

QUARANTINE

ISSUE 4

APRIL 19TH 2020



~PROFOUND
EXPERIENCE
OF STAYING AT
HOME

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~PROFOUND EXPERIENCE OF STAYING AT HOME
A QUARANZINE
APRIL 19th 2020
ISSUE 4



Edited by Lucy K Shaw
First Edition
April 19th 2020

**Cover by Lucy K Shaw [but really it's by Egon Schiele.
I used his drawing of Edith Schiele on her deathbed.**

**She died from the Spanish flu, a few days before he
did, in 1918.]**

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THIS SPACE FOR WRITING MESSAGES

Hey, it's Lucy again.

How many issues are there going to be???

Nobody knows!

But here is the 4th one.

I honestly can't believe how much great work is being produced for this quaranzine...

To think, a mere month

POST CARD



ago I had never considered that such a word existed.

And now a quaranzine is my life.

Thank you for reading it. I hope you enjoy.

Stay safe.

Lucy



Making friends



“Buddy”

April 2020

Cotton blanket and jeans stuffed with winter clothes, string

Quarantining in a one person household, the arrival of Buddy was only a matter of time.

Ida Skovmand

Morse Code

Jordan Debor



I could say I've been chewing on wires
in a golden chamber, and that would be true,
but I've also been sitting around alone
in my apartment where everything I own
is a secret message about a part of myself
I'll never understand. Somewhere else fireworks
put pockets in the clouds, a tired person
makes bread, a small green horse is smashed
out of a slab of industrial plastic, all with a brutal
deliberate sweetness. The whole world makes
a kind of horrible noise I can't help loving.
The war ending and ending and ending.
If it kills me. If it kills me. If it kills me.
What do you remember most clearly?
On the way here I passed a field
of donkeys on the sea.



Progress!

Emma Ensley



Leah arrives to the unit on my 18th day and takes the seat across from me at the dining room table. She introduces herself and I avert my eyes, stabbing bitterly at my potato salad. Conversation is always forced, at first. A nurse turns up the radio, hoping pop country will dull the discomfort.

Jordan had predicted this. “There’s a new girl coming today,” she had whispered to me after Process Group, right before our morning snack. Today it was an apple, a string cheese and a can of Ensure. I’m already sick of it all. “I saw her in the main office. She looks practically dead.” Jordan wasn’t wrong.

“I’m Emma.” I reply, making eye contact with Jordan. She returns my glance with an overly exaggerated eye roll. God bless her. Leah doesn’t seem to notice.

After dinner and the third snack of the day, we are finally released to our rooms.

“Are we roommates?” Leah asks as we walk to our doors.

“Oh,” I had become used to living in my unit alone. When I first arrived, I shared the space with a 52-year-old woman from Vermont. She’d been admitted for 90 days before I showed up and she was incredibly unenthused to have me invading her space. I suddenly empathize. “Yea, I guess so.”

Leah throws her bag onto the bed, empties whatever hadn’t already been confiscated and begins folding a pair of the tiniest jeans.

She tells me she’s been sick since she was twelve but this is her first time in treatment. She is 19. I am 20 and surprised I feel jealous to no longer be the youngest in the unit. I feel completely normal next to her - like a fraud. I suppress an urge to bolt for the door.

She finishes unpacking and falls back onto her bed. “So. What do we do now?”

At this point, I am used to being perpetually bored. Once you’ve been at the unit for a while and have proven you aren’t going to cause all that much trouble, you can go to the weekly Narcotics Anonymous meeting that takes place at the addiction facility across campus. This is the highlight of my week.

I usually walk over in sweatpants with a sketchbook and idly draw while listening to tales of overdoses and relapses, of triumphs big and small. It feels like church, if everyone at church were a lot more honest. It’s comforting.

I don’t feel like explaining this to Leah.

“We eat and then we wait to eat.” I shrug. “Unfortunately, that’s about it.”

--

The day the virus was named a Pandemic, 35 days ago, was the last time I saw anyone other than Kate. It was the finale of the Bachelor and my friends all gathered to celebrate. We dressed up, we handed out roses, we popped champagne.

I hope we snuggled on the couch, I hope we hugged each other goodbye when we all went home.

I’m sure we would’ve, if we’d known.

--

I walk into my 17th Process Group. It’s Leah’s first, so the head counselor, Heather, goes over protocol.

“We’ll start by describing how we feel.” Her voice seems too soft, unnaturally gentle.

“Physically,

emotionally, mentally and spiritually. Then I’ll ask if anyone has something that they’d like to process and we’ll take turns sharing.”

There is a very small window in the corner of the room and I watch in the distance as a man on a lawn mower rides by. I wonder how he is doing physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually.

I wonder if he ever even thinks about it.

Heather shuffles her papers in her hands before continuing. “I’ll start. Physically, I feel rested.

Emotionally I’m trusting, Mentally I feel focused and Spiritually I’m connected.” Heather never says she’s sad or angry or anything remotely interesting. I keep waiting.

When we get to Leah she tucks a foot under herself, taking in a breath to begin her self-report. Heather interrupts. "I'm sorry, Leah, I forgot to mention that we keep both feet on the ground during Group. It keeps us grounded."

"Okay," Leah scowls, skeptically, returning her foot to the floor. "Well, physically I feel...really fat." Some patients begin to chuckle while I look to Heather who holds her neutral half-smile, unwavering. "Emotionally I'm pissed off, mentally I feel very annoyed. And spiritually I don't really give a fuck." She smiles at me, pleased. I smile back.

Heather scribbles something in her notebook while Leah instinctively sits on her foot again.

