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PART I: BURDEN

Burden

I.

When I found out you had cancer,
I thought I cared.

We walked around Savers,
and I shopped with you,

thinking: *this will be the last time
I buy winter clothes with you.*

Trying on hats, scarves,
and used white laced shirts.

You didn't want
treatments then.

You didn't want me or my brother,
didn't care enough to stay alive.

You had a choice at life and
chose no.

We had to convince a five-year-old
in your fifty-five-year-old's body

to finally say—
yes.

II.

Sourdough bread rots in the kitchen
while I stand patiently waiting

for a hello or a goodbye.
She steeps in garbage. I don't

want to be writing this poem,
I don't want to be writing anything

at all. She smells like cancer, reeks
of it. Won't call her doctor to

get treatment. Won't call her doctor
to figure out how long she has.

Wheat bread sits fresh in the kitchen.
It has a week until it rots.

III.

She doesn't know how many treatments
she has left until she's fully healed.

"I can't do these treatments no more."

She slips away from her bone cancer—
she gnaws at the bracelet I gave her
that one Sunday morning (\$15 at an over-
priced healing shop).

And of course she pretends it
doesn't really heal.

The bracelet's from ancient Tibet
("or at least the shop says it is")
and it's rounded like her belly still is
from when she had cancer the first time
just after I was born.

Her bone cancer slips away from her, as well,
because it doesn't want to be around
her red bipolar.

IV.

Mom's bipolar is like a watermelon.
Slice it open and red, red, red.

*Remember when she yelled at her daughter
for hours over using too much counter space?*

She doesn't know how to control it,
or so she tells me, and everyone else,

so the doctors won't prescribe her new
medication (she doesn't want them), her life

won't improve,
her favorite color will always be

telling other people: *I can't help it,
it's my disease.*

Shouldn't you be focusing more
on your cancer,

eating away at what keeps
your flesh from rotting?

V.

I'll do anything you say if
you say it with your hands.

- Taylor Swift, "Treacherous"

Mom's favorite color
is yelling for an hour
after the fight has ended.

In my mind,
I take my knife
and stab, stab, stab.
She takes her words
and screams, screams, yells.

I ask her to stop.

She won't.

I go out of the room,
hold out my fist,
tell her *stop*.

She grabs me.
Won't let go,
never let go.

Pushes me to the ground.

I bleed. I have a gash
on my lower back.

Mom's bipolar is like a watermelon.
Slice it open and red, red, red.

My schizoaffective/bipolar
is like hers, or, maybe,
it's worse?

VI.

Oh, disgruntled bone,
I call to you, ask

if you will get better.
I merge with you,

become one with you,
take your bone cancer

into me, become cancer
itself, become a red dot

on a useless bone.
Oh, disgruntled bone,

will you follow me
into the mental nothingness?

VII.

“This is the stuff that gets me
hurt & then mad. U don’t consider the pain

I’m going threw. I don’t mind helping u.
But u r walking around w/Ben ‘having
fun.’ & leaving it up 2 me 2 get your stuff

pk. I hate that u r having fun. & i’m in a lot
of pain. U should be responsible 4 it. But it’s fine.

I’ll get threw it. Just got off w/mass health.
I can finally get pain med Mon. & go back 4
treatments! Hope u r enjoying your self.

I really hope u r ok @ this place.
I dont like the area 4 nights. Have 2
get you mace or something!”

VIII.

Mom's treatments are starting again,
soon. She got her Mass Health figured out,

got it all settled. Mom's treatments
will cause her intense pain again. They jab

the needle into the leg, directly into
the bone, and she feels it all. Her treatments

won't stop for a while now, I don't know
how long because she does not know

how to listen to doctors.
Mom's treatments will start again,

and I will not be there this time.
I am away, and I will stay away

from my mom and her red bipolar,
for now, at least.

Until she gets better, which
could never happen.

IX.

I will never have a great relationship
with my mother.

Why, you ask? Well, it's
simple:

She eats away at my heart, the same
way her cancer eats away at her bone.

