

F r o m
J u m p

By

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This is a work of fiction. About moments.

From Jump

In slow moments, the pills are in my hand. In slow moments, the pills are in my mouth. I have a bottle of water to get them down. Head tilted back, I'm standing by my sister's car with three bags between two shoulders. Facing another apartment building, I hear my sister yell to a man. He gets out of his car. I turn to watch. Then back to standing, seeing nothing. My eyes see the other building. There's a woman. She's talking to someone. Is there something she's fighting? She's still here.

The pills sit on my tongue. *The sweetest taste*. In slow moments, they're all back in the bottle. I look over at my sister and the man. This isn't the right time. It should be before bed. Not in a parking lot. Still crying, I walk over to my sister's car, her face wet only from the rain. I look at her and realize how close I *was*. So close I can taste it.

Mom, I'll do it.

Dad, there's reason.

Have a good night sir, I say. He managed to get the car running. We can leave this place. *Thank you*. He can't hear me. In slow moments, that's alright with me.

Snow on Mountains

Your dress is absolutely gorgeous, a long black-haired woman screamed out. Her hair was beautiful. She had to be in her late twenties, early thirties. She could have been the host, the way everyone loved her. I let out a thank you and hurried away from the crowded room.

The sun was readying for its departure. Grabbed my phone from my purse to see missed call after missed call. Despite the anxiety of starting over, I loved every minute of being alone.

Earlier in the afternoon we exchanged words. He talked about the weather and how it was cold back home. I almost couldn't believe he stood in front of me with his boyish

charm, smiling at the thought of leaving together. Just for something to eat. Or maybe we can ride around. I've cried and smiled at his words.

Let's walk out to the beach.

I recall it only being a few steps away. Felt like forever. We didn't speak, sat in the sand silently with minimal space between us. That morning I read in the newspaper that he'd be at this castle.

Why did you bring me here?

Tears in my eyes as we watched the sun set. I looked at him. He looked for the sun. With his left hand planted in the sand he answered: *You remind me of my mother.*

An Earth

It's usually the Brooklyn basements or Recita rooftops that make me realize I hate this earth. It's waking up at six o'clock in the morning, while you sleep. Wondering how I managed to make it to you. It comes together at different times, like a foreign family to the free land. The earth is giving up on me. There's no feeling of joy, no climax, there's no connecting. But there's you. There is this earth. This basement. That rooftop. Your words. Your time. My hands. They're moving. I am touching everything.

You know so much, know so little. You want to know more. There are questions. There are your eyes. I'm sitting down, watching your eyes and your hands. Start to think about writing. There is no feeling but there are words. The words of sleepless nights, the stolen, the deceit, the bags, love, hate, lies, drugs, alcohol, parents, moms, dads, sisters, brothers, enemies, envy, hair, cheese. There is wine. You begin to drink. There are questions. You ask. Where is the happiness? The sex, the love, the passion, hugs, rain in the height of summer, the sun, smiles, sons, daughters, children. I am in a basement. And it's usually the basements or rooftops that make realize there is – this earth.

Again

I fell out of love with you years ago. As you exhaled and released me, I moved away from your bare skin thankful for the night. There are many things I imagined my tears would bring. I thought they'd bring you home. I thought you'd see me, see us. Wish I could write some things down, carry them everywhere. *I am not in love with you. I do not enjoy sex with you.* But it feels comfortable, you know the angle of my breasts, memorized the rhythm of my breath.

You know when I leave. I'll be back. We dance around pain, around questions we really want to ask. Angry with you for sharing your love. Going in circles, hoping things will change. Knowing if our feet allowed, we'd continue to dance around the things that stay the same.