"I hope," Heather says, ignoring the foot. "You'll come to learn during your time here that fat isn't a feeling. Feeling fat is just a cover up for deeper emotions."

Leah nods, but convinces no one.

--

During the first few weeks of isolation, Kate and I try to develop a routine. Walking around the neighborhood is one of the only things we can do, so we do it 3 times a day. My whole world narrows in around these three walks.

In the morning, we pour our coffee into mugs and begin the first loop. Flowers have just begun to bloom and sometimes she picks them and places them in my hair, laughing. We chart the path - "this is my favorite part" a few steps more, "no this."

In the evenings, when we've finished our work, we pour beers into the same mugs and head out again. The air feels thicker at night. The joggers are out.

Most days, Kate cooks for me.

We eat veggie curries with produce from her garden. She makes me breakfast burritos with crispy

potatoes, pastas with herbed goat cheese from local farmers, mediterranean flatbreads. She is always running off to the market with a bandana over her face and coming back with flowers for the table, jars of spices and vegetables that I would have no idea what to do with, if it was just me.

I consider what a solo quarantine would look like - I'd survive off of Clif bars and frozen pizzas - maybe I wouldn't even survive at all.

I let myself eat freely in a way I've not been able to in years. Out of guilt, I do the dishes every night, as if this somehow makes us even. "Let me cook for you," I beg. But she shakes her head and kisses me on the forehead.

This is the routine now.

We walk. We clean. We eat and then we wait to eat.

--

During an hour of free time, I'm curled on the couch next to Jordan. I'm drawing her a picture, a silly portrait, and she is braiding my hair.

I wonder if, somewhere, a nurse is noting this - *keep an eye on them*. It feels oddly forbidden.

Jordan checked in 2 weeks before I did. She has a punk haircut, almost like a mullet and looks perpetually sleepy. I once wore her jean jacket on our weekly outing to Hobby Lobby. It was way too big for my hungry body but I felt safe and protected inside of it, in a way that had nothing to do with scale.

"Where are you right now?" She asks, tying an elastic around a clump of my thinning hair.

"What?" I'm playing dumb. Obviously we are here, in this treatment center, killing time between Process Group and Nutrition.

“You’re not here, no one wants to be here.” My braids are complete and she runs her hand down them, blessing them. “So, where are you?”

I tell her about my grandmother’s house in Clayton, Georgia. How my sister and I would wear life jackets over our t-shirts at the dinner table - “lake fashion” - we called it. How I would follow my older cousins around like a puppy, pretending to be asleep when they watched 7th Heaven episodes so I would be allowed to stay in the room when the topics turned somber. The thrill of buttering an ear of corn with a fresh sunburn tingling your nose. The bunk beds my sister and I shared, reading Babysitters Club books aloud to each other until we finally fell asleep.

Jordan nods, intently, as I speak.

“Where are you?” I return.

“I think...Disney World.” She says with a solidifying smile, revealing her gap teeth in all their glory.

“Yes, today, I’m at Disney World.”

--

The night that the first case appears in the tiny, rural town in West Virginia where Kate’s dad lives, she runs out the door. I don’t see her for another hour, she’s gone out beyond our charted path.

She asks me to fight her, begging for a physical release. “Just hit me, do something.” We’ve been in this one bedroom apartment for 16 days and it no longer feels like a routine will save us.

At a loss, I hand her a piece of blank paper and instruct her to tear it. “Into a million pieces!”

“You’ve done this before?” She asks, making her first move, ripping the paper in two. “And it helps?”

“Once, yea.” I think about the hotline and the list they provided, this person on the other end of an anonymous text. Do you think you can do any of these? They had asked. I said I had paper, I said I can rip.

We rip, rip, rip for a few good minutes and she seems calmer as we place the newly created confetti into a bag.

Later that evening, we find the confetti trailed throughout the whole apartment. My cat stuck his head through the bag and ran, causing a whole goddamn celebration.

--

Kate and I ask each other how we feel, playing by the same rules from treatment. It’s been long enough that they don’t make me cringe. The only difference is we’ve changed spiritually to sexually - a more relevant “s” at this point. Sometimes, we jokingly add in a “d” and an “a”, for “depression and anxiety” and we call the whole production PEMDAS, harkening back to that acronym from middle school math, the one that teaches you the order of operations for solving an equation.

Physically I feel restless.

Emotionally I feel lonely.

Mentally I feel distracted.

Depression is a medium.

Anxiety is high.

Sexually I feel undesirable...but interested.

And so on.

Our relationship grows deeper but increasingly fraught. Neither of us can solve a global pandemic and our ineptitudes become frustrating, at best. *It’s going to be ok* stops working so we settle for *We are ok today. The ones we love are ok today.* And we repeat this like a mantra.

--

Jordan was released about a month before me and for a little while, we exchanged letters.

They were filled with a mix of mundanities and drama between patients that felt reminiscent of middle school. Has Candice learned how to shut her big mouth yet? *Has Elaina gone ape-shit on anyone again?* I once let an ex-girlfriend read them.

It was hard for me to talk about treatment but I felt like the letter provided some baseline knowledge, some context. *I miss braiding your hair and going on walks with you.* Each letter held an empty promise to meet up again, someday.

“This is so...gay,” My ex said, to my surprise. That wasn’t supposed to be the take-away.

“What?” I grabbed the letter. They nodded. “Yea, Emma, I think y’all might have been in love.” They were laughing; the one I believed to be “the first” pointing out that that wasn’t the case.

I folded the letter, mentally re-writing my own history.

