

TELL ME

YOU'VE GOT GOOD NEWS

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**TYLER
GOBBLE**

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for Todd McKinney

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WAY BACK INTO LOVE

This just in: there are 2,918,177 ways to love someone. I counted.

The TV said to grab it by the face, shake it and tame it like the first man that hugged a dog and said you're gonna be my best friend, just settle down,

But yikes, I'm overwhelmed by its funny shapes, like when a carwash turns out to be a giant hole in the ground.

Or how I haven't been good at balloons and birthday cake since I grew out of Spiderman underwear. And the way Peter Parker loves Mary Jane, I guess,

is another. I can't believe in movies, like the ones you waste the name brand tissues over, because

life ain't no damn Hugh Grant/Drew Barrymore flick: the one thing I say with confidence. Still, a temporary plant waterer falling in love with an olddude pop star reminds me

of falling out a second story window, caught in the arms of my favorite poet. Even then it's hard to believe in taking

anyone the distance, friend or mentor, lover or pal, because I'm no good at math, and I wanna know the odds that ours isn't one of the seven involving vans

and some kind of abortion, or a constant hum of wewouldallbebetteroffifwejustfakedourbeliefinjesus.

My weird noggin trembles for a love that generates new organs, makes history in the shape of poems. Beside me, the radio shouts, WHAT IS LOVE? and I'm like, NOT WHAT BUT WHERE.

I'M So STOKED

you are alive that last night
I printed 72 pictures of you
from Facebook, cut out
Natalie, Spencer, Layne, me.
The curtains closed, I took off
my shirt, glued every last one
to my bare skin. With glue
there is a coldness you get
used to. I called you but
you couldn't talk. Something
about the lifespan of a fish.
Something about breathing.
Something about focus.
You hung up before I could say
goodbye, before I could say
HEY I HAVE 72 PICTURES
OF YOU GLUED TO MY BODY.

GAME ON

I'm so stoked you are alive,
like waking up and the baby is squished
in the cushions, but yes it is breathing.

The guy on TV is trying to pick up two
chicks at once, one with a smile
like yours last night shimmering off

the cans on the counter, the other
has hair with that golden sheen
of your dog, prancing around the house

until you said WOW when our arms rubbed,
and he trotted up the stairs, put his head
in my crotch, a thank you for the nice evening.

ANTHROPIC BLOWJOB

The place between your thighs
is a luminal space, like a tide
leaving trash and sand dollars behind.

For sex's sake, I should extend
this image, but I have other things
to extend, like our dinner bill,

because when we get together,
babe we are all appetite, beneath
our mountains of mashed potatoes.

Our relationship is Sunday morning,
potluck after potluck, church to church,
happy with our eyes closed, bellies full.

Out of the bathroom, you ask if I washed
my hands, tell me about a tribe somewhere
that doesn't clean their skin, *ever*,

and they all die before age four.
Do you want that, for me, for yourself?
I'm 22 years old, I thought you knew.

I'd also like to extend our evening,
an after-dinner stroll around Hump City,
at your house, where I'd like to sleep in

your bed, but I'll settle for the couch again,
kicking the National Geographics off the side
table, dreaming about ending starvation.

WRITING HOME

In 2004, Dean Koontz novels were the only words
I read, that and messages

black men sent me on Myspace thinking I was my older brother,
thinking I had finger-fucked them

at Club Odyssey, Winstom-Salem's hottest gay bar.

Sometimes, I think it's best not explaining to my grandfather
being a poet doesn't make me gay,

like how being homosexual doesn't make my brother insightful,
jumbling his emotions

in peace sign profile pictures and sideways hats.

Maybe my poems are pick-up lines, I tell him,
use this bit on your next date

I promise it's okay to pretend the world is a big talkin' book,
you are a catchy title

spewing funny words half of us can't understand.