Window, Black Dress, Cigarette

There's something about those nights
the ones where I'm indulged in every aspect of your life
without your voice
where my tears and cigarettes and a small mug of coffee
come
together
there is something about those nights
the yearning for absolutely nothing
that relates to you
yet you are always there
a mirror of pain
there's something about those days
like this one
where I should be loving
writing
working
you are always here
perfect mirror of pain

Glass

Spent my last ten dollars on wine. Vodka stumbled my steps. The habits that are hard to shake usually make me feel best. Floated around the party alone, hips moving with the beat while I danced past eager men. The night ends early around here. Rain drops touching my cheek, my lips. Sliding down my chest. Thinking I could go home. Leave. Drive to you. I'd like to have you until something deeper comes. And as you kiss my neck, I'm wondering what I came for. Some things are easy. This is easy. It's like touching the surface of glass. You just touch it. There. Your fingers slide up and down and you are touching so much because it's clear, it's easy. You can't believe it feels so good and you are just touching so much you cannot believe you came.

I came here to touch glass. It's clear. The drive home will be clear. I'll think of you, how my eyes went through you. I'll think of the moments we spent. Stoplights will shake my train of thought. Back to everything I'm waiting for. Everything I'm chasing. I'll be back to the one who makes me feel best. I'll be back to that place with the black sand. It'll be like before. You'll want to know my safety. I'll be polite. Speak with softness. I'm safe. I'm okay. I'm sliding up and down, touching so much knowing there are some things I'll never feel again.

Oviedo

I promised I wouldn't fall asleep with you. You told me to stay. I told you I could not. We made love through the night. We made love as hard and as constant as the snowfall in Boston. We lay down on leaves that design your sheets. I repeated I couldn't stay. My legs locked between yours like a puzzle. Fell asleep locked inside each other. Touching glass again. Touching so much my hands are lost.

You walked over to me. My mind traveled to your bed and fell asleep the way we did. After you kissed my cheek, I managed to ask how you were doing. Tried to calm my eyes as they followed you. Wanted to tell you I want you. I wanted back to your bed. Slip on my bra and panties and sleep the way we did.

Driving back to you. Different this time. Truth in time. I can see my hands now. On your back. On your chest. Locked in yours. I can feel my hands now. On your face. Gripping your legs. Locked in yours. I can see my face now. Looking at you, wanting to hold every moment of this love inside. Touching so much. Where are you? Where are

my hands? The eyes that belong to me are taking pictures of your smile. Fingers somewhere gripping your skin. Pulling your hair. Give me your eyes.

I'm done with you. You belong to someone else. I say.

Why are you looking at me like that?

You are beautiful.

I don't see myself as beautiful.

Purple

I hope I look better than you tonight, she said as I stood in front of her in a short Grecian designer dress. I took it as a compliment. Her envy eyes glared at me with a smile, as she helped with one last curl that needed some pinning up. *You won't,* I whispered. After an hour of standing in the mirror, curling hair and applying makeup, we were anxious to get to this birthday party.

My older sister and I haven't partied together before. I've been partying for almost eight years, with friends, family, wealthy and poor – but never my sister. Took great pride in touching her breasts, moving them around for the perfect fit in a black strapless dress I picked out. Against my desire to drive to the party, she insisted we ride with a couple of guys.

I've worn this dress before, but everything feels new. Ex lovers everywhere. A whisper in my ear, a touch of my hips. Some angered, others understanding. After several drinks, it's starting to feel like Manhattan. Gracefully making my way across the room, across the dance floor. They're all watching. They're always watching. The women, the men. *I should keep my drinking at minimum.*

I meet up with my sister after the party in front of the driver's house. She told me about him days ago. Said I need to meet him, said he's nice. Doesn't smoke, doesn't drink. He signals for me to get out the car and accompany him inside.

Nice room. Did you paint yourself? I asked.

No my brother remodeled the entire house.

Are these all your sneakers?

I have more downstairs.

Do you mind if I sit on your bed?

Of course you can sit on my bed. He smiled.

I'm watching him, he's careful. Zip loc bag here. Zip loc bag there. Reminds me of relatives. Of all the boys growing up. I want to go to sleep. I want the company of hard working creative men. I want the company of hard working creative women. I want to go back to the place that made me forget what home was like.

Rest

There are memories of us that still make my body tremble. The sort I find hard to explain. Where it feels like someone reached inside and grabbed my heart. Gave it a tight squeeze for three seconds. Suddenly back to beating.

