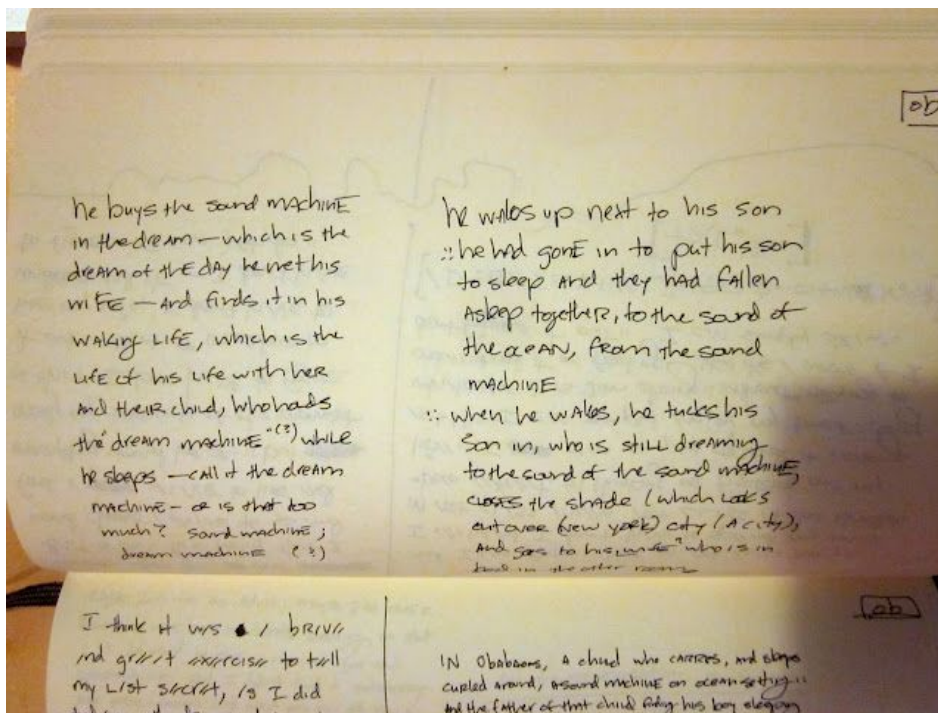


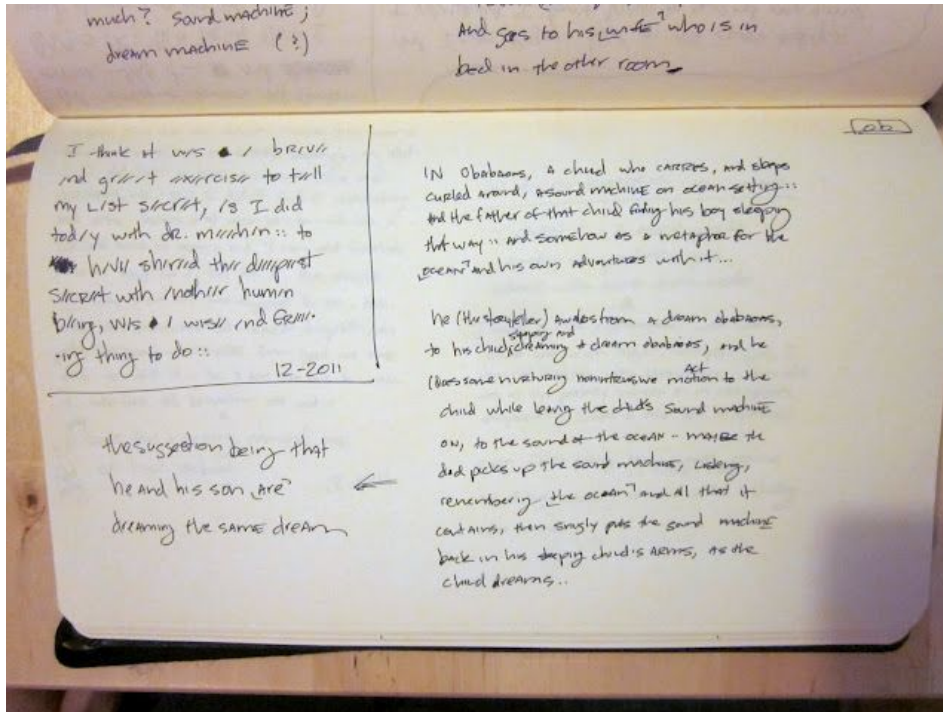
Of Bicycles and Boardwalks and Oceans and Ships notes 2

by Matthew Temple
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Thanks: Andrew Morrissey, Penny Goring

let chris nguyen read an advance copy, kenia cris, berit ellingsen, etc, and give them special thanks





I had a way I did my mornings. It was a simple way. It didn't involve anyone, as there was no one to be involved. It was of breakfast, of a shower, of meditation, sitting cross-legged on the living room floor. I had a rug I had found in the dumpster of one of my neighbors, a round rug with patterns of the sun. Woven into it, rays of light and beams from the sky. That's where I sat to meditate. I would count my breaths, start my day that way, breathing in and breathing out, and getting ready to be, to be in the moment, which above all else I strove to do. Even more than friends, even more than attract a lover, I wanted to be present. And I did, I found that, I found it simply, not too long after I started meditating, found a way to sit in quiet and simply be. To focus on my breath. To wake up that way, before I ate, before my shower. As the first thing I did in a day, I would meditate until I felt alive and awake and aware. If I had been with someone I'm not sure I would have ever got started meditating, because I would have been distracted. I had to start that way, alone, with no one to love, with no one to go out with. And be with myself, even if it was sad in some ways, be with myself until I got comfortable that way, and to get to a point where I didn't need anyone else. After that, maybe love would come, and maybe it wouldn't. It wasn't my business, really. It was the wish of the universe, whether I was with someone or not. I'm not one to press such things.