ONE VIOLENCE

I discovered last night the damn
pretty things have existed inside
the vibration of your saw glob
together like a dead bird a winged
spout of vomit mutilated worms
somehow beautiful somehow with a glory
that rivals Jesus I realized stuck
between these walls like a colon
the shit and shit-tube walls life bites
like soggy demons and this cloud coming
from inside you is a haven I'm safe thanks
I wish you could talk instead of gargle
your glowing guts but my hurricane is naked too
what I call emotions took out a cool lady
and HEY SHE WAS ONLY OFFERING A TASTE
my body breathes the paint and I'm splattering
the tiny things stuffed inside my pockets
onto these glasses your hands like one
of those paintings where Pollock flicks and drips
and drops the colors cigarette butts etcetera
yep that's life sometimes everyone striving
for happiness faking smiles chuckling memory
chunks of roadkill pets and we-are-all-perishing
-but-together feelings a fleetin' comfort I know
(phew! been waiting this whole poem to get my lips
untangled and admit that) in the morning
you can hug and you try even but hey hey hey
don't forget at night you can do more than hum
and wet the world with this inner slush.

POEM

THE GOAL IS TO PLAY
OH BABY YES IT IS YES IT IS
Often, affection defines itself as resistance
kind of like a wage
but not quite kind of like flipping
a coin but you've got way way more control baby
I can find the right
word the exact word to tell you
how I feel about your sweet dimples, hankering to see
which fingertip best
fits as I tell you the same joke for the 114th time and still you laugh
Socialization
some would call this but I'd be apt
to remind them that I have yet to meet a sound person
Everyone flashes
their chest on the Internet yells
fuck you through tinted windows at 40 miles per hour
It is okay to be
goofy with the lights on
GO FOR IT TRY IT
have an HELLYEAH outburst windmill
arms, your voice shrieking
like you've just won the lottery
BECAUSE MAYBE YOU HAVE—the self does not exist in
sealable baggies
The ruin of imagination
is a steamroller flattening
your existence is your ship docked full of boring people
I'M BEGGING MORE WRECK MORE WRECK

Us Two Plus That Baby In Your Belly Makes Three

This embryo on a string, she says,
bounces in and out and back again.

Some of us have uncles with shaky pick-ups
and some of these uncles set fire to chickens,

but all of my uncles have children
and swear, *A diaper is worth a thousand beers.*

They holler above the hubbub of the motor, the dirt
road, whistling about their new tattoos.

Some of us have tattoo artists who do their best
work drunk, and perhaps, parenting is a similar art.

It's like nature is daring me: JUMP
AND LET'S SEE YOU EVEN TRY A BACKFLIP.

I was never courageous and you know this, baby.

Today, our child is the size of a lima bean
and tomorrow it is skinning the cat.

This child without a name, has a pronoun,
already it's got you flubbing your words

when *I'm hurtin'* sounds like *I'm birthin'*
among the racket of burning chickens.

Uncles smashing Milwaukee's Best cans on the porch
can't deliver this baby. Are you listenin' to me?

Oh darling, yo-yos are a riot, but they can't solve everything.

NEW YEAR'S EVE

Your hat was a broken piñata.
My intentions, full of candy.
And before tonight, I would've shouted

PERFECT

across this neighborhood lined with
drunk drivers, sitting at the wheel,

contemplating
the right thing.

I've been scribbling
my Best of 2010 lists for months
your name in numerous fonts
and colors, under headings like

The Wahoos in my Heart
Dance Partners of the Year

No, my slapped cheeks are not hurt,
but confused and scared,
like the tiny dog that wandered
into our party avoiding the trapezing

feet, mimicking the pup's zig-zagging
after its tail the natural way.
Oh do I know things about the terrible urine
of canines startled by drunk kids.
Now, I'm motorboating memories
like I'm running out of self-esteem.

I left without telling anyone, without
one final song, because
maybe I am a slug,
maybe I am hungry,
maybe I am stupid,
maybe I am dead.

The pang of your hand on my cheek
thudded like

YOU'VE NEVER BEEN RIGHT,
erasing the tug of your squint,
like good bike tires on black top
before I wrecked, just like I asked for.