Causes my anguish, retreats
into nothingness again and again.

Takes everything from me,
then tells me she took nothing.

Invents her own logic like when
she tells me to clean up her dirty dishes.

She's uneducated; some say stupid.
Though I love her,

and know she has a whatever percentage
chance of beating this cancer,

she will always be a burden on me,
a burden I always forget to remember.

X.

I sit in my new room
waiting for the noise from

the TV to stop. I want it to stop.
I beg for it to stop.

I sit in the temporary respite,
the institution where I have to

get my medications
from a nurse.

I'm not allowed to take them
myself. I'm not allowed

snacks in my room,
and I have my room checked

for snacks weekly. I'm not allowed out
past 10pm.

Still, it is better than living with her.

PART II: UGLY STARS

Lifeforce

You literally screwed me. Took
a screwdriver and stuck it in me.
Took a knife and sliced right through me.
Took saran wrap and wrapped me tightly,
but not lovingly. Took a pillow and suffocated
me. Took my hands and bound them to each
other. Took my heart and gnawed at it.
Took my legs and scraped the hair off.
Took my life. Took my life. Took my life.

brianna & weed

*we got a little higher
than we probably should
- Kenny Chesney, "Setting the World on Fire"*

brianna wants to try weed.
we eat weed brownies until
we're restless, until we're
out of space. we fork the yolk
until we have a perfect image.
we take everything from
everyone. we set ourselves on
fire. we set our eyes in green,
wear blue until no one can hear
us. we drink beer until we vomit.
because we don't like beer. & we
eat weed brownies, smoke a joint,
vape a little. live a little. take this life
& crush it, until it's as small as you are,
& until you can handle it, handle it,
ride it good.

River

put me in the undertow
- *LIGHTS, "River"*

I want to feel your body against
mine. I want to find something
that doesn't expire. No spoiled
milk here. No choking on spit.
Just me and you.

Just you and I.
carry me far
I want hot chocolate with you,
spending nights on the nightstand,
please stumble me
onto the ground
so I can fall over
into your chest cavity, opening, wounded,
yet healed and I
I will be that healer.

Deb

As I await Date,
I think of the things

Deb has told me.
She has \$400 left

to her name each
month, while I

have less than half
of that. She has anxiety

sometimes

but I have it all
the time, all the fucking

time. And I wait for Deb
to text me back, laughing

and I feel badly for her
because she has an incurable

disease, but so do I,
so do I, Deb.

For P.N.

I'm feeling better now.
I don't have to worry anymore.
I'm happy now
with him
as fwb

We fucked all night long,
multiple times
until
he came inside me.

I hope he's clean.
He says he's clean.

I'm happier than I've been
before, but why do I
feel so alone?

Mean to Him?

Pick up your shoes, I say to my boyfriend.
S. says *No*, he'll make love to me.

Put down the toilet seat, I say to S.
He doesn't rip me, but flowers me deliberately.

Stop screwing up my stuff, I say to S.
He yells to me he'll love me despite not getting
to bed on time, maybe not loving him.

* * *

S. + me = Anxiety kills me like a raptor. I am a ripped-
apart rat, but I never take myself out.

It is me and him and him and me and everything
we can and cannot be, it is not destruction, not love,
but something more than that, tuneless, and tuneless,
and free.

Bathroom Door

He keeps his bathroom
door open, like I
keep mine.

& then my anxiety flies away.

The best part about anxiety
is that you forget it's even
there, until it appears
yet again.

He Said Okay

I said don't worry,
it won't kill me, into
his chest.
& he said ok,
sighing into my breasts.

& it was perfectly
enough.

Patrick #234

After Eduardo C. Corral

I said: it's been warmer since you've been gone.
& he said: no, it's even warmer here, Cambodia land,

place where all the free people roam.
& I am not free.

I take from people and people like me,
like Leah, Patrick.

& I think he's starting to love me,
Patrick, I mean,

just as I love him,
just as I don't love you.