--

Every meal has at least 10 “exchanges,” plus an Ensure if you need it. The food is delivered on a beige tray with every item wrapped in cellophane. There are certain rules, of course. Like your hands have to remain above the table at all times, and you have to finish everything. You can’t talk about food - “food talk” - they call it, but that could be anything, even just reacting when a dish felt too hot.

We play word association games to distract ourselves. Someone will shout a letter and everyone has to name an actor or a band or something with a name beginning with the letter. “B” for Brad Pitt, Brittany Murphy. “D” for Death Cab for Cutie and David Bowie. It’s hard not to talk about food when you are obsessed with food and also when you are confronted with it 6 times a day.

--

During Quarantine, Kate's friend calls and says "I don't want to talk about coronavirus" and they sit silently on the phone and eventually hang up.

--

Leah goes to the Narcotics Anonymous meetings right away, she doesn't have to wait until it's deemed permissible.

"Heather told me I had to," she explains, flippantly. "I told her that I'm 19. Everyone does drugs when they're 19. But she didn't listen."

I go with her but she never speaks until we leave, and then she acts, all, suddenly enlightened. I think about my former 52-year-old roommate from Vermont and I imagine she was just like Leah once. I try not to think about Leah coming back here again and again. I try to look at her and imagine her out in the world with the same big smile and long skirts. I picture her in a vegetable garden. I imagine her happy.

"I don't think I'll ever get better" she whispers to me late in the night, her voice echoing from the other side of the stale bedroom. I want to be empathetic but I have the same thought, that this is temporary. I will do what *they* want until I can do what I want. Again. Whenever that may be.

During her second week and my last, she learns to play by the rules.

"Physically I'm uncomfortable, mentally I'm aware, emotionally I'm a bit sad, and spiritually I'm disconnected...but open." she announces, proudly, during Process Group. Heather nods and scribbles something like - *progress!* - down in her notebook. Everyone wins.

--

On Day 32, Kate and I lay in bed well past noon, watching old seasons of Survivor on my laptop and eating toast spread thick with peanut butter and topped with bananas. My mom sends me a grainy photo of myself at 3-years-old holding an easter basket and crying. Happy Easter to you, too, I text back.

I've stopped trying to make the days special or interesting.

We watch a whole Survivor season, only getting up to pee, and lamenting that the game has a finite timeline of 39 days and that someone wins a million dollars at the end of it. I fantasize about some sort of conclusion - the support of a team, a goal to work towards.

I close my laptop and we take a walk before the sun sets, before the rain begins. We cook dinner, and slow dance to pop country as onions sizzle on the pan. Holding on to each other, we wait, killing time between Process Group and Nutrition.



For Mitzi : Another Update

Kate Shaw



Since receiving the money raised by our campaign earlier this week, Mitzi has been buying as much rice as she can each day and distributing it to her community with the help of her family and neighbours. She has sent so many updates and messages of gratitude every day and wants to extend her thanks to all of you.



Thank you so, so much to everyone who donated!!!!

135 families so far have benefited from your generosity!!



If you still want to donate, it's not too late.
The campaign is ongoing.

Mitzi is planning on using the remaining funds to provide meals for frontliners at the hospital in Marinduque. Even the smallest amount can go a long way and make a big difference. I'll keep you updated :)



The First Time I Listened To *Fetch The Bolt Cutters*



Kristen Felicetti (quarantined in Brooklyn, New York)

Yesterday, I listened to *Fetch the Bolt Cutters* repeatedly on a 2-hour walk from my Bushwick apartment to the Williamsburg waterfront. I wanted to look out at Manhattan, then go back. I think Fiona Apple has one of the most recognizable voices in popular music and I'm stunned by the new places she takes her voice to on this album. Hearing her voice on the opening track "I Want You to Love Me" felt like being reunited with an old friend, but then the unreal noises she makes at the end announced we were going to different territory. Well, I will follow her anywhere. Later, in "Relay," the way she sings "I used to go to the Ferris wheel every morning, just to throw my anger out the door" is so overwhelming I had to stop walking. I walked and walked, listening over and over, and thinking: there is no one like her. There is no one who writes such crammed, witty wordplay over that skittery piano sound. No one who captures the

frustrations of being in a body and the neurotics of being trapped in your head. No one who channels such fury and anger, while also being so compassionate and generous.

I have loved Fiona Apple since I was 11 or 12, shortly after Tidal came out. The thing about your teenage musical obsessions is that you outgrow most of them. They sell out, you hear about them acting shitty, their music loses its teeth, you realize their music was never good in the first place. This has never happened with Fiona. Her music has always been good, and she has always been a capital-A Artist. She remains my favorite musician of all time. I was chatting with Lucy K Shaw, the esteemed editor of this publication, and she said, "so nice that she is like 10 years older than us, leading the way into being an insane artist forever." I laughed, it's so true. If you're an intense person, in an almost adolescent way, and simply don't see a future where you won't be this intense person, no matter what age you reach, well, Fiona is your guide. Now might be the right time to mention how much I love my friends. I feel for all of you. Long before quarantine, I was proud to know you and I am always proud of you. I can't wait until the next time I see all your beautiful faces.

Another thing Lucy said, about Fetch the Bolt Cutters, was "it reminds me of what art is for." I couldn't have said it better.

Rachelle Toarmino (quarantined in Buffalo, New York)

Last night I saw [Hanif Abdurraqib tweet a picture of bolt cutters](#), and reader, I did not understand. Woke up and the album was all over the internet! Downloaded it immediately! Stood half-naked in my kitchen at 9:15 (late for work, lol) eating an apple (in celebration, obviously) and decided not to "clock in" until the album was over. Self-care! My first fav was "Under the Table," which, for me, is an anthem for those of us who identify as baby. I felt immediately empowered.

