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No 15

H E A R T B R E A K E R



REACTION

KOURTNEY ROY / KAROLINA JABLONSKA / RUBY DHAL / NINA VAL / FATIMA ELMUSBAHI / NICOLE WITTENBERG / CHACHA SANDS / ADEOLU OSIBODU / RYAN DZELZKALNS / KSUSHA ITWAZCOOL / ANTJE LANG / SONYA KORSHENBOYM / LUCAS WAKAMATSU / ARR*Z CON MANGO / JIHUAN WANG / JENNA-MARIE WARNECKE / HARRIS LAHTI / NICOLE DUENNEBIER / OSCAR MCGRATH / DANIEL RAMIREZ / CHIRON DUONG / ZOE KEARL / MONIQUE FITZPATRICK / M.K. FOSTER

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H E A R T B R E A K E R

Kourtney Roy — Selected work from: The Tourist / **Ruby Dhal** — Foreword / **Karolina Jablonska** — No Man is Big Enough for My Arms / **Nina Val** — Tricia's Story: In the Shower With Nina Val / **Fatima Elmusbahi** — What it Feels Like to Let Go / His Departing Reflection / **Nicole Wittenberg** — Selected works from Love and Kisses + The Female Gaze / **Adeolu Osibodu** — Losing Amos / **Ryan Dzelzkalns** — Appropriate Violence / **Ksusha Itwazcool** — Love / Happy Valentines Day / **Antje Lang** — Basildon Drive / **Sonya Korshenboym** — 365 Days Challenge / **Lucas Wakamatsu** — Cobra/ Duo Shapes / **Arr*z Con Mango** — Hello? / **Jihuan Wang** — Window / **Jenna-Marie Warnecke** — Dance Slow / **Harris Lahti** — So Much Love to Give / **Nicole Duennebier** — Bust in Magenta / Sleeping While Eating / **Oscar McGrath** — Yank My Chain / Nude and Rouge / **Daniel Ramirez** — Rack & Ruin / **Chiron Duong** — In the Mood for Love / Love in the War / **Zoe Kearn** — Waves and Waves and Waves / Bosendorfer **Monique Fitzpatrick** — Uneven / **Ruby Dhal** — Heartbreak Changed my Life for the Better, and This is What I Learned / **M.K. Foster** — An Excerpt from Butcher's Tale XIV: Waffle House / **Savvy Sandy** — Exclusive Content /

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My heartbreak taught me several lessons but perhaps the biggest one was this; **I deserved more.**

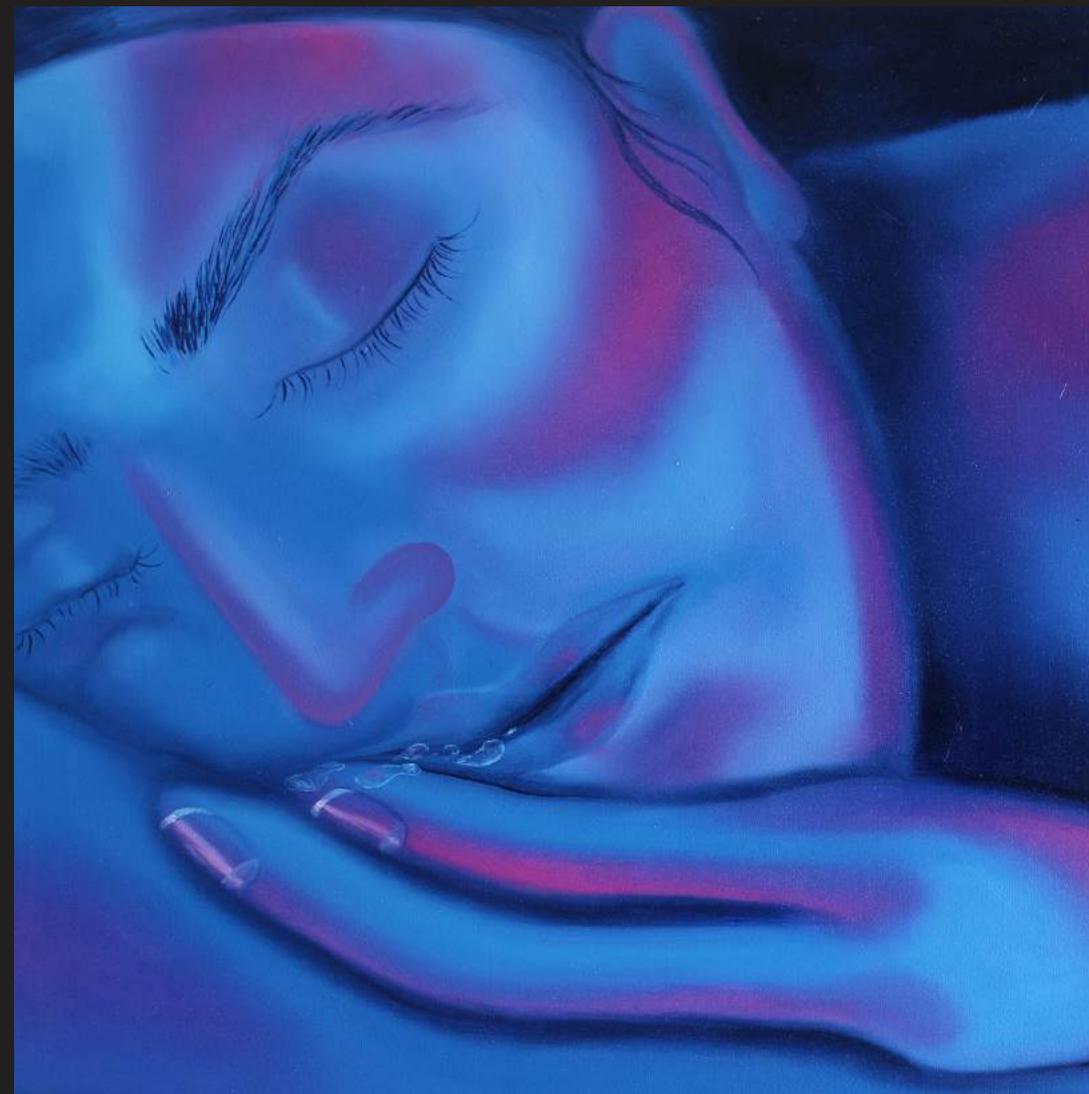
And that's the problem. When we're in the depths of a love that isn't meant for us, we refuse to accept that we deserve more. That we have a right to an explanation for the hurting. That it's not just about their wants and desires but ours too. That we don't owe them their pride at the cost of our self-respect. That promises are meant to be kept and not broken.

But we don't see this when we're in love with the wrong person. With the person who doesn't respect us or our love. With the person who gives more excuses and carries out less actions that live up to the promises they made us. And it's only after we break through the shackles of toxic love that we're able to see the light – the one that shines through every muggy idea we had about the relationship that we found ourselves in.

Because only then do we realize that it wasn't them that thought so little of us to break us in more than one way – it was us, because we are the ones who let them.

—Ruby Dhal





KAROLINA JABLONSKA





These images are a very small part of my ongoing photo series 'In The Shower With Nina Val'. I started it with one sitting with Mr. Ireland a year before the pandemic and I picked it up again when the pandemic started as a way to connect with the human spirit during a time when we were all being kept apart. I wanted to show human beings in a raw and natural way, and I love working with water as an element.

Humans of course are a wide spectrum of emotion and experiences that make us who we are. Of course broken hearts along the way can be expected.

