

Poetry Series

anais vionet
- poems -



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anais vionet()

I'm a Yale University student (junior) .

I like writing, and have these awful tiktok, Animal Crossing and pizza addictions
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As far as writing goes, I apologize - in advance - to anyone who actually knows what they are doing - i certainly don't. When the long list of poem types pops up I'm lost.



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Foolish Things

I do foolish things
when I'm blue
when I'm sad
and missing you
I do foolish things

like dancing all night
foolish things
drinking everything in sight
foolish things
shopping til I drop
foolish things
somehow I cannot stop

doing foolish things
when I'm blue
when I'm sad
and missing you
I do foolish things

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watching 'parks & rec' all night
foolish things
drinking coffee until daylight
foolish things
dragging friends on crazy romps
foolish things
somehow I cannot stop

doing foolish things
when I'm blue
when I'm sad
and missing you
I do foolish things

acting like spring breakers
foolish things
herpy-dirping strangers
foolish things
acting like some whack-job

foolish things
but somehow I cannot stop

doing foolish things
when I'm blue
when I'm sad
and missing you
I do foolish things

making badong decisions
foolish things
I'm in an awkweird position
foolish things
I've begun precrastinating
foolish things
a change is indicated

so come back soon
cause when you do
there are foolish things
I want to do with you
foolish things
foolish things
crazy foolish things
foolish things

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slang

badong = bad / wrong

herpy-dirping = saying silly or outrageous things to strangers for effect.

awkweird = combination of 'awkward' and 'weird'.

precrastinating = procrastinating before procrastinating

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Storm Warning

I love spending nights on the lake.
Once the oven-like sun disappears,
things get suddenly quiet, except for
the occasional hoot of an owl, crickets, frogs
and the soft lapping of the lake on the boat.

When the moon rises above the pines
the sky lights up, like a fireworks bloom,
its reflection is brushed, in scatters on the lake,
giving insubstantial moonlight a sharp substance
not unlike a fractured, undulating, glittery lace.

This evening, there's a rumble, stage left, off to the west,
and a thunderstorm's growl, like a wolf on the prowl.
The wind was picking up, so we began battening down,
stowing things in the galley and taking in the flag. The wind,
had become almost solid with its insistent and restless energy.

The question, with these daily, southern, summer thunderstorms
is whether you're going to catch the edge of it or get the full onslaught. The
doppler radar, of my iPad weather app indicated the monster was headed right
for us.

Just as our phones, watches and iPads began chirping
with National Weather Service, "Severe Weather Alerts,"
Charles asked, "You two still want to stay?" His voice fighting
against the stiff wind as he watched the tall pine-tree tops bob,
like boxers, afraid of the far off lightning flashes in the sky.

"Of course!" I chimed in, wearing a grin, I LOVE boat storms!
"Lisa, there's a storm on the way but we'll stay on the boat, ok?" I
asked, trying to english the question with both a sense of adventure and
nonchalance. Lisa, of course, followed my lead, saying, "Sure."
"It'll be ill," I assured her.

Charles nodded and leapt to the dock, replacing the gunwale rope lines with
longer dock rods to distance and secure the boat (lowering front and back
anchors too) .

"We're staying, " Charles walkie-talkie'd Carol (his wife) below in the staterooms where she was probably making the beds. "10-4" she replied. I love her, she's so game for anything. While Charles worked, Lisa and I sealed the upper deck from cockpit (helm) to transom, putting up sturdy plexiglass windows and closing the transom doors.

Charles came aboard just as we turned up the air conditioning and thick raindrops started falling. Having finished our work, we looked up and the moon was gone, hidden by dark clouds that writhed like some angry, mythical, steel wool animal.

The rain went from a delicate pitter-patter to a generous applause and finally, a steady torrent. We felt it initially pass over us from port (left) to starboard (right) . The wind whistled, like a giant's breath, rocking the boat, alternately, in two directions. It was wonderful.

The far-off thunder had become intimate, bomb-like and personal, with its Crack-k-KA-BOOM! Every time such a concussion rocked the air, the boat and our teeth, I cackled, with joy, like Poe's Madeline Usher, the madwoman in the attic.

"HOW DO YOU LIKE IT! ? " I yelled to Lisa, but she made an 'I can't hear you, ' sign. Carol, who'd been working the galley, produced yummy tuna-fish sandwiches, potato chips and milk. We played a dominoes game called 'Mexican Train' until the rain stopped, then we watched 'Jaws' on the fold-down TV. Lisa had never seen it!

The boat had rocked, lightning had flashed, the cutting wind howled, and the thunder boomed, but it was the clawing rain, like a tiger trying to break into the boat, that made it an unforgettable night on the lake.

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My parent's boat is Tiara-43LE

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Don't Mess With Georgia

You can lie in Wyoming,
they don't care in Arizona,
you can mislead them in Mississippi
but don't mess with Georgia.

You thought us "hicks from the sticks"
but we were wise to your tricks,
we just recorded your words,
now you'll get what you deserve.

