we demand, all the hope that is necessary for humanity to shift. My poetry rarely translates outside of this vacuum. I’m going with Right Here, Right Now in a total nod to my childhood love of Van Halen. Back when I listened to them and Bon Jovi non stop on my mint green tape deck, while I practiced free throws in our driveway basketball hoop. Make no mistake, I grew up in horror, but I also had glimpses of a boring white middle class life.
It was around this time last year that I realized that X would have to go. I am speaking of a previous version of myself, a friend so clearly my foe. I used to think it would all shake out in the end, and I still do, but my definition of such resolution has nothing to do with reunion and all to do with pushing myself to move on. The connection reverting to dial tone is the epitome of a successful outcome.

It’s the middle of the night and I’m laying on the edge of a borrowed bed in Fort Walton Beach, FL. Dredging every inch of my floors to piece together a bit of prose to post to you. Breadcrumbs from the original factory. What a familiar scene. Tomorrow I plan to drive by the old apartment. The dumpy little duplex on Landview Drive where I picked up three of the most important women in my life. A best friend, a muse, a partner. The first no longer in this chapter.

January sucks. You are not the only one of us — minstrel, oracle, sullen beatnik — to feel the weight of this damn month. Personally, I don’t think about things getting better or applying stability to the erratic flow of water. I have learned to accommodate the lack of control. Can’t fight the Winter.

What has changed? What stayed the same? For one, I don’t just ask those questions of others, I ask them of myself. It’s probably not a good idea for me to answer these calls. Not while I am in this ocean air. Among other things, I think of you as the best friend I lost. I’m hiding, too. I’m hard on myself, too. Puffy and often feeling like I’m either the ruler of a galaxy or absolutely flailing. The epitome of grown up.

I miss lifting heavy things. This year, instead, the weight rests on me. Pools and maps my paths in reverse, let’s everyone in on how hard coming to terms and letting go has been. Winter is the last season I have to traverse until I’m okay with it being just me.

I have lost my words, a delicate hand, my voice really. The fluttering melange of birds outside my windows so engrossing that I have probably also lost my mind. Have they really come to my more southern waters for safe haven? Me, nothing but a transplant from concrete laid edge to edge upon the borders. Me, wayward and dark, entirely without morals.

One hundred draft emails sit in my account. I draft emails to myself as notes because I am too set in my ways to use a note taking app. Usually, I delete the build up of shopping lists and daily to-do’s every few weeks. But, there are still the 100. Years worth of random single lines and unfinished thoughts.

Lines like, My cup is empty save for a swirling funnel pulling. We are honey and this loosened the locks. Trans women are women. Shut up. I come from the forest. Also, for the record, this is heartbreaking.

Or lists, such as things that make me believe in magic: The smell of grass. The calm determination of nature. How it covers us and survives no matter the stone heights we construct or the sheer amount of blood we pump. How the sun wakes me up. Mist. How tress hug without touching. How they learn history, both horror and joy, and how they call us to visit them. My intuition. The face of every living thing when it first wakes up. The healing powers of humming.

**FEBRUARY**

The first day was quiet, almost sluggish. The night so far, bitter, yet golden under the wolf’s glow. I should take a bath or light a candle or charge up this pile of rocks I intend to build upon. Right now I’m laying on my back, intent on keeping my head warm. This first week will be hellish for sure. Detoxification. Sorting out the loose ends from the year before. The 30 day challenges. In the dead of night I doubt I have the energy for it.
The eleventh day is playing tricks on me. Everyone is out enjoying the short weather reprieve. The windows of my house are shut. The air is here a balmy 50 degrees. I'll leave eventually. If I had not just been in Florida I would have smelled this morning's air and instantly thought of sitting on the curb in front of CVS waiting for my ride. It wasn't a great trip. I should have had a plan, but the drive was exhausting, the energy from the unrelated reason for the trip was draining, and I pretty much wanted to go home the second I got there. I wasn't open to the deeper meanings, but I did drag myself around to old haunts. Figured a map might manifest within me and I could travel back when and if I want.