I'M SO STOKED YOU ARE ALIVE

a girl once told me.
Her name was Shirley
No, that was her last name.
She was 17. I was 14.
We were the same height
and when we went swimming,
we wore the same style trunks.
Her name was Devin.
No, that was her sister's name.
I remember French-kissing
Devin, the sister, next to a big
cow pasture where a bull
was scraping its horns
on the split rail fence.
This girl, the one who changed
my life, her name was Alexis,
but she went by Alex.
We stood on her porch
and she looked at me.
We were the same height.
I said, "These two weeks
have been awesome, man."
She kissed me closing her eyes,
opening them as if tasting
her sister, like drinking a glass
of milk before realizing it came
from your mother's breast.
She ran inside. I stopped by the arcade.
I never heard from her again:
The email account she gave me
was invalid: skater1984@yahoo.com.

UNLIMITED TEXTING

Every moment with Jill is LOL
funny. She is always falling. OMG
I say and I get a bandaid BRB.
When I return, she is ROTFL
and I get mad and bout say TTYL
but she is my BFF

I'm her BFF
too. I know that. People say *you are dykes! LOL!*
and I say to those bitches *TTYL*
and *OMG*.
Jill doesn't care, she is too busy making me ROTFL
and making me pee my panties, so I have to BRB.

Speaking of BRB
I had a BFF
in middle school who was ROTFL
funny not just that ditzy LOL
like she would say *OMG*
shit, but one day she said *TTYL*

But she never called or texted, so it wasn't *TTYL*
or even *BRB*
it was like *OMG*
I just lost my freakin' BFF
and all the fat girls went and LOL-ed
at me, and Nancy, this evil girl, wrote *ROTFL*

you are a loser on my Myspace. *ROTFL!*
I cried and cried, but my mom said *TTYL*
and my brother went all LOL
on my ass so I told the school *BRB*
and played hooky for a week, grieving my BFF
It was totally *OMG!*

When I went back, the other kids were all *OMG*
we didn't mean to ROTFL
about you and your BFF
but I didn't listen. No *TTYL*
No *BRB*
on our friendships. I didn't LOL.

But *OMG*, I met Jill so it is all LOL

now because we are always ROTFL and she always says BRB
and comes back because she is my BFF and means it when she says TTYL.

DINNER IS THE NEW BREAKFAST

My cheeseburger doesn't have to be topped
with a fried egg, but that'd be nice.

I'd hate to compare our date to hunger, but
the napkin is often greasier on the other side.

I love the color you've painted the kitchen.
Yes, I'm sure I can handle rejection with

the right explanation. A thousand words
is worth an email, a sexy pic attached, a subject

line of SORRY I BROKE YOUR <3 BUT HERE'S
ME IN MY UNDIES. What I know about flirting

couldn't fill your stomach, but what I know about
Patrick Swayze fills your heart with questions.

I'm starting to get to the root of the problem,
like how my best jokes burp up in the shower.

Other people know it's their stutter or their affection
for dogs. I'm admitting here that I'm lost in tessellation,

begging you to step closer, give me some hints, unable
to tell apart the bang of the timer and the boom of *goodnight*.

HEY HEY MY BODY IS MOVING

Today is my day, oh boy goodie,
gonna get my haircut, pay for it even,
not just my buzzing hand across
my scalp, gonna let that foxy lady
massage and water my head down good,
gettin' a little tipsy just thinking about it.
We all need to get stoked sometimes,
like we strap on beer goggles
and stagger around with our best buds.
Only yesterday, I threw my hands up
ripped off my shirt, told that burning
wind to get off my back, lighten up.
Now, I'm ready to get together y'all,
let people build up my self-esteem
the way I never could, with that fistful of truth:
nice haircut, nice dance moves, nice bod.
THANKS THANKS THANKS
It's called gratitude, when you
let people store their drugs
in the pocket of your favorite shirt,
so please go right ahead because
I'm so fucking thankful
not to be dead, that you're not dead.
It's easy to fall in a bad old groove
like those old timey folks
thinking a camera flash
is enough to set their soul elsewhere.
I've got news for them:
things are gonna be just fine.