Your threats and fraudulent incitements,
have earned you several indictments.
You came down with your whole freak show,
so they charged you under RICO.

Come back to Georgia, Mr. Trump,
it turns out you were the chump.
Because we've got lots of new prisons
and DAs with surly dispositions.

In Georgia we don't mind high flyers
but man, we hate traitors and seditious liars.
While many, it seems, fell for your blusterous aura,
you screwed yourself good by messing with Georgia.

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Nyc - Paris

Peter, Charles and I were jetting our way to Paris. I'd just woken up. I had to pee so badly it woke me up. It was a medical emergency. I stretched and everything hurt, I felt like I was 30.

Peter was sitting next to me, on the aisle, reading. When he saw me stretch, he said, 'Hey sleepyhead.' Ok, I didn't actually hear him say it, we were all wearing noise canceling AirPods. I read his lips. I motioned that I needed to get up and he probably said 'sure, ' marking his place with his index finger and standing up in the aisle. I saw Charles watching us and I gave him a sleepy smile.

I'd made the Paris trip 20 times, at least, and I carry an indispensable little travel facial bag. I removed my AirPods and put them in their case to recharge and used Neutrogena cleansing wipes before I splashed water on my face. Then I spritzed my face with Biologique L' Eauxygénante moisturizing mist. Finally, I applied Clinique lip balm. When I was done, I felt human. My watch said I'd slept for 2 hours.

On my way back to my seat I dropped by Charles, one row back from us and across the aisle.

'How you DOin?' I said.

For some reason Charles and I always greet each other like we're the Sopranos. 'I'm DOin' ok, ' he replied, giving me a little toast with his coffee cup, 'You slept?'

'2 hours, ' I said. I nodded at his coffee cup, and he handed it to me for a sip.

'Mmm' I said, handing it back. 'It feels odd not sitting with you, ' I told him, because, well, it did.

'Go on, ' he said, giving me a little shoo-away gesture. 'We'll catch up in Paris.' I gave him a gentle, backhanded tap on the shoulder as I left.

When I got back and Peter and I finished the whole seat-hopping bit, I tilted the book he was reading to see what it was. The title read 'Thermodynamics and Control of Open Quantum Systems.' I pantomimed a yawn and he smiled condescendingly.

I put my AirPods back in and the annoying, but necessary, jet noise vanished. The little jet on my seat display indicated we had about 5 hours to go, but I had my Kindle (500 books) , my iPad (games, apps, the slow Internet) , my Nintendo Switch (Animal Crossing and Zelda) , my phone and, of course, the movies and series offered on the seat panel in front of me.

Then, I remembered the two Cinnabons and Honeydew melon Boba Teas in my backpack. The flight attendant passed and asked if we needed anything. 'Can I get a large cup of ice, please?' I enquired. She nodded, making a 'be right back' finger motion.

It's not like we have to row this jet. Why do people complain about air travel?

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Athens

We're (Lisa and I) back in Athens Georgia (hometown USA) , where it's the halcyon days of summer. The south used to be the home of summer heat - not anymore. Now everyone has their little 'heat domes' and temperatures well into the hundreds. Show-offs. In Augusta, we creep into the low 90s, some days, between daily thunderstorms. Oh, well.

My parents are here! I haven't seen them in the flesh in almost two years. Each time I had a holiday, they were off doctoring without borders. Every time I've seen my mom this week it seems like a surprise. I'll walk into the kitchen or see her in the den. I hug her every time (Step too) . They seem grayer than I remember, it's scary and it makes me sad. When I mentioned it to Brice (on facetime) , he just nodded noncommittally.

Earlier today, my mom, Lisa and I went shopping for our junior year of college. I don't actually need anything; shopping was really a chance for us to visit and do what we like the most - mallng. I like college gear, the clothes, tech, the odds and ends. College clothes are simpler, more utilitarian than I'd imagined back in high school. I'd brought a trunk of Anna Molinari designer clothes to Yale, but I only ended up wearing those at events.

Being home reminds me of how I'd dreamed of going away to college, especially back in the covid lockdown days. I still dream about college but now they're stress dreams where next semester I get all the wrong classes, I'm placed in the wrong residence, or my roommates are all gone.

My mom's still my mom and she wants to know all about Peter.

"How'd you end up with Peter? " she asked.

"Well, " I said, shifting dresses on the store rack distractedly, "we met in a coffee shop freshman year, then I saw him on campus a few times. I was drawn to him, " I confessed.

"How so, " my mom asked.

"I like tall guys and he had an unkempt, scarecrow quality that gave him a.. vulnerability. He wasn't all muscular or fratty." I further defined, making a yuck face. "And he obviously needed fashion help (my specialty) ."

"And, " my mom prodded me after a moment.

"But he was a doctoral student, " I sighed, "and I was a lowly freshman. I mean, why would he be interested in me? " Mom gave me the side eye. "Sure sex, maybe but I wasn't looking for THAT."

My mom and Lisa were shuffling through racks of dresses too, each showing me the occasional standouts for themselves or me. My mom stayed quiet and just watched me. She wanted more but, as if I were still a high schooler, I was inclined to give her the minimum info. She broke me down by eyeing me.

