

SMELL THE ROSES,

y'all

a healing response
in poetry and prose

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LYNNE

Editors:

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For Thomas.
Look what you've done, my love.

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SMELL

THE

ROSES,

y'all

INTRODUCTION

In my debut collection, *Fire Sale, Y'all*, I took you through the stages of fire development—a metaphor for burning down the life I once knew. After all, I literally sold all my things and found myself shivering in the bed I had made, with nothing left but my words and the realization of how my choices and relationships had unraveled. Much of that unraveling, I came to see, was rooted in childhood trauma. I had mirrored the toxic, unfulfilling relationships I grew up around, and when it all came crashing down, I was forced to rebuild.

During the creation of that first book, I had to face my mistakes and start building new processes to take back control of my own story. One thing was clear: I wanted to be loved, and I wanted to love in a healthy way. The final chapter of *Fire Sale, Y'all* was titled “Decay,” marking the end of that fire’s devastation. But decay is also a beginning. It’s what happens after the ground has been cleansed by fire—leaving it dormant, yes, but clean. I wanted that clean slate. I wanted to be renewed. And dammit, I was determined to make it happen.

Fire Sale, Y'all ended with decay, and so this book begins there. While you don’t need to have read the first book to follow along on this journey of growth, I think it’s important to reference that ending because it sets the stage for what comes next.

Welcome to *Smell the Roses, Y'all!* Ha! This book is about igniting desire and rediscovering life after being dormant. I’ve named the chapters after the stages of plant growth because, as I gathered the pieces for this book, I noticed that my journey of healing closely followed these stages.

We start with “Dormancy.” After betrayal—infidelity that left me feeling undesirable and unattractive—I was emotionally frozen, stuck in a winter of sorts. Trust had withered, and I felt isolated, cold, and numb. In those moments, I longed to be desired more than loved, but I soon realized that wasn’t enough.

Then comes “Waking,” that glimmer of hope, the first steps toward thawing. Maybe it was through self-reflection or a small act of kindness to myself, but something began to stir.

The “Growing” stage is where the real work of healing began. It’s about feeling, rebuilding, and learning to trust again—both in myself and in others. Just like a rose pushing through the soil toward the light, I found momentum.

Next is “Budding,” where I began to open up to others. This is a delicate phase, where vulnerability emerged but was still fragile—like a closed flower bud, ready but cautious.

And finally, we arrive at “Blooming.” This chapter is where I find myself in full bloom—self-love, trust, and strength. Like a rose at its peak, this stage represents my healing, my confidence, and my ability to embrace love with a renewed heart.

Let me show you how I got there...

DORMANCY

A BALLOON

Recently, I had a moment where I missed the person I thought I married. The moment was so heavy, I fell to the floor. I was limp, lifeless.

Just as fleeting as the moment entered and plowed me over, it was gone.

I sighed a gasping, healing sigh. How long had that been trying to make its way through me?

I was so light now, like a helium balloon. I could almost touch the ceiling, weightless.

It's ok to grieve the loss of who I thought he was. He is a figment, but he was created. He deserved this mourning moment and I desperately needed to release him.

There he goes. Like the helium balloon. Floating up and up, getting smaller and smaller. The sun catching his silvery skin, glinting.

Then poof.

Gone.

Bye.

The part of him that remains, there is nothing. Nothing here.

MY ALAMO

I built it from what was left—splinters of vows, burnt maps of trust, the shrapnel of good intentions. I sandbagged my chest with silence, stacked my ribs like barricades. No one gets in now. Not all the way.

“Remember my Alamo,” I whisper each time someone reaches for my face too softly, like they’re asking to be let in without earning it. I remember. God, I remember. The way love marched in wearing warmth and promises. How I lit the lanterns, opened every door. I fed the soldiers. I let them sleep in my bed. I kissed their foreheads before battle.

But they weren’t fighting for me. Just through me.

The siege came slow, then all at once. I held the line. I bled where no one could see. And when the smoke cleared, no one stayed behind to bury the girl I was.

So I did it myself.

Now I walk the walls, a sentinel in my own chest. I plant warning flags where hope tries to bloom. I turn kindness into enemy code. I lace my tea with watchfulness. I cannot afford another surrender.

This is not fear.
This is strategy.
This is survival.

And this—
this is my last stand.

THERE

Do you see her?
She sees you.
I know what she says
Isn't true.

Her helpfulness
Has run out.
It's hard to ignore
The echo of her.

She says:
I am not worthy.
You are fake.
I am safe
When I am alone.

And other things.

She has helped me
In the past.

Now she is
Just a saboteur.
I cannot force her
Away from here.

Always there
She is me.

LOVE ME

Where did I go wrong?
When did I first slip?
Bent and broken—
Nothing left to grip.

Gave and gave, left nothing undone,
Whispered, begged—
“Please, love me, someone.”

What do you need?
What should I say?
There’s nothing I won’t do—
Just love me someday.

But what would that look like?
A ghost? A shell?
Never had it,
So how can I tell?

I’m crawling now, on calloused knees—
Can anyone, someone, love me back, please?

Take all of me and even more,
Till nothing is left of my worn-out core.

My hands are dirty from the work,
Never afraid to dig through the dirt.

What might I find?
I’m never enough.
Please, someone—
I’m buried in the bluff.

I USED TO BE

Hold me, baby—
I'm so scared.
I used to be the girl
Who came prepared.

I believed in love
Like a child believes in magic—
Blind and breathless,
Never tragic.

I gave it all.
No hesitation.
Thought love meant
Full dedication.

But I was wrong.
It broke me clean.
And now I live
In the in-between.

Who am I now?
And who are you?
Someone—
Please tell me what to do.

I don't like this version of me.
I miss who
I used to be.

*She was soft.
She was bold.
She trusted your hands
To safely hold.*

Now I run
Before I fall.
I don't believe
In love at all.

It feels like risk,
It feels like war—
And I'm not sure
I care anymore.

So don't ask me
To open wide—
I barely recognize
What's left inside.

Never again
Will I believe
That I could be
Who I used to be.

DEADHEADING

Knee jerks,
Making it work—
Trying my best
To be myself,
Nothing less.

I've adapted so well
I forgot what I feel.
I say what they want—
Not what is real.

Is that the way
To make friends,
To keep lovers?

Where did I go?
Hell if I know.

Discomfort means growth,
Wise men say.
Discomfort is all I know,
So why didn't I grow?

Did I grow?
I think I did—
Forgot to clip
The deadhead.

Feeding the rotting flower,
Stifling the starving bud.

How do I become
What I am meant to become,

When I can't see myself
Without someone?

THE FLY AND THE BUTTERFLY

Buzzzz buzz buzzzz

Unhinged, she tirelessly bangs her head against the glass

The pile of shit which nourished and warmed her this morning visible

Out of reach, despite incessant efforts

Deafening buzz

Buzzzz buzz buzzzz

Halfwitted, insane

The same result a million times

Flying the same path

Navigation disabled, perhaps inside the walls

Buzzzz buzz buzzzz

Or moronic, regardless

Hard to say

How long until she kills herself

She isn't smart enough to comprehend suicide

No, but she does indeed kill herself

The insanity of repetition

Crashing yourself again and again

Into matter stronger than you, despite pliability of thought

You have thought yet cannot break this thing

Buzzzz buzz buzzzz

Do you know you are trapped

You do not know

Again, and again

There is nothing but the pile of shit

You can see it

You can almost smell it

But you cannot bathe in it
Days pass until you expire
Lying on your back

Shhhh silence shhhh
Legs raised
Wings intact
Of all the places you could have flown
All the adventures ignored

Shhhh silence shhhh
The aromas, tastes and visionary delights
You chose what you knew
The warm pile of discarded, decaying plant and animal
flesh
A few feet from your crusted body rest fragrant flowers
in a vase

Shhhh silence shhhh
There lies a dog, once concerned with your presence
but interest wained in dull repetition
An opened can of root beer
Popping and bubbling with excitement
A Mexican Dagger plant which smells of damp earth
and moss
Flaky croissants on the counter just a buzz away from
your kamikaze path
Nothing was of interest, a tragedy
Death was chosen by her
Life was ignored, though it was under her nose
Beckoning

Shhhh silence shhhh
When her soul returns
Will she remember the plight
Of her repetitive insanity
Has she learned from her mistakes
Will she return to the pile of shit
Some will, I have no doubt
Others worse, become the shit
Then again, many of them come back
Vibrant with remembrance and learning, those become
butterflies

LEAVE

If another girl catches your eye,
More than just a passerby,
I won't beg.
I won't cry.
Goodbye.

If someone sees you with someone else,
If you can't recover from loving me less,
I won't pretend.
I won't defend.
The end.

I want you to be happy,
And I hope it's us, you and me.
But if it's not,
You should leave.

Don't mess with me.
I am Plan A,
And Plan B.

I never miss anyone
As much as me.

YOU GOT ME WRONG

You got me wrong,
Thought my giggles were just echoes,
My dirt-streaked knees the whole story.

But I was painting galaxies
In the dust of the backyard.

You got me, wrong.
I wasn't small;
I was infinite,
Dreaming with my arms open wide.

You got me wrong,
Mistook my stumbles for weakness,
My quiet for surrender.

But I was mapping constellations
On the ceiling of my fears.

You got me, wrong.
Behind my blush was fire.
Behind my silence,
A storm brewing on the horizon.

You got me wrong,
Thought my love was a gift
With no price, no weight.