I miss the trees. There are tall palms and squat bushy ones and all sorts of scraggly weeping willows. My favorite are the pines. Tall and lanky without branches till at least 20 feet up. As if all their knees had been scraped away and they could only exist locked safely in their minds. Stuck, yet free. I brought a pine cone back for my altar.

I did in fact shave my head so I have all of this data about my scalp and hair. My hair grows half an inch in 18 days. I am surprised by how long it feels at that length. New moon rituals are probably going to have to include a maintenance shave. A solid two hours of each day is spent running my hands over my head. Tips to buzz. I like to bounce on my hair with the flat palm of my hand. It makes a satisfying sound similar to Bob Ross painting his happy little trees.

I end up with my pants around my knees a lot lately. Raging from the flick of a scroll. I have always liked fucking with some of my clothes on. The bulk to fight against. The tension of elastic keeping my thighs too close. Knit. Laced with holes I instantly start gnawing at until my hand slips through. Theirs, too. Sweater edges grazing their bony knobs as they bend and hover. My gaze fixed. Intentions true.

I can feel her searching, thumbing through forests, stomping dance floors. Willful, taut, anxious to parade her conquests. Of course wearing that face that says I don't care. Are you counting on me to know different? The year won't truly begin for me until I find the energy and light to welcome it humbly. On my knees amidst feathers. Legs crossed leaving me set wide. The graze of a finger easily led inside.

I like old words. I like knowing where they fit in the story even if the story isn't mine. We all had our time at the needles. Threads sewn into cloth to fashion a heart dead. I, now forever the embodiment of all hopes fled. The shroud placed on my head. An inverted letter A in penetrating scarlet red.

Losing a best friend. Grieving for 11 months. Falling into a pattern of self destruction. Climbing out and falling in again as the tide of the whole process ebbs and flows. Not knowing when the line of permanence can be drawn. It all fucks with you. Teaches you to be a lot more careful about what, when, and where to sow. It cracks your heart open and leaves you at your weakest to decide if your heart will heal open or closed. I'm open, but I'm hardly whole.

Need is a cage I always seem to end up alone in. Encased in steel bars, dangerously exposed. Let's be clear. I'm not here to save you, ruin you, or anything in between. I have no questions. No demands. No expectations. Give and take what you want freely. There are slivers of moon in your eyes and that's good enough for me.

I want every word I have ever written back this instant. I want to be entombed by all of the paper I have released. Stacks six feet tall putting me six feet under. The leather of my skin thirsting for markings. Neglected save for the absorption of ink. I know nothing of stones (yet), but to throw them (again.) My scents provide warning; wood smoke too close to my home, dryness, a rag stained with metals from a perpetual bloody nose. Tomorrow I will drink coffee in my boots and rain grey sweaters. With a friend most thoughtful and perceptive. Tomorrow I will open the shutters and come up to speed. Aperture on the mend.
Tomorrow, will you let me in?

MARCH


There is no reason for me to be as cold as I am. I am day dreaming about the smooth jazz they pipe into chain coffee shops in the city, about these weird brown leather boat shoes I adored as a ten year old, about this specific memory of being stuck in traffic in Philadelphia in front of a museum I planned to work at when I reached the age of independence. Connecting the dots of the moments I previously felt this way. Out on the line of hope, of cotton, of dim lights and tired eyes. A continuum.

Do I really have the flu again?

I am working hard on an art portfolio. In my entire life I have never needed one nor did I want one other than a website. Now I am filled with the immediacy of both and a mere three days to produce a stack of papers meant to be a map of the work. All my illegitimate children lined up in a row. And, then I have to stand there and potentially watch someone cut off their little heads.

I want to rip off my own toe and eat it because I eat when I’m stressed. Instead I’m resting. Still as a tree in the forest. Laying under blankets and watching the glow turn down to night. Off in the distance I think I hear them say never enough. It means nothing.

Real talk: I’m sitting in my bathrobe waiting for an Uber eats delivery, because I did not plan well today and if I don’t eat a meal soon I WILL LOSE IT. I’m thinking about the never ending struggle for balance, about how there is a fine jagged line between self care and self sabotage, about how food is both necessity and poison, about how social media is observation and not participation, about fear motivating or preventing us being decided on some secret random whim. I’m thinking about how to liberate myself from the burden of measurements.

