

I'd rather be in pain

I want to hurt.

I want to have a hole in my chest; aching with the pain of the loss of you

I want to feel like I'm going out of my mind, unable to think or breath without you beside me.

I want to lay awake at night, twisting in my sheets, wondering if I'll ever be okay again.

I want to smell your perfume lavender-rose, and fall into a bed of sweet intoxication.

I want to know that I can never be happy again as long as you aren't here.

It's not that I want to feel pain; I'm not a masochist, but I'd rather feel these things, knowing that I had you,

than to be numb, never knowing the bittersweet taste of what love can be, and what you can do to me.

School Shooting

I patrol my way around,
looking for what shouldn't be found.
My mind surges with random hate and planned spontaneous responses.
I will be prepared, does it happen.
Improvisation will be my protection
and my weapon.
As evil deals its' deeds, I will chance thereupon like a mortal angel.
Putting it all on the line, as designated.
I shall have shattered the adversary's mind,
interrupting its' purpose with my
reaction, to live or die I've already decided.
Here,
either is fine.

Prince Ian viewed the ambassador in front of him coolly, his eyes unviewable behind the dark glasses he wore. The High Minister, Lord Cyon, smoothly sailed in with an answer. "Naturally, the territory dispute of the river affects our farmers as well. We will certainly wish to—"

"We will do nothing." The temperature in the room dropped. All eyes returned to the prince, but he had not moved his gaze and he did not speak again. Several of the people seated at the large conference table began shifting in their seats.

Princess Miranda leaned over in her seat to speak quietly to her husband, but he waved her off without looking at her. "The river's course changed by rogue magicians from Ea'ton. It is Lord Warren's problem. We will not waste our time or resources taking care of him." The princess and the High Minister exchanged quick, wide-eyed looks.

The newest – and most elegant – member of the political world, Lady Ellis of Rokell, spoke calmly. "I was under the impression that Lasseal supported Nea—"

"It is nearly lunch," Lord Cyon announced abruptly, rising from the table. "We shall adjourn for now."

For a brief moment no one moved. Then Lord Warren, the grey-haired diplomat from Ea'ton, stood and stalked from the room. Several other men, who had been treated with equal courtesy by the prince in the past hour, followed in the same manner. The remaining members of the conference followed in total silence, with the exception of Lady Ellis. The new fiancé to king of Rokell paused by Lord Cyon long enough to murmur, "I see the stories of his temper are not exaggerated." Then she glid off, seemingly unaffected by the tense atmosphere.

Prince Ian's dark gaze fell on his High Minister next. "Do not presume to contradict my authority again." The prince left without another look.

When they were alone, Miranda and Cyon exhaled a mutually-held breath. Miranda put her face in her hands. Even the long braid in her dark hair and the pink bow on her purple dress seemed to droop.

"What is going on?" the short High Minister asked as he dropped back into his chair. His normally pleasant face was weary. It was true that the thirty-something ruler of Lasseal had an occasional temper, but Prince Ian had never acted like this before.

"I don't know what he's thinking," the princess said. "You saw how he wouldn't even listen to me." Her deep blue eyes were suspiciously bright.

Lord Cyon felt a twinge of sympathy for the athletic and normally cheerful princess. Cyon's appointment as the prince's right-hand man had given him a view of the royals' personal life. It had been something of a revelation for Cyon. Having grown up as the fourth son of an unhappy and occasionally abusive couple, Cyon's first encounter with a happy union had been Ian and Miranda's marriage. For Ian to ignore his young wife was unprecedented.

I have made four stops at Chicago's O hair airport, all through connecting flights leading me to other destinations. My first time, I was heading to Orlando for a journalism conference, at the time I was on the design team at UVU and this was my first trip to the east coast. My first impression of Chicago was the airport. Every impression or image I have about Chicago relates to O hair. As funny as this sounds, but something about Chicago's O hair airport puts me at ease. Maybe it's the Quizno's sandwich shop or one of the numerous magazine stands I like to browse, the little coffee shop where I buy a double fudge brownie, each little venture just adds to the excitement. The people seem different. The language is off. The airport staff's uniforms are a rich dark blue color. The entire airport seems like a grand hall and I am the special guest for the evening. When you first step out of the airplane, everything can be so overwhelming. You feel lost. I remember my first steps and how uncomfortable they felt. I wasn't in my comfort shell and a city as big as Chicago could either swallow me whole, or take me for a wonderful ride.