We arrive at your apartment, the cab driver and I. I speak of our homeland. He speaks of my beauty. You walk into my view and I do not feel anything, until I get out of the car and your arms grab me. Close. Maybe it's been months since we've last been together. We're holding and kissing and maybe I've missed you. Before we get to the door, you're carrying me. A scene from all the movies created in my mind. You always smell the same. Taking you in. Maybe we've missed each other. We speak about politics, about your dreams, about your work, about you.

I love you all night. I can feel everything about you. About this trip I've taken with you. No one else knows that you are everything you do not want to be. You hold me with distance. *I think I love you*, you whisper. I continued to love you that night. Haven't made it back to you since.

On a Vineyard in Wachau

We made a toast to unprotected sex then pulling out. After the wine settled, I realized that it wasn't smart, safe or possible, considering I'm single.

The only men available to go into the wild with were all a waste of time. I want to feel wild and free and sexy the way I did when I hit the fostering ocean weeks back. I belonged to the ocean. Followed the waves, embraced the water's lead.

Being intimate at a time of chaos – the Riesling's draining. Thoughts more focused as I catch the wind outside of my favorite restaurant. *When will I stop coming here? When will I let go of the life I use to live?* I think of how good it'll feel to have a man in my freshly designed cottage. It'll feel good. He'll feel good. By morning, I'd want more.

I want that feeling that the ocean gives, working with the sun, pleasing me. Depth, passion, love, warmth. I want to feel a man again. After another glass, I convince myself I can have this feeling all the time. Must get home. Need nurturing; I can worry about the love part later.

Distilled Vodka

He was perfect. She talked about how it felt when she touched him; he *felt* like a man. She hadn't thought of him until he sent her a message. Then it all came back. The four different cars. The woman he embraced atop a bed of leaves. The lies. The leaving. Her words.

They spent four hours sitting in a car talking about the intimate moments they shared – the public and the private. And when they kissed, she realized the walls he couldn't get past and the walls he *could* tear down. Screen captures of his face, on top of her, giving a different kind of love.

With her head in his lap she thought about what it would be like for him to be the one she *did* love. The one she wanted to love. Ready to love the one who didn't know she loved him. She thought about what he would say. What they'd talk about. How his waist would feel in her grip. But she'd wait for that.

In the car she asked him why he sent the message. His indistinct answer was something along the lines of missing her, tired of going off memory. Despite her sudden departure, he was glad he could inspire some of her work. She looked out the window of the car that sat idle on a dead end street. Thought about how she prayed for men and played with boys. Looked to him and said *Thank you*.

From a Letter to My Therapist

I fainted in the small hospital room after the physician's assistant left to view the cultures. It wasn't a hard fall. I lie on the cold floor with just an old bleach stained collared shirt. Felt the cold for almost five minutes. Thought maybe she'll walk in and see me in pain. My head was pounding and I imagined getting up to have been exceptionally difficult. There was so much pain. Pulsing in my head. Hot, burning waves in my body. No one came in while I was on the floor. By the time the stubby, old PA returned, my clothes were on. Face turned up. I made an attempt to describe what happened without sounding like a whining girl who just admitted to having unprotected sex with someone who is having unprotected sex with someone else.

It was probably just your body reacting to you getting up so fast. Sometimes that happens to people when they get a pap smear. Here, have some water. Good old harbor water.

On Women's [Mental] Health

Did I ever tell you reading *Women's Health* makes me feel skinny? Like last month's issue. I read it for the little facts. Like hummus being a natural abdomen tightener or how green tea helps you burn calories. I prefer men's magazines to stay away from countless pieces on love and relationships and sex and how to improve yourself for men or the nice shoes and bags for fall. Fuck that. What about how to get my life together? How about some fucking reporter explain to me what it means when I feel this intangible sadness so powerful it feels tangible will not pass? Do you know any mags with that kind of information? You keep a lot of magazines in your bathroom. I'm running out of time and I know, jumping around. Back to *WH*. I did read an article on love and crushes. Don't judge me. I didn't say I didn't read these kinds of pieces, I said I like to stay away. The article listed the reasons you like someone. Closed the book at – *you want to be like him.*

Of course I didn't know that was the reason why I avoid his existence. Out of sight out of mind, right? No. I wouldn't be writing. I need your help. You're the doctor here. Do shock treatments make you forget heartache? Heartbreak? Bad sex? A sad childhood? Can you keep some stuff in? Like your goals or your siblings? You're the doctor and my friend. Can you get me out of here? I want the same meds when I leave. And shock treatment. Or shock therapy? What is it called? Does it only happen on TV? All the women in my unit need it. Ah, that was a joke. I like being really quiet when we have social events. Because the ladies here, they're much sadder than me.