But as with life and its cycles, even broken hearts mend again. Due to our own healing work, inner strength, searching and perseverance, but additionally at times with the help of others.

This was why I was drawn to photograph Tricia. She inspires me with her work empowering other women. We met at a Woman's Awards event where I was the event photographer and where the organisation she's involved with were awarded and acknowledged for their work

and contributions.

Yes there are heartbreakers and broken hearts. But it has to be said that there are also heart menders, and I consider Tricia a heart mender.

She explains, "I got into helping the women's group because I wanted to give back. I was once in need of help during my pregnancy and early motherhood. It was such a tough time in my life.

I then considered doing this for work because I wanted to empower other women, just as I was empowered.

To help other women understand that whatever they are dealing with at any moment in their life, is just a journey and it's not the end of the world. They have power within them to do and be anything they want. Helping others is a rewarding feeling. I'm grateful to have the opportunity to be a part of an organisation that creates positive impacts in women's life's.

This shoot with Nina Val was very therapeutic for me. She made me feel comfortable to be my authentic self. I enjoyed it and I am glad I experienced it."



*It took me a while
to find the courage
to write this.
All I seemed to have
in me when facing
the thought that you
are gone forever,
was blank pages
—a lot of them.*

But I came to a point where the pain of clinging on to the memories, was taking over the very present that was actually occurring around me.

I was neglecting those beautiful aspects of life that once kindled such mighty soul and will for life.

I used to urge myself to stay awake through the night, so that I may witness upon the red luminescent flames which brushed across the magnificent skies.

Canvases to my famished soul and hungry heart. Missing you took all that away from me.

I was broken, fragile and so very weak. Keeping my eyes awake to the commitment my soul made oath to upon the horizon, had become near too damn impossible. Promises I made to myself all began to fade away...

From myself.

All that was left was but a hollow shell which lacked the necessity that is self-love.

Elapsed turbulent fragmented ripples, that sought to realign across echoes and whispers

of the universe.

So, you see.

Once you come to a realisation of all the things you have to let go of to keep that person

-was it all worth it?

Did that person's value equate to all these beautiful promises?

The answer is of course no.

The truth of the matter is, They would have remained at hand and dormant beside your soul, to witness your beautiful growth in waiting.

Similar to that in essence of trees who patiently await in silence for the growth and grand reveal, behind those enveloped blossom capsules that they guard so honourably. Or how each singular grain of sand awaits in silent slumber patiently, to be carried and salvaged against the mundane station and repetition at mouth of sea.

Have you forgotten how the sunlit skies still wait for you, their promise remains now more than ever?

Silent hymns seeking you out, every day, every hour and every second.

The earth still spins in perfect order and constitution, so that you may conquer the mighty untraveled roads that beckon and conspire you home. They never gave up on you. But alas the person you 'miss' ultimately did. So how do I let go you ask? —Remember why you are here. Your purpose. Seek remission of the oaths you have taken: Live, —in embrace and pursuit to nurture your soul. For that is home. Nomadic, wild and free-with no bounds or limitations to what you reap. Seek, —the whole universe and laugh by its side

wholeheartedly, for you are a child of she. You bore onto mother earth with origins that replicate her. You was never a stranger. And grow, —Feed your roots and hunger for knowledge of the unknown, for the very roar that echos within you shall crumble even the strongest of foundations that seek you out. Your ancestors made it so. You are destiny in momentum. The very tale of the beginning unto thy end. So you must forgive yourself, forsake the pages you have lived in turn of a new one. Appeal in harmony with the hands of the divine and whispers of the universe,

*realign your bearings
and navigate accordingly.
You are free now,
A master of yourself*

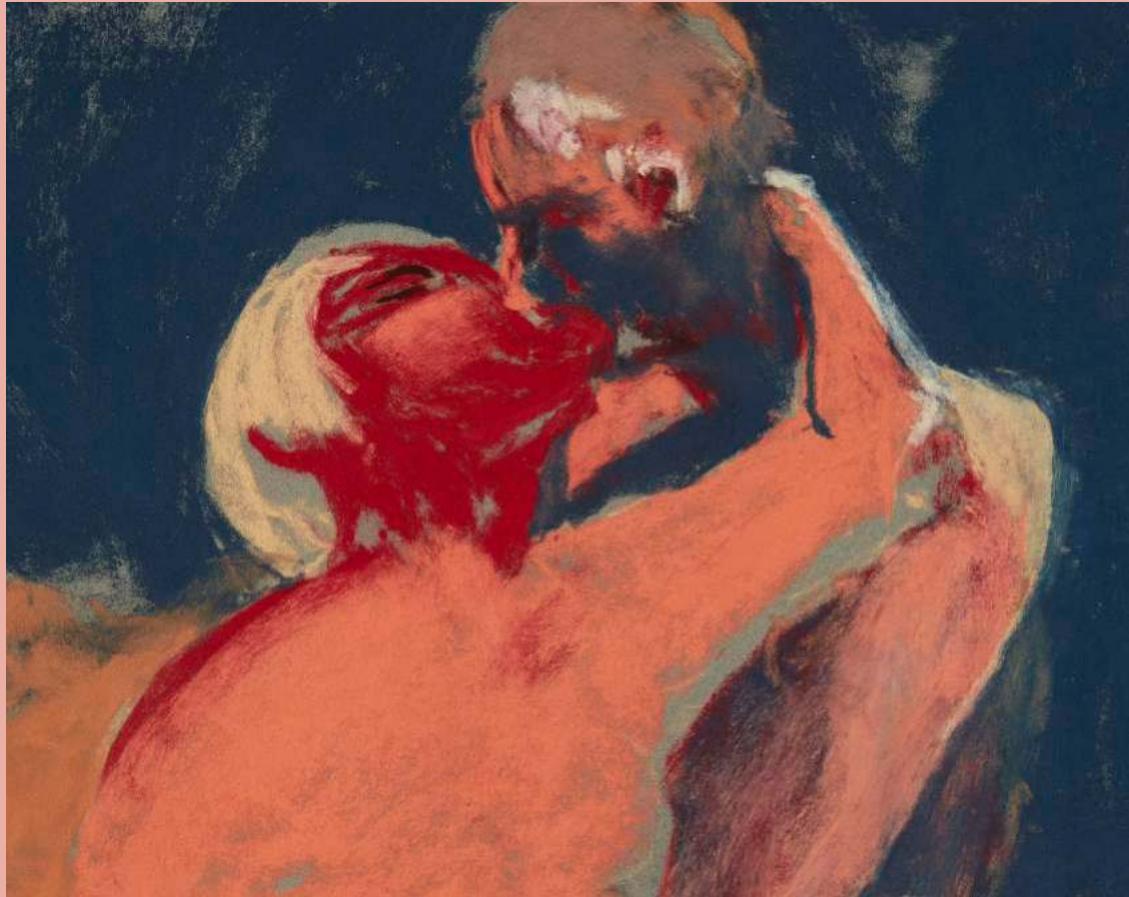
—Always.