But I was carving my soul into the shape of trust,
Even as you chipped away at it.

You got me, wrong.
I wasn't yours to break.

I was learning to build,
To love,
To leave.

You got me wrong,
Thought my scars were my story,
My strength a burden.

But I am the weight of mountains,
The force of rivers.

You got me, wrong.
You never held me at all.

I am the fire that warms
And the flame that consumes.

You got me, wrong.
You never got me.

CLUMSY

Have you ever held everything you wanted in your hand—

Held it too tightly at first,
Then threw it away before it could break free,
Watched it squirm and bleed?

Tried again,
More gently the second time,
Only to watch it slip through your fingers?

Then you squirmed and bled for it.
Ached for it.
Died for it—
In silence.

When you finally worked up the courage to reach again,
Did you hesitate?
Did you break the silence?
Did you brace for the fall?

What did you do—
When you held it all?

RIPPED

Here I sit,
Trembling in the dark—
Terrified
You'll rip me apart.

But worse than pain,
Worse than the blow,
Is the fear
You'll simply go.

No bruises,
No broken bone—
Just the ache
Of being alone.

No scars to prove
You ever tried—
Just salt on my cheeks.
And nowhere to hide.

I AM AFRAID

Where do you go
When you are away?
I want to believe
The things that you say.

But someone hurt me—
Cut me deep.
Sometimes I worry
You might creep.

It isn't fair.
It isn't right.
Still, it keeps me
Up at night.

There's no way
For me to know.
I have to trust
Where you go.

But trust is not
A simple thing—
It's a bridge rebuilt
With fraying string.

You smile,
Say I'm safe with you—
But smiles
Can lie too.

It isn't fair.
It isn't right.
You hold me close,
But I still fight.

If you break me
From within—
I'm afraid
I won't let you back in.

So be gentle.
And let me begin.

TANGLED

I don't like these ropes.

They're pinching and unnecessary—
Yet here they are,
Holding you.
Holding us.
Back.

Don't you see them?
Who put them here?
Bound us with fear.

I hadn't seen them,
Not until now.
What do we do?
How?

Maybe the ropes are comforting.

Nonetheless,
We are tangled in a mess.

SAFE

Please tell me, lover,
When it's safe—
To step outside
My hiding place.

I've been broken down
Far too much.
I flinch at even
The gentlest touch.

So I built these walls
Of heavy steel,
To give my heart
The time to heal.

You arrived
Just as I was through—
And now I don't know
What to do.

I want to show you
All I hide,
But shame still lingers
Deep inside.

Still, slowly now,
I start to peel
The parts of me
That never healed.

You handle me
With careful hands—
And promise me

That love still stands.

This burden isn't
Fair to you—
But somehow,
You keep breaking through.

CRUSHING

There's a run in my hose
And a hole in my heart—
I keep stalling
At every new start.

You disarm me
With that sideways smile,
Say you'll stay—
But just for a while.

I only know
How to go all in.
No armor.
Just paper-thin skin.

Nothing's ever
Quite what it seems.
Please, baby—
Don't crush my dreams.

GREY

She gave herself away,
As much as she could,
Without ever meeting herself.

It was black and white.
All or nothing.
Good and evil.
Right or wrong.

She found herself wondering,
Wandering.
Lost.

She walked alone
In the black
And in the white,
The dark and the light.

Everything fell short.
She did, of course,
And all the others too.

Nothing was right,
Even when it was simply
Wrong or right.

Until finally,
She met herself
In the grey,
The middle.
The place where all the parts
Connect.
Connected.
Found.

Grey in her hair.
Old or young,
But not really.

She stopped giving all of herself
To help someone else get ahead.
She stopped giving all of herself
To feel loved by someone.

She stopped
When she met herself
In the middle.

That is where she is now,
No longer young,
But not exactly old.

No longer good,
But not evil,
Most the time.

No longer giving her all,
But not content with nothing.

She is fine in the dark
And enjoys the light.

She mutes the beauty of her face
With a silver pin in her nose.
The contrasts make her
Feel more approachable.

She doesn't want to be approached.
But she doesn't want to be ignored either.

She prefers the middle.
The grey.

To her though,
It is green.

The space where she can be
Whatever she wants,
Whenever she wants,
Now that she knows herself.

Her favorite color is green.
Or should I say,
Grey?

HOW

Be patient with me.
I beg you.

You see—
I know how to beg.
I don't know how to love.

But I want to.
God, I want to.

Do I hide?
Should I run?
Will I ruin it?
—I know how to do that.

How do I accept love?

Is it real?
Will you use me,
Abuse me,
Confuse me?

And if not—
Will I do it myself?
Isn't that what love is?
Hurt.
Pain.

Here is my body.
You can have it.

But my mind?
That's harder.

I don't know how
To hand it over
Without flinching.

What do I want?
What do I like?
I keep asking,
But I don't know.

Am I supposed to?
Can you teach me?

How do I do this?
How do we do this?
Can I do this?

How?

Be patient with me.

HDYDI

You bless me with your love
I do not deserve you
You do not deserve me
You deserve easy, better

Loving a poet must be torture

I lean into the darkness
I scratch the skin to study the bleed
The scab I pick
No other way to conceive

Hurting myself
Hurting you
Just to see
What you'll do
What I will do

How do you do it?

Put up with me
The insanity

Am I worth it?

I can't change me
Can I even admit
I don't want to

I like me

I love you
I love you

I love you

I love you a million times
I will hurt you a million more

Do not implore
Do not implore

There is the door
There is the door

I hate me more
I hate me more

How do you do it?

Why do I do it?

Please, do it
Please, do it

Please love me

Love me
Love me
Love me

SHOW ME

May I be the stars
For you are the moon.
Perhaps the sand
As you are the sea.

Please won't you show me—
I'm tired of the words;
They often deceive.

I'll fly as a bird
On your sweeping wind.
I'll reach as a sapling
To you as the sun.

Just show me
What you say...

HE SHOWS ME

I have a new lover
Actually,
I have never had a lover—
Not like this.

He caresses my cheek
Like he caresses my nipple.
Attentive.
Slow.
Delicate.

Sometimes I want to beg
For his firmness.
The tenderness makes me
Ache for hard parts.

Then he shares it with me.
He never gives me,
He never takes me—
He shares with me.
He shows me.

And I howl for it.
I break apart
In the middle.
I vibrate from within,
Like a wave
Crashing and exploding.

Then he joins me.
Then he holds me.
He whispers in my ear.
We sleep.
He kisses me gently.

Tragedy when he goes.
I think he won't
Ever really leave—
But I still don't know.

So I share with him.
I show him.
And hope he aches
For me, as I do
For him.

WAKING



RUNAWAY

It has occurred to me, just as I sit here
On this bright and shining day,
That I am, in fact, a runaway.

I know great fear and pain.
I have been betrayed.
But that isn't why I runaway.

I am a frog, content to boil in the pot.
I know what to do when it gets hot.
I hunker down and brace for the storm.
Never ignore a moment's forewarn.

Happiness, joy, respect, admiration—
Nothing but a hallucination.
Run as quickly as your legs can handle.
These are feelings we can't dismantle.

When it is good and you don't want to stop,
It feels to me the shoe will drop.
When my leather softens and turns to lace,
Will I be standing naked with egg on my face?

Who's the friend, who's the foe?
To run away is all I know.

APOLOGIZING

Laying naked,
Wrinkled sheets,
Talking about the day—
All the things,
But really nothing,
Like I do.

Then I tell him
I'm sorry
For talking too much.

Concern on his face.
“Baby, why do you do that—
Apologize for being yourself?”

Did someone shut you down?
He doesn't say it aloud,
But I hear it
In his eyes.

Tears in mine.

He asks me to tell it again.
Says he likes the sound of my voice,
And the way my mouth moves.

“Please stop apologizing
For being you,”
He says.

And I did.
Start.
Stopping.

SIGNS

I love someone.
I love someone so truly—
I am certain I have never loved anyone else.
I thought I loved before,
I was wrong.

I don't know if anyone has ever loved me the way I love him.

If they did, it must have been torture.
No, no, I would have seen the signs.
They would have considered me at every turn.
They would have a self-awareness,
An inner dialogue that always went back to me.

I have never been loved like that.
I hope he loves me in the same way I love him.
If he doesn't,
I just hope he likes me enough
To let me love him like I do.

LEARNING

Learning you — Slow to change, scared, thinking it through. Hesitation or procrastination? Eager to please, weakness or strength? Driven to please, friend or foe. Workhorse, something to prove? Where is the proof? Skinned knees, bitterness, or is that me?

Learning me — Doubt, slow to change usually, head-first when in panic. Scared, capricious, melancholy, I like words. Impulsive, if only for a moment. Regret, no time for that. Hurt, longing, eager to please...Defined by this. Who am I? I can't see me. Was I ever even there?

Learning us — slow and easy. Fast and hard. Long and short. Forever or a season? Who is to decide? One moment I think its you; Am I to just wait? Then, I quickly realize it is me. How patient with you can I really be?

Learning you again — Is patient helpful? Does demanding drive you to action? They have all been demanding, right? Wrong? Idk, some days I don't care either. I just want you however possible. Other days I want to be wanted. Begged for. On your knees begging for me, forever. Is that fair? Do I care...Sometimes.

CHOOSING TO FOLLOW

Ok, baby—

You called my bluff and gave me what I wanted.
It was a little bumpy but otherwise painless,
Perhaps even a bit anticlimactic.