Ugliest Clothes

I wear my ugliest clothes
to my therapist

so that she will think

I am not as well-put-together

as I am.

I take my ugliest hammer
and bash my skull in

so that my head parts will
cover the floor.

I eat my ugliest meal so that
my cook

will not suffer for it,

will not know

that I am really sane,
waiting

for sane.

Hot Noodles

*Eating hot noodles rn.
Can't talk, babe.*

They're hotter than you.
Like, really, really hot.

They're silky smooth
down my throat.

They itch at my tongue,
feel the heat, feel the heat.

I don't know if I want you.
I don't want you, I want you

like drowning in water, the ocean,
all by myself,
alone.

I'm eating hot noodles
with you

and they're as hot as
your love for cake.

We eat them together
until we spit them out.

Grandma's House

She took me by the hand
& gave me Milky Ways, one by one,
two by two. She lay on the fluffy, red carpet
with Tampa, the unhealthy dog
& brought me to her room & we watched
the funny Urkel show until she rubbed
my feet good night. We slept on the huge bed
until morning, when she fed me Devil Dogs,
one by one, two by two.

Grandma's Ring

I step on all the sidewalk cracks
to hurt my mother.

Grandma's ring is like that.
Cracked diamond.
Ruby reds all around.

But that's all I have left of her,
plus one other ring.

Grandpa took the rest.

Never said anything to me
about taking it all.

& mom had the worst
relationship with grandma,
but I had the best.

Mom & grandma would fight all
day long, just as my mom & I do.

I had the best.

The ring is opalescent, straining
to find its way, just like I am,
just like she was.

Uncle

One of my uncles is allergic to grapes,
the other to anything chocolate.

I take my cousin's dying father in my hands
and give him to my other uncle.

He now lies in a hospital bed,
no clothing.

Dying uncle, why do you have
to die so soon?

Dying uncle, why do you give life,
somehow, to second uncle?

I am more engaged,
I am more enraged,
than my cousins or my

Auntie, simply there.
Being. Present.

Scar

Today, my boyfriend, Ben, pointed out
that I have a scar on my back.

How did I not see it before?

It's from when my mom was at her
bipolar worst and pushed me
after I threatened her.

It's big. Goes a quarter of the way
up my back. This happened 6 months
ago, so I have no idea how I didn't
notice before. I don't know how
to feel about it. It's ugly,
just like she can be,
just like I can be.

PART III: BARBADOS

Hair

I touched her dreadlocked
hair as I made my way
to the bathroom on
the airplane to Barbados—

Something that will be forgotten—
no, something that will be
remembered.

I am different than her, somehow.

*

The Waiting Creature

I went swimming in the blue,
blue ocean with Kayla & Grace.

Later, I had an anxiety attack
& stayed in my room for the rest
of the night.

The beach is peaceful, like
the sound the toads make, but
anxiety creeps up on you.

Anxiety stays, then kills
its own beast.

*

List of Medications & Disorders for University Health Insurance Policy

i have:

PTSD (from the time he hurt me)
OCD (from the time you told me)
Generalized Anxiety Disorder (from the time she yelled)
Schizoaffective Disorder (from the time i disappeared)

i take:

xanax 1mg 3x a day for
anxiety
prazosin 2mg at bedtime for
depersonalization
perphenazine 16mg at bedtime for
my hallucinations
melatonin 3mg at bedtime for
sleep
zyrtec 10mg in the morning for
allergies
flovent & proair as needed for
asthma
bromocriptine 2.5mg at night for
my pituitary tumor.

that's all.

*

Five More Days

Second day of Barbados trip.
Only five more days.
Only five more days.

We go to the beach today a few
minutes away and I'm excited,
but nervous they won't have a bathroom.

I need a bathroom.

Please let there be a bathroom.

*

Your Money, Roommate

Don't worry, I'm not going
to touch your money,
honey,
as much as I want to feel
its ripeness down my back,
as much as I want to overspend,
as much as I want to feel
something.