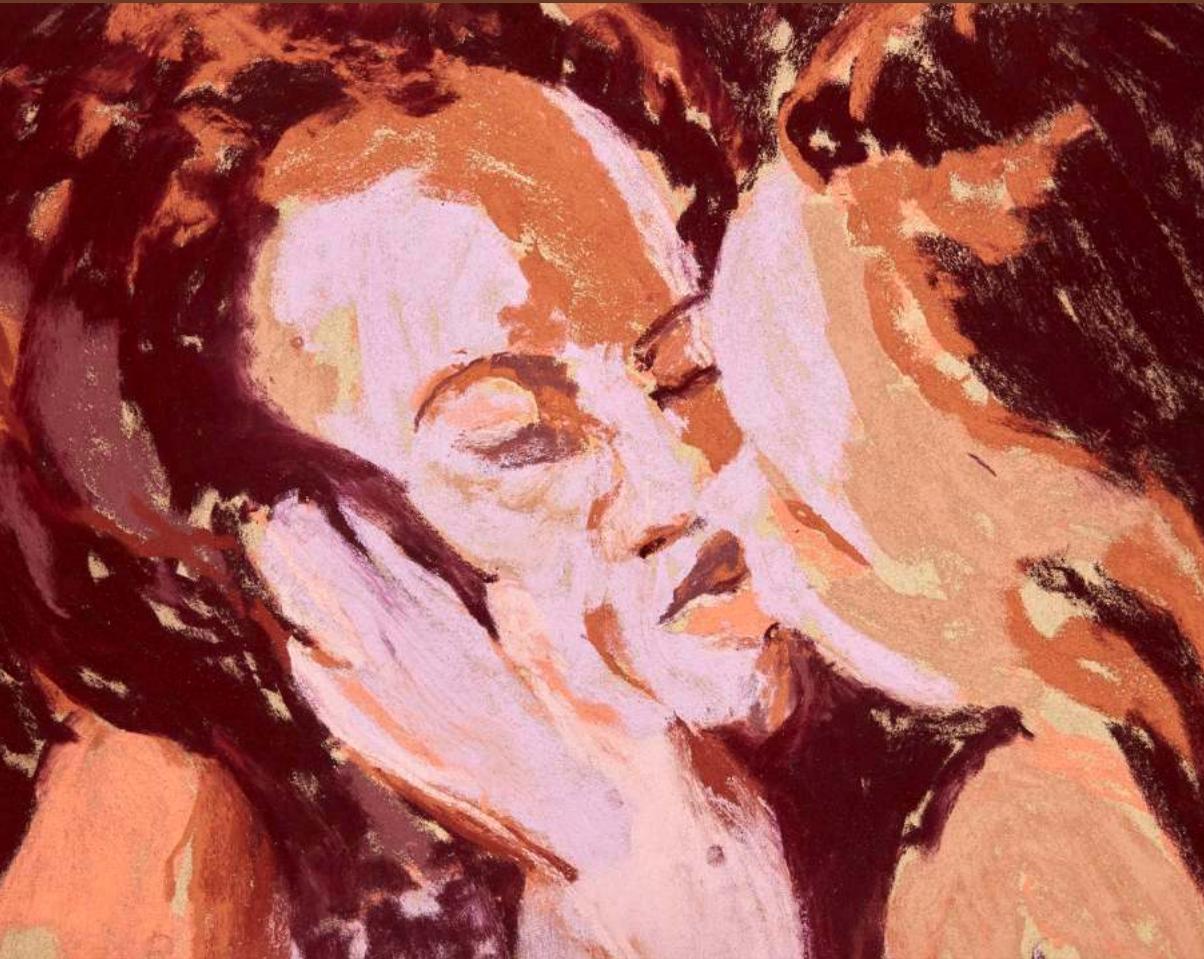
*Fatima
Elmusbahi*

What it Feels Like to Let Go



*Nicole
Wittenberg*







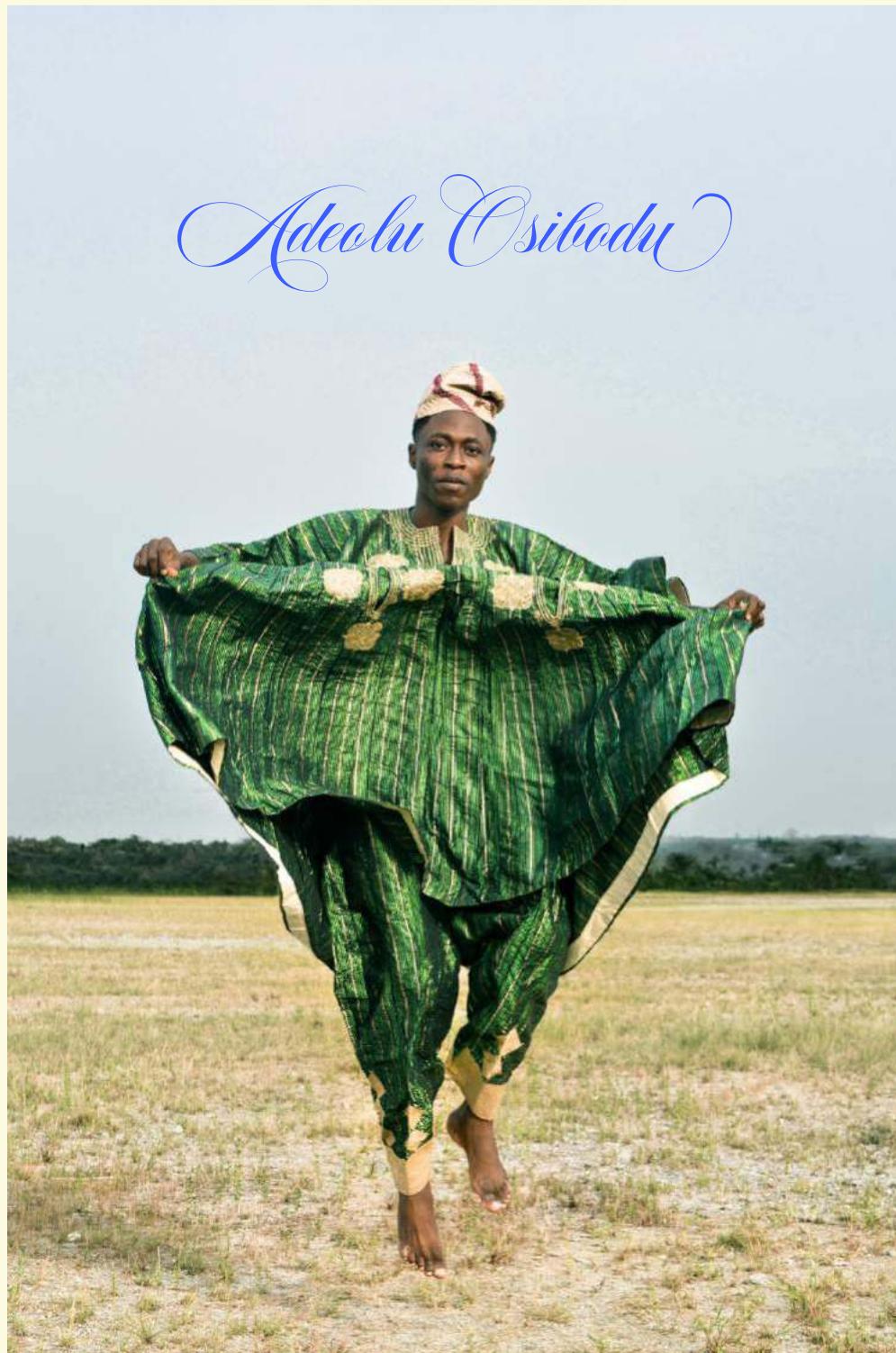
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Laford
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y alma

Resistencia

y alma

Resistencia



Adeolu Osibodu



Losing Amos

My Grandfather, Pa Amos Olufemi Adelaja died late 2014. It was until about then I realized how casual my idea of him was. I constantly asked myself why I couldn't see beyond his heavy grins. Why I couldn't define him as more than the man who was never not glad. Was that all there was or did I just completely miss the point of having people before me? Was there a chance we could have been a lot closer and then maybe I'll have inherited his hunting rifle? These were the unsettling thoughts that meddled with my conscience.