Now I sit with the gift of having what I wanted,
Which I kicked and screamed for,
Feeling like a damned idiot.

Why was this so important to me?

Because it was hard for you?

Why do I want to force you to do things that are hard for
you?

I just want to love you.

I am a terrible lead.

This may scare you a bit...

But I am finally ready to follow.

I hope you know where we are going.

THIS ISN'T PERFECT

I am a mess. You are a mess. Things are easier when we undress.

I just want to have my way, why can't you do as I say?
Why do I hurt you so?

I can't ever let things...

Go.

No.

Stay.

I try so hard not to run away. Am I a runaway or just pushing through? I've never been too sure what do.

In the past, I stayed because I had to. Now I stay because I want to. Sometimes I don't, but when I think about the "don't," I get sick. Not just in my heart. My whole body aches just thinking about the leaving part.

I simply cannot do without you. I refuse to. Do not let me...

Go.

No.

Stay.

GROUNDHOG DAY

It's hard to define
Just how much
You cross my mind.

The gusting wind,
Its melodies—
Like your whisper,
Weakened my knees.

The warming sun,
When it touched my skin,
Made me think
Of you again.

Every second,
Of every day,
Transpires in this way.

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

Careful, baby
My bruises are soft to the touch.
I'm not used to being loved this much.

Maybe I should pull away
Because I don't deserve to feel this way.

My worth is broken, I ache all over
So much fear of starting over.

You love me right, and hold me tighter.
Please don't stop; better late than never.

TRY

Pull me close,
Kiss my shoulder.
I bend my knees—
You warm my toes with yours. Intimacy.

Talk of the past,
Share the burdens.
Show our hearts—
Share our souls. Love.

Why do I think
More is needed?
This is deeper
Than I've ever had. Real.

The culture—
Mom, friends, faith.
Here's a timeline,
Framework to follow.
I have done that. Pointless.

Can I let that go?
Can you let it go? Free.

Could we just do
Things our own way
In our own time? Focus.

I think we can.
I want to.
I will try.
Can you be
Patient with me?
Let's do this in

Our own way,
On our own time. Purpose.

HOLD ME

When I am a bitch, mean and fierce with fangs bare,
when I am numb, hard to reach, a blank stare, hold me.

When I am sad, dripping wet with tears, clinging to old
fears, when joy is abundant and the sun appears, hold me.

If I am fighting mad and you don't deserve it, if you are
fighting mad and I deserve it, hold me.

If ever in doubt of what I feel or what I need, when you
are in doubt of what you feel or what you need, open your
heart and arms and just, hold me.

Please.

Just hold me.

MUSE

You are quiet,
Enough to hear me beg
Without words.

Please, won't you kiss me,
Make me better.
Little kisses,
Big kisses,
Deep and shallow.

Massage my breasts,
Rub my ass
You know what I like.
A kiss of goodbye
As your face enters
My thighs.

I will write you a poem,
Write a prose,
A song, a lullaby
Anything you want.
Please, just don't stop
Making me shake,
Twitch.

How is it
Any woman
Ever had the nerve
To leave your side?
If you ever leave me,
I'll be right there,
Still begging silent
As you come inside. Fuck,

You even do the dishes.
You, the muse
I am utterly bemused,
Bewitched.
I am happily your bitch.
Xoxo.

RELAX

You are such a strong man, baby,
I see you are tired and weary.

Working hard to provide and protect us
Rest now, I don't need a prospectus.

Let me take off your boots,
All the worries I'll dilute.

All those tight places in your feet and legs,
I will soften with my feminine hands.

Your back carries such a weight,
Pay no mind; here's your dinner plate.

Fill your belly and relax your mind.
If you want it, beer or wine.

Once you are full of food and liquor,
Come upstairs, and I will lick your pecker.

DESIRE

The rain is pounding the roof above.
My heart echoes the melody.

The wind blows, whipping loudly.
My breath quickens as my lungs stumble.

The kiss is wet and firm,
Yet my body goes limp.

I am but a mold of clay
Manipulate my body as you wish.

Press my skin and bend my limbs.
My greatest pleasure is pleasing you.

I will do all you desire.
It is all I desire.
You.

FULL OF YOU

Gentle, is your love.
Proficient is your artifice.
Deep is your disciple.

Bursting is my heart.
Wet is my garden.
Full is my flower.

COLORS

Pressure building,
Overflow.

Shaking legs,
Flushing glow.

Can't distinguish
You from me.

All the colors
I can see.

Pounding chest,
Throbbing treasure.

Detonation is
Unmeasured.

I love you,
You love me.

This is how
It's meant to be.

MMM

So, so sweet
The shadows
Lurking below
The navel.

Familiar smell,
Cashmere.
Pussy cat tongue
Licking skin
From bone
Delicious moan.

Mmm.
Waves of pleasure
Rolling down the spine,
Up the trunk,
Others flowing
In the same undertow.
One, two, three
Now baby,
Cum with me.

My three to your one,
Chemical undone.
Mmm, what we become
Blessing,
Curse.
Without it,
Worse.

What a world
I didn't know existed
Until you kissed me,

Kissed me awake.

The power you have
The mouth,
The taste.
Now my body
Finally shakes.

WET DREAM

You lay me down
Soft and sweet,

Never loud,
Never mean.

Respecting me,
Giving me space

Consistently.

But that one time,
You told me
To shut my mouth
My orgasm nearly brought down the house.

MASTERPIECE

Look at you,
What an adventure you are.
The shape your hair takes when wet,
The waves begging my fingers to comb them loose.

Your eyes, a language I speak.
The mouth, sex.
Good god, the twists and turns of it.
You are the most skilled suitor I have ever saddled.

The shape of your body,
The high and low places along your spine.
The dip above your buttocks, how the sweat pools there
While my legs wrap around your waist.

My teeth marking your shoulders,
My nails piercing your flesh.
I have never been so perplexed.

The complexities of my emotions astound me.
All I know to do is keep making this love.
Whatever becomes of anything,
I must have you.

FOREVER

I wanted you then; I love you now. Come with me as we take this vow. You are who I adore. Body, mind, and so much more. With each day, my esteem does grow; you are all I need to know. Share with me in all your days; next to you, I will always stay. Keep me close, both near and far; I'll do the same wherever you are. You, my husband; I, your wife. Forever, now begins our life.

I WANNA BE RICH

I wanna be rich enough
To spend all weekend
Leaving footprints in the forest.

Rich enough
To have moss in the yard
And a creek to pull dads from,
Fry 'em up for dinner.

Rich enough
To grow wildflowers,
Picking the ripest blooms
To scent the living room.

Rich enough
To open the windows in spring,
Letting in the smell of rain.

Rich enough
For a corner stove,
Stocking the fires.

Rich enough
To hold hands
Wherever we go.

Rich enough
That our toes aren't cold
For long.

Rich enough
The only growl in our bellies
Is from the pie we ate too fast.

Rich enough to take a drive on Sunday
And play records till we fall asleep.

Rich enough to save only for what we want,
Not what we need—

Rich enough to know the difference.

FOREVER THIS TIME

The first time I met you,
Distractions abound.
I promise forever,
The second time around.

The lessons I've learned not all fun,
Only cementing you to be the one.
There isn't a plan B, no way without you.
I am all in, without a single doubt, too.

Nothing compares to what we've found.
Forever together, my second time around.

LOML

The love of my life, he's an ordinary man to those he passes,

Quiet and calm.

I am sure they would say.

Many know him to be a giver,

Someone to call in any event,

A level head.

Modest he is,

There is no doubt.

He has accomplished much

But never boastful.

The love of my life,

He's exquisite to me.

His body is both strong and gentle;

His mind, a wonderland.

He lets me inside.

What joys we find together.

Naked or not,

Naked preferred.

He is everything,

The greatest of gifts.

I will fight for him;

He will fight for me.

GROWING



EVENING TEA IS FOR LOVERS

“Is it too early to lay naked in bed, my dear?”
He asked, tired from his endless insomnia.
“Never,” she would say, her answer each time.
She would also suggest tea, unless his eyes were the
kind of tired
That turned them grey.

And so it played out.
She offered tea.
He didn’t want to be a bother, as he always said.
He only wished to have tea if it be her wish.
It was always her wish.

She kissed his lips, usually two times,
Unless she needed a third, or felt he did.
She descended the dark staircase,
Made the tea in the delicate way she does;
Small plate, small biscuit, small cup.
Big love.

The sun was longingly gazing at the moon.
The moon, smitten, returned the gaze.
Passion in their distant embrace,
Never enough time between them.

She ascended the stairs, slow and steady.
The bed-tray is under the bed.
She prepares the tray, tucks it between them...
An interesting predicament to ensure the tray
Does not hinder their touch,
Or the ability to properly molest the tea and biscuit.

She finds the spot and settles in hers.
Another two kisses.

He watches her as she reads.
She will look up on occasion to meet his gaze.
Smiles between them.
She will gasp when taken by the words,
Sometimes sharing with him the richness of parchment
in her hands.

He loves the sound of her voice.
She loves the smell of his skin.
He always finishes his tea first,
Only good at savoring her.
She will finish last, the final sip stone cold.
She is good at savoring all things.

FORESIGHT

I'll write the stories,
You be my muse.
The trees will whisper
Of all we do.

The moss will grow,
The stones we will turn over.
The creek will ripple,
The snakes dive under.

I know all I need to know.
The goats will neigh,
A tree may fall.
Next to you is where I'll lay.