Luna Miguel (quarantined in Barcelona, Spain)

Lloré de belleza  / I cried for beauty.

Nadia de Vries (quarantined in Amsterdam, Netherlands)

I was out for my daily quarantine walk in the park and decided to just walk circles around the park until I had listened to the full album from start to finish. By the time I got home, I was softly chanting "I spread like strawberries..." to myself and I felt better than I'd felt all week.

Jo Barchi (quarantined in Chicago, Illinois)

Dear [REDACTED],

It's 12:13 PM on Thursday April 16th. I'm laying on my new bed. It's covered in sage green sheets. I built the frame myself yesterday. I faceted my lover while I did it. Someone from twitter sent me the leak. I know it's ethically and morally wrong. I know it's artistically wrong. I know it's a shitty thing to do, but I pressed play.

I have my window open. The furthest left of the three. I listen. The radiator goes on about it's business. I'm sitting up and the song starts. I listen. It's so noisy, so fun. I wonder if the link is wrong. There's the piano. There she is. It's so classic her. I start crying the second her voice comes in.

I'm crying so hard but there are barely any tears. It's the kind of cry I had as a kid. It's all choking. Do you remember crying like this? Did you cry like this as a child? I wept so much as a child. I started to try and choke it down. Now when this kind of sob hits me my chest tightens. My chest is so tight. Two tears slide down my face. I throw up in my mouth.

I pause the album as track 2 begins. I walk into the kitchen. My roommate looks at me. I must look insane. She tells me immediately to shut up and not say a word about the album. She says don't spoil it for me. I make an asiago bagel. I put cream cheese on it. I put half an avocado on it. I pace around my apartment. I return to my bed. I'm not thinking about anything. I press play again. The light continues to stream through the dusty windows. It covers my books and the plant my lover gave to me. I named the plant Gertrude. Fiona starts again.

I don't know. I don't know! Baby I don't know what to say! Every line is a punch. I cry. I sit on my bed. The vomit still burns the back of my throat. It hits and it hits and it hits. I'm dissolving. I'm dissolving. BABY! I'm dissolving. I'm so happy. I'm fucking ruined. The next track plays. Then the next. It keeps going. She keeps going. We continue together. I'm moved. I'm moving. I'm moving up some fucked up hill. I'm moving in bed. I'm sitting still in bed. I don't notice my breathing anymore. The percussion, that's all I notice. I notice her words. Every one so biting. Everything relevant. How can it feel so relevant to me when I'm relating half the words to a relationship long since past? Do you know what I mean baby?

I have to get up and shower. I keep promising I will after each song. I let the album play. She finishes. I don't feel finished at all. I get up and wash my face. I put on deodorant. I put on clothes. I walk out of my apartment. It's time for work.

I know you won't listen for a while. I respect everyone waiting on this album. I respect anyone who knows their limits. I cannot imagine knowing my limits. I cannot imagine not pressing play

immediately. I will open the email right away. I'll pour lemon juice on the wound if I think it'll help. I'll feel everything. I just want to feel everything baby.

I guess all that's left to say is: *FETCH THE BOLT CUTTERS BABY*,

Xoxo,

Jo

Liz Bowen (quarantined in Manhattan, New York)

I tried to put off listening because I knew it would consume my whole day—but I couldn't, and it did. I gave in when I saw that my freshman-year roommate Jenn Pelly had written [that Pitchfork review](#) giving the album the first perfect 10 since *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy*, and I remembered that Jenn was the first person I ever met who loved Fiona Apple like I did. Fiona was one of the few musicians I cherished in high school that none of my friends cared very much about. Her music was a private, almost secret, world of refuge for me, at a time during which I had more secrets than I probably ever would again. I think this is probably the way a lot of women my age relate to her earlier work. And even though it now seems like everyone I know is losing their shit over this album and I love that collective feeling—of both the fandom and this album's lyrics—the music still draws me right back into that old place of solitary mystery and intensity.

Anyway, the first time I listened to FTBC I was full of shit. The day before the album came out, I'd managed to do some work on my dissertation for the first time since the pandemic started, and I was hesitant to let that moment of capability pass by. So I tried to listen to it while writing and thinking about something else. Two minutes into "I Want You to Love Me," without having even really heard the song with my full brain, my throat caught with a sob and I stopped working. I put my computer down and stared at the speakers on my bookshelf for the duration of the album. Like any oceanic experience, there were waves and waves. The one that crested with "Good morning, good morning..." put me on the floor. I laid down and replayed "For Her" with my eyes closed, and didn't try to put my stomach back in my body. I had never heard anything like the bridge of that song, ever, ever.

One of the things that makes the most sense to me about Fiona Apple is that she rescues pit bulls. She's always been a person who sings to the jittery and vigilant animals in us. Her live performances have exactly the same energy as my dog considering whether or not to lunge at the dog that's looking at her funny. So I'm sad we're getting this cosmic gift in a time of impossible touring, though as many others have pointed out, the timing could not have been more perfect for her long-running isolationist fervor to reach a fever pitch. And I have a hunch she'd be happy if she never had to tour again.

This album gives its listeners a kind of permission I am hungry for, always. For this reason, I think my brain is storing it in the same place as Carrie Lorig's poetry. It discloses and and makes demands not despite the limits of language, but from right there at the bulging edge. There's so much to say about that horror and the sounds it makes, the way dogs live and die inside it, the things you can beat out of the walls. But I think I'll go and put those things in poetry. Kick me under the table all you want. ;)



Oh Well, I've Always Resented the Spring Anyway
Oscar d'Artois

A Balcony Story

Maria Fernández Beltran

I have started to develop a crush on my front door neighbour. Everytime I go out to the balcony he is there being quiet and smoking. He looks so mysterious. His beard makes me wonder how it would be to run my hands through it, his curly hair looks so soft. I even dreamt about him last night.