Not the phase of losing someone but that of losing them with not all your heart. Here are self-portraits in which I am contained by Aso-Oke attires he owned at certain dated times in his life. Maybe this is inspired by an urge to find consolation or my intimate affection for a time before or me just being "Adeolu". Regardless, I'm forever glad I happen to find myself in this state. My Grandfather is from Ilisan-Remo, Ijebu. Our hometown, where he and Mama also raised my mum and her siblings.



His Departing Reflection

How strange is the tale of life when reminiscenced in reverse?

That two paths may indeed intercept in formidable pursuit.

Yet by the dawn of a new day,

you and I are forgotten; lost in remnants of time and past momentum.

For once bound by shared feathers of the same wings,

only now to be dominated by the parallels and winds of opposite poles.

We shall never meet again, yet know of each other's existence.

Broken fragments to linger on within one another;

past residues that cannot be shaken off.

A sacred hymn which echoes within the very earth and beyond,

amongst dimensional space

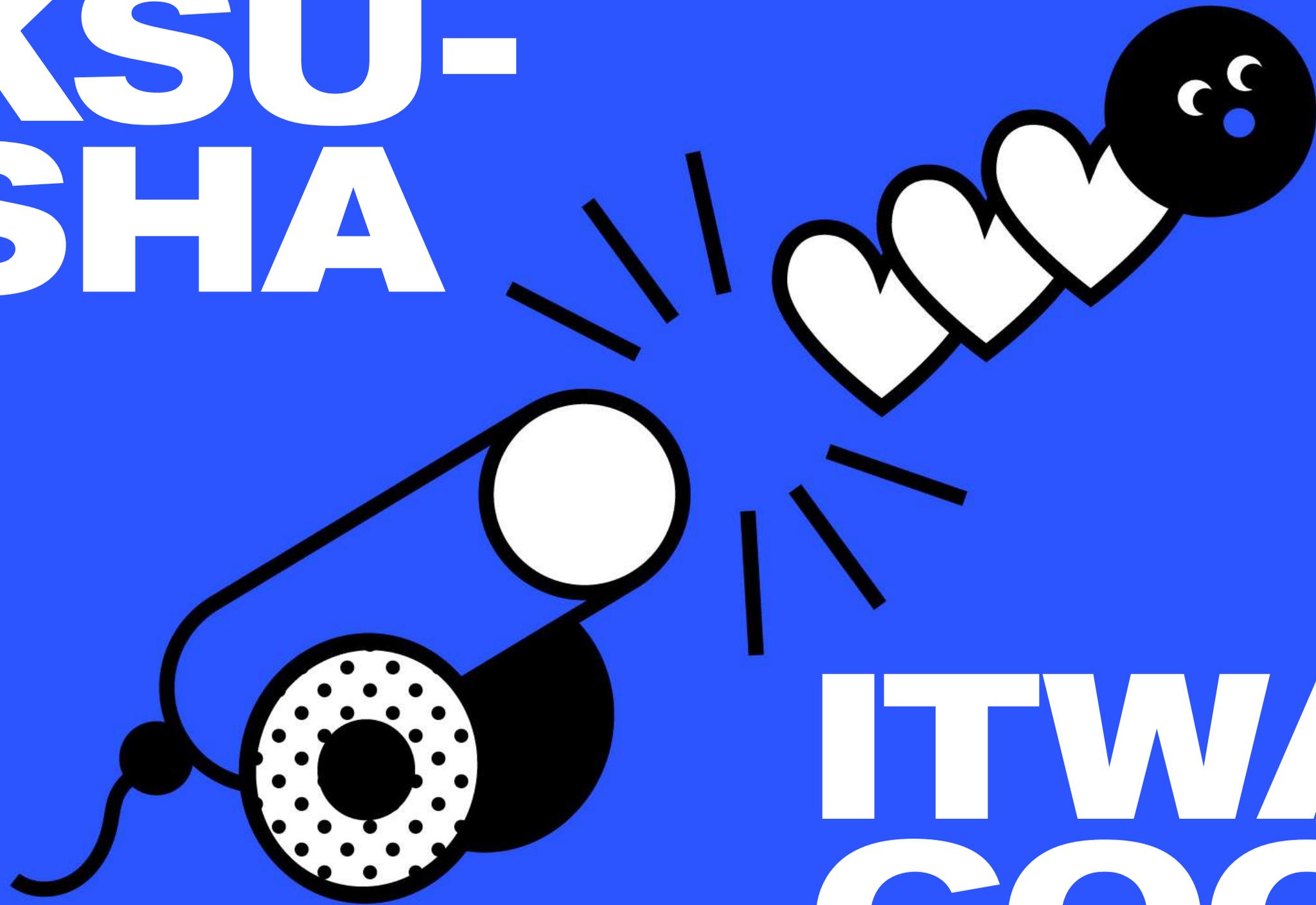
- like lost lullabies.

Somewhere out there...

We are strangers never to look back.

Fatima Elmusbahl

KSU-SHA



ITWAZ COOL

BASILDON DRIVE

Antje Lang

She turns the tap on and twists the shades open.

“Cup of tea?”

“A coffee please?”

“Okay.”

The kettle whistles. She pours – one into a mug with a Pantone green swatch on it, another that’s just green. She sits on the couch next to me.

“What should we watch?”

She shrugs. I turn on a rerun of Parks and Recreation. The comfort of an old favourite.

I stare at the TV. Then the sour apple wall behind it. So much green I feel sick sometimes. I wonder if it’ll be green for the rest of my life. I wonder what I’m doing here. I look at her profile and remember. Years of shared experience are enough.

I bought her a ring once, engraved with the coordinates of a waterfall in Iceland. I had a feeling that, in absence of a catastrophe, she would propose to me there in a few years’ time, once we were of a reasonable age to be engaged without feeling weird about it.

The ring was for our second anniversary. I haven’t seen her wear it in a while. I want to ask if she had lost it or if she just didn’t want to wear it anymore. I didn’t know which one would make me feel worse. I had a matching one. I’d left it at home this time. I wonder if she’s noticed.

We sit side-by-side on the couch. I notice every movement. Did she edge away on purpose? Do I love her still? I must. If she just put her hand on my leg I would love her. I think about reaching out to her, squeezing her thigh, putting my head on her shoulder, telling her I miss her. I turn back to the sour apple wall.

There was another time, too. I don’t remember clearly, but I see her walking out of the church, the winter sun highlighting the back of her hair, her right hand clutched around the casket handle, one sixth of the weight of my father’s body held in her hand.

There comes a point in time, after sitting on a couch for too long, that your upper back begins to collapse and your sit bones cause your legs to fall asleep.

“Do you want to go for a walk?” I ask.

“Sure.”

“Where should we go?”

“A National Trust?”

I open the app. I look longingly at the places along the coast, in the hills, far away from mind. We’ve been to almost all of the ones nearby. I wish I knew how to drive in this country. I wish I knew how to ask for what I want. I wish I even knew what that was.

“Basildon House? It has a fancy looking garden.”

“How far is it?”

I open Google Maps and type it in. “Thirty-seven minutes.”

In the car, I turn on the speaker and connect my Bluetooth. I put on one of our favourite artists. It was mine first, and then it was hers, and I wonder who we would be without the other.

