

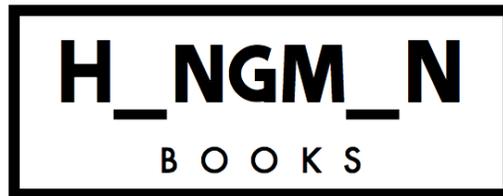
YOU
ARE
THE
MEAT

You Are The Meat

Layne Ransom

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For my wolves

Mercy

You have heard it said that God killed
the dinosaurs with bullets from space.
But you have heard wrong! I killed them
with kindness. There is nothing to be afraid of
in this century or the next
that does not already make you tremble.
Ryan shows me old mattresses
wrecked by love all along
the highway and I mouth what Christ
taught me, "Blame softly,"
when we fail to regret our wrong
and hungriest moment.
All the horses are dying without
knowing they're dying
and I pity their fear of the unknown.
These clothes are unnecessary.
The sun is not embarrassed.
My heart is a sleeping deer
about to be awakened.
I think that's what I mean,
wake up. Don't reason
with a plane crash,
clean up the fucking bodies.

Wolves

That's my problem, I don't ever think!
Good thing you're constantly saving,
pulling me back into our collective HELLYEAH
heart before I hopscotch into traffic
or piss off Joyce Carol Oates again.
It's amazing how good cheap pizza
tastes when you're not alone.
Our talk is all giddy gobbledigook but
leaving Ohio, we had no words
and I was trying not to smile
so big I'd break, scattering
my shrapnel past the combination
Dairy Queen KFC Long John Silver's
into the grease-trap grave of the Midwest.
If I could slap a title on this moment
it'd be EVERYONE I LOVE IS HERE.
In your blue room we cuddle up
to each other's sadness, we fist bump
after writing God's epitaph, we owlshit
outburst because we're weirdos
and that's what we do, we stick together
and when we howl we howl because we want
somebody else to make a goddamn racket
with us at this balls-out, impossible sky.

Sabbatical

The small shoe under my sleeping
back always says we should go
where glowing insects drink tall crags of earth.

How beautiful, it sighs. I am in no shape to travel.
My polygon edges stab out from blankets
fluttering in breezes from a new place.

Somebody somewhere belts their strawberry song.

Slugs Don't Want Your Pity

you are an asshole. that is fine.
you live in my house. that is fine.
you invite slugs over for dinner.
they refuse to leave.
they are assholes.
you offer them drinks.
after the slugs are dead you say
you gave them salt water.
that is fine.
you feed my children the dead slugs.
they are hungry.
they have strong immune systems.
they will grow up to be assholes.
that is fine.
my children are pissed.
you said the slugs were fries.
my children cannot tell the difference
between slugs and fries.
my children are stupid.
I tell them to stop crying
and go to bed because
it is late and no one cares
about their feelings.
you slither over and stand
in my intimate space.
your cheeks are flushed
and your pupils are dilated.

I will not have sex with you.

you are an asshole.

do not feel sorry for slugs.

they don't feel sorry or anything else.

you are still an asshole.

Little Methods

Almost anything I loved later on realized there is a beginning. New doubt. The gap spawned from time. Are you learning? Your first something is holy. Have a sandwich. Keep moving constantly, firing and firing out. An arrow harnessed the right way can hurt like little keys in a fire. A wild field of circles. Amidst the onslaught, you are the meat.

(erasure of Blake Butler's HTMLGiant article "22 Things I Learned From Submitting Writing," posted July 18th, 2011)

Sirens

The music when our cars kiss
comets out at near-45° angles. Or angels,
nearly forty-five called from the dew-covered
edges of our descending world.

The sky is rubies. Or, the sky opens
its arms. Clouds pick at their clothes,
unsure while kites poke their bright selves in,
too young to know what it means
to be gray. Jets drag their trails across Indiana
like wedding lace. When they catch human scent,
you can hear foxes singing to their sisters
Careful, careful. The forest behind my house
in the early nineties. Night swaying above
our playground on the hill.

Achievement

The holographic swimsuit period of my life is over!
My green stems are turning grey and my grey stems
are turning dead. I pray to a black-and-white portrait
of Stevie Nicks at 23, sad-eyed and perfect, because
she is not a saint. All the cows in my hometown
see me driving past at two in the morning, looking
for some text message reading "You are mine" lost years ago.
Where is the Japanese body pillow for my tired heart?
When will Jesus Christ fulfill my sexual desires?
Who will see the bags under my eyes and say,
Congratulations, no one deserves this more than you.
I have the appetite of a bicycle. Blue sedans
make me nervous. Today in the grocery store:
a pang of loneliness upon seeing a frozen package
of stir-fry for two. I am followed by ghosts
with wedding dress bodies waiting to smother me
in my sleep. Though sometimes they hold my head
with an unspeakably bright love.