We will walk the land,
From beginning to end.
You, my lover,
You, my friend.

The squirrels will scatter,
At least at first,
Then welcome the sound
Of our feet in the underbrush.

The birds will watch,
Perched on high,
Stealing a kiss
As we walk by.

Rain or shine,
Bright of day,
Cold of night.
I see it already,

My foresight.

Let's go get it!
Actually, never mind.
This dream of ours
Is making its way to us,
In due time.
Just keep your hand in mine.

DREAM WITH ME

There's a mountain ahead, and all the hills we've climbed behind.

You are here with me,
Holding hands,
Keeping each other warm
Inside the storm.

There's no way to control the wind in our face.
You are the willow,
You are the grace.

Together we travel the roads ever-changing,
Steadfast in the commitment we have made.
Loving you deeply,
Liking you the same.
Seemingly shared paths
From which we came.

Truly now shared,
The blessing I don't deserve.
The caress of your hand in mine
Through each narrowing curve.

We are the light,
We are the dream,
Frontiers together,
Forever we cling.

You once seemed unsure we could capture our dream.
Baby, you are mine, and I'll callous my feet and torture
my hand
To find you a cabin on our piece of land.

DRIVE

Take a drive, as I sometimes do,
When, for whatever reason,
I can't be close to you.

There's a barn on a country road,
Pines growing over it,
A touch of red peeling off the door,
Sagging roof and dirt floor.

We can buy it cheap,
Bolster the roof,
Add a wood floor,
Drywall all through,
Add a stained glass door,
Maybe a little front porch,
And big one off the back.
Couple of chairs
And a swinging couch.

Would you grow old there with me?
We can tend the fences,
Every morning check the goats,
In the evening, round up the chickens.

Shotgun 'bove the door,
Coyotes a damned shame.
I'll even take your last name.

From then on, won't you drive?
I'll sit contently by your side.

MY KENTUCKY HOME

He carved a path through silent stone,
A boy alone, without a guide,
Each fall a lesson he'd atone,
Each ridge he climbed with steady pride.

His fists were raw from sandstone edge,
His heart as bare as limestone walls,
But every vow, each solemn pledge,
Riverbed like voices through deep halls.

He bent, he broke, he stumbled hard—
Like sinkholes sudden under tread,
Yet found new springs within each scar,
And rose where others might have fled.

The caves he kept were carved by time,
Underground rivers charted pain,
But stalactites in perfect rhyme
Showed beauty born of slow, clean strain.

He was no stranger to the dark,
To hollers, cliffs, and coal seam weight,
Yet caprock steadied every arc,
And held him firm against his fate.

His soul was forest, wetland wide,
A quiet plain, a whispered prayer,
Where wild things wandered, pain could hide,
But hope would root and always dare.

And then—her voice: a southern swell,
She longed for hills she'd left behind,
Where coneflower bloomed in knob and dell,
And bluegrass danced on wind-swept time.

She saw in him her mountain ridge,
Her red-arched gorge, her waterfall,
The man, not born past Daniel's bridge,
But one who knew the rise from fall.

He never clipped her eagle wings,
Nor told her which high path to take,
Instead he built her sky-bound things,
With hands that trembled but won't break.

She soared above his rolling grace,
Her heart unbound, her breath set free,
For though she missed her birthland's place,
In him, Kentucky came to be.

He bore her pain with quiet spring,
He let her bloom through every scar,
She showed him peace where strong roots cling,
He taught her love just as they are.

And now no land could draw her back,
No river pull them far apart,
For what they've built no map could track—
Kentucky now is heart to heart.

No border marks where they begin,
No state can hold their gravity,
He is her home, and she is him,
Together they are Kentucky.

DON'T BE SILLY

The idea of finding your soulmate is stifling. The legend is farce. Both men and women have fallen on the sword for their so-called soulmate. Blood and tears have been shed for a lie.

You have endless pursuits, and suitors who will make for a legendary partnership.

The world abounds with incredible people; men with skilled tongues and women too. Minds with endless conversation or meditative silence.

The world is bursting at the seams with skilled lovers in literally every shape, color, and size. Smelling different, marking of hair and freckles, or bare.

What do you want? It exists and, rest assured, it isn't just one man or woman.

Find a suitable partner and build magic. The magic doesn't wait to be found. Can you imagine the naivety of it. NO, it isn't just sitting there waiting for you.

The magic is built with time, understanding, perfecting the dance of partnership. Your soulmate is built, not born. Don't be silly.

If you find a partner unworthy, then leave as soon as possible to continue the pursuit of something remarkable. For time is truly lacking. Worthy pursuits are not!

Go, go now!

HUNT SEAT

Bite down
Metal bit.

Rode hard
Busted lip.

Lunge line.
Fall back.

Pickup
Boot strap.

Dappled scars.
Mustang.

Broke in.
No reign.

Mare first.
Then stallion.

Equitation
Well round.

Muzzle free.
Heels pound.

Never let
Horse down.

I SEE YOU

I see a great man—
A bleeding heart, begging to be loved,
Carrying secrets, ready to burst.
Where do you rest?

I see a strong man—
Bearing the weight of the world,
Crushing shoulders needing to share the load,
His own sorrows unheard, yet he remains steadfast.
Who do you trust?

I see his compassion—
Never first to anyone, his cup runs empty.
Always giving, never thirsting,
The drought within.
When do you sleep?

I see his perversion—
Irresistibly naughty with little provocation,
Suppressing desires to suit others
While the fullness of his needs grows evermore.
What do you want?

I see you—
Searching for a home, an ally, a refuge, an exploit.

Here
I
Am.

HEADLONG

How can this be? I've fallen so quick
And I barely even tripped.
Stumbled maybe.
Headlong.

Is this real? Never have I felt anything like it.
This love is overwhelming, so intense and bright.
I'm tangled in the depth of your embrace,
Caught off guard by your loving grace.

My heart races, my mind is awash,
Caught between pleasure and a cautious hush.
Every moment with you feels so complete,
Yet I can't shake the fear of defeat.

I've been burned before, can't ignore the past,
But this time, I hope it's meant to last.
Every touch, every kiss feels so right,
But I'm falling headlong into the night.

FEAR

I'm sorry.

I think I hurt you while I was worrying about you hurting me.

What am I doing?

Fear is in control.

It's a blazing fire sucking up everything that is important to me — distracting me with its mesmerizing flames.

Stealing the air from my lungs.

Scorched earth.

He is the dove — white and powerful, returning with a green twig.

Hope.

Grace.

I can do this.

We can do this.

I'm thankful.

There is a seed bursting forth from the cleansed soil.

Stronger now with the lessons fear left behind.

Learning.

Widening my view.

No longer trapped in tunnel vision.

Focus.

I love you.

I MISS YOU

Do you dream? What are your dreams?
When you eat alone, do you feel lonely?
Are you lonely?

Do you ever reach for me at night, or in the morning?
Do you get cold? Do you get scared?
Are you scared?

Do you ever miss me? What does that feel like?
Do you struggle for breath as your chest tightens?
Do your eyes get damp and your stomach churn?

Do you imagine us together?
If you do, does your groin begin to throb as your heart
flutters?

Do you close your eyes and feel my soft lips on your
skin?

Does your mouth part as you sigh aloud?

On your best day, do you wish I was there?
On your worst day, do you wish I was there?
All the days, do you wish?
What be your wish? Is it me?

EVENING TEA

The tea marries the milk
Cool enough, tilt to lips

I miss you though you are within me still
Music inspires the poet in me
It's you that inspires me
Kiss
Touch
Share words
Share silence
Desire to be in your presence
Shivers, twisted yarn to warm me
Since you aren't here
Tell me a joke
Tell me you love me
Tell me something I don't know
Tell me all the things I already know
Just speak
Sweetest melody
Bluest of eyes
Such longing in them for me
Your desire makes me tremble
Come to my side

Plate catches a droplet of tea

I smell you somewhere on me
Bliss
The tea is a gift from you
You are the gift
I ache for you
Every moment is made better and worse
Won't the sun go down
Won't the sun come up

Whisper in my ear
Hands in my hair
Make me a sandwich
Let me love you for the rest of our lives

Evening tea

When I am with you time stops
Alone, it crawls

Tea is gone

Longing remains
I will turn in
If only to pass the time
Until we meet again

DON'T LET ME MESS THIS UP

There ain't a song in all the world
That compares to you—not a word.
Every moment with you is bliss;
Simply nothing compares to this.

You love me sincerely. Look in my eyes—
Please, baby, never tell me lies.
You have broken me in two,
Patched me up to like brand new.

Stronger now than ever before—
All I want, and so much more.
Kissing you is heaven on earth;
Making love to you, my church.

I am down on my knees, my hands folding.
You are the one to forever be holding.
Promise to never let me go.
Something else you should know:

When I get scared of what's to come,
Sometimes I pack my things and run.
Don't ever let me mess this up.
Hold me tight, and never give up.

SEE WHAT YOU SAY

See lack—
Fickle woman,
Looking to pick apart
Rose petals.
Not a wrinkle,
Not a dried leaf,
Picking the good,
Fingers wilting.
Perfection
Is hard to handle.

See abundance—
Doing the thing
Again and again,
Rub your feet,
Your shoulders,
Your hands—
Suffocating demand.

See what you say,
Change what you see.

Look at the shiny thing—
It's mine.
I shall burn it,
Burn it all down,
Then weep,
Drowning the ash
With my foreboding regret.