So after I meditated, after I found myself present in this body, in this

moment, I would shower and feel the steam escape through the upper window in my bathroom, cool air coming down, hot air going up, and I would wash my body without much soap. I would wash my hair. I would wash between my toes. I would step out onto a wicker bathmat and feel myself dry against the air.

9946

he has a morning ritual, he does alone
making breakfast
showering
a meditation
and then he goes out riding his bicycle
seeing the neighbors
and riding down to the ocean
to the boardwalk
seeing the shops
as they open
riding in the cool of the morning
and the first trains arriving
bringing people from the city

Dream that I left my house on a bike, which affixed to it was something like a balance beam tightrope walkers use, and I rode down the courtyard and down the sidewalk and down the street and onto the boardwalk near a Santa Monica/Ocean City looking wharf, and it was beautiful, and I rode far far far down the boardwalk and it eventually turned into an impossibly long, impossibly populated, impossibly stocked buffet of shops and people and happenings, this miles-long street with bike paths on both sides, and shops on both sides, and beyond the shops on one side the ocean and beyond the shops on the other side the city, and I rode all the way to the end of the end of the boardwalk where there was a ship waiting and you entered the boarding dock of the ship through a seafood tavern, and there was a high school girl there as part of a field trip from some faraway land and she had the kind of pertness that attracts me and she had the kind of alertness that attracts me, where everyone else's normal eyes are dead and then sometimes you meet someone like me, whose eyes are alert, whose mind is aware...she was one of those, and we talked immediately, and she wanted to see me later, and I wanted to see her later, and she was one who even if I, in the foolishness of societal politeness

would have left our later meeting to chance, she wouldn't leave it to chance, and even though she didn't have a cell phone we would meet later as I would write my email on a receipt, and she was young and rebellious and showing me that the receipt I had just gotten wasn't really printed on heat-sensitive paper, but the heat-searing-looking markings on it were black instead of blue, as they should have been, indicating that this receipt was instead to resemble one that had been printed on heat-sensitive paper, and with that we went on to investigate the dots of a colon which were suspect for a different reason, and when we looked out the little window at the waiting ship and its ocean beyond, we did it at the same time, and we weren't afraid, even as we first met, to have our heads close by each other so that we could look out of the little window at the same time...and it was one of those moments and one of those energies where all at the same time we didn't mind being close because it was simply the practical requirement of looking out the window at the same time, and why should we not look out at the same time, since we were looking out at the subject of our conversation, the boat, and its leaving to take her and her classmates on the next segment of a field trip, but yet we wanted our heads to be close as we looked out the window, and we wouldn't have kept them apart even if there hadn't been any practical requirement that they be close, but yet if we hadn't have wanted to be close for any other reason than the practical, we would have been close for that reason, and not been concerned with the implications. We were that kind of people, who can unselfconsciously like or not-like each other many times throughout an interchange and our behavior be totally unchanged, totally undisturbed, by our motivations: if we liked each other as boy and girl, we would have had the same conversation as if we hadn't, we were that true. But we did like each other, and we would later act on it, we both knew. She would take my email and write me later from some overpriced internet cafe on the boardwalk, and we would meet and continue our relationship. When I woke up from this dream of bicycles and boardwalks and oceans and ships and fieldtrips and mates, I knew that starting today, in my waking life, everything would start to get better. In the waking haze coming out of this dream, I know my life hit a vertex today. Yesterday, today, was a vertex in my life, a turning point, after which the rules of progression are changed. There is a definite high school energy to this dream, and I will never be me in high school again, and do not want to be, but there are some aspects of me from that time that I know are active again now. I had to go through everything I've been through to get to be who I am on this day, and some of it produces a me I've never been before, and some of it washes out, revealing a me I've been before. My childlike path of simplicity/abstinence with respect to

addiction is part of why I can feel this way today. My intellectual and social experiences up to this point are another part of why I can feel this way. I am older than I have ever been. I am younger than I have ever been.

Also, in the dream, one of the young lady's classmates pointed out that I was floating some inches above the ground when I stood or walked. Riding a bicycle, a symbol of freedom for me, but also, my feet would not quite bend to gravity's will that they touch down.

1

Of the way my feet would never touch the ground. Of my lightness, of the sky. Of floating some inches above the ground. Of standing above the earth. Of taking steps in air, even the little bit beneath my toes. Of tremolo.

2

Of taking your hand in mine. Of taking the fingertips. Of playing your prints against mine. Of the palms and the tips. Of kissing of the hands. Of the lightest love you ever made, a finger-tip and a finger-tip, touching. Of the play of hands. And I took you in me, took your hand in my hand, and brought it up to my lips, and kissed you, kissed your hand, and you touch my lips, and fingers move to face, and eyes, and neck, and ears. There you are, lightness. There you are, sun. There you are, in little drops of light. Taking me, taking me with your touch. And moving me, moving me from my self, in speed and sound, in the lightness of unwinding, in the race of air. And I knew you in hands, in fingerprints, in joints and feet, in bones and in kisses and in arches and in tunnels and in rhymes. In blindness, touching my eyes as if you could not see, in exploration, in the savage touch, and the blessing touch, and the aching touch. Of apples, and apricots, and peaches, and pears. Of the name inside a name. Of calling me, of your voice, of your number. Of meeting under blankets of sun, in rivulets of light. Of our boardwalk.