We simply wave our hands, hello and goodbye. We say nothing to each other. It would be weird, at any other time, to just sit there in silence trying not to make eye contact, but now we have nothing else to do. Anyway, I have started to wonder what it would be like to talk to him, to stop reading my book or writing my daily poem while I am out here enjoying the sun. Would it be enough to shake this feeling of loneliness that's been hanging over me like a cloud since the start of isolation?

He always seems to be so lost in thought I can't help but feel curious about how it would be to argue with him. Would he snap his opinions at me? Would he let me finish my arguments? Would he shake his head when I tell him that a woman I know went to the hospital because she thinks she has Covid-19 and they sent her home without taking the test because she wasn't in mortal danger, right after advising her to go there to check her symptoms despite the hospital being the very core of the pandemic? Would he look at me condescendingly as if I were a little child who still doesn't know how the world works? Would he give me that look I despise so much? He can't be like that... At least he can't be like that as long as I keep observing him from across the street. For now we can share imaginary, tranquil conversations about how some man has managed to be seen as a saint for paying his workers during the crisis and for giving away face masks while exploiting kids in Bangladesh and evading taxes...

Or maybe we won't talk about politics because he enjoys reading as much as I do. There is a closed book next to him which I can't identify from here. I have been reading a lot during this quarantine. Perhaps out of boredom, or out of a need to experience a different reality than the one I'm stuck in. He must enjoy Walt Whitman. He gives me that feeling and even though I have the habit of disliking people who read Walt Whitman religiously, I feel like I could forgive him for it. He could even enjoy learning about women's works that have been forgotten by history. He could find so very romantic Vita and Virginia's love story, he could use his knowledge about American literature and make me reconsider my weird illogical hatred towards it, arguing that Uncle Tom's Cabin started the war that ended slavery in the USA so it must be worth it to give it a try.

I would tell him that Harriet Beecher Stowe definitely deserves a try and that my main reason for disliking American literature up until the 20th century in the first place is the fact that I never learned about her or her work because men are the only ones we dedicate our hours to during my degree. I have only heard the voices of white men. There is something missing.

He will know that deep down I don't dislike American literature at all - even though I do actually dislike Walt Whitman - the only thing I strongly dislike is the fact that I have been taught about only one half of their literature and this has led me to refuse this part on behalf of the silenced one. Deep down he will

know my attitude is nothing but a joke, a way of trying to make less serious the deep sadness I feel for those women who are not considered important enough to be taught in a university class.

These talks could also distract me from this terrible yearning to be closer to my friends. We have started to get really drunk on FaceTime. I have lost count of how many wine bottles I have already emptied during this month of social distancing but everytime I see everyone on the screen I just miss them more. My neighbour could maybe fill this void. He could even make me forget about how I always seem to find an excuse to stop myself from writing. I need to go outside to get inspired, I need to be around people, and that makes me feel like a bad writer because someone told me once that good writers don't need to feel inspired and don't need to feel things to describe them. You don't need to fall in love to write love stories, you don't need to feel sad to write a poem that shatters your heart, you don't need anything but your own talent and technique. So perhaps I am a bad writer, perhaps I need to live because my imagination is not enough, perhaps I am not worth it and I should stop writing at once and dedicate my life to more simple pleasures and more achievable goals.

My neighbour could possibly stop this train of thought because everytime I have been in love I have dedicated every inch of myself to my lovers. I have spent hours fantasizing about how to run into them again. I have planned long conversations in my mind. I have looked for them on social media to learn about their taste in music or about their hobbies and family and friends. Everytime I have fallen in love I haven't left room for anything else so maybe falling in love during this quarantine is exactly what I need to forget about everything, maybe speaking to him from balcony to balcony will help me distract myself even if the neighbours listen to us talk for hours. Maybe it will even be better that way because us writers love being heard and listened to and admired and I can't think of a better reason for being admired than being in love and speaking your mind.

But maybe I am looking at my neighbour like this to keep me from thinking about everyone who is dying across the country - and across the world - right now. There are 155,633 infected people and there have been 18,579 deaths so far in Spain. It terrifies me to think how many people have died separated from their families and how many people are currently fighting alone against this sickness. It's ridiculous for me to feel lonely and to be so selfish, to have these mundane thoughts while so many people are suffering. Sometimes I even forget the reason for this confinement and when I remember, I feel terribly guilty. But then I inhale deeply and look at my grandparents and I feel so relieved they are home with me, safe and sound. And then I feel guilty again.

I need to stop. I am drifting away again into dark thoughts and I know it is not easy for me to get out of the blue once I get into it. Anything would be useful to keep me from thinking about what we are living through.

But despite this month, I feel incredibly lucky because my handsome neighbour is having a smoke right now and he is smiling at me and I am wondering if maybe I could say hello out loud, if I could ask him about how he is dealing with his confinement or what he has been doing today. Would it be too forward to ask him about his favorite movie? Can he read the book cover I am reading from where he is sitting? If I read in this position I am sure he can. If I look at him sneakily I will be able to see if he is interested in it, if we cross looks I can start a conversation. I can't believe I am reading Walt Whitman for him.