*

The Bitch

I listened to the bitchy woman
from Canada
talk with us, telling us we
couldn't be there, calling us
Americans who always consume
everything. I listened to her rant,
for what seemed like hours, until
we were forced to move
away.

*

We chatted with the fishermen

who had caught a stingray,
and it was teeny-tiny, or
maybe medium-sized (about), but
we (except for Julia) watched them cut
it up to eat later on. They made
strokes at the wings; it's
the only part they eat.

That was one of the only times
when I wasn't apart, when
my anxiety receded,
watching them slice that
knife up and down, backwards
and forwards.

*

God/Religion in Barbados

I wish, like them, I could:
ignore the gravel,
let in the sun.
But life is like dying, and I'm
too scared.

God's love only works
on those who aren't suffering
as much as I am.

*

Grace Number Two

Grace, not my roommate, but
the other Grace, was very
annoying. I felt bad for her,
though. She didn't know how to
socialize. She kept saying, "This
is my birthday present and it's
the best birthday present ever!"
but no one even liked her.
Should I be mad at others
or just mad at myself?

*

the ocean

oceans collide
the view is a blue
& pink pony dancing
i like it so much
i could drown in it

PART IV: KILL M.I.

I

I'm feeling better now.
 You don't have to worry
 anymore. I know the dandelions
 are a mess, they're all moldy
 and the vase is probably ruined.
 I wasn't feeling well.
 They went to waste.

I'm feeling better now, though.
 Can you make it stop? She
 came to me the other night,
 crying. Her figure standing
 above my bed, first hallucination
 in weeks. They're like dough.
 Moldable. I can mold them into
 whatever I'd like. Only sometimes.

Sometimes I feel pretty.
 But mostly my messy Bessie bun
 is tied up, like the Ferris wheel
 was tied up with duct tape.
 I'm not safe. Ever.
 Sometimes I don't put
 antibacterial cream on after cutting.
 She came to me the other night.

During my shamanic journeying.
 I said hi. We exchanged glances
 and a kiss. I miss her.
 I'm not well. Can it please continue?
 It's the only way I know how
 to function. Like a button on the TV

remote, I'm unwired. Sometimes
 too wired, typing away until my
 fingertips bleed. And I like the blood.
 They came to me in the shower.
 Scratched my chest, deep.
 I couldn't sleep that night,
 or maybe I slept deeply?

She came to me and I was scared.
 Wired, I like being scared. I hate horror.
 She came to me when I was like that.
 Bare. Naked. Masturbating.

The towel's hanging up and I always
think it's a ghost. Can I see ghosts

or are they all hallucinations?
I want them to stop,
to keep going, go, go, go.
I'm nothing without them.
My bun's a mess. Do I

look pretty enough yet?
She came to me last night.
Sat on my chest. Said don't
talk. I rarely talk. I talk when I
have something important to say.

She came to me last night.
She came on me? No,
that happened when I was two

or three. See that tree over there?
That's called nature.
It's sentient. Unlike me.
It called up and said "you're doomed."
I told it to go fuck itself.

I feel angry, punched the bed
until I turned tomato. And I can
pretend I'm people and I feel
myself shapeshifting into them.
Is that normal?

When she came to me, I screamed.
Bashed my head into the bookcase
in the hallway.
But, hey, don't worry.
I won't do anything stupid.
I won't cut deep, I won't
kill myself, punch myself.
She came back and I want it all to go.
They came back and I want them to stay.

I'm a paper cut flowing blood from my chakras (blocked, gush out) and I can't ever hold a
napkin over it it has to flow.

xanax

writing to stay alive,
i take a xanax. i am
abyss, i am nothingness.
i take what i can from
people i know,
and turn it into everything
possible, which turns out
to just be nothing
at all. i am a childless
mother, weeping for
sanity. i want everything,
but nothing is returned
to me. i don't really want
everything, i just want
enough. i am enough,
but only sometimes.