Three years ago, we made bread in her damp Scottish flat. I put on ‘Telephone’ by Lady Gaga and we danced while the bread rose. We were silly and I loved us for that. We forgot to put salt in the dough, and it tasted like something 15th century monks would’ve eaten. I found out six days later that, five months earlier, she had fucked her housemate twice in that flat. She cried so hard when I found out that I felt compelled to tell her it was okay because I didn’t know what else you say. Five months after I found out about the fuck, I found out that my dad was going to die, but only after he lost his mind.

We harmonize in the car to a song about a long distance relationship that didn’t work out, even though the words to me also sound like they’re about death. I roll the window down so the wind parts my fringe stupidly in the middle and watch the countryside pass by. I’d fallen in love with the country before I’d fallen in love with the person, but I wondered now if they were conditional, if I loved one because I loved the other.

The house is ornate, built by a first baronet and restored by a Lord and Lady in the ‘70s. Frankly, I think the design is gauche but I like that nothing has changed inside in 40 years. I like to see a precise moment captured. The stairs creek as we wind our way down them. I turn back to see her on the landing above, leaning slightly on the balustrade. I take a photo.

I have other photos on my phone, spanning the years. The app plays various backing tracks for a slideshow of all the photos that feature her. One of her on the platform, hazy behind the rain-paned glass as I pulled out of the station. Cramming our faces with two burgers from Borough Market, ecstatically in awe of the strange circumstances that brought us together. Snowshoed on top of a mountain. We only had three photos at the start. Then letters – months and months of letters. They’re all in a box now, in my childhood room. I wonder what I’ll do with them when if we leave. I can’t leave because I can’t get rid of the words in that box. They’re too precious to give up. Who else would ever write me words like that?

We walk back to the car.

“We should stop at the store on the way back,” She says. “What do you want for dinner?”

I look out the window as we roll out of the car park. There’s a red kite flying over the road ahead. I wonder what we look like down here.



SONYA KORSHENBOYM



Lucas Wakamatsu

ARR*Z

CON

MANGO

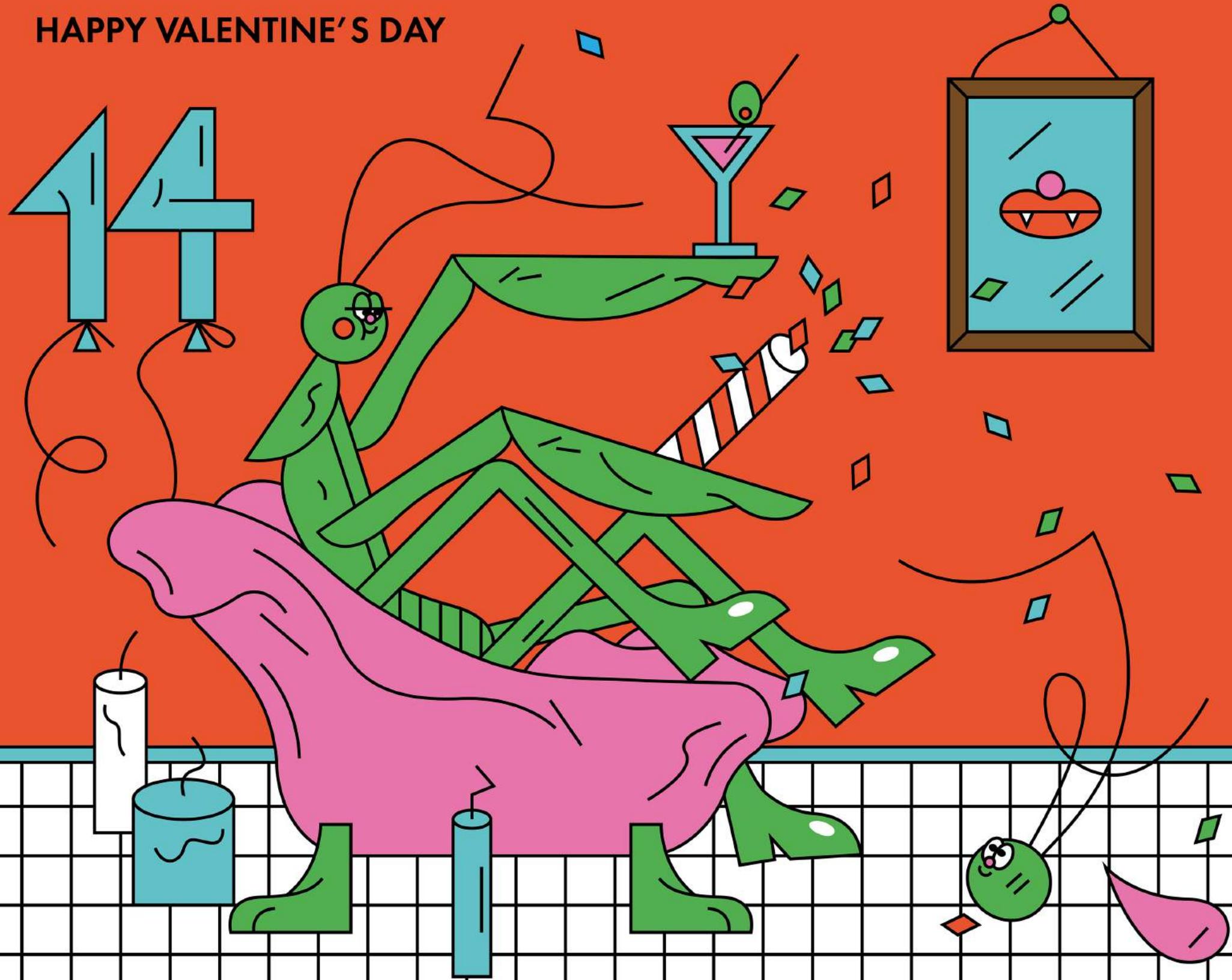


TAKOTSUBO

TAKOTSUBO:
[tākətsōbō] noun

A sudden and acute form of heart failure.
Broken heart syndrome.

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY





Jihuan
Wang

Dance



Jenna-Marie
Warnecke

Frank buries his nose into Becky's curls, made wild by the damp August air, and clasps her right hand and presses his chest to hers, swaying to the echo of music drifting from the living room record player out through the window and onto the porch. He feels her chest rise and fall in complement to his own, their hills and valleys filling each other's valleys and hills, and for a moment he isn't sure whose heart he feels beating the skin between them. The canyon between her breasts carries a small river of sweat, trickling down its walls into a pool in her bra. Her neck, craned up in offering to his lips, is still young tonight, not yet waddled and withered by time and summer suns to come. Her brow is smooth, not wrinkled by years

of worry and surprise and fear and sadness for things lost. Frank pulls her close, into arms taut and strong from lake swimming, the left one not yet taken by next year's war. He hunches down to put his teeth against Becky's freckled shoulder, gnawing with gentle lust, wishing he could swallow her spots like stars into a throat that has never yelled at her, her pinched brow or bitten lower lip. The moon above hangs low and yellow and large, like a button God has sewn into the sky just for them, the universe a backdrop for a love rooted as deeply as the sycamore trees that frame the house. The moon will wax and wane, but it will always be that same moon they see tonight. Becky's waist, small and cinched, gasps at the tickling

squeeze of Frank's fingers, ten that can hold the whole of her waist, one day to become a bitter five. Five so long, so thick that they alone could squeeze the breath from a throat, Becky's lover's throat, and crush the cartilage inside; five that will clutch the telephone as Frank begs her forgiveness from behind state-mandated Plexiglas. Tonight, as he fills his ten fingers with her twenty-five inches, she clutches his shoulder with her left hand and leans her cheek against his neck and sways those little hips. John Lee Hooker is like whiskey to the ears and whiskey is like love to the throat and love is like the sun for a skin that can't be seen.