Juncture

Daniel Frears

these weeks, I've submitted,
shine that comes through pilfered glass.

sun, rain and intended eventualities
unearthing a new swelling in every pair of pants.

dissection to better display,
selling short not being an option.

the slither between curtains
the dust that I'm made of
sounds of no voices
'amor' of the cold screen glow

begging for the end to never rear it's wanted
head
I tread on myself

a new pair of slippers
will see me right



Lapsed Librarian

Words by Matt Nelson

Art by Jake Muilenburg

I got three emails this week about books. Well, two about books. Well, actually, only one about a specific book mentioned in these little listings. But all three were lovely and uplifting (if not in content then in contact) and (even if tangentially) brought around by the allure of books. As my school has transitioned to distance learning, I keep wondering about how students will learn empathy if they aren't around others and if they aren't around books. This sounds very anachronistic right now as people are slicing portals into living rooms through Zoom and Facetime, projecting the astral bodies of their loved ones onto walls or their own receiving faces like some new matter-less make up. Even for someone who grew up with dial-up and felt more comfortable using AIM to talk to other humans rather than a phone (no cord), there's a nagging sense of, "Oh, please. Please, younger present person who will someday be an older future person, please read some books. They will connect things inside, connect things outside, and the best is, connect your inside to the outside." I'm not worried, though. There are much larger things to be worried about like if you see someone else's snakes in your laundry basket. Or if you listen to John Prine and can't feel a goddamn thing. Things take time and then they take some more. I've gotten to see some of my students, and I've laughed with them over the computer screen as they asked their partners to run to the store for a Monster energy drink at 10am--as I drink my 3rd cup of coffee. Life is funny. Please, please, please, please, please (I'll add one each week!), if you'd like to talk about these or any other books or anything at all please email me at abigwindmattnelson@gmail.com.

This is what I've been reading, with at least one starred line:

Week 4:

Finished	
<u>How Can I Get Through To You</u> by Terrence Real "You can use virtually anything as a wall--wall of anger, wall of silence, wall of words."	I started this book because my therapist mentioned it (note: did not recommend, just mentioned) while talking about the braiding of capitalism and patriarchy, goal/achievement fascination/exhaustion. Which is pretty relevant these days: I don't know about you, but sometimes I'll go through this dreadnaught anxiety over not doing enough, not reading enough, seeing enough, talking enough. Enough, enough. The author is a guy who wrote a book about male depression I really like called <i>I Don't Want to Talk About It</i> . It basically said that those who are brought up male are tailored to expunge and cache emotion through various socially-acceptable outlets and reservoirs like work, sex, and exercise. Terrance



“His birth was a nail driven through my foot to the floorboards of our marriage.”

“Love acts like a giant magnet that pulls out of us, like iron fillings, every recorded injury, every scar. The prospect of deep connection stimulates a visceral recall of each instance of disconnection we have encountered.”

“Disconnection is masculinity.”

“If you want to do exactly what you want to do--be alone”

“Damaged as boys, men often combine a boy’s vulnerability toward being wounded with a man’s entitlement to withdraw or lash out.”

“So go love’s small murders, tiny everyday escalations of injury reacted to by disconnection, causing more injury”

“All great lovers are anarchists,

Real’s outlook on gender is constraining and hard to get over while reading. He speaks exclusively about hetero-normative monogamous relationships and though he includes various warnings of “this size does not fit all,” the feeling is that his big stroke ideas of binary- and from-birth- gender identification (since trans folks don’t get any play in this book) construct his worldview and that’s the worldview he wants to shift. 2002, what a time. For me, beyond the limitations, the takeaways are ways to understand your “average” het/cis/probably white guy -- Real says that men are guided by shame and grandiosity, with a heavy lean on the pretension (think mansplainer), and that those two emotional peaks leave little in terms of relational terrain. I know I have only within the last 5 years begun to climb down from the shadow of those two peaks. Real says, men either shut down/wall off/disconnect because they think they are the worst (or think they are being told they are the worst) OR they shut down/wall off/disconnect because they’re above all this shit. They go to work, they do the dishes, what more can one want? Well, a lot more. It’s funny how Real basically tells men they suck at emotional literacy and being vulnerable and relation-building and that they need to do a lot more work. Tough love, man. The part that feels obtuse is that Real also directs women to be more assertive in relationships. That a female human needs to wave and stomp her boundaries+needs in front of her man until he “gets it.” It reminds me of this other book called *Why Does He Do That?*, a book about spousal abuse, that recommends if you really want your (usually) male partner to change (i.e. stop abusing), you have to basically make it clear that the stakes are high and you’re getting the fuck out if he doesn’t change. Although Real recognizes that the patriarchy does all that it can to disabuse women of their power, he still insists that women need to reclaim power and stand up to their man. I don’t know. There is some good stuff about how to listen to your partner, especially when you feel like they’re just trying to get to you. And he presents the idea that the reason why you maybe get more mad or more hurt by your partner than say your friends is because the level of intimacy brings to the surface all past traumas from previous close relationships. You either get to deal with them, or your partner does until they don’t or can’t or won’t. I’m kind of being all over the place because

insurrectionists.”

“Holding fast to one another in the midst of this flux--that is our most critical task.”

“The profound truth that the culture at large hides about acceptance is how much it hurts.”

“When men speak of fear of intimacy what they really mean is that they fear subjugation”

“...choosing to maintain integrity, even as your partner indulges, doesn't feel 'fair.' It isn't. In healthy relationships everyone gets to be a jerk sometimes, but mostly, we have to take turns.”

I had a hard time with this book. I like some of it, don't like some of it, and well, there you have it. Relationships rotate from connection, disconnection, to repair and back again. Just because you know you need to repair, doesn't mean you know how to.

Sour Heart by Jenny Zhang



“their homeland would always form a small, missing, and necessary bone in their bodies that caused them ghostly aches for as long as they were alive and away from home.”