Come back.
Let me do it
Again,
And again,

And again.

Run—
Run as fast as you can...
Into my arms,
Not away.

I will love you with lack and abundance
Until the end of time.
Always on the edge of destroying
All that is mine.
You are mine.

No one will ever love you
As crazy fucking good as my way...
See what I say.
See what I say.
See what I say.

CHASM

It's irresponsible and reckless to think
That anyone or anything can fix us.
We are made whole in the afterlife—
All that is broken is made new again, there.

What, then, has filled this chasm in my heart — no, my soul?

His eyes — my breath catches in my throat at their depths,
Searching, learning, undressing me.

His mouth — soft, firm. Wet.
His words are a gift, and his voice, a soothing melody.

HEAVEN OR HELL

Perched on a razor's edge—
Not a bet that you should hedge.
Perhaps the savior, most likely the damned.
Help me understand what I am.

Shining brightly to light the way,
Or the fear and the doubt that haunt your day.
Goddess with my porcelain skin
Versus the prostitute you pay to sin.

Trusting lover awaiting your touch,
Woman scorned, never enough.
Is that you holding your breath,
Or are my hands tightly round your neck?

I'm fucked up in every way.
Try to love me anyway.

HOLDING BACK

Here—

That is the last of me.
You have it now.
All of me.
What will you do with it?
I want to pull away.

Scared—

I am flailing
Like a fish out of water,
Gasping for air.
Won't you please help?

Stop—

Holding back.
Why are you holding back?
What are you holding back?
You have it all.

Enough—

Maybe too much.
This is it for me.
You are it.
I will never do this again.
Please meet me here.

Ready—

I don't know how long I can breathe
While you are holding your breath.

HOLD HANDS

He doesn't want to
Hold me back—
He just wants
To hold my hand.

He asks
If he can go
Wherever it is
I want to go.

He says he could help
As I go—
If it's something
I decide so.

He knows I don't need him.
Alone, I'll do just fine.

He just hopes
I'll share the journey—
Both his and mine.

HOLE IN MY SOUL

Heat ain't working right,
Gonna be a cool night.
Better for you
To hold me tight.

Power's out again—
Nothing left to lend.
Morning'll come soon,
Just enough to light the room.

Hole in the sole
Of my shoe—
On my feet past noon,
They go numb by two.

This ain't heaven,
But it sure ain't hell.
Been there.
Not much to tell.

Bills still come,
And you ain't there.
No place feels like home—
Soul was snare.

All things better
When you're near.
Me and my soul
Would rather stay here.

NO MATTER WHAT, BUT...

I am struggling to process your words—
You love me no matter what...

*What kind of person would you be
To put restrictions on your love
For me?*

You will love me no matter what.

But...

But...

You reach your hand to mine,
Wiping the tears from my face.

“No.
I love you—
No matter what.”

BUDDING



FIXED

You say you are sorry to be so fucked up; You don't expect me to fix you. You are working to fix yourself. I say we are all broken. There is no fun in fixing what cannot be fixed. Let's make something beautiful using all the broken parts. Some from you, some from me. What could we make with these brilliantly flawed pieces of each other? A fascinating and fulfilling life, where instead of trying to fix things, we accept them, embrace them, understand them, talk of them.

For all eternity until we are made new together, naked with unconditional love. Let's do that, and we will be "fixed."

GREY MAN

He notices another line upon his face,
Handsome, chiseled, with a strong jaw and stubbled
grace.

His grey curls flirting carelessly with his creased fore-head—

A distinguished brow hides his dread.

Eyes deep with such pain, suffering, doubt, fear.
He is a child crying invisible tears.

Shaking and trembling behind powerful arms,
Wraps her up tightly in security and charm.

All the while he's pleading silently,
“Won't *this* woman show me mercy?”

Too scared to jump.
Too scared to play.
A child inside this man of grey.

EVERYTHING

Can I be your everything?
Why should we pretend?
Nothing else should matter.
All things matter
With you.

If I prove you can trust me,
Can I be your safety?
When I show my eternal love,
Won't you love me?
My undying loyalty belongs to you.
Would you belong to me?
I'll give you everything
If you say I'm everything,
To you.

My stomach churns,
Not in weakness—
With power, steadfast.
Ready for all things.
My eyes gaze to you—
Only you, nothing compares
To everything, or nothing
With you.

Listening to your breath—
The greatest song.

Hearing your steps to the door—
The first and last dance.

Your voice—
The prayer to which I bend my knee.

Be everything
With me.

LAYER

I am inside a dark cave. Bandages cover me from head to toe. I pull a layer from my eyes with bandaged hands. It is pitch black and I see nothing. Then a wisp of light emanates from my chest. I shake my head and the bandages covering my mouth loosen. I try to scream but I am unable to discern sound. I use my partially exposed mouth to bite the bandages away from my hands. I rip the bandages from my head. My ears are exposed and I try to scream again but there is no sound, I am too weak to make sound.

I lay resting. The light in my chest is brighter now and I can see a path. I pull some bandages away from the light in my chest and use the light to follow the path to a brick wall. I claw and scratch the wall until I find a loose brick. I pull and quickly the wall opens to outside. It is a war zone. Ash is falling constantly from the sky and multiple cyclones are blowing about the horizon. Fire clouds are burning in the sky.

There is nothing on the ground to burn. Just piles of ash. Some smoldering ash and some blue and orange with heat. I am crawling. I try to scream again and a pathetic sound escapes my mouth as ash is dislodged from my throat. Now I inhale deeply and scream. It echoes. Or does it?

There is another. Another is screaming. I crawl forward and scream again. With bated breath I await the other scream and begin to crawl in its direction. Another is here. A figure a little larger than mine crawls towards me. I try to stand and help it, but I stumble and my face falls in a pile of ash. The figure puts a knee down, extends a bandaged hand, and helps me to my knees.

When he touched me, a light sparked in his chest, still bandaged. My light sparked brighter for a moment and returned to dim. I reach towards his light and pull the bandages away. As I touch him, his light begins to shine and mine grows brighter as well. We learn quickly - our collective power is greater and we help pull away each other's layers and stand to our feet. Revealing a battered man and me, the woman. No longer touching. We are unsure what to do now our layers are gone.

Standing next to each other side by side our lights dim again. Instinctively we reach for each other as the light is nearly gone. Then it shines again within us. We look from our glowing hearts to each other and decide we must remain together. And so, we heal each other. We help each other. We build each other. There comes a time when we can separate, and our light does not dim as it did once before. However, when we do reconnect, our light is somehow more powerful than any time before.

We are unaware, but as we sleep, holding each other, our light escapes our chest and intertwines in a rainbow of light dancing and growing together, healing the war zone surrounding us and returning as we stir awake. We are forever connected and regenerated with our shared experiences and our time alone. When we are apart for too long, however, the sky starts to rain ash and we know to return. For woman and man are both equally made stronger together.

We are meant to be together.

CHRYsalis

Standing in the hallway,
Dripping black doorway
Nothing is ever as it seems.

He was above me,
Said that he loved me,
Carried away all my dreams.

Sitting in the kitchen,
Feigning my existence
How did things ever get away?

Crawling to the bathroom,
Forever ending too soon
What is left, I can't relay.

Leaning on the wall,
Kiss me so I'll fall
Amber-colored chrysalis.

Dancing in the street,
Snuggles, touching feet
I am completely fearless.

Here I am now,
Loving what I have found,
To no one I am bound.

No man will break me,
Do not mistake me
This road is mine till
The end.

IGNITION

I see—

You are aglow with the flame of your dream,
Wearing your greatness upon your sleeve.
Leverage the tragedy in your bulging wake
You carry the burdens with wisdom and grace.

Many have tried to stifle you
With warnings to hide
All you have been through.

A mantra of shame was parroted,
A grown woman they parented.
Released from the damnation
Shame of silence, save defamation.

Can you see?
My only wish is to stand close to you,
Warmed by the glow permeated through.
Never one to wish it retire
The fullness of your grace, my desire.

Lifting you up, drink Stoup's font,
Gladly consumed by your flashpoint.
Let me be the one you want,
Let me see.

SIN

Let me be your filthy whore,
I want that and so much more.

Tell me all your messy secrets,
I am the best to keep it.

Push your limb deep inside,
Discern, I have nothing to hide.

Sin with me now and forever,
You are all I endeavor.

WELL BROKE MARE

I was born in Kentucky
Tobacco in my blood
I stood upon the mountain
Where the fire ant stung

I drank the moon
Clear as day
Grand daddy had no care
To hide the still away

I sharpened the axe
Where Boone once stood
I took me a man
Turnt out no good

Down in the prairie
He lay dead
Granite stone
Upon his head

I ran with the horses
I turned their dung
Ticket was pink
Trailer eviction

Sounds like a sad one
Stories, I mean
Lines of black
With rainbow tourmaline

Never did spread my roots
Aster seeds stuck
In the muck of
my dusty boots

Never had a home
With no foundation
Worried of my
Eventual stagnation

Then you came
Rough hands catching
Lace of my stockings
Ain't all you scratching

Made me forget
The man I killed
A hundred cuts
A hundred thrills

In the sun
At Old Hammer Lake
I gave you all
Another man take

There is no dowry
Left to my name
Give me yours
Broodmare tamed

EDGING

Something just over the hill.
Riding this wave is such a thrill.
Bumpy, sure, here and there,
Never to leave, just too rare.