Today was good. I am very close to securing grant money for a community zine project. It’s a scary, wondrous development and I’m determined to not be buried alive. Today was a good day for this woman in the arts.

Confession: I’m angry at my friends right now. For not getting along, for being defensive, for shit way out of my control. I’m angry at myself and my dysfunctional insides. Also at my fear that is loyal to protecting the sick instead of eradicating it. I’m pretty tired of myself at the moment and doing what I can to channel that into art. For the rest there is space and faith. The season is changing. The flat low whisper of winter is fleeting. More days will require a coat but you can’t stop spring from releasing. I’m grateful and mournful all at once.

This is always a weird time of year for me, the time of Pisces. It’s fitting that March 8th marks the silence. The fish symbolizing my old life, slippery, escaping through my lukewarm fingers. Twins ultimately ripped from one another. I always wanted a twin.

My thoughts are a smidge uncomfortable. I am teaching a class tonight, and it’s going to be fine and fun, but I was dealt this body with an insane flight or fight response to everything. Excitement is anxiety. Anything is anxiety. I wonder what it is like to have a normal nervous system. I of course will never know.

My drawing is shit today, because it needs to be perfect, and the universe is so well practiced at playing this particular joke on me. Out of frustration I may just put sunglasses on the ladies in my portrait even though that will ruin the scene. Who wants to deal with eyes and
expressions and other such idiosyncrasies? I'm tired from being a maker. From making tables to display my innards. Drilling countless holes, filling them, lacing everything together.

I am almost done being sick. My zine workshop project was funded. I don't want to talk about my birthday. I'm leaving town. Every inch of my house is dirty and I just want to throw all of my belongings out, paint over every color with a warm white, and start fresh. Spring is coming and I cannot wait for the gloriously violent transition. Spring is coming, my bones tell me; I continue to be haunted by ghosts.

I'm reading a lot about witchcraft lately. The restricted section. Reclaiming. Why do people feel like they can't follow a passion just because they are involved with someone who considers themselves a master? What's with the endless power struggles?

Kitchen witches don't necessarily have a ceremonial practice. They just try to put magical energy into their daily rituals. I suspect this often comes naturally. The older I get, the more value I place on what comes easily from the depths of within. Art, poetry, intuition. I'm not ready to name the signals I'm getting, but know they stretch further than roots. I am most certainly mine. Surfacing. External.

Now is the hour when drips rise in flood. Partners set adrift on strangely symmetrical boats. We'll pass an apple back and forth. Twins, biting at the core. Rocking gently to suckle that sweet glistening water. Self destructing as paper would melt when spread upon water. The sounds long and filled with water.

We are crumpled by regard. The mirage of distance too great all of a sudden too close. A boat built for tidal waves but not the undertow of ghosts. Our signals mimicking the salty smoke, requiring more breath and harsher afterglow. Announcements and secrets spewing in sight and drenching the lips. Heavy as stones thrown and split.

There is no choice but to wait for the light. To draw legs into the corner of intention. To visualize reflection. It'll come like a fucking tightening bolt taking every wood plank with it. When fire comes from water there can be no protection. I'll have this convulsion all alone. No problem. The sea my fateful home. (Stay angry.)

I am ready to gently move through retrograde. Being sick certainly set me back a bit with day to day life, but I was already feeling a natural instinct to pull back a bit in my relationships. I tend to put too much energy into them, to the detriment of other areas in my life, because I am afraid of losing people. I'm not ever going to be rid of that fear, but I have learned to calm the paranoia enough to recognize when I need space and to give myself permission to take it. I'm at my usual coffee place. My usual soundtrack — one I wish for you to adopt — Tom Petty's Wildflowers. The entire album.

Hearing someone use the phrase platonic life partner is like taking a shot through the heart. Somewhere right now a child is watching The Lion King and all the name Mufasa means to them is daddy lion. I called X Mufasa. I have not written or said that word aloud in a year and I won't say it again except in dreams. Nightmares really, where the pain of losing her is superimposed onto a divorce scenario with my partner.