That left hand of hers will bear his ring, and those hips will expand to bear the weight of his child, tucked into her ballooned womb until an angry push down the stairs of this very house will crush the life inside, and Becky will look up at Frank with sickened eyes that will match the disgust in his own, though tonight they look up at him from under the glittered veil of booze and blues and a heat that never seems to die. Her lips caress his neck with small, unhurried touches so fine they can't even be called kisses, only marks of territory, until she reaches his salty Southern lips. She knows

that mouth so well, that mouth that will kiss her, smile at her, ravage her, bite her, spit upon her, snarl at her as it asks, "Do you love him?" Her mouth will lie and say "No." Her mouth will tell him truthfully, "It's yours, I promise," the same tenderness lacing her lips as she now murmurs "oh, darlin'" against his cheek. That cheek so tan from a summer under warm sun and warmer kisses, it's destined to be made red, the flush of jealousy blooming from chin to brow when he finds her soft pink nipple in a mouth that isn't his. Wet from a tongue that isn't his. A nipple that should have been saved for Frank's mouth,

for Frank's child's mouth. That nipple now spikes to attention in the prickle of a rare breeze, and Becky feels the future approaching, quivering in the sycamores. Their leaves will turn dry and fall apart under her feet, crushed by her human weight, and their barren branches will grow tall with snow, straight and still in the bite of winter. But for now, tonight, they are full and the leaves are alive, languid in the August dusk, their green flesh swaying with the music, the fingers of their tiny branches holding the guarantee of another season yet to come.

Slow

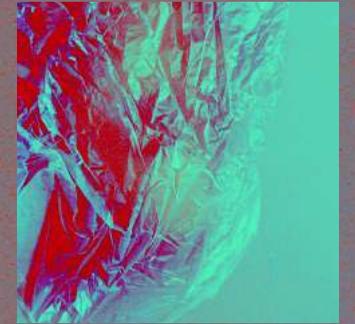
So Much Love to Give

HARRIS LAHTI

Malcolm slides over his tattered shopping bag full of porno and says under no circumstances do you give it back. He makes me promise. He seems serious this time, even holds out a quivering pinky around which he wants me to wrap my own. "Matter fact," he says as we pinky promise, "throw that out as soon as I leave the room." Then he leaves the room, humming softly to himself, a thousand pounds lighter in the soul. And as his humming fades to nothing, I consider our promise. I consider keeping up my end and throwing away his tattered shopping bag full of porno. I consider the moaning women and the grunting men and the smut and the shame those DVDs most certainly

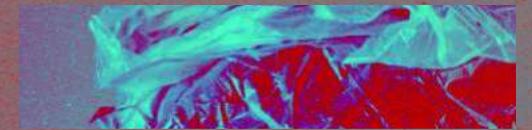
contain. But even so, all considered, I cannot throw them out. I've been this way since I can remember. It started with the garbage in the street. At a young age, I remember the garbage started looking lonely. That I used to see the solitary bottles and cans and the flapping torn newspapers and think how sad they all must be. I remember how, one night, my mother raided my closets and threw out all the lonely garbage I'd collected. And how I cried. I cried quite a lot as a child, I recall. A sensitive soul. I remember holding funerals for worms I found drowned on the sidewalk, how the tears ran down my face. How I had so much love to give that it constantly broke my heart. That it was a steady problem until I discovered pets.

"At a young age,
I remember the garbage
started looking lonely."



I remember the relief of getting pets of my own, my cats and dogs and hamsters. I remember the way in which I loved them. And how, for a while, that that felt good. How my love multiplied and grew with every day as I cared for those fragile little beings. And how I cried for days every time one would die. How I loved them so much that, after a while, I couldn't even bring myself to throw their motionless bodies out. I remember having to buy extra freezers to store them as they began to rot. I remember the high electric bills. And I remember sending my love into them, into the freezers, knowing that, even though they were dead, this they could feel. That they could feel my love in the afterlife, and I could feel theirs in the real world. So that, when the state took them away, I almost died with grief. When the state took my pets away, alive and dead, I remember how they hissed and whimpered and growled in protest. How they couldn't bear to leave. How when they were finally gone, I was so alone that I thought I might die from the loneliness. How I knew my lonely apartment would never feel the same. And how I had no more reason to live. I remember Googling ways in which to kill myself. How I was just about ready to end it all, when I miraculously saw the ad in a newspaper draped across the floor at my feet. How highlighted in my long-lost cat's piddle, the advertisement said this: Help Wanted. And so, that's how I ended up here at Lexington home, a mental

health aid, with my Malcolms and my King-Kings and my Phils and my Melissas, my new reasons to live. So, you see, it's not that I don't want to throw away Malcom's tattered shopping bag full of porno as promised. It's not that I ever dreamed to watch it. It's just that I cannot physically throw it out. That, for whatever reason, the thought makes me unbearably sad, to send these DVDs away to idle, unused and without a purpose in this cold dark world.

