

PRESCRIPTION: ether

PATIENT: Dodie Bellamy

DOSAGE: from *Phone Home*

apothecaRy

E.T.'s chest glows red with fear as faceless agents chase him through the forest. My mother and I sit in her living room and watch. A week ago she called me in San Francisco and said she couldn't breathe right, that she felt like she was suffocating. The doctor was going to stick a long needle in her chest and drain out the fluid from around her lungs. "I'm afraid," she said. And then she started crying. "Please come home." The procedure didn't help. My mother's breaths are loud, a jerky bellows over the movie's soundtrack. Compared to the swimming-pool studded terrain Elliott crazily peddles his bike around, our Indiana neighborhood is modest. Still, I'm reminded of my recurring dreams of racing my blue Schwinn down Oakdale Avenue. I'm hungry, so while Elliott scatters a trail of M&Ms in the woods, I dart into the kitchen to make a salad. Washing my lettuce I stare out the window at the apple tree in the front yard. The tree looks like a man bending forward with his arms outstretched. Like in a fairy tale, I think. "Dodie!" my mom calls out. She's having an anxiety attack. She had one yesterday and the day before. I give her a Xanax and sit beside her on the couch. She's gasping for air. All through my visit she's been talking about a neglected neighborhood cat—Fred—my mother lets him in when it's cold and feeds him. Last night when Fred came to the door scratching and meowing, she said, "All he wants is a human touch, he's craving a human touch," and I knew she meant herself. She's hunched over in her sleeveless nightgown, shaking. So frail. I awkwardly put my arm around her. She lays her head on my shoulder and holds my hand. My mother's lung cancer has returned. We don't have an official diagnosis yet, but we both know it. She calms down a bit so I nod to the TV and say let's watch E.T. Elliott's just lured E.T. into his bedroom. Elliott places his fingers to his lips, then E.T. places his fingers to his own lips. Elliott sticks one finger to his ear, ditto E.T. Elliott smiles, then holds his left hand up with all five fingers spread apart. E.T. raises his left hand with his three fingers spread apart. Elliott makes a fist and points his forefinger up. E.T. does the same. They both wiggle their fingers. My mom says, "I love this movie."

PRESCRIPTION: ether

PATIENT: Ryan Clark

DOSAGE: *how it is to walk sideways*

apothecaRy

Playground at sunrise
where memories line this rusted slide
looking tired and sad.

Sometimes it runs down to the street.

I saw her walking
but she said she liked it, and those smiles
lit so brightly, a million loves:
coffee, poetry, honest.

My head fell left, floated fat in air,
tore up its gray blanket, breaking clouds
'til slashing strings engrave
the sun dead and black.

I want to row,
talk drunk, blank-faced

For us, love is left in waiting,
but it will be good, I promise
below the savior.

The mountain was fit to climb, as
our teacher wanted to show us,
waiting for exhausted soil to grow.

The smell of piss in the bathroom
signaled my retreat
from a cannon.

her skin burnt, 1:01 glows red,
socks soaked and a film of mud

PRESCRIPTION: ether

PATIENT: Shy Mukerjee

DOSAGE: *Inventory of Maladies*

apothecaRy

sprained ankle

dancing, walking, or running. several times a year, that sudden snap. crack. swells, size of egg. elevation, ice, elevation, ice, elevation, ice... heat. hobbling, or trying to hide it: important decision.

pink eye

spreading back and forth. itching: endless. belladonna for symptoms, repetitive washing for prevention. pillowcases: dangerous. laundry: constant. fear of recontamination never subsides, not for a second.

mouth

smoking... class, no break... desire to fill: strong... chewing chewing chewing pencils pens fingernails...

back/knee

electrocution by doctor as exploration. x-rays reveal nothing. needles places repeatedly in arm—blood tests either inconclusive or overly conclusive. electrocution continues, nothing yet found. MRI reveals: everyone fucked up. or did they? the knee still swells.

mother

stories over the phone of detached retinas. equipment and procedures to suck out "eye goop." late night emergency procedures lead to endless television watching and microwaved dinners.

teeth

dentistry not considered. swirl dye around mouth. fluoride in water, paranoia, filtration. popcorn kernel cracks, pieces found in sink late at night. preservation for curiosity.