They're Coming

They're coming
if I leave I know I'll never be back
something settling and unsettling about it
it's dark
please do not turn on the lights
most of my things are gone now
but wait, what about these books
should I take them with me?
they're coming for me
everything is gone
please don't let them take my books
the dreams and the thoughts the gun and the fire
just don't let them take my books
the day I am to see again
I'll be back for my books

Place

Place
wandering
belong no place
no place at all
Never did
to anyone, to any place
not my mother
she had her vice
not my father
he had his wife
not to the town
wait
wait
I can't cry on this train
walk into this million-dollar building
make-up running.
tears falling on my working class outfit

Save

I'm waiting on something I'm not sure will ever come. It comes in and out of my imagination throughout the day. Something or someone's going to save me. It may come tomorrow. Sure, I'll go to this meeting. I may be saved on the way. I'll go for coffee. I may be saved on the way. I'd rather lie in bed until the sun feels permanent. But it's you. You that'll save me. That I'll leave for. Anxious and excited to feel and touch you. Save me. I've been crying. I'm waiting. Take me out of misery and carry me like an infant. Until you arrive, I'll be waiting. In front the mirror. Staring so hard into my own eyes. Take my eyes outside and look at a body in the mirror. I'll put them back. Leaving out now. We may run into each other someday. I don't know who or what or where you are. But I'm feeling like I can't save myself. Make it easy. Like it rough. Save me any moment now.

Welcome

When I wake up
everyone will be there
they won't know about the dream
I will not speak about the dream
everyone will be smiling
some will have flowers
some will have cards, cake, cameras
I'll rub my eyes again and again
the dream is over
wait
I'll kiss everyone to feel
they'll keep on smiling
There's green
trees
nature
mountains
there is snow
there is snow on mountains
there's light
I'm sure it's you
the sun
It's peaceful
they're still smiling
I'm still dreaming

Looking Forward

Somewhere in Malibu with the water again. Been here all day waiting for the sun. Waiting for change. Wanting an unknown number to call. Drink and smoke hoping inspiration will come. Say things repeatedly, put things in my vision. Change will come. Faith. Believe. Finding it hard not to hate in the process. Hard to love during the interim. Having fun with all the wrong ones. Thinking in forms of content. In forms of stories. I'd like to tell a story of change one day. I loved me. I loved you. I accepted and lived in the moment. Let go and healed from my first love. Healed from the pain of my parents. I stopped visiting psychics. I stopped pushing friends away. Made an honest attempt at describing this breakdown. Satisfied with writing. Hung-over from wine and lovemaking. Okay with the flight of the water and the setting of the sun. Somewhere dancing, drinking, with the water again. In need of something real. In need of something different.

My Flowers are the Most Attractive

Everyone's here. We're dancing. The steps of home. Of our own islands. We're all here. The wine is touching every part of me. As if I'm moving. Moving out of an apartment. Moving out of an office. Moving out from you. I'm touching everything. We're talking about being a woman. Domestic violence. It's our fault. It's not our fault. Heart, mind, body, feet, hands, lips say goodbye. The things we worry about. Being judged. Being sexual. Wanting sex. Wanting just sex. Lips say goodbye. We laugh about a lot. About sex. About lack of sex. The snow in Malibu. Everyone's here. We're beautiful. So many of us. The wine is touching every part of me. Body temperature mounting. Speaking to everyone. Touching everyone. We're all coming. It's all coming. Back. I remember this. Large rooms and crowds of people. Subways, streets, Manhattan. In my mind. When my flowers are the most attractive, I am alone standing next to everything.