3

Of your toes, and your ankles, of your calves, of your foot. Of stretching, of reaching, of lifting and stance. Of a hop. Of jumping. Of skipping. Of glee. Of a cut on a knee, and a bandage. Of a kiss for a boo. Of healing there, under a plastic cover, and of your little bleed. That cut, that drop of blood, covered with a band-aid, smothered in love and a kiss and a pat on your way. That day. The moment you fell. The way you stood. And a finger dropped to touch it, catching elements of red. That is the way I remember you, before we cleaned you up and covered your wound, standing with that tiny drop of blood on

your knee, from a stuck-out nail.

4

Of laying you back, of draping your neck over the pillow, of air from the window, cool in shade, of the dryness of June. Of some hard-won idea of getting you here, gone. Of easiness, of simple, of knowing you always belonged here. Under my hands, over my hands, over me and under me, side-by-side, in cotton sheets of pleasing and a gentle tease of a finger on your front, between your eyes, over your belly. There it was, there we had it. There was one of those moments, gone. Taken us with it, taken us out of it, savored, and departed. There it was, and we were with it, for a moment. I knew you for an instant, saw myself revealed, was next to you, and then it passed, and we were left by it, floating wispy in the air, while the moment, far below, became with the wind, blowing sails, below ships, beside my bike, shifting us, throwing us forward. Traveling us, making us newly, tearing us from one. Blowing us. And we ride, ride with it, we are in a passage, we are in a boat. Blown by the sea, on a bicycle, fastened by the street, pedaling. The sun above. An island cloud. This moment. This one right here. That is where I knew you. With my hands below your neck, and you underneath me—that is where we met, that is where we knew. And we had it once, and we would have it again, by different names, taken in missing night, where there was only sun, and wind, and blue before stars, forgetting us of space, making us think that this was the only planet, the only shore. That we would never need to travel to find our home. That we would never move. That this place, and only this place, could hold us. That this is all we'd ever need to know. That lightness, that breeze, that breath blowing, the blanket of that heat, that feel of the boardwalk under our feet, those boards and those nails and the cracks and the rails, that that is every single day to us, the only way for us, the hook that, and the line that, towed for us, our ease.

5

Of the back of you, of your skin. Of the blue, and the wind. Of those white-board boats, caught to the sea, of traveling weekends, of moments off work, of families eating lunch on the back of that tiny sail. Of your swimsuit draping, of sparklets of water on your simple back. Of that time we went to the coast, of the train tracks, of the beach book, of sitting with each other in the sand. That's how I know you, how I always will see you. That's what you are to me, in shades of blue and bright, in the whiteness of the sun, perched on a mast, or railings, or benches, or surf. Walking right in the part where the water

comes in, where the sand is hard and you can bend to find a seaweed that drapes itself over your foot. That is your name to me: seaweed on foot. That is your name to me: hardness of the sand. Your name is brightness, your name is tide. Your name is any of these names I have for you, whether air, or mystery, or sky. You could never be caught, not even on a word, and so my names for you are not tethers, nor ropes, nor leash. They are songs to you, they are praises sung to a god, they are notes in music, they are movements of a dance. They are symphony, they are glass. They are the infinite, never bounding. They are kites. They are the strings of a kite, hanging on air, tangling with each other, embracing, each, in a name. Calling. And coming short, never knowing you, never capturing you, but inflections on you, simply facets of your reflection, chops on waves.

6

Of flying things overhead, of the dot of planes. Of silver perches, of carrying us away. Of looking down, on islands, of seeing runways drift away. Of taking off forever, of leaving, and leaving behind. Of the last trip made to a place, of never going back. That is how we see it from above. And from below? Of passing, of visitors, of tourists, of those who come and go.

7

Of hearing what I thought you said, and it not being quite right. Of leaning in to hear your lyric, of missing some final notes, of inventing my own words, of filling in, of improvising what you might have said to me. Of hearing nothing of you, when you're gone, except what I made up inside my head. And when you're back, seeing if the two match up, of how I imagined you, and of what you've been.

8

Of the way the sun came through the window. Of the air plant, wisping there, gathering nutrients, growing from its infinite stem

book of misheard lyrics
of people on vacation
of sun
of sunlight

9

Of brightness, of beyond limitation, of the caring for a moment that you knew

would pass, of the love of the day that goes behind, leaving only the new way
to look at things, only the new self, the blank and the real and the present self,
free from what it new yesterday, free from how it felt before.

of brightness and beyond limitation
of sandals and bare feet
of backs and skin
of blue and wind
of flying things overhead
of people seeing themselves through airplanes

10

Of leaving here and never coming back, of going somewhere else. Of letting
this be my goodbye, this time when I see you but don't tell you I'm leaving,
but just sit with you, in my mind. And in a week, or in a month, when you
haven't seen me, you'll know I'm gone. But we needn't do it with a hug, or a
word, we can just have had that last visit, one of us not knowing a thing. And
I'll think of you, cutting out spaces in my mind and placing you there, on my
shelves of laughter, of summer outings, of books, of days, of mornings, of
beach trips, of running in the sand. Of you sifting me, timely, through fingers,
strumming like a harp. And then I knew you once, and you are only in my
mind, and you remember me at random, in fissures of recall, little moments
not lost. And I'll think of you that same way, here and maybe there, maybe
now and maybe then. And that's how you came here, looking for your home.
This place I've known forever, this place I'll someday leave, that's the place you
choose to stay.