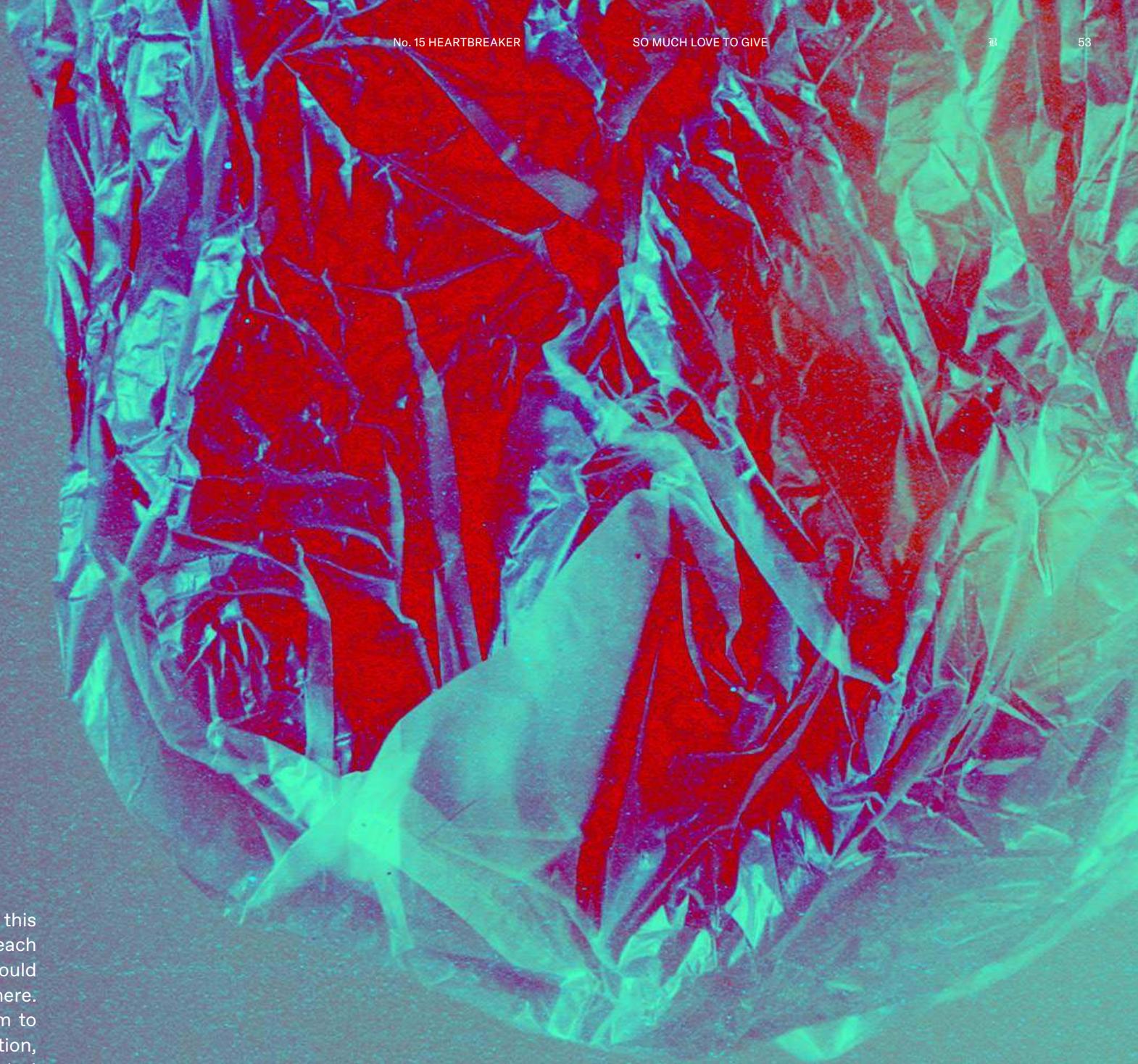


"And I remember sending
my love into them,
into the freezers,
knowing that, even though
they were dead,
this they could feel."

"It is a matter of love. I think, I would've never let something I love out of my sight, no matter how ragged or gross."

So, when, a few days later, Malcolm comes asking me about it, well, I have to lie. I have to lie and say that, yes, I threw it all away. I have to say: "It's gone, it's not coming back," as if I really meant it. But I've always been a bad liar, and at first, he doesn't seem to believe me. In fact, Malcolm seems downright mad. Carrying on for some time, he tells me that I didn't have the right. That I should've known that he'd change his mind like before, like every other time. He needs his porno, he

tells me. He loves it. It's all he has in this world. And I know I could easily reach there into my bag and return it. I could easily hand it over right then and there. But in the moment, he doesn't seem to deserve it. It is a matter of appreciation, I think. It is a matter of love. I think, I would've never let something I love out of my sight, no matter how ragged or gross. But I suppose some people just have more to give. It's more of a solution than a problem, really.





NICOLE DUENNEBIER



OSCAR
MAGAZINE



*Daniel
Ramirez*

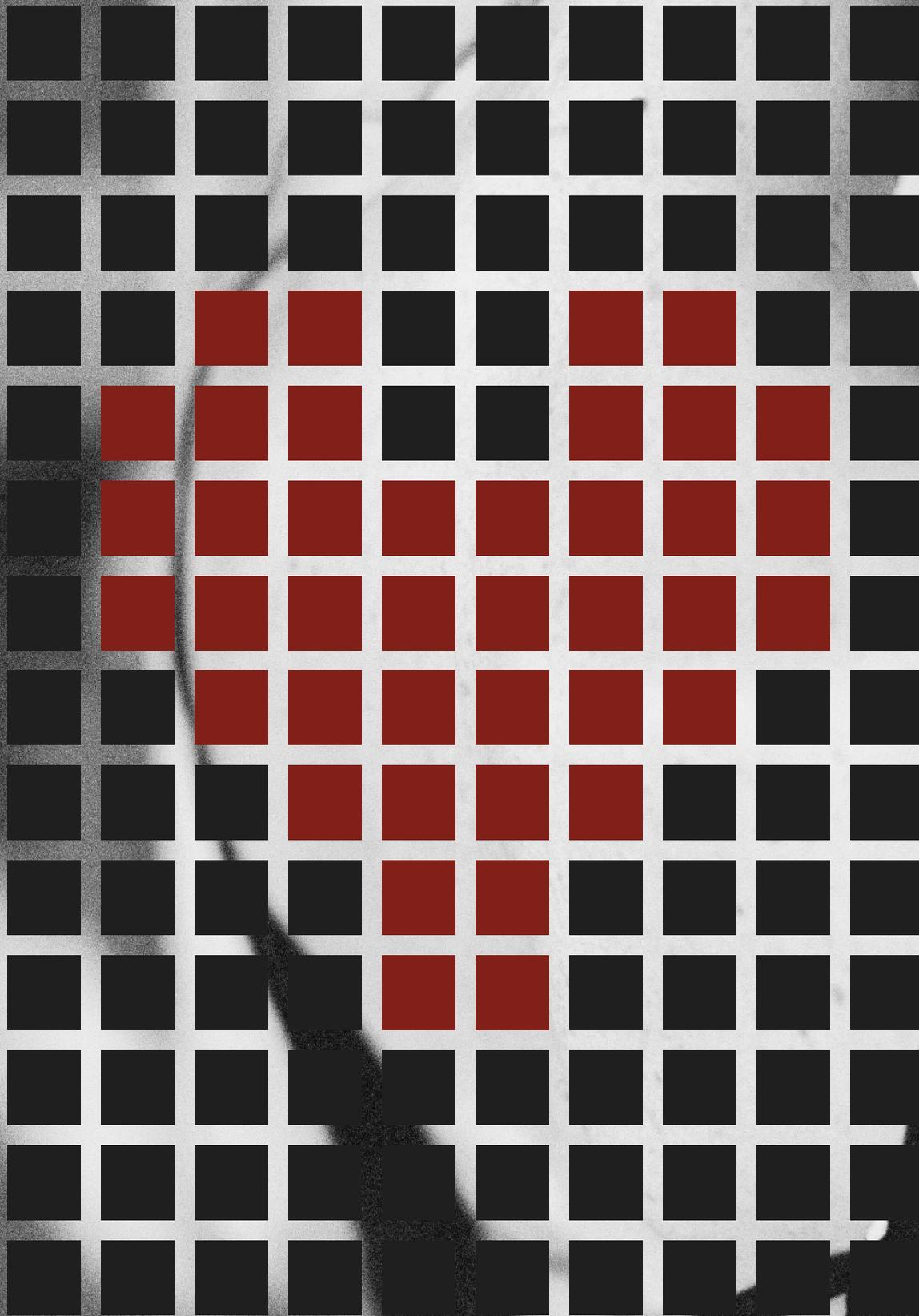


Shiron

Suomy







Waves And Waves And Waves

The opulence of adoring you,
of your hand on the nape of my neck.

One thousand nights this way.

Cruel summer coming
we shoot pool, the white ball
in the pocket again and again.

Why do you always tell me these things
when I'm already gone?

I can't wait to see the freckles
on your shoulders
once June has its way with you.

—Zoe Kearn

Bösendorfer

Your long pale hands,
there's a piano somewhere
begging for them.

Our meeting is made no less grand
by circumstance.

Smoking cigarettes inside,
you breathe so slow.

The first time we kissed
the room was pitch-black
and you were sky high.

Languages,
friends,
fruits,
all dying on the tree.



As we walked to the Rodeway Inn
fireworks crashed above,
senselessly beautiful.

This time my hands shook
you stepped forward
said quietly,
your heart is beating so fast.

Dark hair on the pillowcase,
collarbones like cups meant to hold
nothing but clean water.