PRESCRIPTION: ether

PATIENT: Carolyn Zaikowski

DOSAGE: from *An Invisible Bottle of White Ink*

apothecaRy

Case History #1: Courtney

"I can't wait to ask god where he got those sweet shorts."

For years, I have been used to the way her head only reaches my shoulder. Maybe it doesn't even reach that high; she is approximately eight inches shorter than me. She is always asking me to grab cups and plates, candles and cake, from the top shelf because she can't reach them.

She cuts the sleeves off her shirts when it is humid, never thinking about what she will do for shirts come winter. She is the personification of the color blue. Her eyes, hair, teeth, and skin are blue. She sleeps with only a thin screen separating her from a family of blue raccoons who try, every night, to destroy her air conditioner. Her goldfish floats upside down due to a digestive problem and her cat has twenty-four toes. She forever mourns the death of her hermit crab; she did not mean to fall in love with him. She dreams of wearing leggings, of moving to Seattle, of saving things.

Her spurts of creativity come at the most inopportune times—in the middle of the night, she calls out to the world for adventures, wants to read poems to the universe, paint pictures onto an eternity she can't find; at three in the morning she wants to bulldoze the Cape Cod cranberry bogs, jump in front of the bulldozer, make soup out of all of the roots and vines and dirt she recovers from it.

It's a humid July afternoon when we ask god to have iced tea with us. We boil the water and put it in a big pot because we can't find a proper pitcher. We fill the pot up with Lipton's tea bags and watch the sienna clouds melt into the hot water. We put the tea in the refrigerator, let it cool for about an hour, fill it up with ice cubes and a few lemon slices. We leave the sugar out; we figure we should let god decide whether or not he wants his iced tea sweetened. We decorate the table with dead flowers in empty wine bottles.

We are in a stadium, which is actually the universe. It's god's birthday. He is sixty-five trillion years old.

"I wonder what day it was when he created the pencil sharpener? Pavement?"

PRESCRIPTION: ether

PATIENT: Carolyn Zaikowski

apothecaRy

DOSAGE: from *An Invisible Bottle of White Ink (cont'd)*

The owl tattooed on her shoulder winks at me as we talk about sex, about collaborative art, about other peoples' relationships. On her hip, which she doesn't always know is a wonderful hip, three tattooed stars remind us of dead friends.

I was with her the day the Mooninites took over Boston. 1/31/07: Never forget.

As we wait for god, we roll joints, wondering whether or not we should give one to him as a birthday present, but decide against it. We sew punk rock patches on our skirts. We ask the universe-waiter for band aids. We take pictures of ourselves showing our teeth, then hiding our teeth. God was supposed to be here at five-thirty. It's almost nine.

"I don't think he's coming. He's probably really busy today."

We are a finished puzzle. We swallow our Prozac with coffee and red wine. We are only sometimes ashamed.

Case History #2: Asheville

In Asheville I am drinking a beer in the back of a record store. A friend cries as he plays the guitar.

We meet a woman we call Georgia Peach. She is sixty years old and has been coloring her own hair since she was sixteen. She doesn't want to think about how many years have gone by. "I'd dance if my foot wasn't so bad off," she announces to the banjo player on the sidewalk.

Yesterday in Virginia, the Astrovan broke down. On Interstate 81 a country band in a veggie oil bus picked us up and brought us here. After rescuing vegetable oil and bagels from a dumpster, we drove the bus up a mountain and almost tipped over into a creek. I stayed up all night in the house on the mountain, talking to you about Buddhism, non-violence theory, monogamy, sweat, and creeks.

I'm in charge of watching Georgia Peach's belongings while she limps up the street to buy Eddie Bauer jeans for a dollar and refill her prescriptions.