“Eventually though, I began spilling, we got to talking and when we talked, he seemed like a person of substance. I mean, he was working on his PhD. I shrugged, He's a serious guy - forthright, no-nonsense, shy and lowkey funny. We actually got 'together' at the beginning of sophomore year. (I'm hoping he'll come for a visit but I'm holding that for now.)

“Annick told me he's from California..” My mom followed up, “Have you met his parents?” “You know, I leaned into her confidentially, I'm working on my emotional and behavioral independence.” She Laughed and let it go - for the moment - I have no illusions about that.

Meanwhile Lisa and I are out on the lake early every morning water skiing. Charles is in his element, skippering the boat while Carol (Mrs. Charles) mixes coleslaw and grills bacon cheeseburgers. In the afternoons, we've begun studying for a couple of hours.

Lisa & I are both molecular biophysics and biochemistry majors. Our books for next semester arrived the same day we did, and we've started to read ahead. Everything about Junior year is extra. Our classes will be full of Biochemistry and biology labs, psychology, statistics, and research for credit class with names like “Quantitative Approaches in Biophysics and Biochemistry” and “Research in Biochemistry and Biophysics.”

I'm already set to continue my hospital volunteering and we'll need to begin to study for our MCATS (Medical College Admission Tests) . Next summer we apply to med-schools!

Of course, my Mom, Mz 'I know everything about med-school admissions' has a list of every other conceivable requirement for med-schools, like reference letters and God-knows what else and she'll drop that list on us, like a ton of bricks, with the least hint of encouragement.

But she gets her hugs anyway.

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Close

I want to hold you close forever,
to savor the vivid, fleeting intimacy,
that, like candy, seems gone too soon.

I'm a practical person, so I asked Peter,
"What works better, duct tape or velcro? "

Sure, some things will be awkward, at first,
like walking, thanksgiving dinner with parents,
shopping, bathing and driver's license photos
but those always suck - let's accept that.

We'll live and love - together - without apologies.

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Gimmie

Peter's off again to job interview (second round, in Geneva) , he was only here two days but something of him remained behind. Oh, fingerprints for sure - but memories too - like scattered Christmas wrappings - or a poem:

Ok, gimme me your best day, take your best shot at perfection.

Our minds take experiences and press them grape-like,
into the intoxicating liquor of memory.

The vivid ones linger - unaltered - like youthful Internet mistakes forever posted.

Someday to beckon us back, teasingly - like bright, neon signage.

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Tha Boyfriend

Making him argue with me about something silly, so we can make up.
Stealing his pencil so he has to put his arms around me to get it.
Walking to class a different way, because I know I'll pass him.
Jogging together or racing him to the top of the climbing wall.
Having him walk me to class even though it's out of his way.
Playing, "yeah, but have you ever seen one of THESE?"
Driving the countryside to see the changing fall leaves.
He's weird, I'm weird, our weirdnesses mesh perfectly.
Hearing a love song and thinking, wow, it's about him.
Watching him work out, study, or talk to his friends.
He'll call me at 2am and tell me to stop studying.
Making up stories to tell him in silly voices.
When he brings me coffee between classes.
When he picks me up, like I'm weightless.
Stargazing together on chill fall evenings.
When he picks out my outfit for the day.
When we get ready, together, to go out.
Studying at a coffee shop together.
The way he makes me feel happy.
The way he makes me feel smart.
Buying him things, like clothes.
His twangy western accent.
The way he says my name.
Dancing without music.
His exciting otherness.
The way he smells.
The butterflies I feel knowing he's coming to town - tomorrow.

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Summer Persists

Our summer fellowships are over! We learned a lot - for instance - how summer's a lot less fun when you're hemmed-up, inside working. I mean, we preesh'd the clinical experience, the learning, and especially how good these fellowships look on our med-school applications - seriously - but there were a hundred rules - aren't rules incompatible with summer?

Hmm, Ok, let's see, something poetic..

As the summer sun's blistering radiance waned, shadows,
muscled by sunrays to the marginal edges and corners,
gradually spread, like water - soothing, lenifying and assuaging
simmered nerves with their refreshing, canopied touch.

If sunlight scorched with heat, twilight soothed and gentled,
while varnishing, the dimming world with rainbow, event-horizons,
larger, more inventive, colorful and glorious than any mere mortal art.

Night gradually squeezed, unseen, through those vivid sunset cracks,
and refreshing night-air, drawn in by the last, escaping updrafts of heat,
rustled cooling relief to weary workers seeking the solace of evening and home.

back to unpoetic realities..

When work was finished, we'd retreat from the heat, racing up to the rooftop
pool, like two happy porpoises out of school.

Whoever invented poolside food delivery, should win the Nobel Prize for 'thank
you very much.' We wouldn't go back to our rooms until it was dark and we'd
started to prune.

Now, we've a month to relax before our Junior year begins.