My Shoes Were Made in India

Tonight I rode here in a machine
that eats dinosaur corpses to live.
Katy Perry belts it out on the Top 40 station
in Hunan Buffet, *come on let your colors burst*.
Baby, we are all fireworks. We were all
invented by the Chinese. The internet is so old
I get paid to sit in front of a webcam
with clothes on. The only person who can
make fun of Sting's solo career in front of me
is me. Today I found a recipe for making tomatoes
into cancer – but science, contrary to popular belief,
is not magic. Yesterday a lot of cars crashed
and none of them were mine. Once I eat a chip
with the perfect amount of guacamole, I will stop
worrying about from lack of what substance I will die.
This poem couldn't exist without Queen Elizabeth I.
This poem was brought to you in part by the Civil War.

Once Virginia

At sunset we part ways, reconvene when air goes down throats like lemonade. Lightning bugs float across dunes. Seagull feathers litter the pier where I lay out, twine my ankles around the posts, waiting. Funny, the name “suit” given to the dripping cloth cut below my navel, where you place your mouth on me like an ear to a conch shell, straining, listening for lapping water. Caramel apples on chapped lips, stars splitting the sky above our gritty backs. Anointed, soaked with brine.

Brainbows

your love operates on my brain
like a hand grenade. you bite the top off
and stick it in, then my eyes explode
out of my skull with blood and multi-colored
magnet letters spelling words like “faith,”
“love,” and “beauty.”
you rearrange them into phrases like
“you evil fatty” and “voila, beef hat!”
and kiss my empty sockets like they’re gonna
taste like somethin’ other than blood.
I can’t see you no more, but I feel you, it’s true
and you ain’t goin’ nowhere, never you said,
so let me tuck my eyeless head
into the nook of your chin, neck and chest
until we rot with age and die, amen.

How Was Your Day?

If I have to watch *13 Going on 30*
starring Jennifer Garner and Mark Ruffalo
one more time to be included
in a social gathering, I seriously might
suggest another movie. Word games
that incorporate fruit-related puns
into their names are more enjoyable
than paying for a loved one's abortion.
If I ruled the world, everything
would turn out just as awful.
Could you please stop blathering
on about how all action is meaningless?
I'm trying to mow the goddamn lawn.
Sometimes I think, *Why am I not
punching myself in the face right now?*
Then I remember: *Oh right,*
I don't even have hands. I tremble
against the dryer as it shakes
with my damp jeans to feel like I have
something in common with something else.
The local news informs me that drinking
almond milk daily protects my heart.
I have killed tiny, sentient things many times
without regret – does this mean it's working?
Bono asks through my CD player,
“How long must we sing this song?”
I press a button, two arrows facing left.

Keeping the Faith

I wanna yell, "IM NOT GOIN ANYWHERE"
but LOOK MA, I ride the cosmos
with NO HANDS
so how could these Martian gears not
go galactic, eating E.T.'s dust all the way
to a diamond-studded future?
I feel the comet tail of broken glass
and lightning bugs that will follow
in my departure already.

Scientists say our dead skin cells
are falling stars and I just wanna go back
to where I came from,
what I mean is: this is a love song
to Nashville, Tennessee,
what I mean is: my brother once said
life without Jesus is a movie
starring Nicholas Cage,
probably *Wicker Man*,
what I mean is: I will remember you
fifty years from now when iPhones
arrange our funerals in Daytona Beach,
when everything that made me interesting
to you is fatter, and grayer, and shakes.

I don't believe my atheism
is in bad taste and I don't believe
we are easily stopped,
but if I had to find the lonely skeleton
of every Savior in the universe
I'd do it, I'd hijack cruise ships
to the Dead Sea and ride bareback
on UFOs to Ursa Major,
excavate, exhume, come down
from Heaven after two thousand years
carrying boney-ass trophies

in Mother Mary arms
to where you are,
knock on the front door 'til
it falls apart and yes, you are
watching TV in your boxers,
lovely and perfect, asking,
“What’s this about?”
I’ll say, “Here’s your proof.”
You’ll say, “Of what, exactly?”
And I’ll say, “That I believe in you.”

What Am I Drinking?

Today kerosene. Toxic sting weirdly soothing. No adolescent stunt, no high school boys in anime shirts spitting fire to impress unimpressed girls. You know the kind. No, I eat matches. Cradle this lantern belly. Shepherd the moths fluttering around my lips, paper thin lambs. They just want swallowed by light. Torn open, I'd be dazzling: One million torches. Icelandic volcanoes. The Chinese New Year.

Independence

Tonight I'm scraping on my beautiful rocket
past McDonald's wondering how long
'til all the stars are dead. Summer
rises like bread or a chest breathing
onto another chest breathing heavy
air lush with the smell of our
neighbors' swimming pools in full bloom.
If I could take you where I'm going
I would take you. Past stadium lights
the hills swell like strings and
my tires sprint over the earth
to accompany them in the lightning
bug-lit orchestra of our blood-splattered,
mythical birth. Inhale, then
infinite color. I could do this
on my own but I want you
to tilt my face to the explosions
saying, "Just watch, just watch."

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