“sleeping between my mom and my dad who whispered through

The first time I saw Jenny Zhang read was one of those *where am I moments* you have a lot of when you first move to New York. I was scouting the closest bars to my Bed Stuy place and it was a certain epoch in that neighborhood's continually evolving/gentrifying geopolitical history when that happened to be Goodbye Blue Monday. I mean, I was off the Halsey J so Goodbye was still a good 20 minute walk. Close is relative. The place was so weird, so comfortable in its weirdness that it was the first venue I organized a reading at--Silence the Silence. Anyway, one night Jenny Zhang was reading, though at the time I didn't know who she was or what she had written. It was funny. It was explicit. It was different from the poetry I was used to in that it had a punch that made sure you knew you were alive and here on the earth. Sour Heart is perhaps not a departure but a rewinding of the poetry found in Dear Jenny, We Are All Find. Many of the stories focus on the family life of first generation children and their parents in New York City. Many of the themes strike at the guilt and pain and singular pleasure of life when you either deal with or are the offspring of those dealing with the psychic damage of leaving homes and people and languages, the tolls paid for dreams that either come true or are delayed until the next generation can pick up the threads. I love

me like I was air”

“I wondered then how magic was distributed in the world and when and if my family would receive our fair share”

“Surely there was someplace where it was safe, where who you thought you were matched up with how others treated you, where there was forgiveness in great abundance, never to be depleted”

“‘Good morning, class,’ I said in my ventriloquism-of-a-vagina voice, as I maneuvered her vagina lips to look like talking lips. ‘Today we are going to talk about periods.’”

“somewhere, my father was riding his bike all around Manhattan with a plastic bag tied around his face, speeding past lights like he was light itself”

“I felt the pleasure and panic of doorways that had once seemed impossible to reach looming ahead of me. I felt sure I was on the verge of something wonderful. I wanted to come right up to it, and shake its hand and say, I’m ready I’m ready I’m ready I’m ready.”

“No broken person in the world had wanted to be described that way.”

“My father looked at us like we were potatoes trying to be oranges.”

“Being someone is terrifying.”

“That was the secret to being me back then: if you never say a word, people will think you don’t know anything, and when people

that there seems to be one family set that the other families in the other stories return to while recalling for their children the shittiness of the beginning, cramped lodging and minimal food in a flophouse. The singular image that all these people remember is one young girl who wouldn’t stop scratching. Long into the night she’d scratch until she bled and the noise, the noise is what the others remember. That particular family group was one of my favorites because their arc starts at the lowest point, at least for the ones set in the US. They had to at one point ditch their car in the Harlem River for example. And don’t forget the itching. So to see the progression of this narrator from being a tiny person full of physical pain, due primarily to being intensely poor in the first story of the collection, to being a healthy young adult who embarks on a teaching gig outside of Paris whose biggest problem is the psychological pain of leaving the family behind, well, let’s just say that last story gave me sprinkle eyes. Being a kid is emotional! Being a kid in a family is emotional! Being sent to live with grandparents in Shanghai because your parents can’t afford your presence is very emotional! There’s an intergenerational play that focuses heavily on how to both protect children from the past that was worse, but also teach them not to grow up unthankful--and the intra-generational interactions, usually between sisters and brothers, as they navigate those parents and grandparents who are strict and wise and completely outside of what is normal to someone in middle school in Queens. These are growing up stories. The hilarious and scary advent of sex. How to deal with your embarrassment and love and eventual outgrowth of the adults in your childhood. The loneliness of childhood darkened by the shadows and ghosts of those adults. I really loved how time worked in these stories, moving between retellings of Shanghai before you were born to retellings of little brothers being nuisances when you were younger. Zhang’s watch is distinct, in as many terms of the word as you can gather.

Playlist Stories:

“We Love You Crispina”

“The Evolution of My Brother”

“Why Were They Throwing Bricks?”

“You Fell into the River and I Saved You!”

think you don't know anything, they say everything in front of you and you end up containing everything."

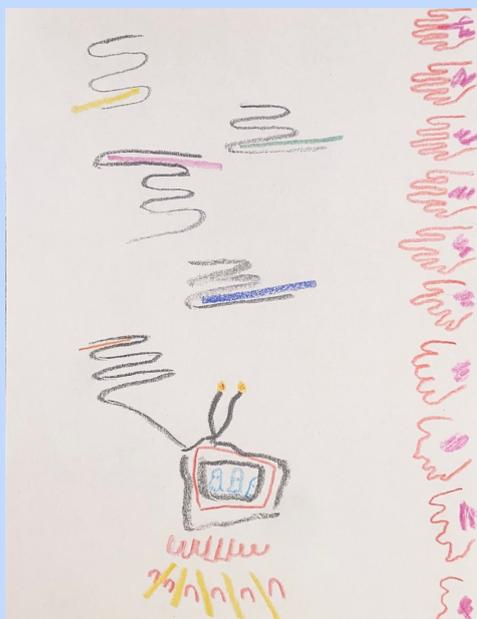
"Your great-grandfather died standing up, writing his last poem in the air, scribbling with his fingers."

"how did anyone ever come up with a hundred different ways of saying, 'You have made this world a great one for me'"

"My mom smiled at me like I was the very girl she was meant to bring into this world, which meant I belonged to every single place I ever stepped foot on, but most of all, I was hers, and she was mine."

"In those days, you would've rather eaten a basement full of rats than be separated from your nainai."