of leaving and never coming back—but going somewhere else
of how everyone who leaves one place goes to another
how one person's prison of birthplace is another's paradise

11

Of faces made to strangers, of glances, of love. Of that first moment, of a
strand of hair. Of that touch of a hand, waiting in line for the ferris wheel.
That

12

Of faces made to strangers, the first time I saw you, with the strands of your
hair falling between us, making hands in mime, pressing our faces together,

looking with close eyes. Of the curl of your lips, of that almost-a-smile, of your steps, like a dance, to me, and back, and to me again, dancing closer and farther away, dancing up to me, dancing back, and then our dancing together, with hands, almost touching, in mirror, in time.

of faces made to strangers
of love
but of that first moment of love
of hair—of strands of hair

of grains of sand

13

Of a crab, scuttling, in his tiny world. Of his walk within the sand. Circling, and circling. Of his avoidance of the gulls. Of their screeching, above, and his flight.

Of the gull, diving, snapping the claws of a crab.

of crabs
of broken shells
of crustaceans crushed from above and eaten from their shells

Of my ticket,

of tickets and passage

15

Of that seat on the train, the one you used to sit in, that I can still find empty if I look, with scratches and old marker stains, near the window, that used to hold you as you looked out on the boardwalk, watched it ride away backwards as the train moved. I love that seat. It's the only one I ever ride in. Or, sometimes: next to, as if you were coming with me to work, riding that train in the morning, with the first light coming in. Talking through our usual circles, with that empty seat next to me, gesturing in hands, looking over at you occasionally, seeing your smile, hearing what you have to say on the matter. Knowing all your points, right up to the point where you surprise me, and then my imaginary you falling apart, and it's just me on the train, with that empty seat beside me, where you would always sit if you were here.

of empty seats where you used to sit
where someone new sits down
of breakfast
of all kinds of breakfast
breakfast is the only meal people ever eat in this book
they always meet at breakfast
of gulls
of the screeching of the gulls

16

Of grief, of wearing the black shirt, or the black tights. Of your scarf, that lets me know you're mourning. Of the lost, of the loved, of those missing. Of the look in your eyes, when I see you think of him. Of the way he's still with you, of the way he's there with us in the quiet of a room, even our bedroom, of the way he never leaves you. Of his name, that I'll never know but that you repeat in your mind, over and over, to keep him with you. And there are questions I know not to ask, places I know not to go. Wounds too deep in you to touch, conversations we shouldn't have. For that is your loss, and I could never share it, could never meet it in you. It could never be transferred. Only you were there, and only you were there with him. I can only sit with you, and know that I can never know, but sit with you and hold your hand. And sometimes even that is too much, you have to be with yourself, and you have to sit on the edge of our bed and cry. I would never keep you from that, from what you need to do. He is your ghost you carry with you. I can see him sitting beside you, can see you reach for him, can see you touch, and see him touch you back. And see you starting to forget him, and see you hating yourself for it. See him starting to fade, in the time you spend not thinking about him, when we're getting ready to go somewhere, see him fall behind. And I almost miss him myself, knowing he's a part of you, and myself, don't want him to go away. For who would you be, if you didn't miss him? Would you be someone new, someone whose pain could not bring us together? Would you be less careful? Would you be stronger? Would you need me still, if he were truly gone? Would you move on, would you leave us both at the same time, and fly out of here, never coming back, would you let us die away from you and become someone totally different, would you shed your bags and step onto a plane with nothing but your ticket and a backpack, would that be the end? So I see you mourning, and I love your lover all the more for being in you, love that he died and love that he's still here, love it all and love your sadness, love its taste,

love its shape, love it in the quiet of you when you're putting your clothes on. Love it in your stare. Love it in those little pauses we have at dinner, when your mind goes and you never really fully come back, where some part of you is left behind, and part, and part, and what is left, after all those pauses, is it still you, or is it just your grieving, and you don't even understand it anymore? You don't even know why it remains, why you wear that black scarf around your neck, draping you in memories of someone who has forgotten you, and forgotten you forever.

17

Brightness of where you used to be, my love. Brightness of your ghost, knowing all of us, driving us forward, friending us in odd moments, in blank chairs beside us, taking our hands. And you warm me, warm my shoulders instead of being cold, as ghosts are supposed to be, you warm me. You blind me with light. You pass above, not below. You tumble and tumble and tumble and tumble, and never fall. You try my ears with noise not meant for this dimension, rolls and bells so bright, so, so bright I cannot hear. And you web my mouth, unspoken. Dust, and shafts of joy.

18

Of the day where you used to be. Of your running. Of your shouts. Of your laughter in the bed. Echoing. And I'm arching for you, reaching, and I cannot find. Cannot find you. Waiting in a station for a train that never comes.

19

Of placing your clothes in a basket. Knowing you'll never wear them again. Of the dust in the air above. The lack of the sound of your voice. And knowing that I'll never hear that voice again.

We used to know you. You used to be beside.

We used to feel you. You used to feel inside.