Tap Water

I missed my flight to Los Angeles because I got stuck in the bathroom. There was no line. Yet I managed to massage my hands under warm water for twenty minutes. Glancing in the mirror only when I could bear the sight of my face. Yes it was beautiful. Yes it was firm. The water had become hot, hotter than I'd expect for a public restroom.

Hands pleaded for a new beginning with each motion. It was my mother. It was my father. It was me. In the mirror.

What was your last relationship like? The panel moderator asked.

I'd been invited to this panel at a college about love and relationships and sex. Slid my suitcase out of sight. *It was a test I failed over and over.*

A blonde girl who said she had read my work asked me to explain.

You can pass any test. When you're ready. When you want to. The universe was testing me, asking me if I was ready for happiness. Ready for greatness. I cried and said yes. But I'd end up in this dirty dark place. Usually my boyfriend's apartment. I'd cry in his bed and felt like my life wasn't worth living. I wanted to be as casual and calm as I could. Say I felt so low that I wept in that same bed for years. One night after crying, I went to the bathroom. Started to feel the warmth from the water. Walking up steps, I looked down at my feet. I knew I'd be happy one day. I just didn't know when. I imagined a man. Imagined his face. Looking at me. Smiling. I was smiling. I had running sneakers on. My legs stood close to his. I can see glances. Pictures of content. Pictures of admiration. Pictures of inspiration.

When I arrived back upstairs, he finally asked me why I was crying. *What was wrong?* Looked for his eyes and said: *Nothing, I'm fine.*

Untitled

Champagne glasses shattered across the floor.

Valet sensed the urgency.

Began to think about the ocean. You on the beach. The sounds, the waves, the cries of joy. Your forearms. Strength. Grip.

Where's the car?

Are you happy now? You asked. *You've used what you think love is, turned it into a self-portrait. Are you happy? All the success. You. Your words. You and your words. Before you go, tell me. Are you happy?*

I take in the ocean when I can. Aren't people always searching for more?

Away

All the things we miss
all the things forgotten
what it feels like
inside of a tunnel
on my back
looking up to love
up
your face your breath
rule me
own me
make me forget
the tunnels
dark
come in
come out
bring me the sun
go away
I'll go with you
where you are
picnic inside me
we'll share fruit
we'll drink water
hurry now
the sun
is setting in front our eyes
stay inside
I'll keep still
while you bring all
your love inside

Nose Bleed

My best friend asked what I look for in a man. I looked to the right at the graffiti-covered door, then left at the back of my ex-boyfriend's head (he'd just walked by us). I told him I hate this question. My last two relationships, they weren't my "type." I closed my eyes and felt my stomach rush. *Honestly, it's Him*, I said. My friend knew the man I was talking about. He makes me feel. Inspires me on a warm night when it seems nothing is left. *Killing me softly*. I said he gives me hope and happiness, mixed with a slight feeling of fear. Fear because the days are changing, but my lessons stay the same. Fear because I can't feel the hope and the happiness *right there*. I pointed to Him. But from here. And this feels too far.

September 22nd

The second she closed her eyes she heard the front door unlock. This was the Bronx: There was the main lock, two dead bolts, and a chain she managed to nail on herself when she moved in—her mother always put the chain on the door growing up. She was used to chains and locks and being careful. She'd lay in bed for two hours without closing her eyes until she decided to count to sixty then try to get some sleep. Hungover from the night before. It had been a long time since she drank hard liquor. That was Brooklyn, a brownstone party. Made her rounds smiling with different pretty drinks in hand each time. A man in a button-down Polo asked what she was drinking. "I don't know. But it's pretty and it's strong," she said. She thought her answer was off-putting, but he seemed even more interested as he smiled and asked about her day.

She had spent that day at her apartment with a man she met a year ago. They stayed in bed for most of the sunlight. She did not like this part of making love. Staying in bed and asking questions, recounting fond childhood memories. Though it was nice, outside was where the world existed. Her apartment, just a resting stop. They met in Manhattan inside the subway station on 63rd Street. For a year they made love—good love, she thought. His scent, his controlling nature. The text messages. Emails. Flowers. Sounds of love. When she gave him the key to the apartment, she said it didn't mean anything other than convenience. In bed he gently touched her stomach as she stared out the window. Thoughts dancing around about things to come. Things changing. She was growing. She knew she would be a woman one day. Comfortable living wouldn't last. She knew there would be a moment. There would be a chance. In one heartbeat, she'd grow up.