We got letters from Yale that said, 'As upperclassmen..' 'Upperclassmen! ' We
shouted as we danced in hand-holding circles, singing, 'Upperclassmen,
upperclassmen, upperclassmen, upperclassmen. upperclassmen.'

We've grown so much at Yale.

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Ufos

If you ask our NewsMax, America One fueled, republican congressmen who won the last election - they'll pretend that they don't know. But hey, these are the guys, the 'honest brokers' we can trust, to figure out UFOs.

These republicans disavow Trump's clear treason. If they refuse to follow those clues, like video captured by the guilty themselves - how can their UFO 'hearings' fail to amuse? It's a shrewd political distraction, a republican red-herring, to put vague 'aliens' in the news just when Trump's lawyers are figuring out which prison facility he should choose.

In this circus of misinformation, we're offered unproven decades of government collusion, heck, we even have that RFK.jr nut insisting that the alien saucers are full of jews.

Of course, the aliens must be from distant galaxies - in their new breed of flying saucers - why else would they be turning down so many lucrative showbiz offers?

Will it turn out that the cute, little, ET-guys are here conducting interstellar analysis? Stay tuned. Have the aliens come to eat us - should we be frozen in fearful paralysis? Or will our republican overlords, so busy removing our freedoms, decide it's time to save us?

There's no long proven, scientific fact that the newer, dumber, Republicans haven't disputed, maybe the UFOs were sent back from the future, their mission: study primitive human stupid.

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The River Of Rhyme

I'm standing close by a river of rhyme,
where words cascade, in endless pantomime,
each line is a ripple, on the rugose water's crest,
but the chaotic current seems a randomized mess.

I see waves of words riding swells of sonnet,
into concrete verse, only to crash upon it.
There are dark plaintive whirlpools of elegy
and swirling haikus kissing off sharp envoi.

This river of rhyme could wash me away,
with its desperate currents of poetic dismay.
Its sensual verses can become a toxic wine,
oh, God, don't let me drown in the river of rhyme.

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Pitches

The band was loud, in the other room and the bar was jammed.
He set his drink down a little too hard and it over-sloshed a bit.

"Run away with me," he said, spreading his arms wide, "I'm done with school!"
"Well.. you graduated - that's why you're done," she said, somewhat confused.
"We share a gravity, you and I - we're.. we're like aligned suns," he romanticized.
"You should've majored in sales." she said, sipping her own beer.
"Our love is so real, so raw - it's pure and yet - so street."
"We have 'love cred'?" She asked doubtfully.
"Wherever we go, we'll navigate that urban maze, hand in hand, we'll OWN those concrete streets, we'll paint our own graffiti!"
"Have you snorted something?"
"No matter what life throws at us, we'll face those challenges head-on and we'll stay united."
"Have you been practicing this?" She asked
"We'll swagger," he said, "our love will be timeless.."
"And rhymeless," she interjected hopefully.
"Together, we'll be urban legends.." he continued.
"Like Bonnie and Clyde?" she asked, making a yuck face.
"We'll be living art," he said dreamily.
"Sounds dope." She admitted.
"Then you'll DO it?" He asked.
"Until Monday," she said, nodding in assent, "classes start on Monday," she shrugged.
"It was worth a shot." he said stoically, after a moment.
"It was a good pitch" she said, taking his hand in hers.
"I didn't oversell - I wasn't too pushy?"
"No, you were right there"
"Maybe next time," he said.
"Yeah, maybe next time"
They kissed.

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La Ferme

It was a cool, overcast and windy Sunday afternoon in March 2014. We were about 50 miles from Paris, at my Grandmère's (grandmother's) farm. She lives in Paris, but she owns a Château and surrounding 1,100-hectare farm that she calls her 'fall retreat.'

Between three and five hundred people work on the farm, the Château and its surrounding shops (some work is seasonal) . The shops sell wool, cheese, wine and ice cream produced on the farm, as well as touristy things. Many of the employees live on the farm, rent free. Their homes, owned by the farm, form a hameau (village) . I didn't understand much of this at the time, I was 10 years old.

My Grandmère was dedicating a new store just off the village green. The green wasn't square, like those in the UK and it didn't have swings or a slide, as I'd hoped. You'd think I'd know a hamlet my Grandmère owned but this place was alien to me. I'd arrived as part of her entourage but as the presentation ground on, I got bored. So, I took Charles by the hand and off we went.

We (my little nuclear family) were living in the UK then and we were visiting Paris for the Easter holiday. The fall before, as the school year had started, a girl in my grade (4th grade or year 5 in the UK) had been kidnapped and murdered on her way home from school. My Grandmère was 'having none of it, ' and hired Charles, a burly, red-headed, just retired, ex-NYC cop, as my security, escort and practical nanny. He'd been with me for about half a year, at this point, and we'd become fast friends.

It was the height of the pre-summer, Easter season. In addition to the villagers, there were tourists everywhere, picnicking on the grass, visiting the shops and playing football (soccer) .

Most of the tourists seemed to have small children that ran around. The townspeople sat on benches, eating ice creams and playing dominoes or quoits, a horseshoes-like game, played on a sand pitch.