20

We used to see you. You used to see us and see every motion we made. You used to see our waking and our leaving the house. You used to travel with us, to the beach, to the shore, you used to come with us in our bags, escape with air when we opened them, circle us in the sand. Now there is nothing. No air, on opening. No following. You've moved on. Haunting someone else's bag,

someone else's beach trip. Or you've gone away, to wherever spirits go when they're done with earth. We remain.

21

You're in archways and high glass ceilings. In train stations, in fresh pots of coffee. Sometimes you spin around flowers, with purple trails, like a spell. Sometimes you're found just above a wave. Running parallel. Flying to the shore and then dispersing, breaking apart in a zillion pieces, going upward. Up, and up. Blanketing us, like stars.

22

Of putting on your hat. Of putting on your glasses. The dark sunglasses, the ones you wear to museums to see a painter you like. Because you know that seeing his work in person will make you cry, and you don't like to share your tears with strangers. They're yours. Cry them at museums. Cry them at home. Sometimes, I see you cry them in restaurants, when you tell me what is true. Sometimes you cry them in bed—but not often. Put on those dark glasses. Adjust your hat. Find that black scarf, wrap it on your neck. Ready yourself to go. If you could wrap everything about you in black, you would. Wrap yourself down to the soul so that even if I looked inside you all I would see is blackness, in the loss of him, I would find him missing from all your insides, find you lost without his breath.

23

Wrap his breath around you, around your neck, in your eyes, over your hair. Lie down on blankets made of him, sail in ships of his breeze. Use his breath to push you on, use it to take you. Even take you away from me, if it needs to happen. Take you back to him, and you revel forever in losing him, revel forever in the fact he's gone. If that's what needs to happen, then let it. Let his breath surround you, let it drown you, let it take you down. Take me down with you, though—let me die too, let me die with you in your grief. Let me die with you in your love. Let me love him too and let the three of us die together. Let his breeze take us all away, snuff us out, darken us, let us to die, ache us, run us over, break us, make us lose our minds, let it sail us out to sea and leave us there to drown. Let it abandon us. Let us be marooned. Let us be lost without it. Let us need it to get back and let us not have it. Let us pray for it and let our prayers not be answered. Let us have a silent god. Let him ignore us, abandon us, be deaf to us, and mute; let him tell us nothing. Wrap his breath around you, around your neck, in your eyes. Make him your protector,

cover yourself with loss, run yourself into the ground, stall yourself, let life pass you by...and not care, not care that it's going, going out of you like blood, leaving you behind. You're a shell—a beautiful one, but a shell anyway. Empty, you. Only thing left is his loss. Only thing left is the calling of his name. Only thing left. Wrap his breath around you, wrap you in his name, wrap you in his beauty, wrap you in everything great about him, in all that went away. Wrap you in his breath. Tuck you in. Let you sleep. Let you dream of him, in our bed. Let you take your time. Let you need him. And I hope you find him, find him for all you need him for. Find him in the smell of our sheets, find him when we're out to coffee, find him on the sea. I hope you find him as much as you need to find him, and I hope that he stays. I don't know what would happen to us if he went away. I think we'd fall apart, I think we'd have nothing to hold us together, we'd be too empty, too open, too ok, without enough to miss, without that chaos that binds us together, without that rage. I think we need him. I think we need his glue. So wrap yourself in his breath, take on his name. I will not stop you. I'll push you on. I need him as much as you do, maybe more. Maybe every time you push him away, I pull him to us. Just like you want to say goodbye, I want to meet him, just like you want to let him go, I want to invite him. So wrap yourself in him, I will help you, I will put his blanket around your shoulders, I will tuck you in. Wrap yourself in his breath, breathe him in. Breathe him out on me. And the three of us will be together.

of casual grief

and casual griever

in this book grief is a part of life, it is accepted, it is natural, it is normal, it is loved and it is something everyone is doing

there are ubiquitous symbols of grieving, of black hats and sunglasses

when people go to museums in this book, when they face that which they love, it is too great and too bright and too sad for them to face without blocking out the light

Of the broken. Of all that is beauty. Of the falling apart, and the letting oneself go. Of people who once had it all together, who came unraveled like strings. Of people threading that yarn in new ways, more delicate, less certain, weaving the life of the ocean. Of the waves, broken as a constant state, coming in—never stopping, but never quite together, either. Never quite in place and certain. Never of a piece. Never put to rest, as final and neat and quiet, like we imagine we could be. Of the breaking of those waves, of all that was beautiful within them. And of all that was ever beautiful—the broken.

they are broken, as a constant state
and that is beauty
that is all that was ever beautiful—the broken
All that was ever beautiful was broken.

of todays
nothing takes place outside of today
of notes received
by the wrong person
of reading someone else's love note
as though it was to me

24

Of music, in parts, each sung by a stranger. Of the notes you carry, alone,
playing into a fabric. Of no one person having the whole song, but it all
coming together in mis-delivered tones. Shared notes, yours stepping on mine
and mine stepping on yours. And when mine rises yours falls, and when yours
rises, mine falls. We play our song in parts, sing it in parts, weave it in parts,
but somehow it, as one song, remains, even when, in parts, we fall away, go
missing, disappear into the light. One song remains.

25

Of tones, mis-delivered, of yours sent to me and mine sent to you. As I open
your song, and it spills out of its box. I smell your notes like flowers. Play your
tones as petals. Water your voice. And when it comes back to me, growing
upward in stems, I brush you and group you and tie you in a bunch. And even
prune a leaf. And somewhere, you are doing the same for me, with the song
that came in your mail.