The love he gives is otherworldly.
How did I ever come to know the?
Taking a turn, the car flips and spirals,
In the rearview, the others seem so trifle.

Left behind, but not a care,
We have all we need right here.
He, with his hand o'er mine,
Our love meant to entwine.

Never again in the shadows,
He holds me high with broad shoulders.
And I his weight on my legs of iron,
Never tiring.

Edging ever so close to the top of the hill,
Together in the blind.
We ride this rollercoaster.

Let's go, baby.
Just hold on.

OUR CABIN

Puft grey clouds release spidery lightning across the starless midnight sky.

Rain pelts my naked back, the hairs on my neck raised in shivery protest.

I pay no mind.

I am straddling you,

Your back pressed into the cold, wet grass along the creek's edge.

You look up at me, fingers gripping my hips,

Pulling me in rhythmic circles at a growing pace
Until a fierce crack of lightning bursts as we do.

Rain drips from my forehead onto yours,

And we both smile.

With a shared smirk, we jump up from the slippery grass

As the lightning begins its crawl across the sky.

We run back, hand in hand, to the warming glow of our cabin,

Before the thunder shakes the ground again.

You throw a blanket over us,

And we sit together on the porch swing, drying each other off,

Watching in awe as lightning crawls across the clouds,
Revealing the saturated forest below.

Our hearts and gentle kisses warm us.

WEB OF LIMBS

Dripping with such ecstasy,
You fit so deeply inside me.
My softness meets your pulsing vigor,
We burst forth, simultaneous trigger.

Floods run deep within our soul,
With tears and sweat, we pay the toll.
Tangled in a web of limbs,
I hope for us this never ends.

SEDATED

You love me so hard in the light of day.
Listening intently to all that I say.
Giving me all the space I need
To be your equal in all deeds.

When the sun goes down as the day takes toll,
I want you now to take control.
Push me to the bed, act like you own me;
Stripped to my lace, parts of you growing.

The scruff of your cheeks tickles my legs,
Climbing the walls until I beg.
The softness now that you created
With your lips, you so sedated.

You deliver what I need
For which you are equipped indeed.
In your arms, I am subdued;
Feel my flesh as it surrounds you.

My ecstasy you brought first,
Now's your time for rhythmic burst.
Tell me when right in my ear;
When you do, it's so sincere.

The whisper drives me up the walls;
As you cum, I sink my claws.
You hold me till you fall asleep;
Breathing steadies, falling deep.

Dreaming now of this and more
With this man I so adore.

DID YOU KNOW

You intoxicate me.

The sound of your voice is like sweet molasses,
The taste of your tongue I crave both day and night.
I am jealous
The shirt you wear,
The lip balm you press into your skin,
The belt wrapped round your waist.

I despise them all as they get to touch you all day.
Fucking bastards don't even know how good they have it.

Did you know your smell lingers on my bed when you leave?

I soak it up and then pout the moment it isn't there,
usually a day or two.

Baby, I have never loved, needed, wanted, or been completely obsessed with anyone like I am with you.

I imagine you walking down the aisles at Aldi, touching the mangoes, and I am sad not to be there with you.

I want to see how your lips part when you talk to passersby.

I want to see how you touch the pineapples as you decide which one is perfectly ripe.

I want you so bad all the time.

Did you know you are the most interesting person to me?

You have absolutely no idea how incredible you are.

I am always shocked to notice that the people around us

have no idea, either.

Should I be sad for them? No, I will greedily soak up
every second I am blessed to be in your presence.

TOUCHED

Went up to the city
Hoping for a change
Nothing ever really
Less you count the name

Then there was you
Like nothing existed
Until the day
You touched my hand

No roots anywhere
Believe I tried
Nothing seemed to matter
Till you held my eyes

Like nothing was
Until you were
Beside me
Inside me

Hi Baby
I am home
YOU are home

UNICORN

All men cheat,
Ringing through my head
Something my
Man friend said.

Your grandpa cheated,
Your daddy cheated,
Your ex-husband cheated.
The man you see now
He will cheat,
If he hasn't already.

I wanted to object,
But two of the four
Had in fact cheated.
You can't fault the math.

I've decided I don't want a man.
How is it, not fucking someone
Is so hard for some?
Are they dumb,
Are they weak,
Can they not see past a moment?

What I know of men
Proves these things to be mostly accurate.
His assessment, "all men cheat"
May be valid and supported by fact.

Therefore, I want a unicorn.

He will be strong in body and conviction.
He will do the dishes without me asking.
He will tell me I am beautiful every day,

Because I am.

He will buy me dinner,
And when I cook,
He will praise me,
Because I will always praise him
For all he does for me.

And he will do plenty,
Because he is a unicorn of a man.
He will hardly complain, and when he does
I will be sure to listen.
With support and action to help,
If that is what he needs.

We will fuck, and we will make love,
And I will orgasm every damn time,
Because it's important to us both
That I do.

He will see I am the unicorn he has been searching for.

Neither of us will ever cheat.
If the thought crosses our minds, it will be discussed,
And we will find a way forward, either together or not.
Because that is what we both want.

No one wants to be a cheat or be cheated.
Stop cheating on yourself.
Be a unicorn.

KEYHOLE

Dripping for you,
My legs portray
Portal.

Pulsing keyhole,
Turn me over
Hunger.

Quivering tunnel,
Flesh obelisk
Bliss.

Straddling you,
Cradling me
Plea.

Dripping for me,
Sensuality complete
Beat.

RUINED

When you open your mouth and put your lips on me,
My legs shake like branches on a tree.
Your fingers press gently into my thighs
How could anyone ever tell you lies?

I am nothing and everything at once.
My body buzzes without a choice.
You look up at me with those perfect sky eyes.
Your love has the power to hypnotize.

The future is non-existent without you in it,
Happiness with anyone else, you ruined it.
Nothing will ever be better than the way you love me.
Always and forever.

DAY DREAM

I am sitting on a chair outside.

I am facing a modest 'A' frame house with smoke in its chimney.

The sun is setting behind the mountains to the east.

The sky begins to mist.

A light comes on inside the house.

A woman runs playfully from a hidden room.

She is naked.

The woman is me.

Her hair dances in the light, her heart in her chest.

She collapses on the couch.

A naked man appears in the room, holding a Polaroid camera.

The man is you.

He shakes the picture, looks at it, and smiles, then drops it to the floor.

The woman hides behind her hair.

The man takes her picture.

He shakes it, looks at her, and smiles.

He sets down the camera and the picture and lays on top of her.

They embrace in a passionate kiss.

She wraps her legs tightly around him.

He lifts her onto him in a seated position.

They rock and sway.

The mist is now a full rain.

TIME TRAVELER

It's the first day we met:
Your eyes say more than your perfect mouth
I notice how well you are put together
I should stay away

It's the company pitch-in:
You are standing so close I can feel your warmth
The breakroom is electric
I should go

It's the day you crossed my mind:
I remembered your eyes and this feeling in my stomach
I wanted to lean in but couldn't

It's the day I texted:
My heart is racing
Am I ready, it's just a text
It's not just a text
I want to be lost in those eyes
Where are you
Please don't be in love

It's the day I crossed the line:
Have I been clear
Did the words take hold
If they didn't, the picture should
Touch me, here

It's the first time we touch:
Coffee
I am tingling all over
Your hand over mine
Please kiss me
Those eyes need me, I hear them

I need you
Can you feel this

It's the first time:
Breathless and weightless
We should wait
I want all of you
You want me
What are you thinking
Please don't go

It's the first time I beg:
I want more
Do you want more
Why is this taking so long
Please lean in
Are you in love
With someone else

It's the first time I leave:
I realize I love you
My head aches
My stomach churns
This is wrong
Will you be with only me
Why are you there
When you belong here

It's the day you are finally free:
You hurt
I think I hurt more
But that's not fair
Can you do this with me

Do you want to

It's the day I see your love:
Your eyes, they soften
There is desire and desperation
I saw it
Are you in love
With me

It's golf:
Can we do this everyday
You do something that makes you happy and I am close-
by
Always close
My heart is racing like the cart
You are still very well put together

It's the day I try to leave again:
Why are you holding back
I want it all or nothing
I am sick all over
You fight for me, with me, patiently

It's the day I decide I will never leave:
I am terrified
It's not your fault
Please don't hurt me
Stay forever

It's the day you stop holding back...tbd

PLEASE DON'T GO

Last night, you lay sleeping—
The soft snore I know well
Comforts me.

I try not to stir, you wake so easily.
Then the struggle begins again
For the rest you need so desperately.

So I lay very still in the grips of your melodic noises—
You grip me, even unconscious.
I think to myself, how fearful I am that you will mess up,
And if you mess up, will it be too much for me.
I don't see how I could ever leave,
Even if you mess up.

So then the thought comes of being without you
And I realize my fear is that you will leave me.
Somehow I will mess this up.
I may lose you.

This is so good, I worry it can't last.
I can't be this good,
But can't I?

Then you roll over and I wonder if I was thinking out
loud,
Because you reach for me,
You pull me into your warmth,
Wrapping your arm around me and cupping my breast.

My God,
Please let me keep this one.

MEAN AND FICKLE

What is happening to me?
Why am I pulling away?

I think I have changed
You seem the same

Is that perhaps the problem?

I used to wonder why or what you were waiting for

Didn't you want to be here with me all the time?
Didn't you want to claim me as your own?

Now, I am having these moments of relief
Relief, that things haven't progressed

Is my love fickle?