You couldn't mistake the two groups - the natives and the tourists. The townsfolk were plainly dressed, the women in simple smocks and sweaters, the men wearing slacks, tweed jackets, berets or tag hats. The tourists spoke other languages - there were Italians, Britts, Germans and even Americans - who wore sports logoed t-shirts, shorts, sneakers and baseball caps.

As Charles and I wandered around the village, I asked, 'Can we get a sirop? ' One of the most popular drinks, in France, is a grenadine sirop (soda) . We stopped and as Charles bought us drinks, I wandered a way off. He found me, moments later, hanging from a tree limb, upside down, my hair sweeping the grass like a broom.

'Stop that, ' he'd said, swooping me up and off the branch with his soda free hand and setting me alright. As he picked leaves out of my hair, he said, 'Don't wander away from me like that, you know better.' 'Yes sir' I agreed. A moment later, he picked me up and placed me atop a low, four-foot parapet wall that ran around the village. I could feel sharp, rough stone edges through my cotton dress but I drank my sirop and didn't complain.

'You saved me from the dragon, ' I said, after my first few sips. 'What dragon? ' he said.

'The dragon that had me in its teeth, over there.' I pointed at the tree where I'd been upside down.

'I saved you from yourself, ' he said, as he looked around the square.

'That's silly, ' I announced, 'how can someone need saving from themselves? '

'Oh, It happens all the time, ' he said.

The event ended and as people began leaving, they filed by us on the sidewalk. The village men doffed their hats and the women nodded a quick curtsy as they passed. 'Why are they doing THAT? ' I asked Charles, 'am I a princess? ' 'No, ' he snorted, 'you're no kind of princess. They're doing it out of respect for your illustrious grandmother.' 'Oh, ' I said disappointedly.

A moment later our car pulled up and we were headed back to the city. 'Did you have fun? ' my Grandmère asked, 'yes mam, ' I answered. 'Did you behave yourself? ' She followed up. 'Mostly, ' I admitted. She nodded, pronouncing, 'That's how it should be, ' as the limo turned onto the autoroute (expressway) and accelerated for lunch in Paris.

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Leeza

(Leeza, my roommate Lisa's little sister, was off-tha-hook earlier this summer)

thirteen
peach flesh
fabuk buster
nu-metal priss
sexless breasts
bitten fingernails
dirty babyskin feet
mirror mesmerized
straight-eyed honesty
grouchapottamus
without analysis
corollary sister
wide eyed
hot mess
skinny
pacer
bella
doe



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Webster: Corollary: something that naturally follows another (like sisters)

slang...

off tha hook = out of control

fabuk = rotten banana

buster = acts like a punk-b*tch

nu-metal = new generation heavy metal, hated by purists

priss = baby

grouchapottamus = someone perpetually grouchy and edgy

hot mess = a handful, a piece of work, a colorful character.

pacer = very smart, hard to keep up with, sets the pace

bella = someone to handle with care

doe = girl

Krispy = super exclusive

*Leeza tested into some krispy mathcamp and that apparently calmed her down.

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Survival

Lisa and I finally tested covid-free! When we saw our results, we began an impromptu dance that felt like levitation.

Although my covid case seemed much milder, Lisa's been nothing but supportive. Why just yesterday morning, before we tested, Lisa said, 'If you test covid-free before I do, I'll kill you.' She was holding a spork which gave the threat a specific gravity it might not otherwise have had.

'Back off, Sweeny, ' I said.

We worked the next day, masked - just in case - and I'd swear that Rebecca, my surgeon, almost smiled when she saw me. As funny as Rebecca is, off-hours, once she puts on that white coat - forgetaboutit - she goes to some other, humor-free zone.

That night, we went out to our favorite bar to celebrate our Lazarus-like resurrections.

In the club, as we were walking to the bar, Lisa asked me, 'What if we get carded? ' I gasped. Never, have I EVER been carded. To even suggest the possibility is to risk breaking a spell that has lasted since I was fifteen years old and first walked in the adult-bar world.

It's not that I look old, I've been told I don't look 21 (although I'm almost 20) - but in dark, bar-light - I just look 'right, ' like I belong. And let's face it, no bar turns away college girls or charges them a cover - we're good for business.

I put a hand on Lisa's shoulder and stopped us in our tracks. 'Turn around three times, ' I said.

'Why? ' She asked. 'To break the god-damn, bad luck, vu doo you just put on us! ' I said exasperatedly. She shrugged and started to turn in a circle. Again I took her by the shoulders, 'Counter-clockwise, ' I instructed, 'don't you know anything? ! ' Once she'd broken the jinx, we were free to go on. The next part can only be poetry.

Behind the bar were shelves of bottles, brightly lit,
with pastel glows that shame the merely silver moon.
Red rums, golden bourbons, begging you to commit,
elixirs that dull every pain and brighten every mood.
Give us your tired, your lonely, and like Houdini

we'll invoke fun with mystical words like 'martini.'

We were basking in those lantern-like glows, like tourists, in heaven, when a bartender said, 'What can I get you? ' How generous those words were, how open and inviting.