"Approximately two hours until our flight to Orlando would be boarding passengers." This was the thought that kept creeping through my mind as we started to exit the plane from Salt Lake City to Chicago. In a single file line from the back of the plane, I waited patiently to get off the crowded Boeing 727. The lights were dim, babies screaming, people frantically trying to find their carry-on luggage in the large compartments just above the seats. The line wasn't going to move anytime soon, so all I could do was blatantly stare out the small circular shaped window. I had the perfect angle, though it was a moody afternoon, I caught a quick glimpse of the Sears Tower. I could see small sprinkles of snow blowing in a particular direction and suddenly understood why they called it the "windy city."

After about twenty minutes of standing around I finally made my way to the front of the line, nodding to the captain and giving the cute stewardess a wink, I was out of the plane. My backpack was the only thing I had with me. Loaded with strawberry fruit snacks, SND conference brochures and my ipod, only to find out the it was completely out of charge and utterly useless to me. My plan was to exit the plane and watch Office reruns for two hours, but I was out of luck. Instead, I spent a good fifteen minutes dreaming about the cute stewardess I had just left behind. Was the wink a little too much? All I could picture were her piercing blue eyes staring back at me. They reminded me of a calm storm, with grey skies, where ocean waves would pound the shoreline. She was a brunette, with long wavy hair that reached to her perfectly shaped waistline. Every man has a made up image of what his ideal woman should look like. This was as close to mine as I had come to as an 18 year old. I wondered what kind of a life she led, if she was in a serious relationship, or if she was single. Where she was from. Where she was headed. I wanted to know who she was. This was one of those moments where I felt helpless and all I could do was answer my own questions in a series of daydreams to come. I'm sure she was al least in her mid-twenties. What chance would I have had? None.

I hopped on an escalator to see what my next journey would be. Chicago's O hair airport is so large; so many endless possibilities exist. As I made my way to the lower level, the atmosphere was a little different. It felt like an older version of the airport upstairs. The handles, light fixtures, wall tiles; all felt like they were from an older time period. It seemed cool to me, like I had just stumbled onto some secret-hidden underground world. Even the posters and advertisements on the walls felt outdated. Maybe I had accidentally walked into a secret time machine and I really was walking through 1970s O hair airport.

Guilt, hate, love and fear;
All the things that brought us here.
We know not where, nor how to go
Only life today we know.
Heavens above have lost their name,
We down below have done the same.
Lost our faith and where we're from
Lost ourselves, deceased, become
Alone and lost, spread far and wide
But lost to each other, and lost inside.
Diseased and tainted, scattered and confused
And I know I am not the first to have mused
At the state of humanity and how *far* we have come,
At the horror of the masses for the benefit of some.
But if so many have criticized the state we're in,
Why can't we turn things around and win?
Why can't we change, put the old ways behind?
I'm assured if we do so, we'll eventually find
We'll find a way to succeed on this planet.
Rather than taking the whole world for granted.

Silent Prayer

In answer to my silence
You echo every word
Of thoughts I had not spoken
As if already heard.
You understand the pains within
My heart I've kept away.
Shining like the morning sun;
Illuminate my way.

The Calling

"What do you keep looking at, Jesse?" asked Raymond. "Is it a letter or something?"

After a pause Jesse answered. "Yeah, it's ... a letter from home."

Raymond waited expectantly for Jesse to elaborate. When Jesse remained silent he said, "Oh."

The two were camped around a small fire in the jungle. Night here away from civilization was black as a tomb. They were surrounded by the sounds of life, however. Crickets and frogs and whatever else was out there. "It's just, you've looked at it every night since we joined up," Raymond prompted. He was answered by silence.

After a few minutes, Jesse said, "You have family, right Ray?"

"Oh yes," Raymond answered. "That's where I am headed. To meet up with them."

"I feel weird asking you about this now, when we have been together for what, three days now?"