26

And we stopped waiting, we stopped waiting for everything to be perfect
before we continued. We took our plant and we planted it in this imperfect
soil, in this imperfect pot near the imperfect shore. And maybe the breeze was
all that was every perfect, for us. And maybe that breeze was enough. We only
ever needed a breeze. Everything else could fall away, and we'd be ok. But we
didn't wait. We planted our plant and we watered it and we showed it to the
sun, and it grew, it grew out of imperfect dirt and it grew in the imperfect
shade of a kitchen window that was too dark for this particular kind of plant.

But we showed it sun every day, and it took the breeze, and all in all we were glad we went ahead and planted this plant imperfectly, so we could have its company and it could be in our lives, be part of kitchen dinners and cooking and just looking out the window, could brush against us as we leaned over it to look at the sea. We loved that plant.

of mis-delivered tones
of shared notes
of music, in parts, hummed and sung by [a cacaphony of] strangers
of no one person having the whole song
but of a song
sung
in parts

of ocean breezes
and thin curtains

27

Of your hair ties, that flew off in the wind, of those tiny pieces of lace that lived on, in the air, once they freed themselves from you. Unraveled, came away, learned to be on their own.

Of your bracelet that came off without you ever knowing it, that we looked for near our table but never found, that must have been so loose it slipped right off your wrist when you placed it down, or while you were walking.

of loose ties
and lace
and bracelets that come off
and go away
untied
there is no bondage, here, there is nothing that holds tight
no chains, only lace and faded strings
beach-dyed and sun-bleached strands

28

Of those who had left, and come here, or gone away forever. They had made their money, or decided not to, and lighted here, or left us behind. And become untouchable, skipped the entire system and made their lifetime outside

of it, not having to talk to anyone, ever. Except their own untouchables, who could relate. Who knew that there was a way out, and who had found it. Or a way in, where they could stop struggling, and be in quiet rooms, working on their paintings, making their poetry, sleeping after hard work, and spending those few minutes of each day not working, trying to leave their work behind. And if two of these untouchables got together, their conversation would last forever. It was as if perpetual motion had been set alight, when any two of these goners had met. Their bells would spin. Their flags would fly. One would inspire the other and the other would inspire the one. One would reach a hand in, to pull the other out. One would reach a hand up, to pull the other in. And they'd be tied there together, inspiring each other, fueling each other, setting each other on fire. That's what made them untouchable—nothing could dampen them, nothing could put them out. Nothing could keep them from spinning their tales. And their tales were of meetings of sweet strangers, of lovers, of tragic deaths. They knew what it's like to lose, to have even been the cause of your lover's passing, and to still be here, to still be in this brightness, to still carry the world on your back. And what it's like to set it down and go for a picnic. To bring a tablecloth to the beach and meet your friends. To pack lunches in tupperware. To smoke imaginary cigarettes. To drink water out of your cupped hands. These were the ones who made it to freedom. These were the ones who knew how to be happy, inside the space of a day. And we made it here by a simple formula, something of honesty, to yourself, something of love, for another, and that was it. Have a project. Care for it. And doing that enough would make a goner go, would make one untouchable, would get you lost, and lost forever, lost in the best way, and make you never found.

of goners
the untouchables

29

Of that silence in mid-afternoon where all the noises go soft, and even the breeze doesn't make a noise, when the trains are hardly running and the beaches empty for the sun, when everyone is napping or sipping drinks quietly under shade. Of conversations stopping, then, and there just being two separate people, for a while, in different rooms, their backs to each other, not making love, not speaking, not thinking of each other, just thinking to themselves, arranging items on their shelves. Of one of them, shuddering in the silence, thinking of someone past. Of that person who will never be here

again. Will never be spoken to. Will never call. Of the other, hearing the silence like a scarf, wrapped his ears in it, and lost in fantasy, of some possible relationship, giving up a single blink upon realizing it will never happen, a single blink of an eye. Standing in separate rooms, at that perfect point in the afternoon. For a while, they are not a couple, just two people found themselves in the same house, placed in rooms of one apartment, for a moment not knowing each other, for a moment with no thoughts but their own. And for a moment, there is nothing about either of them that needs to belong to another. For a moment they are on their own.

of terror—just—the terror of silence
and the single blink of an eye

30

Of casual invitations—accepted. When you left me with that card. To meet you at the table, where we always found each other. And I showed up, and you weren't there. Except you were—you were behind me, watching. Watching all the time. And when we sat down, it was a dance. We chose our chairs, placed your legs in relation to mine. I picked the chair where I could see you the best—urging you into the one with the better light, to put you on show. You letting yourself down into that chair, knowing you looked amazing. Me placing the card down, setting it nice and neat on our table, in your red ink, and you looking over at it, as though you had never written it, seeing your own invitation there like it was speaking to you, calling you to meet yourself at this very spot on this very day. This so you wouldn't miss me, so we wouldn't fall away.

31

Of your hair ribbons, always calling me. Of this one particular red. That you left on our table, that I took with me when we left, and you went for the trains. The day your ship was leaving, and you gave me a blue one, that first ribbon you gave me and that first time our fingers actually touched, I'll never forget that one, never leave it behind past my memory. It will always be there, being passed one to the other. I will always be receiving it; you will always be giving it away.

32

Of your whispers in my ear, telling me where we'll go.