WHEN I SAY WEIRDO, YOU SAY HEY

Sometimes, it feels like you got the gold medal at the stalker Olympics, she says and I'm sorry, it's my other half.

My split personality will send one side to Heaven and the other to Hell but in between, both of me will end up in jail.

There you go again, throwing yourself under the Judeo Christian bus, but I swear I'm not, religion too tight

for my style of life, like rolling in paint, smashing into a stretched out canvas, both hoping to stick, hoping the stain comes out.

Sometimes, I'd rather just erasure my birth certificate, leave behind HEALTH at the top, the Go of my last name, the wrinkled border.

Am I declaring that my birth was the problem, another way of blaming my parents? No. I think this is an exercise in social hygiene,

like the girl who wears the hat of buttons, DON'T APOLOGIZE FOR YOUR ART, a one-inch circle of comfort pointed my way.

See, some of us are figuring it out, like Mike who told me to oscillate wisely, his crooning floating in bursts through the aisles of the mega

store. To the paint section, a new brand called JUST GO FOR IT, so I did, buying two quarts, one for each arm, to show her I believe in balanced pairs.

HERE'S ANOTHER POSSIBILITY:

clouds are living things, super intelligent,
and we are tricycles in comparison.
I'm imagining a cloud couple on a date
gazing down on us, watching us
twist into our various shapes,
saying, *Oh, that one is homeless,*
wait, now an Internet sensation,
singing Cher songs into the public
library computer. Yes, we evolve
and persist, I guess you could say.
My finger is some kind of figure,
balled inside your palm, my voice
poofs out like a youngster cloud.
I lean to you and say, *it's a newborn*
chick, and you nod, impressed with
these clouds, how they hold themselves
together, move around, have routines.
What does it take for life? A system?
They got it, how sometimes they band
together, attack us all at once, ferocious.
I'm sure they can take over if they wanted.
But you too can take over if you wanted,
your hair chilled white, eyes and teeth
with your own bursting. The best things
in life become a thinking being when
fermented between us. I see one growing,
the glow spiraling out of our disgust with
grownups shriveled up, jitters gone,
by a nurturing consciousness. I mutter
the words "floater" and "sinker,"
the pitiful words I have to describe
these clouds, like they're something
to just drift off. Now, I'm staring at one
radiating around you, thinking,
Even if his brain cells aren't remotely
alive, he is gorgeous.

THIS IS SO ROMANTIC

Ride bikes with me!
Our helmets protect our heads
soft from the fossil fuel burgers:
we go fast through the suburbs
on the edge of our town,
dotted with daisies and driveway
cookouts already in April.
Our apartment building
behind us stands like the asylum
I visited with my girlfriend (before you)
when her Mom swallowed
12 pills that started with an E.
The ride there the last time
I felt comfortable in a car
before I knew you
and your speeding ways,
before I saw a shirt with
stick figures holding hands,
hearts around their heads,
lop-sided circles empty
besides two eye dots,
and the caption *This Is So Romantic*.
You ride closer as the sun inches below
the houses with their gold doorknockers
and gold Hummers parked out front.
A young boy hits a wiffleball
ahead of us. We swerve,
and you say, *Yeah it is*,
without opening your mouth.

TELL ME YOU'VE GOT GOOD NEWS

The stroke, a few years, a decade ago,
the doctor said, and my death could never
come fast enough because the tears inside
my children's faces are wishing wells,
hoping for me to sober up, but
this week's religion lesson claims
speaking in tongues is how
some of us pray, noises
blurred, like the doctor's jittery hands
in the out-of-control innards of a man
who rode his bicycle down the hill too fast.
OH HOW GREAT THAT MUST BE
Child-me rode a bike before playing doctor,
but finally with my two cousins and
my aunt, learning in that dusty trailer:
some pain only lasts a minute.
Today, I can't tell you what all these parts
begin to mean or when it will end, but
white lab coats like fat-headed ghosts point at
charts of what is human, and snazzy Jesus-
loving suits shout at decibels roaring
like bottle rockets my drunk uncle shot
at the cousins on trikes, pulling the match
across his calloused left palm, the only thing
it's good for. I can feel the flash of
electricity, a dancing jolt between
family reunion memories and
records of the Great Survival when
my heart stopped beating those 14 minutes
that one July. On the hospital screen,
my head is a modern city, tiny people
running around, not yet figuring out
you can't straighten your crooked lines
once the thing's been set into motion.