**APRIL**

I very much want to escape the moment I am in, because I shared too much. I kinda just snapped and had an it's my party and I'll cry if I want to day. Probably shouldn't be traveling right now. I didn't want to leave my studio or my dogs, but I made plans. Planning to have fun rarely works as well as stumbling upon it unexpectedly. My brain is just looping that wah-wah sound.
The harshness of today will maybe break up a friendship or make it stronger. Certainly a learning opportunity on how to deal with unsafe people and a cautionary tale on how it's sometimes best to leave them on the sidelines lest you get left there yourself.

Birthdays are pressure filled for me. Like you have to be grateful and perform all the time, because your the main event. All I wanted was a weekend where I didn't have to make decisions or be responsible for anyone. It's so hard for me to get over clusterfucks that I feel I properly mitigated for. Sorry. I'm just laying in some stranger's bed. Everyone is asleep and I just want to fucking go home. Hopefully weird vibes are over tomorrow, but if that burden is solely on me we're going to have problems.

I'm deeply attracted to a future filled with lots of people. A clan. A family. But, I have to remember that my vessel is small. It fits me. I attempt to tug and tow in tandem with a partner. There is a little stretch of carpet for the animals I will love and lose in this lifetime. Some paintbrushes. That's it. Social shit cannot take up space in my boat.

Despite ill company, my birthday trip to Louisville was magical thanks to lots of vegan food and a trip to Cave Hill Cemetery. There was a hill with a large masonry tree trunk. The names of a mother and father on the front and the names of each child they had carved into their own broken branches. Surrounding the trunk were the graves of over 150 years worth of this family's members, each headstone a small tree trunk itself. And, a beloved magician's grave with pennies all around it, stuck in the statue's ears, at his feet. It was cool. The cemetery is an arboretum as well, so there were beautiful trees everywhere. I have an affinity with trees. I came home with lots of leaves, petals, and fallen cones that smell like burning fires. Cave Hill was full of poetry.

I also went to a witchy shop called moonstruck. Bought a lot of protective stones. Lava, blue calcite, green quartz, howlite, and pyrite. My cake had
strawberries. As hurt and frustrated as this trip was I'm ok, because my actual birthday is today and I'll be home soon. There will be a bowl of warm pasta, dogs to cuddle with, movies I've already seen, a birthday reading, and a much needed break from social media.

Today I was told that I am fiercely proud. Can't decide how I feel about that just now.

I quit when I cannot conjure castles in the air. When I cannot make sense of the dots. When I have nothing to give or want too much. When real life requires many miles and big, expensive thought. What wants now will ramp back up. My moon is in cancer, maybe has cancer, so that's just how it goes. To love me is to know that water covers rock.

Every fiber of my being wants to fold in on itself like majorly complicated origami. I blame the moon waning. I don't want to rebuild. I don't want to lift what's required. Things were going fine just a moment ago. Such is my internal sea, unpredictable. Conflict within the circle is closing in on me. How can I hike on tight legs? How can I speak when I have no confidence in the right moments? How can I feel content without forcing myself to go? Slug mode has taken over. I don't want to be around people, because damn they have such capacity to hurt you.

Friendship is magic -- and hard.

My friend – the one who could not make eye contact with me as I opened my birthday gifts, as I was celebrated – she's finally processed out of her shutdown mode and is trying to maneuver things back to normal. Not by having an actual conversation about her behavior, acknowledging, making amends. Nope, let's just be BFF's again by perpetuating a cycle I am sure her previous life encouraged. Act like a shit, avoid people for two weeks, say nothing, then invite everyone for brunch, get drunk and bask in the glory of everything feeling fine.
The me of last year would have let this slide, smiled, and moved on. Not today. Don't get me wrong, I'm not comfortable being a hard ass. Lessons learned though. Never again.

I love this person. I like this person. They add value to my life. But, that birthday experience has revealed some troubling facts. Some I have already butted up against and reconciled to simply accept, such as the intimacy wall they have. Some are alarming red flags that in hindsight I can see were always going to be a problem, and now that I have drawn lines in other relationships with these issues, they've become permanently nonnegotiable. This person has raging insecurity and because of this has a number of coping mechanisms that are problematic, the worst being that they seem to need to be on top. Seen as cooler, more beautiful, stronger, etc. I have no idea if that's truly what they believe inside, but that really doesn't matter. It's an exhausting attitude to be around and it is unsafe. And for the last fucking time universe: I AM NO ONE'S LITTLE BUDDY.