Just telling me that, and us getting ready to go. And

your hands on me while you whispered it, bracing me, telling me the same
thing as your voice. I'll always go where you lead
me, I'll always be up for one of your trips. It can be to the driveway. It can be
to Spain. Say the words. Say the words only once, I'll never need to be
convinced by you. All it takes is one suggestion, I'm there.

of casual invitations—accepted
there is a hair ribbon
falling away
an ankle bracelet
never heard
and someone
who covers her ears
for sirens

of inconsequential habits that rub off
shared
in disparate contexts

who can't listen
who can't hear darkness
who censors herself
from everything that was less than

33

Who can't stand the sound of sirens. Who thinks they'll ruin her. Who covers
her ears and shakes her head like a child. Who can't wait to hear them pass, so
she can be open again, letting in the sounds. Who, if it ever rained, would stay
inside and not even be good enough with an umbrella. Who uses sunblock to
the max, who covers every surface so that she never gets burned. Who picks
seaweed off her shoulder like it was the plague. Who picks it off her legs. Who
brushes sand away, as an impurity. Who takes this all so seriously as to want
her own contamination to be minimal, as well. Who watches her language
and, when it gets too difficult, puts tape over her mouth so she will not curse.

and who covers her ears and shakes her head like a child
and shuts it out
who literally puts tape over her mouth
so she will not curse

for every sacred circle
losing

34

Seeing snapshots through an eyelash, sitting in the sun forever, seeing you in your swimsuit, seeing just the arc of your leg, right under the knee, seeing the curve of you, going up to your neck. Seeing the drops of water and sweat on you, beading. And a pair of sandals, blue dots and blue straps, just over there. The surfers, some children swimming. There's the one dressed in green. There's that one in yellow. Throwing sand, running back to their mother, in a circle. Feeling the sun on me, seeing my own toe, holding forever in this moment, of swimmers and beaches and lovers and sand.

and someone sitting in the sun forever
feeling it warm her
and seeing snapshots through an eyelash
and holding it forever in a moment

and no one dies in this book
because they are always dying
every time
there is no need to talk about death
for every moment is one, every scene

35

Every little breath, every dialogue, is you passing away. Every time I open my mouth, I'm leaving. Every time you open yours, you do the same. We have a death in each word spoken, for every time we breathe. And I catch you, in your death, and you watch me in mine. You catch me falling, I watch you in time.

every little breath
every dialogue
is a death

and it is about grass
and riding
and the neighbor's lawn

36

Speak to me, speak the sounds of the boardwalk, the children talking, speak to me of footsteps, of the engines up the road. Of the waves, crashing. Of the crowds getting on and off the ferris wheel, of the child asking his mother for a quarter. The bicycle locks, the chains, of horns honking. Of the sound of the man sweeping.

it is about the street noise
and the carousel vendor
the ferris wheel by the ocean
and the trash on the boardwalk

37

Of tickets, lost. Of prizes never claimed.

Of a timesheet, half-filled, thrown away—that was the employee's last day. The day she left on a boat and never came back to claim her check. Of a punch card put on the board and never taken off. Of a boss who stood scratching his head: where did she go? She left. She took her break, took off her company shirt, and never looked back. Bought a ticket for the other side. Never needed to know. Never wanted to. Wrote notes on the back of her hand, all the way over the ocean. Found a new job. This one she could take her dog to. This one she could talk to the customers. This one she could stand in the shade. This one she could have forever, and love. And she might, she might just.

of tickets, lost
of prizes never claimed
of sweeping, after the crowd
of the guy who cleans the bathrooms

38

Of the guy who sweeps the boardwalk. Of what he sees. The pieces left behind and broken. A Doritos wrapper. There's that plastic ribbon, like the ones on used car lots, colored triangles in red, yellow, and blue, cast to the bottom of the railing, side of the boards, hanging down into the sand. He picks it up, wraps it, throws it in the trash. No need for it anymore. It has served its purpose, from whatever party, or sale, that it came from, and that is now over. Wraps the ribbon up and throws it away. There's that empty cup, the one

with red and white swirls, plastic top, straw. There's that teddy bear, a small one from the games area, brown fur with a white accent, someone lost him, didn't need him, threw him down. And now packed with sand, caked in his neck, the joints of his arms, the bottom of his feet scuffed, and as the man who sweeps the boardwalk is going for him, to send him on his way, a boy comes over, and picks up the teddy bear. But not to take him home. This is what he does: he picks up the bear, having run from his parents, and he sweeps the dust off him, brushes the sand from his cracks, wrings him in the breeze and wipes him down with his hands. Then he swirls around in a circle with the bear, the bear's feet flying, the boy skipping around the trash can. And he sees his parents waiting, and he sets the bear down. Puts his back at the base of the can. Props up his feet. Gets the bear's back nice and straight. Pats him on the head. And leaves him. Leaves him sitting by the trash, but not caked with sand. Dignified. And when the man who cleans the boardwalk comes over after the boy, he doesn't throw the bear away, but sweeps around him, and leaves him, for some other child to find.