There is nothing stealing my gaze
Solitude beckons me
I used to ache for you in solitude
I am still happy to see you
Somehow though, I am selfish about it
Your needs aren't expressed much, and mine have been
met
Again and again

Have I been spoiled by you?

And if so, then why don't I ache for you
As I once did
I am a fickle woman

My blood changes with the moon

I cannot be trusted with my own thoughts
Now I am aching for you

I have the realization of the meanness within me
You take it, all the pain and suffering I give
You take it with strength and poise
In your state of need
I trump you
I demand it

What have I done?

I am rotten
I am bleeding within
The lack of our offspring makes my womb twist and
burn
I am mean

Mean and fickle
You still hold me
I have eaten your heart and spit out the blackened bits
in your face
Yet you reach for me in the night
Reaching at the table
You reach with your eyes
When you are unsure if I will take your hand

Baby, I am so, so sorry
Please forgive me

Let me spend the rest of my life trying to be better
Trying to be good enough for your love

I thought I had an incredible capacity to love
After all, I grew something inside my belly and loved it
the moment it screamed and chewed my nipples

But you, you love this fickle mean woman
Thank you baby
I love you

I CAN'T DEAL

I had a fleeting thought,
As a poet, I often do.

There was a song—
His voice tugged at my gut,
He was talking about losing.
Losing his love—
His woman, the one.

I tried to be a poet,
I tried to follow the thought,
As a prompt
To write about losing you.

My eyes got all wet—
2 seconds flat,
My heart ached,
My gut twisted,
My fingers wouldn't help
Write the words
“Losing you.”

My man, the one—
The one that helped me heal,
The one that helped me find myself.

I can't deal.

I can write a love song,
A prompt about lost and found,
A prose worthy Of A Hound,

But losing you,

I just cannot do.
I hope to never
Have to write
About losing you.

RIFLEMAN'S CADENCE

Where's this going?
Weapons I'm holding—
Sticks and stones,
Razor tone.

Duck and cover,
Innocent lover.
Must you hurt because of another?

Barrel is cold or is that my heart?
Hole was healing,
Now it's peeling.

I know this pain.
Time to take aim—
Retreat, refrain or
Advance stake claim?

Align the sight with my quarry.
Does this have to be our story?

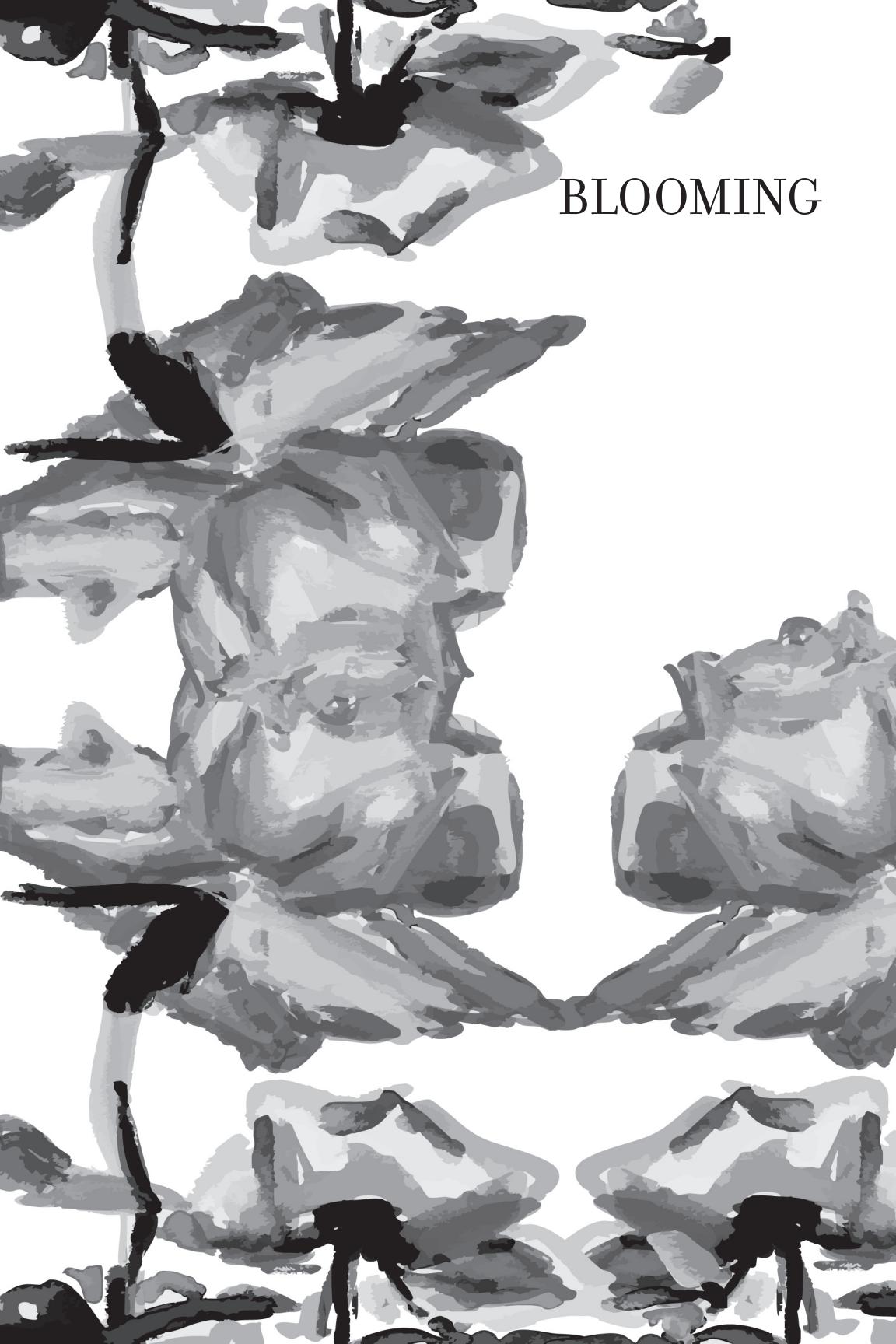
Wood and grease—
Inhale, exhale, trigger release.

Piercing white pain,
I am the one maimed!

Disbelief to see you there.
Holding your rifle in the air.

Pronated, I fall face to the ground—
Never the time to land my round.
Not a breath left in my chest,

The marksman now laid to rest.



BLOOMING

REASONS

These right here are just a few of the many reasons I love you:

When your voice says “Hello!?” on the telephone, as if there’s a secret only we own.

How you kiss me like it’s the first and the last has never caused me to fall so fast.

You stop and release your care when I place my hand on you anywhere.

As you twitch in the night to sleep, I slide my leg to touch your feet.

When you are scared with nowhere to turn, your eyes turn grey, a color I’ve learned.

If I hurt and you feel it’s your fault somehow, you furrow a small square in your brow.

When you bring me flowers, eyes cast down, you fear they aren’t enough for my crown.

Late in the dark, your thoughts racing and your fingers to mine always come tracing.

When you sit next to me on an ordinary day and hold my hand in the most natural way, I can’t imagine a better day.

CORN ROWS

Meet me in the cornfield west of Sugar Hill—
Smell of life and death in the earth swell.

Lay me down gently between the corn row—
Field corn scratches baby, take it slow.

Parts of you mix with me and corn—
Muddy boots and a path well worn.

Moon in my eyes, sunrise on cue.
Together we arrive just in time, dawn's dew.

Tractor hisses awake no time to spare—
Knowing the drill, weight of the stare.

Running back, meet me at the car.
You are my dream,
I am your star.

I hold your seed.
You hold my hand.

Smell of manure—
Fertile land.

LATE BLOOMER

Been driving this jalopy
In circles, both big and small.
Then it dawned on me,
I can choose the path I'm on.

So I twisted and turned,
Busted a U-ey or two,
Ended up broke down.
Parked next to you.

I fixed up this rusty bucket,
Put some flowers in my hair.
I know where I am going,
I just really want you there.

Will you go with me?
Is your destination my way?
Please won't you go?
Here, I can't stay.

I'm a late bloomer.
Figured out what I am.
Let's be together
Wherever we land.

TEETER TOT

Sitting alone on the teeter tot,
No one there on the other spot.

I push and pull with legs so strong,
Never getting going for long.

Here you come with the cutest little ass,
Sitting down and starting a dash.

Up and down and up again,
You are the greatest of all my friends.

The bluest eyes,
The truest heart,
Promise to never let us part.

Be my equal in all things,
This teeter tot will give us wings.

We can fly about this little town,
Make it our own with bejeweled crowns.

We can play all day and make love all night,
Lay here now and hold me tight.

The best of friends and the better of lovers,
Never care to find another.

YOU

I am a puddle,
A puddle of saline,
Sinew, and bone,
Barely together,
Desperate to hang on.

Please hold me,
If you mean it.

I don't know who
I was, at all,
Until you showed me.
Your guiding hand,
Holding me,
Showing me,
Believing in me.

I believe enough.
I know me now.
I am magical
With you,
Because of you.

Loving me.
Never been loved,
Loved so good,
It makes me good.

We are special,
Special together.
Whatever this is,
Whatever I am,
I am yours.

Baby, I'm yours.

MAKING LOVE

I know the lawn needs mowed,
Laundry ain't done,
But you ain't loved on me none.

Sink's full of dishes,
But I ain't had no kisses.

I should run the vacuum,
But we oughta be naked soon.

The trash needs brought round,
First, you need to lay me down.