Jesse said. They had been dodging the Chinese and hiking so hard to get out of enemy territory that they had slept every chance they got, without much conversation. But today they had to hunker down most of the day as a Chinese patrol camped almost on top of them. The Chinese did not seem to be in much of a hurry and spent a good deal of the morning resting. Jesse thought they were probably a group of wounded going back to Subic to heal up.

"That's OK, we haven't really had much of an opportunity to talk, have we?" Raymond said with a smile. Jesse could tell he was the chatty type and had probably only remained silent out of fear of the situation they were in. Now that they had been rested and the Chinese had moved on, it felt safe enough for a fire and some conversation.

"My father is, well, was a dentist in Olongapo. I have two sisters and a brother, all younger than me."

"But they aren't in Olongapo now?"

"I don't think so. At least their house was empty. I am thinking they got out of there when the Chinese landed."

"So you think they went to Manila?" Jesse asked.

"Hopefully there or somewhere nearby."

Inching along the freeway, I glance at the speedometer. 78. Sighing, I resist the urge to speed up as I think of my recent \$90 speeding ticket. Orange barrels and asphalt—that's all that exists. *This is hell.*

Speaking of which, what is he doing?

I give the driver a frustrated look and gesture as I pass. *Why does he look so nervous? I'm not that intimidating.* I switch my blinker back on as I turn my head—

What is that?

Everything's happening so fast—so slowly.

My mind races to explain the object that shouldn't be in front of me.

A car? How did it get there?

81 miles-per-hour.

Leaving my house, I send *See you soon :)* and start the car.

Minutes since then. Or years?

What do I do now? Oh.

Hours pass.

Did you still want to come over tonight?

My foot is halfway to the brake.

If you want me to.

My heart is racing. The breaks are screeching.

Wilhemena's Revenge

Act One, Chapter One: Witch's Contempt

Wilhemena and Inkie were the two scariest witches at Partwitch High. They also hated each other - even by witches' standards in Caldron Bay. One was always spelling and tricking the other. Their second year, things got so bad that the school governors put a truce spell over them. Or so they thought.

Inkie ran her bony green fingers along the fleshy, limp rat's tail, plopping it into the boiling, brown brew. "Just three wiggly worms," she squealed delightfully, dropping the writhing pinkish creatures. "Trick or treat, trick or treat, it's Wilhemena's big defeat!"

She pulled a small photo from the pocket of her robe. The instant her eyes settled on the tiny picture, they squinted into raging slits. "This should do it," she snarled. Carefully, as if lighting a candle, she dipped a corner of the picture into the bubbling vat. Poof! It disappeared!

"Rats are sweet." She rehearsed, stirring the potion by the long handle of the ladle.

"And worms are gritty." She glared into the distorted reflection of the putrid potion.

From head to feet

Make Wilhemena," she paused with a smug grin. "Pretty!"

Act One - Chapter Two – Halfway to Halloween Festival

The last week of April always had a special energy around Partwitch High. It was the only time ungreens and witches actually dignified each other. For two centuries, witches and ungreens tolerated one another with silent disdain. But, every May 1st they shared a bit of extra tolerance. May 1st was the precise day, marking the halfway point to Halloween. For ungreens, it was a spring spectacular filled with games, prizes, ribbons, treats, (etc). For witches, it began the countdown to the scariest night on the calendar. Overnight, the school's grounds burst with black tulips for witches and a rainbow of pastel tulips, daffodils and hyacinth for ungreens. Black kittens and white kittens scampered among the gardens. Boy and girl ungreens giggled and flirted, while witches were particularly prickly, which on this day, was a very good mood. Wilhemena's brows shot up when Inkie passed her in the hall, crouched and cackling like she had won the broomstick derby. "What's up with her?" Wilhemena whispered under her breath. Soon, however, Wilhemena focused on the ancient spell book she held tightly in her grip. In it was the little known, secret broom chant, guaranteed to make brooms fly higher and faster than all the others. She rehearsed it over and over, "Wood and straw; bound together tight. Be quick and agile for this flight." She was so preoccupied that she didn't realize she was strutting straight into Poindexter Picklebottom, the newest ungreen in the school. Poindexter was tall and lanky with thick glasses and a big smile. "Hello, Wilhemena," he said, smiling his biggest smile. Even Wilhemena's scowl didn't dampen his disposition. He stumbled backwards watching her all the way down the hall. She snarled, looked over her shoulder to see if he was still staring. He was.