PRESCRIPTION: ether

PATIENT: Carolyn Zaikowski

apothecaRy

DOSAGE: from *An Invisible Bottle of White Ink (cont'd)*

On the side of the road, under a bridge, I cry because I have no money. I imagine the following things

- What it would be like to walk in front of a car
- Calling you even though you won't answer
- The profile of your ghost in front of me

and then I scold myself. I want to see you from this angle. I want you to be vulnerable.

Let it go... let it go. Fly. On Route 81, the lights turn on by themselves. I think that will make you happy, if you are ever here. Let's drive over small bridges and dizzy mountains. Let's listen to Johnny Cash and The Boss. Let's try to get through Dutch Country tonight. I have a tent if you have a field.

Irrational Beliefs Checklist

- The wine that is eternity's blood should not be imbibed
- I must fix broken things
- It is possible for something to be broken
- I must not tell a lie
- Heart-things can and should be defined
- I should do everything my neurosis tells me to
- I should apologize for existing
- Your life should be saved even though you don't want that
- I should look away from the darkest part of you
- I must never tell you what I see
- I must never unconditionally love a stranger who I will never know in any cognitive sense
- Intensity should be stored in a very compact container
- I should change the pace of my soul's metabolism
- Hunger does not need a name
- Ghosts don't exist
- Your story should not be told
- You are going to be gone now, too

PRESCRIPTION: ether

PATIENT: Anne Maclean

DOSAGE: *Poem Before Breakfast*

apothecaRy

Write at least one poem before breakfast.
It improves everything.
You'll digest your food better
once you do sit down to breakfast.
Your mind will be clearer,
having been flushed out by the rush of words
(or even the trickle).

Don't go out and get the newspaper
or put the coffee on.
Just write a poem before breakfast,
or more than one.
So much the better.

Sit up in bed, or in your favourite chair,
with your notebook in your lap,
and your favourite pen,
and begin.
The cat may demand her tuna
and the dog his walk
but tell them they will have to wait.
They'll understand.

Write. That poem. Or. Those poems.

If you don't know what to say,
Write, "I don't know what to say."
Repeat until another word comes.
Not unless – until.

PRESCRIPTION: ether

PATIENT: Anne Maclean

DOSAGE: *Poem Before Breakfast (cont'd)*

apothecaRy

Write about the night you had.
If you tossed and turned,
thinking you heard noises downstairs.
If you slept too long,
waking and drifting, waking and drifting,
rocked by the waves of sleep,
until you woke at last,
as if you'd just returned
from a long journey.

Write about the dreams you had
when you were a kid
and had no one to tell them to.
Like being chased by a bear
or flying in a midnight sky.

Write about your grown-up dreams,
like being chased by Nazis
seduced by Frenchmen
or lost in a warren of rooms
looking for a way out.

When you write them down,
look at them
and let them look back at you.
Then turn the page.

PRESCRIPTION: ether

PATIENT: Merissa Nathan Gerson

apothecaRy

DOSAGE: B.

Banished. I would be banished by now from somewhere if I hadn't found him in the secret room. If he hadn't looked at my breasts like juicy Buddhist buds. If I hadn't chosen to ignore it. I would have been banished a long time ago if I hadn't chosen to ignore, rather, to endure.

Beef. I do not eat this. I cannot chomp on the flesh of her large raped ass. She, of the farm, of the gatherings, of the festivals, prefers to be called "momma." Momma to baby Sunshine who lies on fake leopard skin crying while her mother smokes opium to prevent herself from feeling the anal invasion.

Beloved. A farce. She, with the needles, says I have to love myself before they can love me. Ah, yes. So I remain belovedless because I cannot love myself. And she, with her beloved, claims to know better of relationship and heart, even though he beats the living daylight out of her.

Better. I am better than you and you are worse than me. Or you are better and I am worse. This "better syndrome" was thwarted by the bodies at The Nitro. Sick men worshipping the tainted forms of flat-chested, scarred, tattooed, and pierced bodies. I found God in a strip club.

Bicycle. I watched you on yours. You sang alone. You are a little boy and I project my manhood onto you. You are a baby boy on a bicycle. I saw you, riding and singing, rushing home to your dog. You adore broken birds. Hippies. Those who adore you a little less. Bicycle. I ride mine and forget you.