'What's your name? ' I asked, he was wearing a name tag but I leaned in and gave him my friendliest smile. It's important to establish a personal connection - but you can't get carried away. He might be gay and decide you're trailer.

'Brian, ' he said. Brian was talking to me, but then he'd noticed Lisa and suddenly, he couldn't take his eyes off her (Lisa's an adriana) . This bartender wasn't gay at ALL.

I handed him my black, Centurion, American Express card 'Can we set a tab for us? ' I motioned to include Lisa, 'and please include a 30% tip for yourself.' I smiled. He smiled.

'Oh, and there'll be a gentleman joining us as well (Charles) .'

'Sure.' he said, as he swiped the card on his iPad, adding, 'now, what are you having? '

I'm a bit of a bon vivant, where cocktails are concerned but tonight, we'll keep it vanilla.

'We'll start with a Cherry coke (for Charles) and, ' I looked at Lisa for approval, 'Two American Martinis? ' She smiled, 'Please, ' I added, putting my card away. The coke is psychologically important; it gives the bartender what's called 'plausible deniability.'

'Do you have a menu? ' I said, as he turned to go. 'Coming right up, ' he said.

We were on a rooftop terrace that overlooked the Boston skyline. To the left, there were tables enclosed in glowing, geodesic bubbles that changed colors and off to the right, a dance space where couples were dancing, and a DJ was spinning 'Sorja Smith's - Little things.'

Our drinks arrived and Lisa and I laughingly toasted our covid survival.

At that moment, at least, everything seemed right with the world.

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slang...

sweeny = Sweeny Todd, the murderous, demon barber of fleet street (Sondheim musical)

forgetaboutit = 'forget about it, ' best said with a fake, somewhat racist, Italian

accent.

trailer = as in trailer trash

adriana = a stunningly gorgeous girl

anais vionet

Whispered

In a breeze of timid whispers
and with wary downcast eyes
the secret world was opened
to where true depth of feeling lies.

With each step, stories were told
and a tapestry of intimacy unfolded.
to dare or not to dare
to care or not to care.
In the dog-days of romance,
those are the calls
that lovebirds must answer.

anais vionet



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Stirring Things Up

When I was little, my stepfather and I would be outside, coloring the driveway with chalk or throwing a frisbee and he'd stop and say, "I'm gonna go stir your mama up."

He'd go in the house, coming out minutes later with my mom hot on his heels, waving her arms and haranguing his retreating back. She couldn't see the big grin on his face as he approached me, "It's good for her heart," he'd say, chuckling and resuming whatever we were doing, "We've got to keep her on her toes." He's a master of dolorous mischief.

Flash forward to a cold, dark, Yale, winter evening in 2023. Peter and I are in the suite's common room. Four dorm rooms share this 'living room' area but we're alone, which was rare.

I'd been reading for about an hour and I was only half done. A chemistry PSet was next. I closed my Chinese language studies book and looked up. Peter was there, sitting on the floor, leaning back on the far end of the red corduroy couch where I was sitting. His long lanky frame was curled around the book he was reading, like an awkward python.

As I watched, he plucked a mint-chocolate milkshake off the white coffee table, bringing the straw to his lips without ever taking his eyes off his book.

Homework, homework, homework.

I was bored and wanted a little attention, a little fun.

"Was I your first choice?" I asked him, as he noisily slurped at the last of his milkshake.

"First choice for what?" He asked.

"To be your girlfriend," I clarified, emphasizing the last word.

He thought for a moment, "No, I had salty love-jones for Ivy Waters in second grade. Why?"

"I don't know, It just occurred to me to ask," I confided. "so, why did you choose me then?"

"Well," he said, raising his eyebrows in all, fake sincerity, "you know all the best jokes," and with that, he went back to his milkshake (argh!).

"I know, you're finishing your doctorate," I said, "but you could

be a flight attendant! "

Peter stopped trying to stir the last of his milkshake into a slurpable lump and froze in thought. "It's TRUE, " I continued, "Really - you need to be flexible in your planning. I read that most physicists slave away in povertude."

"Povertude, huh? ' He said, and resumed his mint-chocolate work - his straw making a loud "ssssuuuuussssskkkkkkkkkk, " empty-cup air-sucking sound.

"AI isn't going to replace sexy flight attendants, " I offered, as my last argument in the matter.

After a moment he asked, "You really think I could carry it off? " Putting his palm on his hip and wiggling his shoulders in a provocative shimmy.

"I KNEW you'd leave me at the FIRST opportunity, " I said, turning sharply away and beginning to ignore him - the universal cap of girlfriends everywhere - with a condensed absence of attention that, I hoped, spoke unspoken things.

Setting his milkshake down, he gave me a lecherous smile, which made me giggle, and began crawling in my direction.

"Eeek! " I shrieked, laughing, as he climbed up on the couch, "I still have homework! "

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Webster: Dolorous: 'causing grief.'

slang...