Black tar, nicotine, a springtime
night long but not long enough
in industrial Pennsylvania.

All of this does not end, will not,
it's a long song, played softly
in the perfect key.

—Zoe Kearn

Monique Fitzpatrick

*How is it that
You played me?
Treated me like I didn't matter.
But it's you who
Seems to have the happily
Ever after...*

–Uneven

From Ruby Dhal: Heartbreak Changed My Life for the Better, and This is What I Learned.

I have lived a whole lifetime in the last few years. That's how grand the lessons were, so imagining anything less than a lifetime feels too little.

And yes, I've aged beyond my wildest expectations. The grey strands slide down my face and tangle with the dark brown as though they own my scalp just as much. As though they aren't the product of the stress, anxiety and emotions that have swamped my life in the last few years. And the innumerable lessons that I take forward with me are a reflection of just the same—of how much I've grown.

That's not to say that I'm not grateful for the lessons, but often I look in the mirror and find a young lady staring back at me; one who knows so much more about hurting and healing than the 21-year-old-me did—the me who'd never envisioned that the journey ahead would be a road less traveled, where I'd have to dip and dive under the twines of

heartache and pain to find my way back out again. A journey which would teach me how to shapeshift like a werewolf in the midst of chaos; a chaos that would bring me back to myself.

Out of the many truths that arose from my heartbreak, one thing is for sure—I've learnt more about what love is from getting my heart broken than I have from being in love itself.

And when I think about this deeply—it truly saddens me. It's difficult to accept that I had to break my heart in two in order to understand what love was, because someone else could not love me enough to show me in any other way. Someone else wasn't strong enough to accept the amount of love that I had within me to give. They weren't gentle enough to hold my tender heart in their palm. They weren't kind enough to treat me with respect

and care. Someone else's inability to love me meant that I had to learn about love the hard way—and initially, that's what hurt me the most. But then another truth that breaking my heart taught me was about love in the truest sense. It took someone breaking me in several pieces for me to learn that love was never about what they could or should do for me. Love was never about them to begin with—love was always about me.

Love was about getting to know myself more deeply so I could understand just what it was that would make me happy.

Love was about pouring the care into my heart that I always wished others poured into me.

Love was about being as gentle with myself as I was with those around me. Love was about learning how to become the person that I deserve to spend the rest of my life with.

Love was about detangling 'self-worth' from someone else's ability to love me, and it was about accepting that even if they could never love me—I was still deserving of the love that I gave myself.

Love was about coming to terms with the truth sometimes the person you love most in the world can hurt you in ways you never imagined.

Sometimes the person you love can shatter your trust and hurt you.

Sometimes the person you love is capable of breaking promises that they said they would always keep.

Sometimes the person you love can bend you backwards and unfold your soul, making it hard for you to find your way back again.

Sometimes the person you love can disrupt the peace of your mind and pick apart your heart in such a way that you forget where all the parts go.

Love was about learning that the person you think you love is often not the person you need.

And heartbreak taught me that love wasn't any of the things that I originally thought it was.

It took breaking my heart into a million pieces for me to finally grasp that what I experienced wasn't love. It could never be love.

Because, you see, love doesn't treat you poorly and make you feel misunderstood. Love doesn't make your throat skip a beat. Love doesn't say 'no' when you demand to be treated right. Love doesn't gaslight you. Love doesn't lower your self-esteem. Love doesn't pull you away from your truest self. Love doesn't make you question whether you deserve to be loved to begin with.

So, that couldn't be love, it just couldn't. And when I came to this realization, I not only learned to shift away from that toxic idea of love I was so attached to—I also learned to accept new ways of loving myself. But I can't say that it was easy. Heartbreak never is.

What I did expect from the whole experience was some sort of realization of my true self, but what I received was so, so much more.

And for that, I'm truly grateful. I'm grateful that I went through something so life-changing that the

'me' before this whole journey was worlds apart from the 'me' that resulted. I'm grateful that through my journey of heartbreak I was able to have some of the most enlightening experiences of my entire life. I'm grateful for the friends I made along the way, for the people I met, for the adventures I embarked on. I'm grateful that I uncovered myself in more than one way and I'm grateful that I embraced a new definition of love as I continued to experience life. And that's what I have to say to you too.

If you're currently going through heartbreak or are in the fringes of a relationship broken beyond repair—read the following carefully:

1. This experience is going to teach you something invaluable. Look for the lesson and let the growth embrace you.
2. Your concept of 'love' will change over time and that will allow you to understand why this relationship didn't work.
3. You will come through from this so much stronger than you were before.
4. Right now, it might seem like everything is over—but believe me, your real journey has just begun.
5. Time is the biggest healer. Even though it moves slower when the pain is raw, it still has enough magic in it to tend to your wounds.

Perhaps my heartbreak was supposed to show me that the person I thought I loved wasn't meant for me. Perhaps it was supposed to show me that I had so much potential, but I was setting the bar too low. Perhaps it was supposed to show me that I had yet to witness true love. Perhaps it was supposed to show me that my dreams were too big to be thrown away this soon.

Perhaps my heartbreak was sup-

posed to be nothing other than a stepping-stone, a push in the right direction, a guide—at most.

But regardless of what this heartbreak was intended to do—what it ended up doing was so, so much more significant.

Because at the end of it, it took breaking my heart into a million pieces for me to find myself again, and that—in itself—is the biggest blessing that I could have received.

An excerpt from

Butcher's Tale XIV:

Now, unlike death, it's a different story all-together for **LOVE** who ain't got no reflection at all. Just ripple after ripple of endless faces kissing and smiling and crying, whenever she shoots for straight eyeliner (not snaggles!) for once. Just because she loves that Popeye doesn't mean she wants to look like him. One round, blackberry eye sidled up alongside a curved line: that's gotta' be why I can't get a date, think **LOVE** when she walks home from another night of crossword puzzles at the Waffle House, **LOVE's** favorite. Hash browns smothered

Waffle House

and covered, cheese eggs scrambled. Comfort food after a day of comforting and caring, holding hands and holding hair back while people puke their guts to pieces. The easy stuff, most days, but sometimes not — Making noodle casseroles when a pet runs away or cancer comes back. She's not sure why, but she can't help helping, doing dirty work or dishes when someone has died, doing her best, given how blind she is: her whole body glowing off so much soft ivory light she can hardly see a damn thing.

— **M.K. Foster**



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KEARL

To: Dearest Reader



Chacha Sands
Editor-in-Chief



My first girlfriend was 15 years older than me.



Britt Mohr
Director of Visual Content

I broke up with my first live-in boyfriend on Valentine's Day.

Kailla Coomes
Director of Written Content



When I was 8, I left a 'check yes or no if you like me' note in someone's desk and found it crumpled in my desk the next day.

Zach Westerman
Director of Graphic Design

I have only been in love twice since highschool. Both times I dropped the ball and waited too long to say anything.

Savvy Sandy
Exclusive Content



The only hearts I have been breaking lately are the heart-shaped Dove chocolates.



Fatima Elmusbahi
Editorials



I always channel heartbreak into a masterpiece. A poem, a career move, or by taking off and travelling the world. I did all three. Says a lot about how many I've had leading up to now.

Seth Dearmas
3D Content

I was stood up for the first time in middle school.

Avautumn Reeves

Graphic Design Intern

I'm usually the one doing the heartbreaking, and it's heartbreaking.

Wolfgang Schildmeyer

Graphic Design Intern

My Kitchenaid has lasted longer than any of my relationships.



Love, Team Beacon

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