Blister. What grows on my heart with age.

Bloody. I think hump. Stump. Severed. And then dripping, all that blood, into the toilet. You and your plastic gauze. I am in college again. I am at the art show. For a split-second to be a woman is to be incredible. Pippilotti Rist. All those blood oranges. The red mark of the gods, so that in the street they all bow down.

PRESCRIPTION: ether

PATIENT: Merissa Nathan Gerson

apothecaRy

DOSAGE: B. (cont'd)

Blunder. You. Me. The woods. My heart. You said I love you with your chest. It hurt, like in Milk Money, that hole you burned. I said it was love I felt but it could have been your pain, sunk into my aorta. You sighed deep with relief and I told you it hurt. It hurt something incredible. Your pain in my chest was what I felt as love.

Brash. This is the not angelic side of the Daddy. Daddy is an angel, so sweet and so pure. Look, a poet. Look, a yogi. Look, a religioso. Oh, Daddy. Daddy dearest. Daddy purest. Daddy incredible and kind and bestower of many gifts. How is it that you are such a monster?

Break. I want to break everything lately. Glass. Wood. Anything I come into contact with. I want to break.

Bristle. The crossing of paths and the dead monarch and the twitching broken chipmunk. I held her bicycle while she scooped the dying thing out from the middle of the road. The feeling before I realize that your vision and mine are not so different. The feeling when I know everything is solely interpretation.

Broken. Nothing has ever really been broken. It is a myth. Sprained, yes. He said his heart is in knots. When a boy listens to his mind, not his heart, then he can call himself broken to avoid fixing. To release the break is to give it room. To give it room is to permit breathing. Breathing is healing. Healing is fixing. You are suffocating.

Brunt. The location of you in my joke. Your nose bleeding down your football jersey because I threw the rubber band ball in your face. Brunt. When I found the thumbtacks in my bed. Brunt. When we remember beating each other up but forget that he taught us how to play that game.

Bullshit. When you choose to close, just after prying me open. When I say you pried me open, I mean I pried myself open, I mean I hate you because it is easier. Bullshit. It is easier to pretend it is all my fault that I flew out of my heart and into yours and you built fire there and left in hopes of not having to witness what you burned down.

PRESCRIPTION: ether

PATIENT: Kimberly Castanon

DOSAGE: *Unknown Ailment #4*

apothecaRy

For several months, my right eye bled. I don't know how it started but one morning while brushing my teeth, I noticed there was a thin rim of blood waiting at the edge of my eyelid. Throughout a big chunk of my sophomore year my eye bled, I always had a thick knot of blood sitting at the corner of my eye. I couldn't go to the doctor, so I figured, whatever had broken or busted, would eventually heal.

What I felt was so painful, for years I had taken for granted the ability to move my eyes around in which ever direction I chose without having to feel this yank behind my eyeball and feeling the need to cringe, which most times, I did. I was convinced I would get wrinkles sooner because of all the times I would scrunch up my eyes, eyebrows and the rest of my face due to the pain that never stopped. I couldn't sleep on the right side of my face because I felt like my eyeball would burst inside my eye socket.

Even just skimming a painting or a page felt impossible. It's not that I couldn't move my eyeball, it's just that I didn't want to. It bled pretty much all day, there was a spot on all my jeans where I would wipe the collected blood from my fingertip and it became habit after a couple of weeks.

It was something I was self-conscious about because everyone would point it out, yes, I knew my eye was bleeding. Sometimes there would be so much that blood would run down my cheeks or it would dry up in the corner.

Eventually, the bleeding stopped but I still had the habit of dabbing my eye. I was grateful to look wherever I wanted without having an excruciating pain as the result of seeing.

PRESCRIPTION: ether

PATIENT: Gina Caciolo

DOSAGE: *from Suffocating*

apothecaRy

"I don't feel so good," she said.

"Come here babe, I'll hold your hair back," he said.