After countless pretty drinks, a handsome taxi driver made a fuss about driving to the Bronx. The gentleman in the button-down Polo handed the driver a stack of cash and told her to call him when she got home. Maybe she said thank you.

The last dead bolt unlocked. She rose from the bed. Maybe it was a friend. Or the architect she spent the day with. Or perhaps she left her keys in Brooklyn. She couldn't think safe. Could not play this moment with caution. Someone knocked on the door. "Can I come in?"

"If you have no intention to hurt me."

The door opened, more quietly than she had ever opened or closed it on a lover. She didn't recognize the grey shirt. The dark bluejeans, the sneakers. Sleepy eyes made way to his face. He was not her lover from the day before or the gentleman who put her in a taxi from Brooklyn. She looked at him. Her eyes tracing his frame. His lips. His fingers. The grip he had on her keys. Her Barnes and Noble rewards card dangling from the key ring. Thoughts dancing again. She spent the last two years silently in love with this man who stood before her. A quiet torture. Every time her legs were apart it was his face she traced as she did now standing in her bedroom. Quieting her heart, her face full of questions.

"You left your keys in Brooklyn. I thought I'd drop them off. You weren't answering your phone."

"You could have left them. Why come all the way here?"

"I always wondered what it would be like to have you."

The window again. She stared out. This was the moment. He was already in; she would not have to open her doors for him. Her heart she would. Her legs she could. She stood close, in front of him. "This is unsafe," she said as her fingers locked in his with her keys between their palms.

Seconds

I flew to Miami alone. Met some guys on the plane who dropped me off at the hotel after a walk on the beach. Stripped to my swimsuit and went back out.

Sleeping on the beach alone. The sun each second making me feel like I'm the only one here. Taking my body in a room, adding pressure each second. Sounds like men are standing over me. I still feel chosen, despite the voices. Saying my name. Someone is saying my name.

I fell for you back in New York. After a couple meetings I wanted you to love me. I wanted to know your scent. But each time, as friendly as before. Hugs and hellos and your eyes.

I'm writing this from a place of belief. It would be your eyes. When we look, we're looking for more. There are always so many around. I want you to love me. I want to tell you how often I think of you. But then, you'll be like the others. Lost and holding on. I like you where you are. On top of me. In this room. Adding pressure each second.

Unknown Love

This time when I come
to write about you
my eyes
they're moving me
many ways
to prevent tears
from knowing what it feels like
to roll down my perfect face
you have not brought me pain
only anxiety
I desire to love you
I do love you
if it's my time for love again
you'll say you've been waiting
for this day
to know what it feels like
to prevent tears
from knowing what it feels like
to roll down my perfect face

Bravery

I cannot wait to see you
keep thinking about what you'll say
what I'll say
been hoping you'd stop dancing
around
what we could be
yes
to what you want
I picture us
us here
us there
lighting
blowing
your candle
my flame
and suddenly I am scared
of what we may not be
you're like success
like happiness
to me
Here
Gone
Here and
Gone
but stay
or kill me dead
my flame
like before prom
before wedding
unease
I'll close you like a book
if you're feet continue to dance
around this beat
unparallel and hot
praying this goes away
sign sending to the universe
in secret
wanting you to stay.

Not Summer of Love

I think I love someone. For the past two days I've been suffocating that idea. Hands hold a firm grip. Die. For if you return. I will kill again. I can be unlovable or not. And you. The other one. With the different kind of love given on top of me. I decided not to suffocate my feelings for you. But drive them off the road into the water, so I can watch them drown. Like the way you did between my legs. Fuck love.

Atlantic

We were the young ones in the office. Young and impressionable. The world was so easy to us. My boss and I arrive at a magazine launch party. I left my fake ID at home. You arrived before me, with yours ready to enter. Boss said a couple words and we were in. The young ones. This was the night the older ladies tried to "hook us up." We laughed. We connected already. Did we kiss that night? You know, at the party? I remember taking a picture together. Said you can have the picture when you don't belong to her anymore. I think we did kiss. You asked me what it felt like. I said, *the ocean*, as I hopped in a taxi to meet my boyfriend at home.