PSet = problem set (homework) .

salty = mad

love jones = crush

povertude = the state of lifelong poverty

cap = playful insult

anais vionet

Love And The Law

(a story in trochaic tetrameter)

Even a Prince must bend his knee
to the lass who has won his heart.
'Please be my bride, stay by my side
forever - tell me we shall wed.'

'My love and affections are yours,
they have never been better fed
- you are surely pleasures master,
with your rough hands and softer lips.'

'Then let us petition the clerk,
we can be wed in a fortnight! '

Sometimes love takes dismaying turns.

There are standards, some are double.
The future princess must be chaste.

The clerk asked, 'Are you a virgin? '

'Do you seek to entrap us, sir? '
The prince asked, his hand to dagger.

'We cannot hoodwink the law, sir.
It must be asked and answered.'

And so the clerk asked it again,
'Would you swear on your honor miss? '

'If I had a virgins honor, '
the possible, future princess said.

The high clerk sighed and sheathed his pen.

'Most honest and least virtuous
lady, the marriage cannot be.'

'So, then the law is strictly tied
to something lost in love's first blush? '
She asked, with no show of dismay.

'My actions follow the law, miss.'
If the clerk sounded bored, he was.

The prince, however, was outraged.
and on the verge of a salvo.

The clerk feared a soliloquy.

To stall the coming storm, the clerk
said, 'I believe you KNOW the King? '

'He's my father! ' The prince revealed,
to no one's shock or great surprise.

'The King, the law - the law, the King? '
The clerk's finger turned like a wheel.

Somewhere deep in prince's mind
a dim bulb lit. 'To the Castle! '

The clerk smiled wryly at the lass,
who shrugged back. Love would find a way.

anais vionet

Cards

If my days were fanned out in front of me,
like a magicians playing cards,
I couldn't pick one, just one, any one
that was better for your absence.

anais vionet



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Diagnosing

If you had one year of love,
and then you had to say adios,
should you be glad or morose?

Sure, if it ends, it's not what I'd hoped,
We just weren't destined to be betrothed.

We had fun, we were close and jocose,
we snogged until we practically choked,
and we did ALL the fun things that were gross,
but our forte was that we felt safe, I suppose.

Now, I'm not saying it's over, but I tend to diagnose,
things and while I wouldn't say that we love overdosed,
I would guess that we shared more love than most.

anais vionet



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Ak..

The first time you kissed me it was a surprise, I wasn't ready.
It was a sneak attack, funny 'cause they say the girl 'always knows.'
I think we're lucky we didn't chip a tooth.

The unexpected slowed me - 'ok, that happened, ' I thought.
Because I'd wondered, before - 'does he like me like THAT? '
and suddenly you came into sharp focus, your lips, your eyes,
your goofy smile. It changed things, for us - like Jesus's birth
changed time - there was before kiss (bk) and after kiss (ak) .

We somehow kludged our way into love - the old fashioned way
without navigation software, dating sites, hookup apps or breadcrumbs.

Like our foremothers and fathers or Columbus - we bumbled into a new world.

anais vionet



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It...

I've got it - woot!

Well, we've (Lisa and I) have it. The Covid.

After living carefully serpentine lives - for the last half decade - we both have it.

Lisa started feeling punky Friday night, after work. Saturday she had some sniffles and we both took Covid tests, coming up positive. By Saturday evening, Lisa was laid-low and looked a flu-like death warmed over. I am asymptomatic, not a cough or a sneeze, although I do feel an occasional little dizziness.

'I hate you, ' she said, in a moment of clarity and focus. I think it's a temporary, fever-driven hatred - but time will tell.

Charles, our escort and consigliere, goes everywhere we go, didn't catch it. He's become our designated shopper. When I asked Lisa if she wanted anything she said, 'Orange juice and mango gelato.' Twenty minutes later, Charles handed me (masked and gloved through a door crack) two bags - one contained a large, extra-pulp orange juice, the other had a \$70 selection of various ice creams, gelatos and ice cream sandwiches (the receipt was still in the bag.)

Saturday night, I texted my mom, who's spending yet another summer overseas with 'Doctors Without Borders.' She Face Timed me not two minutes later, from somewhere in Poland, or Ukraine - 4,170 miles away - and after checking I was ok - delivered what I think of as 'family infectious disease lecture #17, full of 'If you're going to be a doctors' and 'You know betters.' I love technology.

My sister Annick, a doctor herself, was knocking at our (her) door twenty minutes later. She gave us both mini-physicals and left a list of things to periodically check (like blood-oxygen levels) as well as two boxes of Paxlovid, 'Do NOT take this unless or until I tell you to.'

We all have Apple watches and are now walkie-talkie connected for even more instant communication.

Rebecca, my fellowship surgeon, was, of course, very sympathetic and supportive when I told her but displayed a careful, verbal, clinical distance - addressing me as 'Mz Vionet' once - instead of her usual 'Anais' or the even more usual 'excuse me.'

I've been promoted to nurse, cook and bottle washer - but the ice cream, topped with a little Bailey's Irish liqueur, is spectacular.

Anyway, here we are. We've finally joined the Covid parade. I guess Covid isn't over after all.