of the boardwalk sweeper
and what he sees
the pieces
what was left behind and broken
he sweeps it up and puts it in the trashcan
and walks away
no one cares
nothing is solved
only messes are carted away
reset, on the surface
and blessed
with turpentine
bleached and soaped
waste killing the birds

of straws
and things sucked through them
of the thinness of liquor
and fruit sucked and mauled
of the contents of purses
and the lack of socks
of the journey of a grain of sand

and the journey of a piece of hair
through all the characters
of drinkers of milk
and toters of purses
and packers of purses
of the things they carried
of chapsticks
and hair things
and brushes and sandals
of someone who stops walking
who can proceed no further, without figuring it all out
and he never does
and we suggest that he stands there forever
never figuring it out

and of lunchboxes..or breakfast boxes
of packing breakfast for the beach
of making eggs
and runny yolks
of chicken embryos
of over-hard
of shells of hard-boiled eggs
peeling them away from the meat, from the whiteness

and as a rule we don't talk about skin color
so everyone can relate to this book
we make it pure-human

with ideas the cardinal rule is to throw away
and that is what happens here
it is thrown away
we talk about people throwing away tampons
sweeping trash
throwing away matches
and tissues
even dusting
away the skin
and replacing low toilet paper rolls

there is an empty doritos wrapper
which occupies an entire chapter, an entire section
of thought

and a drop of water
hanging from a sign in front of a restaurant
helping sell the goods

and a drop of water
on a shrimp
being eaten at breakfast
there is a drop of water a crab is trying to get off his claw
before he moves on

39

Children making a play in the sunset. On the side of a building. Their shadows, projected by the sun. And grown long, from the angle, orange light crowning them. People stopping to watch. Adults, from the boardwalk, stopping in couples and by themselves, looking at the play. Hand signals, puppets, a little scene. A butterfly. Landing. And then the other children copy. A flock of butterflies. All falling into the bottom of the stage. Then a walker, two fingers walking. And everyone follows. A race of little hand-men, following the first. Then fireworks: one child makes a slow-motion burst with his hand, the shadow projecting on the wall, and then twenty children make the same shadow, the wall filling with explosions. And then the light, so orange, is losing as the sun. Sun passes. Light fades. The show lingers, then shadows have less contrast, and the children disperse, rejoining their parents or wandering off in groups, back to their neighborhoods, tonight to rejoin, to make a similar show. Light puppets on the wall.

that thing Jane told me about the children making a play in the sunset
projected on a building
making shadows for everyone to see

and someone diving off a diving board, walking off the deep end
going to the edge and then going all the way over

When I see you on the face of everyone I see, then I know it's you I love.
(that idea)

..

iTunes File Edit View Controls Store Advanced Window Help

iTunes

Cuando eramos niños
Bosques de mi Mente - Ruido Blanco - 1:41

1:20

Q Search Playlist

Name	Time	Artist	Album	Genre	Rating	Plays
1 ✓ Una vuelta por minuto	2:50	Bosques de mi Mente	Inocencia			57
2 ✓ Pero ella no le contestó	4:05	Bosques de mi Mente	Inocencia			3
3 ✓ En alguna parte	3:21	Bosques de mi Mente	Inocencia			
4 ✓ Golpes tus manos una contra otra	2:22	Bosques de mi Mente	Inocencia			
5 ✓ Botellas vacías, botellas llenas	2:55	Bosques de mi Mente	Inocencia			8
6 ✓ Estoy solo, respondí el eco	3:52	Bosques de mi Mente	Inocencia			2
7 ✓ Y, tendido en la hierba, lloré	2:08	Bosques de mi Mente	Inocencia			1
8 ✓ Solo los niños saben lo que buscan	2:11	Bosques de mi Mente	Inocencia			
9 ✓ Andaría despacio hacia una fuente	2:08	Bosques de mi Mente	Inocencia			1
10 ✓ Lo más importante es invisible	4:26	Bosques de mi Mente	Inocencia			
11 ✓ Los ojos están ciegos	1:06	Bosques de mi Mente	Inocencia			1
12 ✓ Mirad al cielo, preguntáos	5:18	Bosques de mi Mente	Inocencia			
13 ✓ Trenes de juguete (Conclusión)	7:35	Bosques de mi Mente	Trenes de Juguete			
14 ✓ Familia	4:53	Bosques de mi Mente	Trenes de Juguete			
15 ✓ Trenes de juguete (Interludio)	1:02	Bosques de mi Mente	Trenes de Juguete			
16 ✓ Hermana	4:35	Bosques de mi Mente	Trenes de Juguete			1
17 ✓ Y... de repente... me curaste	5:10	Bosques de mi Mente	Trenes de Juguete			1
18 ✓ La calle solitaria	2:07	Bosques de mi Mente	Ruido Blanco	Blues		2
19 ✓ Todo se precipita a tu alrededor deprisa	2:59	Bosques de mi Mente	Ruido Blanco	Blues		5
20 ✓ Cuando eramos niños	3:02	Bosques de mi Mente	Ruido Blanco	Blues		
21 ✓ Soledad	5:17	Bosques de mi Mente	Ruido Blanco	Blues		1
22 ✓ La última vez que estuvimos todos juntos	8:03	Bosques de mi Mente	Ruido Blanco	Blues		
23 ✓ El amanecer reflejado en tus ojos, Parte 2	2:58	Bosques de mi Mente	LO-Fi	Lo-Fi		
24 ✓ El amanecer reflejado en tus ojos, Parte 1	6:40	Bosques de mi Mente	LO-Fi	Lo-Fi		
25 ✓ Un niño que ya no existe jugando con el viejo piano	3:58	Bosques de mi Mente	LO-Fi	Lo-Fi		
26 ✓ Los trónicos esfuerzos de una bicicleta oxidada por avanzar	6:30	Bosques de mi Mente	LO-Fi	Lo-Fi		1

26 songs, 1.6 hours, 138.4 MB

Handwritten notes on sticky note:
I think it was a breeze
and wasn't excessive to tell
In Chabones, a school with cannons, not slings