BE NICE

for K

Every time I see you, Patrick Swayze dies again.
Rewind the clock, let's listen to the clank of your hips

dancing the dirtiness of the mid-teen years.
Back then, that whole place was like Skatetown, U.S.A.:

board shorts and backward hats, the scars on my knees
to prove it. Before school, we'd roll out of bed and

there would be a red dawn, and oh we knew, we were
safe, decisions made for us in some other room.

At 13, things were sucky, scoffing about our ugly friends
and the way they butted into pictures at the dances.

In 7th grade, you failed a social studies test, bawling
outside Math class, and I laughed. That was as bad as life

could get, red pen scribbled F and some dude with six armpit hairs
mocking you in the hall. You think you are the loser of some game show

consolation prize, your dead baby's ghost holding a straight jacket.
Now, I'm sure the house on the other side of the road reminds me

of my childhood home, the shitty pool in the backyard and
shirtless kid in the window with a knife. *Looks like a nice neighborhood,*

I say. This is the point where I break, where I forget where I was going
with this, like how you forgot the way, taking the wrong turn,

ending up at an abortion clinic on a county road. We never got past
catching up, fake laughing about the hours you spent staring

at the ceiling in your underwear. *If you gave me three wishes, none
of them would be to die, so that's good,* you said, looking down the alley.

NUCLEAR FAMILY RHYMES

Fucking people was fun like changing hats
when I was bent-double with growing pains
but then I met you, learning your head
holds images like dying horses and church slumber parties.
Before I left, your father shook my shoulder
and the way my innards rattled worried him a bit.
The way he googled me jumbled my nerves too:
I know you need proof to lock up your daughter,
but man, the Internet's got some crazy shit,
how it sags and grows thin, suddenly it's taut,
but promise, I am 100% goodnesschangedpromise.
I'm watching T.V., recovering from the hiccup
of interrupting your family discussion about
the value of praying the old-fashioned way
with my theory that the stars are projectors.
All the cotton shirts turned yellow with
confusion, heads tilted like almost-blown-over barns.
Wonder what they'd say if you told them,
I quit my job at the cheese puff factory to write poems
about them and their wonky religion?
Don't tell them, baby, I've been drinkin' drinkin'
with the money they sent in the card ending
a cursive God Bless You. Don't tell them I'm a fool
for everyone or that my family tree is a bunch of friends
with meth moms and slutty sisters. Oh darling, don't
tell them that squiggle between us
when we sleep is my favorite kind of faith.

NUMBERS

I'm so stoked
you are alive,
all 7018938511
of you in the world.
The number grows like 4 people
every few seconds.
I am a needy person
in need of other bodies
to comfort my body.
I read somewhere
that 1 in 113 people
died last year.
Math problem: If I know 1130
people, like 10 of my friends died,
but I don't remember.
I must be a bad friend.
I must be too busy with my own needs
to see my 10 friends die last year.
I'm sorry, maybe.
Or maybe, I'm happy
because now there are 7018939152
people on Earth
and most of them don't know me,
but I NEED THEM TO LOVE ME
AND NOT DIE THIS YEAR

OTHER PEOPLE'S PROBLEMS

I am down with OPP:
bring me your problems
people, I am here
for you, I am here.
Dead mother? yes
Cheating lover? yes
Public intoxication arrest?
yes yes yes. I am only
me when I am with you.
I think I love you.
You have this power.
Human beings and their
complicated dust cloud
of nagging hope.
I've never been good with
empty space.
Let me help you help me help you.
There is peace somewhere.
If we touch each other
I know we can find it.

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