This is One Mile #234

After Eduardo C. Corral

“This is one mile,”
she said to two-year-old

me, as I sat in the backseat
wearing nothing but my heart
and a seatbelt. I couldn’t tell

how long it was. I couldn’t tell
time. I could only tell that she

was taking me

to NH to buy her cigarettes and I’d be given
some candy if I was good enough.

This is one mile,

I thought.

But I hadn’t yet thought
about how I would tell her that
***** peed on me, on my stomach

to be exact, but it was white pee,

so it was so different to me. I forgot
how it tasted, if I tasted it, even.

It was all a bad dream.

This is one mile
long and I am one mile
too short. I can’t

stand up to the bad guys and they ruin
my life forever and ever. *I run away*
from him next time,

I reasoned with myself.

But I wouldn’t. I couldn’t. This is one mile
and I am too short to run a mile,
too innocent,
too broken, too chained, too un-free.

Depression

I sit in depression,
lurk in depression,
bask in depression.

I sit on my bed and count
the fur particles
on the sheets
from my cat.

Now I sit back and count the number
of bread crumbs on my floor. Where
do they lead?

Nowhere.

Assembly of Mental & Physical Illness

I assembled my soul into a piece of woodwork,
then told illness to carve into me, like a tattoo.

I told my mental illness to take me and screw me
over until I cried; I like myself
when I cry because I can't stop.
And I like crying because it's mental
illness and it's pretty and beautiful,
cliché, like the world.

I take myself and fly up over in the sky
in an air ship. I take myself and cross the bridge
into heaven, or the afterlife, or the wiccan summerland,
something I can't tell if I'll ever pass into.

Maybe I'm immortal.

But I take bullets in my head, like
this brain tumor, but it's not pretty like mental
illness—not pretty, because a tumor's physical.
I can't afford physical. Touch. Sense.
Which remedies will work? Crying doesn't help. A pill, maybe?

I want illnesses to eat me up inside until I can't work, can't
ever get off disability.

I Am Gone Now

I take your ring and eat it up.
I hold nothing back; the ring's edges form
protruding marks upon my veins and I am
left secreting pure blood during the day,
during the nighttime.
I am mental.

I am illness.
I want nothing of this love,
this sticking two fingers down my throat,
this eating a ring just to feel,
this bringing you down to your knees
begging *please please*. I want nothing of that.

Some Days

Sometimes the days are too short, sometimes too long.

Sometimes I need you like needing to get hit by a passing car, and sometimes I don't, just wanting to be in your arms. Some days I

love the summer warmth and other days I hate its heat. It gives me heatstroke in my heart. It gives me a backbone

I can't pretend to have. It gives me nothing I can't take back, nothing I can be remembered by.

Anti-Self

I am yellow butterflies.
I take what I gather

from each instance,
and plenty is returned

to me. I am foxes mating
in the wild. I like what I do,

and I do it well. I am happiness
overflowing, joyfulness

in abundance. I fill up each gap
with holy water. I take each

crevice, each downfall,
and turn it to gold.

I am yellow butterflies.
I will never cease to be.

Okay

Is there anything other than
a love song? She takes
her words and scratches me
deeply. I don't know how
to feel. Am I a white raven?
Something out of order,
something mistaken?
Something mistaken—no,
something forgotten—no,
I take what I can get from
her then I leave the rest alone.
She deserves to live in peace.
The afterlife means nothing
to me. I just want her life
to be okay. I just want my
life to be okay.

Healing

My poetry is like an ocean, overflowing into my home by the ocean, or something like that—

I use poetry to heal. Therapy as poetry or poetry as therapy, I can't remember which one.

It takes a lot to heal. I am an ocean overflowing with healing stuffs, and I grab it all and poetry comes to me easily, so that I can be cured, of everything, of it all.

Soon I

Soon I'll be old.

The feathers escape me
up a chimney chute and I
am left alone. What are
the feathers, you ask?

Well, you're smart,
figure it out for yourself.

Soon I'll be dead.

What happens?

The trees talk to me and tell
me nothing will come of it.

I will be soil. I will be grass.

I will be me, all over again.

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