The Crown Ain't Worth Much by Hanif Abdurraquib



"until the gates of heaven ask/ about history of your palms"

What? Don't you ever get those itches to read EVERYTHING by an author? There's a chapbook put out by Big Lucks of Abdurraquib's that I want, but for now this will do. The distance between If A Fortune For Your Disaster and The Crown is riverwide. There are some similarities, duh, and some of the grammatical and architectural twists he uses are just burgeoning: the whole poem with line breaks (/) within the block text; the musician as a character who carries the poem inward--here it's Jay Z, Drake, Pete Wentz, Elliott Smith (swoon); using "&" to help you remember arms can link as well as hold and lift up. I like how he makes explicit his thoughts stemming from an initial response or environment. He shows you how to go from one overheard phrase to a whole different directional stanza. There's a cycle of roman numeral poems connected to Jordans. There's way more childhood/adolescent/leaving home stuff here than in his later book. People are present in a more direct sense, perhaps simply named and loved rather than alluded to or generalized. It's not as insider as it sounds; instead

“danced in a basement/ until the walls/ were *moist*/ until it rained indoors”

“nothing knows the sound of abandonment like a highway does, not/ even God.”

“nothing can ransack sorrow like a piano”

“& they will cut open / our stomachs & / wear our sunlight / around their shoulders / like a mother’s arms”

“the homie says *these the hours where black boys vanish* / says *we gotta find shelter before teeth grow through all this twilight* / says *one time I looked up at the moon and I haven’t seen my big brother / since*”

“& isn’t funny how art most imitates life when a black body is being drained of it? how easily we can imitate that which is never coming back again to claim its space?”

“here. take this mixtape I made. it is just 30 minutes / of the wind. how it sounds when being cut by something heavy./ falling from the sky.”

“at about 3 minutes and 30 seconds/ into the song ‘How Will I Know’,/ and I’m pretty sure love has a vacation home there”

“*the old folks would break out the moonshine and celebrate another day they didn’t have to pull the body of / someone they loved from the river. I say ‘river’ because I want you to always be/ able to look at the trees without crying.*”

“this traffic that isn’t moving/ &

of feeling outside the history, there is enough to hold onto and give space to these humans. Punk mixes with hip hop house party mixes eastside with college dorm on a white campus mixes with barbershop chairs in a changing neighborhood. Time is bouncing fast and then slowed down like Michael Jordan floating above known gravitational laws. There’s a lot of death in this one, a lot of burials, and dirt. A lot of remembrance, the pain that comes with. From what I can gather, Abdurraquib is back in Columbus and thankful. These poems feel like a young person realizing that their home, like their parents, is real and changing and flawed and never to be as perfect as that one summer you hustled westsiders for money playing pick up. Instead your home is the torn down punk show you first flung yourself into in order to feel the communal shifting of music and bodies. You’re not quite ready to be thankful for your place of homecoming’s continued existence, but it’s coming. Right after this next night’s close. It’s coming.

Playlist Poems:

“In Defense of ‘Moist’”

“Ain’t None of the Kids on My Block Gonna Debate About the Existence of God”

“On Jukeboxes”

“All the White Boys on the Eastside Loved Larry Bird”

“In Defense of that Winter Where I Listened to the First Taking Back Sunday Album Every Day Until the Snow Peeled Itself Back from the Grass and I found My College Sweatshirt Again”

“The Author Explains Good Kid. M.A.A.D. City to His White Friend While Driving Through Southeast Ohio”

“Dispatches from the Black Barbershop, Tony’s Chair. 2011.”

“At the House Party Where We Found Out Whitney Houston Was Dead”

“The Ghost of the Author’s Mother Has a Conversation With His Fiancee About Highways”

“XII”

hasn't moved for what feels like
thirty yers which is to say that/ it
feels like we haven't moved since
we were too small to speak &/
burden everyone we love with
our refusal to crawl back into
silence”

“In a country that wishes your
children buried,/ you do not wish
a child on your children”

“I only have this one mouth./ I
cannot make it into a graveyard
for you anymore.”

“the sky lets a shower of/
fractured light leak through its
teeth”

I MISS EVERYTHING / an abecedarian

Kendall Graham



A mere month or so ago, I thought I felt the tide turning - not too much,
Barely perceptible except for a slight breeze in the air. Now I remember my hopes &
Count them among the missing, calling
Down dark alleys after errant strays.
Everything slows to a near-stop and still whole weeks of calendar pages
Fly by cartoonishly, lifted by the wind into litter for eternity.
Ghoulish remnants stay a little longer in the ether.
Home feels different without the ritual of coming back to it, a kind of safety that
Is only loosely graspable right now.
Just the feeling of making plans, faith inherent to the act,
Knowing something solidly would come to pass.

Likening the future to a dream taking shape before your eyes, like
Milky moments in dark movie theaters - remember those?
No one wants to laugh but we keep cracking jokes,
Or maybe we want to laugh, and we do, but it feels more like a shudder.
Please. I think of last spring in London,
Quietly parsing through now-empty museums,
Rush hour traffic from the top of the double decker bus
Slowly winding its way back to a place not-home.
Too bad, my nostalgia is always out of control,
Unfettered, I feed on the feeling and further unspool and unspiral.
Vespers are no longer, churches remain vacant even on Sundays.
What I would give to sleep at night again -
X amount of pills to put me under for 8 hours of peaceful rest.
You don't think about it until it happens. In February I went to the
Zoo and I miss those lions, standing next to my friends, peering through the bars.

The New 90s

Rom-Com

Soundtrack

A Quarantunes Playlist by

Pronoun



41 Tracks of new nostalgia curated by the Sleep Well Records founder



That's all for this week!

Thank you so much for reading!!



We'll be back next Sunday with a new issue.

Don't forget to
[follow us on instagram](#)
if you want to!

And if you want to contribute something to next week's issue...
Email me: lkshowbiz@gmail.com

Stay safe!!!





Egon x Lucy