Erica wobbled her way to the grass. Jared took a position behind her head. She felt the rainbow of liquors working their way back up her throat, pushing. He tensed his fingers as he gathered her tender brown hair in his hands. An eruption of the Swedish Fishes, the Surfer on Acids, the Kamikazes, the Snake Bites, the Red Deaths, the Jelly Donuts, and especially the White Russian, landed.

As Erica felt the wet grass soak into her jeans, she attempted to take breaths through her nose, in between regurgitating white chunks against the red brick of the apartment building. Jared noticed his bladder gathering pressure. After a strong breath that filled her lungs, she paused and heard the faint sound of a zipper. Jared composed his balance, as he held himself in his right hand and peed, graciously, in the opposite direction of her head.

"You're letting it out one way. I'm letting it out another," he said. As he laughed, he forgot to aim and the too-yellow stream backlashed off the brick, nearly spritzing Erica in the eye, causing her to gag.

She felt the vomit in her throat but she couldn't expel it. He looked down and saw her face was bright red, even in the little bit of light that was shed onto her face. She could smell the bitter aroma of the pile in front of her, as she pushed with all her throat's might. Jacob leaned down and, with two fingers, fish hooked into her mouth. He dug in, past her tense tongue, until he felt the back of her throat and then thrust them just a few centimeters further. She felt it coming, quickly. She threw up, for the last time.

"You're so smart," she said. Her eyes hung sleepily, angled in his direction, before she shifted onto her back and closed them comfortably.

PRESCRIPTION: ether

PATIENT: LaVonne N. Caesar

DOSAGE: *My Lover Dies of AIDS*

apothecaRy

I.

peach blossoms and t-cells,
your porcelain nipple veiled beneath thin ice,
yellow-ivory paint peels away the fading wall in strips
and your skin decays between my pleading fingers.
I cannot list the things which we have lost:
tight friction pulled from our limp limbs,
or your hungry lips on the back of my hand
like a tear.

This gray,
cadaverous hole is surely love:
the stomach of that beast
who feeds on memories, faith
and taunting hopes. yet,
there must be some truth in this,
some vision-angel trapped in the cold cellar of our pain.
craving a message locked in the godless hollow ache and heave,
we claw the sand with desperate, rabid nails
as the days slip through our fingers.

we cannot hold back the sea.
we cannot hold back the sea

PRESCRIPTION: ether

PATIENT: LaVonne N. Caesar

DOSAGE: *My Lover Dies of AIDS (cont'd)*

apothecaRy

II. I take my dead lover's ashes to toss into the sea But it is
raining and the wind –

How long must I stand
frozen hand to mouth
awaiting the tide?
The moon has fallen
crushed, a dark bird from the sky.
constricting clouds squeeze you towards me
until your skin coats mine
powder white like the sand
against your trembling thigh,
my hand, hot, in you clasping,
your damp womb desperate wild.
This labyrinthial silence will not die
and I am lost inside,
demolished in the ruins
the collapsed walls of my mind,
submerged/fragmented/stumbling blind
your yellow sheets were against my back,
your yellow hair over my eyes.
and now you are chalk rivulets down my arm
pale thread-light down my fingers,
neck, my lips, my tongue
and I am swallowing your bones.

PRESCRIPTION: ether

PATIENT: Kelly Sexton

DOSAGE: *november*

apothecaRy

splinter-under-nail | irritated excitement
headachy anxiety | grabbing at words
one hand intrusive | touching everything on me
the other pensive | touching everything but me
moving close enough for response
hands fold and shake over each other
slide down greasy nose
fall to warm lap | continuing inaction
submitting to warmed gun

never knowing the smell of a hospital or the feel of iodine to arm
tasting beer then blood as last sensations
sitting outside the classroom where teacher has forgotten you

and from the grey mouth a melody

PRESCRIPTION: ether

PATIENT: Susie Huser

DOSAGE: *Observed Opposable: No Dumbs Rights*

apothecaRy

for Tina Darragh

Humble: skin, pulled to the windows
inscribed with illegible existence
as question for all words and spaces where they fall
FIT, SLIDE, imperialism embedded in it
() mal no-vi un () vers center to taunt.