Later that afternoon, Wilhemena polished the handle of her broomstick, brushed the bristles and practiced her potions. Nothing, not even Inkie the ickest witch in all of Caldron Bay could make Wilhemena waver from her will; winning the broomstick derby. She was bent on taking first prize in the spell competition, securing the most coveted item of the festival; a new black hat adorned with magic jumping beetles leashed to the brim. The day before, when the Goblin Governor showed off the grand

"That movie was just terrible. Poor portrayal of such an inspired literary work.

The lighting was all wrong. I want my \$1.50 back. "

"You didn't realize it was going to be awful when you found out that Jim Henson was producing 'The Hobbit'?"

"Touché good sir. Touché. "

They were right, it really was pretty awful. But I liked it, sure it was no cinematic masterpiece, but it got my mind off of things. Lately, that has been no easy task. You would think that being 5 months pregnant and having finals coming up would be enough to occupy my mind. I just can't stop thinking about him. I don't think I can do this all alone.

Jack was a strong man. He was kind and amiable, yet quiet and reserved. He was strong willed, yet rarely spoke his mind. So many of my neighbors and friends spend their nights praying for a victory, that our boys will come home triumphantly. I just hope he comes home safely.

Kate and Brad wanted to go as soon as the credits rolled. I'm a little neurotic and made them wait until I could see the end music credits. As awful as the film was, the soundtrack was unbelievable, maybe that's why I was able to ease my mind.

As we passed under the green neon EXIT sign, the air on my face felt warm for the end of February. I was bundled up and ready to brave the snow, which was inevitable. I

Defending the Union

“Fire!” Captain Malcolm shouted above the blaring alert siren, “And can someone mute that thing before I go hoarse!” The battle had been going on for what seemed like hours—likely about five minutes—and she was losing her nerve more from the throng than from being outmatched five to one. The entire volley of firestars landed true on the nearest ship. “Direct hit on their weapons array, Captain,” came the voice of her weapons officer. Good, but that still leaves four more ships...

While pondering the question as to belated belief in a deity for such moments of needing divine intervention, she realized that she would have to let long-term consequences be damned and show their hand. “Lt. Frasier, upload the virus.” It seemed a shame to waste something so great at debilitating electronics on just the four ships, but what could be done?

“Lt. Wendall, jam their long-range communications. Lt. Frasier, get ready to fire a full spread.”

“Sir? If the virus is successful, that will completely annihilate all four ships,” the weapon’s officer replied.

“Understood. Proceed as ordered,” she stated, that dark coldness coming into her voice and eyes when she had to turn off her conscience for the good of the Union. The virus was effective, but she knew the science officers on the Brekali ships were just as talented at blocking known viral codes from their central computers as hers were; this new virus was revolutionary, but given time...

She watched all four ships explode nearly simultaneously, always an odd and strangely silent phenomenon to watch in space; the colors of the chemical fire looking so

The Number

It was just another day on the subway. I was on my way home from teaching a class when she got on the train. A beautiful woman with long, flowing, brown hair, skin as smooth as a babies bottom, and a figure that would make any man do a double take. Of course, I did a triple take.

From the moment I saw her I knew she was out of my league. I had just a average looking grad student in British literature who came to New York for school. I considered myself to be good looking, but I was in no way a stud, which was probably her type.

I was telling myself to just forget about her when she sat down across from me and pulled out a book from her shoulder bag. To my surprise it was "*Othello*" by William Shakespeare. I couldn't believe it. This woman looked like the kind that would be reading Cosmo, not a book from one of the greatest literary minds in English History. If she was attractive when I first saw her, she was really turning me on now.

I reassessed my earlier thought on forgetting her and mustered up the courage to say something to her. "That a great book you have their" I said to her.

She looked up from her reading, smiled at me and said "yes it is." Then she turned back to her book.

I decided to say more. "How far have you gotten into it?"

She looked up again and said "Just when Cassio is demoted and Iago convinces him to beg Othello for his rank back."

She was about to turn back to her book when I said "that's great. Don't you think that Iago is the most devious villain ever written by Shakespeare?"