You don't know me in real life. Not to say that this isn't real, but the vision you have of me, both the good and the bad, just isn't the complete picture. Such is the internet. However honest I am with you, the content is curated. I say this because I think it may be hard for you to imagine people constantly putting me in the funny, fat side kick role, or maybe it isn't. Anyway, it happens a lot with the type of women I am attracted to in friendships. It was a dynamic that contributed to the demise of my best friendship. She had gotten used to being the best, the one on the pedestal for so long that when my life swung into action she could not handle the shift. She was genuinely happy for me, but her jealousy, self loathing, and petty competitiveness killed things.

So yeah. I have this text to answer that confirms my friend is not going to own up to anything without me instigating a conversation and I am pissed about it. I am in such a raw and focused creative space. I don't want to do this emotional labor right now. The only lines I am interested in drawing are with a pen or a piece of charcoal.

I painted and drew a lot today. Worked on this piece that sort of symbolizes where I am in my story. The previous piece in this series was a girl partially made of flesh and partially made of buildings. She was built in, entangled, stationery. This piece has the girl not really of any gender, less formed but more formidable. And, the building blocks of the city - water towers, doors, fire escapes - are layered over her more like free form scaffolding. Maybe it's an exoskeleton or maybe she is backing away from an old way of life. I don't know yet, but will once the piece is finished.

Deep into making mode as I have a bunch of zine fests, art crawls, and galleries to exhibit at. I could use older work, work I still love, but it just doesn't feel relevant anymore.

I usually name each year in January. Last year was the year of recovery, for instance. It's not really a goal, more of a premonition. I started to confront my food addiction last year, which is what I was referring to when I named 2017, but it turned out that my biggest realm of recovery was to do with friendship. No word or phrase has made sense for 2018. I feel a sense of creative conviction and self determination. Maybe I won't name this year until it has played out. That has happened in the past.

Nighttime me needs therapy. Baskets and bags and barrels to pour the unending tremors into. Sorry. I am foaming at the mouth. Just when I think I am done having a broken heart the blood starts gushing again. I need to stay off Facebook. It's like shooting arrows in the sky and half expecting them not to fall and pierce me. I don't view emotionalism as a weakness, but too much of anything will absolutely render me weak. My tendency askew.

All it is is a need to be accepted, to belong, to appear strong. All I am now is the hateful, the outsider, the alleged criminal, probably a joke
between sisters. In your world my truth cannot exist, because then yours would have to as well. Invalidate and inflate. Tall and shallow. What is the meaning or value of anything as long as you've got some well lit photos?

She's trying to break down my door, the door she locked me behind. She's apologizing for the pressure she put on me. She admits that the chaos is her preferred partner. She calls me by all the names she gave, but not the ones I call myself. She offers surrender, to undo my work, when I just need to be held for a moment and then pushed. She pushes the door instead. It cracks and bellows and hisses. The sounds of a ship deeply sunk.

I always knew I was being used. We are all being used. We are all cloaked in shadow. One day you'll thank me for doing you the immense favor of allowing you to reconfigure without a living soul possessing the key to the door. The woman, so alone, behind the curtain. A woman desperate for (the appearance of) control. I saw you. I saw you clear as day years ago, but I was too emotionally immature to know what to do with the information. What a fucking fool to have lent so much marrow.

My moods shift at warp speed.

My newest dog is a black fluffy labradoodle. She's 8 months old, affectionate, emotive, and bursting with energy. The short list of names: rebel, violet, plum, poppy, mystic, hedwig, juno, poe, mokey, and indigo. Indigo is winning, because Indy for short also works. I wanted a dark, spooky name, because her adoption date is Friday the 13th, but none seem to fit her super sweet personality. She dreams a lot and makes little blip blip sounds while she sleeps. I just adore dogs.