* * *

She was crying on the 6 train. I wondered why. I felt happy and maybe subconsciously in my movement, my demeanor, my face so content, I wanted her to see me happy. It was evil. I get to my apartment. It's dark and late. *Would you like to restore your last session?* The computer asked. Yes. And that was it. My boyfriend cheated on me. Was this before or after that magazine launch party? I apologized in my heart to the random girl on the train.

* * *

Both of you are gone. I feel light. Maybe it's the gym. Now that there's no "real love." It feels so urgent.

* * *

I want you to love me already.
I love you because we are the same person.
This is unfulfilled. But fill me up, fill me up.
Until then.

* * *

Met a young boy around 18. Beautiful curly brown hair. His build suggests he should play football when he starts college in the fall. I imagine what I could teach him. What I taught you. And you. What you never got. What you did so well. I monitor his nervousness while I stand in front of him. Smiling. In a dangerous way. He's young. Delicate and innocent with a tattoo on his forearm that says *live today for a better tomorrow*.

Maria

I've had a lot of sex this year. Good morning sex. Good afternoon sex. Goodnight my love sex. Half-sleep sex. Sympathy sex. Comfortable with you sex. This is all we have sex. Hurry please sex. Forget the wrong I did sex. I don't really like your scent sex. Take me sex. Anywhere sex. Came. The passionate sex. Danced around calling it love sex. Warm sex. Big sex. Stay here sex. You can sleep inside me sex. I enjoy your time-taking, kissing, sucking, feeling right before it fits like a puzzle sex.

She lit her cigarette and said: *Challenge yourself to a year of celibacy and achievement*. My immediate response was: *This year has been good*.

The Vision Board Monologue

A young woman is sitting on the floor of an apartment. A candle is lit to the left of her vision board. Wearing a v-neck sweater, ripped jeans, wild hair, she begins to describe some of the things that are tacked onto her board.

I lost everything. My home, jobs, money, myself, lovers. It's just me. It's like when you lose your memory. Not all of it, just some. You remember everything you lost. Everything. Most of the time, I forget the beautiful. The good books, places, interesting people, unforgettable and sometimes unforgivable moments, and all the amazing things I've accomplished. The board is how I remember.

Two of diamonds. It was a Saturday. The day turned into a sleepless night and I was eventually escorted out of the state. They took me to my mom's house. Was in her bed in a rehab kind of way. We were watching a movie about a psychic in the South. By the end of the movie I found myself with a deck of cards in my hands. My exact words were: *Let's see if this is real.* I guessed the two of diamonds at the bottom of the stack. I did that based on a visit with a psychic who said my grandmother left this gift for me. I also remember writing a short story that began, *I tell people I'm psychic.*

This here is a post card from a friend in California. The Pacific Coast Highway. Riding in Malibu down the PCH. Pulled the car over and got out. Took my shoes off and rolled my pants up. I'm usually anti getting dirty. You know how they say you have to get your feet wet or hands dirty or something? I'm usually anti that. But that was the most peaceful time of my life. With my hands and my feet on those rocks I climbed, I said a prayer to God that I'd feel the exact same way when I got back to New York City.

I love this cover. It's my first published book (laughs). No, it's not. It's actually a book of short stories I was reading on a hospital stretcher. I realized I hated both the book and hospitals. I have no seriously illness except that of the mind, but no one takes mental health serious if you don't walk into the emergency room with your fucking wrists bleeding.

A friend took this photo of me in Union Square. Everything is usually dark. But if you come closer, you can see the light behind me.



At 17, Shauna Barbosa moved to New York City to pursue journalism. She's worked at Vibe Magazine, Men's Vogue Magazine and Harvard Business School. She writes very short stories and vignettes, which she often publishes on her blog, <http://letsjusteatcheese.com>.

Shauna is currently working on a book and organizing her dreams. Contact her at fromjump@gmail.com.