Our chores can wait,
Making love can't.

QUIET PLACE

You are the place I choose to go,
When there are many things, I do not know.

The place where the grass is always green,
Together we make the best team.

Whether happy or whether sad,
You help me move through the day I've had.

Always asking what I need,
I look to you to take the lead.

If I am unsure of where to go,
You are all I need to know.

GO

I will love you wherever you are. Go the distance no matter how far.

I hope you find all you're searching for; Make love to me when you reach the door.

Tell me of all the storied adventures; Nothing between us needs to be censored.

Are there new lines on my face? What did you find in that new place?

Yourself perhaps, no doubt, resolve. Together no problem we cannot solve.

Just promise me you will always return, Then tell me what you learned.

SENSES

What of words when you radiate the aroma of birch and clove?

What of smell when your voice quivers my navel just so?

What of sound when your figure pleases the eye?

What of sight when your taste quenches my deepest thirst?

What of taste when your touch sends waves of pleasure?

What of it all can I ever do without?

Nay.

OBSESSION

I should probably mention I'm completely obsessed.
If ever comes the day you love me less,
I'll be completely unhinged.
Tearing down the house and all within.

Setting it ablaze and dancing madly on the lawn,
The neighbors will call the police to maintain calm.
I will scream madly from behind the bars,
Tearing my flesh and spitting on their cars.

Seeing things that aren't really there,
Talking to invisible people unaware.
At night, I will cry out like a beast,
If ever the day comes, you love me the least.

L WORD

You are the river,
I am the sea.
Pour so deeply
Inside me.

Dredge the bottom,
Unearth what is mine.
You are forever
What I'll find.

There is lust, love, like,
Forever with you,
Not just a night.

JUST OK

I will never be more than just...OK.

If the day comes, you choose to walk away.
The moon will shine bright across the night sky.
The sun will rise, the clouds part, the birds fly.

To work I go, never telling a soul,
Faking a smile, appeasing passersby.

My friends will all know how I hurt ever so.
Mom will kiss my head and pray for my heart.
Should the day come when we are torn apart,

I will never be more than just...OK.

WHISKEY FLIGHT

There's a pink slip on the front door,
Red stamps on all the bills.
Let's live and hide,
Like Bonnie and Clyde.

Grab the shotgun,
Can of beans,
Ain't nothing else
We gonna need.

Drive fast,
Love me slow,
No specific place
We need to go.

Park outside the distillery
For the night,
Finish off the rich folks' flight.
They don't know
What whiskey's
'Sposed to taste like.

Goldenrod blooms
Among the trees,
You ain't got to marry me.
Let's just love and be free,
Here in Kentucky.

NOVOCAIN

Make coffee

Half past six
Brewing up that delicious fix

Contemplating or not at all
Content to just memorize the wall

Open to the embrace of the day

Hoping for sun but don't mind rain
Finish up my novocaine

Put on clothes

Guess I have to
Dying, baby, to just see you

Smell your skin

Feel your touch
Never wanted it so much

We could sit and talk all day

Or hide in the covers
From all the others

No matter

No mind
As long as you will
Always be mine

DO YOUR WORST

I ain't afraid of you or what's ahead, baby.
You on a downward spiral?
Do your worst.
I been running far too long,
Away from what ain't easy.
I don't mind when it gets hard anymore.
I just wanna be with you.

You never flinched at my fire,
Never blinked at the bruises I carry.
Told me your story like it was mine to hold—
And damn if it didn't fit just right.
Even your broken parts speak my name
Better than any whole man ever did.

So, what we doing?
Robbing a liquor store?
Hijacking a car?
Killing a rich man?
Laundering money?
I'm your gal.
Do your worst.
As long as I'm yours, it can't be all that bad.

BOOTY CALL

new love, who ‘dis?

you up?
again?
bless your heart—still tryin’
to text your way back
into relevance?

boy, I done donated that number
to the National Archives
for fuckboys
who need exhibit space.

new love, who ‘dis?

not answering unknown ghosts.
not falling for
copy/paste compliments
or six-pack selfies
snapped in the reflection
of bad decisions.

you said I’d never find better—
which is funny,
‘cause he does the dishes.
and listens.

he doesn’t treat my life
like a clearance rack
for women who won’t
play house on command.

new love, who ‘dis?

too good for reruns.
I binge watch affection now—
full seasons.
ad-free.

and it didn't come with your drama—
loud, lingering, and always late—
a baby mama,
or Jameson empties
left by the sink.

you remember me?
I barely do.

'cause I smile for no reason now.
eat breakfast.
sleep through the night.
don't check my phone
for your toxic blue-light.

this morning, I caught a glimpse—
a smirk, a sway,
a woman in full bloom—
the one who got away

new love, who 'dis?

oh.
it's me;)

STRAIGHT JACKET

I've gone mad,
Completely bonkers.
You said something stupid, idiotic really.

I thought, *I should leave*—
It would make sense.
But here I am loving you anyway.
I've lost my mind,
But I have gained something far more important, you.

I've been stupid, I've been mean—
You took it like a man and loved me through it.
Here I sit, in this lovely straight jacket, ear splitting
grin,
Hoping to remain completely insane with you by my
side.

DANCING ALONE

It may not make much sense to you,
Dancing alone is sometimes all I can do.

Healing myself with a sway of the hip,
Starting over with each soulful dip.

Sure, ask me to dance but understand,
Sometimes a woman don't need a man.

She needs a little self-romancing—
A little alone time dancing.

Tears may fall as I slide off my shoe,
Don't worry, I know what to do.

Spinning around until my head is dizzy,
Nothing better can ever fix me.

Wait patiently till I reach for you,
By then you should know what do—
Dancing alone, with you.

Baby, I ain't sad or even mad—
Just need to move around the day I've had.

Spinning and laughing, or maybe crying—
If you come home and find me swaying,
You know to wait till I come to you,
And let's dance alone, just us two.

THE OTHER PART

I saw it last night—
it dripped through a crack in the ceiling,
an oil slick,
a blob pulsing silently,
growing,
until it slid to the floor and rose,
taking the shape of a man.

Your shape.
Your face—
if you had no face at all.
A void.

He didn't know I could see him.

The fan in the corner oscillated,
nudging him toward you
like a curtain stirred by wind.

He stood beside you.
Then hovered above you.

He never touched—
just loomed,
a shadow in your shape.
A mirror.

You rolled to your side.
So did he.
Now you faced me.
And so did he.
Two of you—
less than an inch from each other,

and only a few inches from me.

Then he saw I was watching.
He didn't seem to mind.
He just kept mirroring.

You rolled to your back,
and his nose nearly brushed yours.
You sputtered in your sleep;
his mouth parted.
A slick drop
slid from his nose
and nearly fell into your mouth.

You reached for me.
So did he.
And when you touched me—
it was both of you.
Him and you.

It didn't hurt.
He didn't hurt.
He was more afraid than you.
And when you both touched me,
you weren't afraid at all.

Just see him,
and it will be okay.
Just accept him.

He is there.

THE WHORE, THE PRIEST, AND A MAN IN IT

The whore, the priest, and the IT man
Each brought forth the adventurer I am.
The whore took an incipient ground,
With her intentions, set flames unbound.

The priest found a woman shattered,
Bible in hand, provocation mattered.
He sparked a fire deep inside,
Just who I am, I could not hide.

The IT man brought about decay,
In the most noble, romantic way.
Not to destroy, but to renew,
The woman he found, broken in two.

No longer am I a pile of ash,
But fertile soil, his kiss I ask.
A seed did sprout, and now a bud,
No longer opaque, as once I was.

Fully formed, deeply saturated,
The flower bloomed, our love unabated.
In quiet rooms, on sheets well worn,
Conversations deep, orgasms adorned.

Thanks to a man in IT,
A priest, and a whore,
I bloom once more.

LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE

She is strange inside, all broken and bruised.
You had her in your hands and squashed her like a
bug.

You broke her,

Look what you've done.

I'm not sure I'm up for the task.
I want to help, but there's so much she needs,
And half of it doesn't even make sense to me.
I won't say it's unfair to follow in your muddy
footsteps,
Because she is more than worth it.
But I'm exhausted,
Cleaning this up, healing her from the inside out.
Can I possibly love her enough to help her through?

Look what you've done.

Then we turn a page.
I reassured her, I understood her.
I met her exactly where she was.
I did so much more than I ever thought I could.

She loves me harder than anyone I've ever known.
She holds my hand, she asks about my day,
She kisses me more than I thought I wanted or
needed.
But it's all I've ever wanted or needed.

When she smiles...when she laughs...
Oh, it takes my breath away.
I will do anything to make her smile.

She tells me I'm great, in specifics, and I believe her,
God, I believe her.

She is heaven on earth.
How did you ever not think she was enough?
She holds me so close, looks me in the eyes, and says,

“Look what you’ve done, my love.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kerry Lynne is the author of *Fire Sale, Y'all*, an Amazon bestselling poetry and prose collection about trauma, survival, and the slow work of rebuilding. She lives in Noblesville, Indiana, with her family. A Kentucky native, she still returns often to hike the hills that raised her.

Smell the Roses, Y'all is her second collection—a companion piece that traces the path from survival to trust, and from anger to love. Kerry is currently at work on several new projects, including a psychological thriller novel, a sales ideology book titled *Get Real to Seal the Deal*, and a fictionalized autobiography that explores her personal journey through homelessness, abuse, and PTSD.

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