Indigo is the name. She's exhausting. Indigo escapes the yard, she bit my lil poodle JoJo, and my other labradoodle Kevin is frustrated because he isn't as fast as she is at playing fetch. It's an adjustment. She's really smart and sweet. She's learned to sleep in her bed, almost knows her name, and my favorite part is that she hugs. Not with her paws, but she'll come to you, look you in the face, and then thrust her whole head on your shoulder. She stays like that with still consistent pressure. Doesn't care about being petted. Just wants to push into you and feel that push back. I'm a hugger so it's pretty much perfect.

I am not finding much time for myself which is sort of infuriating considering how much alone time I have. There is a lot of work to do, and I am hating at it, but I thought I'd have a few pieces complete by now. There isn't enough quiet to hear the paintings tell me what to do.

Happy thoughts to dream upon: the scars I actually want. My left arm is going to be all owls. After the Harry Potter themed piece I am probably going to work on an owl mermaid for the underside of my upper arm and then a deep green evergreen tree with little owls hanging about for the top side of my forearm. I've always been against having ink on the part of my skin that grows dark hair, but I think it will be fine. Plus that will put me at four owl tattoos on one arm, each loosely representing a season. Cherry blossom for spring, mermaid in summer, evergreen in winter, and the deathly hallows and moons for fall.

Right now I wish I had root beer. I wish it was Thursday. Thursday always feels good to me for some reason. I wish I wasn't struggling to keep my food, body, and mind in balance. I wish I could put the world on pause so I can catch up. I wish erasers were the size of my face and they left no evidence behind.

Self abandonment is on my mind to a revolutionary degree as I continue to dodge tangible recovery steps in favor of the abstract. The more relationships that go south in my journey, the more I understand the scope and necessity of my own emotional work. I’m really proud of how I handled the last year and the positive growth I allowed by letting my heart break and by letting myself process on my own terms. I didn’t rush,
hide, or try to replicate to replace what I lost. That’s huge for me. Setting boundaries is huge.

My mother sent me Oreos for Easter and a card that says some random women are praying for me. Good luck. Been thinking about family lately, though not too deeply about my blood family members so much as the women who have been influential through my lifetime. The ones I idolized or were romantically or platonicallly in love with in certain seasons. There has always been a supreme woman from my mother to my bffs in school to my lovers and mufasa. I think the conflict I’m experiencing with a close friend right now has me taking stock and self assessing. I want to honor these women in some way on my altar without harming myself, rehashing the reasoning behind why many of them are no longer in my life, or regressing into a former version of myself.

White Oleander is my favorite book. I don’t know if you knew that. Yes, I think I will create a small shrine to encompass each and the time they were the idol of my life. Maybe in altoid tins which are kind of like tiny suitcases.

It’s solidly Spring now, and actually it might even be Summer. My brain is most certainly dead. I’m forscing words, because I miss this space. It’s probably only been a few days since we last spoke, but emotionally it has felt like weeks. In mud. Labor days.

Updates. The silent friend is still silent and I’m not ready to budge. Last week I was sort of casually bummed. This week my heart hurts without truly feeling hurt due to my workload. When there is air and space to feel slighted I imagine I’m going to explode and potentially make things worse. At some point it’s the risk I have to take. Stagnancy is unacceptable.

The moon has been begging for my attention. Full. Hanging low and swollen in the evening. Darting out from behind billboards in those almost crashed the car because I’m so bewildered kind of ways. I’ve been avoiding my center, my stones, my astral ways. I got the smoke signal. Get home.

A bird built its nest under my patio carport directly over the gate, so that every time I go out the gate the bird freaks and squawks and I basically have a heart attack. Yesterday, there was no noise as I left. The little birdies she was sheltering were out in the yard hopping around as they practiced flying. I had to rescue one who couldn’t get off the ground, because Indigo thought this poor baby bird was the coolest toy she’d ever seen. The bird thanked me by shitting in my hand. Still, it was a beautiful moment. I’m glad birds were born here. When they abandon the nest for good I am going to preserve it somehow.

I’ll spend about 8 hours painting tomorrow, and my legs will ache from being stationary, and I’ll go to bed excited for the next session.

Do you ever cast spells?

Thoughts + art by Veronica Leto aka évey in orbit
made throughout the cold months of 2017 into 2018
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