

## *Things That Pour Out as I Sit Alone*

by Kellan MacKenzie

### **My Dog, The World**

When I walk my dog, the wind circles through my torso. It's not entirely unpleasant. It feels like being alive, taking up space. I walk her in the early mornings when I need a reminder of the fact that I exist. It stills the crashing waves of my soul.

To be known by my dog is to be known crunching through the snow a bit more hurriedly than I would like. She knows my off-tune humming in the quiet before the day begins. I imagine that her world encapsulates one thing at a time. Bootlaces, singing, mint tea. Me. It's nice to be known by my dog.

Sometimes, on weekends, she scratches my door. It wakes me up every time, and I don't mind. She doesn't understand why I'm not rushing awake yet, filled with apprehension for the day ahead. She doesn't understand why I don't gobble my breakfast, brush harshly at my teeth, and hurl my things together in defiance of the day ahead.

She understands the slowness, though. It's a steady, flowing way of living. She is at home in the tangled bedsheets, the drowsy hand that invites her up.

I watch her rib cage rise and fall, rise, and fall, and I listen to her gentle breathing beside me. My lazy dog knows no worries. I love her very much.

### **Rotting**

Outside it is windy and gray and April, and inside I stew on my bed and rot away. It's been three years since I started to keep a journal, and yet I feel restless and discontented. The French call it "ennui."

In these moments, my head might combust from the nonsense circling in it, refusing to find meaning or coherence. I never know what I'm thinking or how to articulate these feelings. My watermelon tastes of gasoline. I'm sorry I was cruel. I hate my jealousy. I want to stifle it until it dies.

I worry that I am going to lose my eyesight before I turn twenty. I worry that I'm incredibly unlikeable. My skin tightens around my stomach and neck and cheeks. My throat burns with unresolved bile. I am overwhelmed and exhausted. The world is so loud that I forget to breathe between the minutes.

### **Muffled**

When I was young I was limitless and gloriously stubborn. My memories are bright and easy. The shadows fall when I realize that I was always a girl, and I wish I could have grown up as a person instead. I have a tendency to lie awake at night, analyzing interactions and wondering how my words would have been perceived if I were a boy. I like to pretend nothing would change.

Everything would change. Women are grown with guilt sewn into us. If I were a boy I would be loud and bold. But I am a woman and when I am loud, I apologize. Reflex. It's enough to pull at my sleepless mind. It's enough to create a twisted hatred toward my femininity.

Still, the only genuine relationships I have are with women. It's easier to be gentle, to bare your soul when the person next to you is trapped in the same box that you are.

And when the world shushes me, I go quiet. It's fine, of course, because I hold the truth: I am strong and wonderful and passionate and worth knowing. But if I soften these pieces of myself, no one else will ever know. And that is a tragedy.

## **Dreams**

In my dream last night, my sisters and I chased each other through a vast glass building tinted green and blue with walls that spread sun rays through the halls. The air bled music and joy.

Sometimes I feel so overwhelmed with joy that I can't breathe. Sometimes I feel like every part of me is completely okay. Sometimes I am selfish and I love it.

Inside the clarity of another dream, I stood in a river; turbulent water whipped around me, gushing and ruthless. It beckoned me with tugs at my knees, my hair, my fingers. I wanted to move but didn't. I stood still because watching the world pass me by was better than being swept away forever.

There's a lot going on, isn't there? I'm glad the snow always feels the same.

## **Always Me**

My muscles are loose and there's nothing biting at my heels. Today, there are no lists to make, no places to be, no thrumming in my head. Nothing stops me from making a ridiculously elaborate warm drink and returning to bed. Earl Grey tea, frothed milk, honey, and some jazz. I never noticed the guilt I anchored to resting. It's nice to be still for a day.

Oh, and finally, it's done! My world has shifted again. A swelling climax was reached and the new chapter slid in so seamlessly that I hardly noticed the previous one's departure. Everyone is amiable and passionate. It's bittersweet as it flies by, but life goes on.

And also, today I walked by a window and felt not exactly beautiful, but in charge, like owning myself. Like a person. Like me.

So today I won't worry about the future or the past, or what could have been. Today, I'll go back to bed and fade into the warmth of all the things that can wait for tomorrow.

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