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Webster: Consigliere: a trusted adviser or counselor.

anais vionet

The Wish

"You can have any wish," the genie said.

"Any ONE wish?" the girl asked, a little disappointedly.

"One wish," the genie answered, shrugging.

"Oh.. then" she said, thinking it over. "I wish for.. a banana," she said whimsically.

"A banana?" The genie asked, hesitantly.

"Yes," the girl said, nodding her head.

A banana appeared on the table.

"As a banana pudding, please - in a bowl," she amended.

The genie nodded, and a large bowl of delicious looking pudding took the place of the banana.

"With a spoon?" she asked sweetly, and a spoon appeared by the bowl.

She tasted the pudding and it was, indeed, magically delicious.

"A jewel encrusted spoon." she corrected, and again it was so.

Then she blurted, all at once:

"The Spoon is In the hand of a handsome prince, who's genetically identical to Timothée Chalamet and is so in love with me that he proposed a moment ago - to the delight of his father, the king, who knows we will both live long and happy lives, having several delightful children - that will rule long after us - but who, unbeknownst to anyone, has an immensely serious heart condition that, sadly, will claim him roughly fifteen minutes after he pronounces the prince and I husband and princess!"

The prince appeared, and the happy king.. It all happened.

As the ensuing dramas unfolded, the genie took his leave.

"It's *never* just a banana," he said to no one, snapping his finger and vanishing in a puff of wispy white smoke.

anais vionet

Start The Day

Lisa and I were watching one of our favorite series last night, a Japanese manga called "The Way of the Househusband" and I could barely keep my eyes open. I went to bed at a decent hour (11: 30) but when I got in bed, I couldn't sleep, I just laid there. It was rude and caused me to oversleep.

I don't mean to brag, but I can go from oversleeping, to brushed and showered in less than 15 minutes, I'm really a marvel of efficiency (with still wet hair) , especially since we wear scrubs.

I grabbed my iPad, stuffed it in my rucksack, and hey, I was ready to go.

In the living room, it took me a moment to situate myself - it was a very noisy and disorienting environment - what with Lisa yelling at me for running late, but soon we were off.

Just a girl, her lemon ginger Kombucha, and her angry roommate, ready to face the world.

We stepped out into the morning and.. Ughh! I'd forgotten my AirPods. I double checked, not there.

Lisa gives me a threatening look. "PLEASE, " I begged, desperately, "MY AIRPODS! "

"OH, my GOD! " Lisa said, glancing, irritatedly at the Apple Watch I gave her for her birthday.

I ran up the stairs and was back in NO time, really, really ready to go.

Just a girl, her Kombucha, AirPods and angrier roommate, ready to face the world.

My sister's apartment is about 7 walking minutes from the hospital. As we were walking, I had my AirPods in and was rolling with Kanye. I in NO way endorse his CrAzY. But If I start the day out, with "Through the Wire" and "Jesus walks, " I'm tweaked for whatever gamut Rebecca (my surgeon) has in store for me. I paused the slaps, momentarily, as we passed a herd of boys, but I was bouncing again in a blink.

Lisa and I are in the second week of our two-month, summer fellowships - shadowing surgeons (different surgeons) for "clinical experience." The first thing I do every workday morning is bring Rebecca a large coffee (from

the cafeteria) . She comes in at 5: 30am every morning of the week and leaves God-knows-when - certainly, well after we do at 4: 30pm.

She spends the three hours before I come in, reviewing patient notes and surgical plans. I gently rapped on her open door. She doesn't look up, but she knows it's me.

"Good morning, " I whisper, Rebecca's seated at her desk, working on her laptop. I set the coffee on her right side and after I remove the pre-existing empty cups, I hesitate.

"What's up, " she says, leaning into her screen to check something as she keys to enlarge it.

"I have a small question, " I say, "Are we supposed to be filling out timecards? " She doesn't say anything, continuing to examine the - whatever. After a few seconds, I added:

"Quinn said we have to fill out timecards."

"Did he? " Rebacca asked, rhetorically, after a bit. She'd stopped studying the screen and gotten a faraway look. Then, after another moment, she said, "Well, bless his heart, " which made me chuckle, because we're both southern girls and that's shorthand for "f**k him."

"Thank you." she says (for the coffee) . I'd been dismissed. We have rounds in twenty minutes.

anais vionet

The 4th

It's a firework holiday,
so let's light up the night,
wave the stars and stripes,
eat barbecue and drink bud light.

We'll celebrate the liberties
that SCOTUS says we've still got
It appears they've all been bought
and before their terms are over
they'll resurrect Dred Scott.

Watermelon, hot wings
we've even added new things,
like smash & grab lootings
and frequent random shootings.

Some Republicans want to break away
to form a less perfect union
can you form a successful nation
based on the politics of illusion?

There used to be parades
I'm told, that featured local
things, like fire fighting brigades
I guess we're just too fractured now,
to sashay in such displays

I bet those were the days.

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Webster: Sashay = proudly walk in confident display

anais vionet

Unbefitting

(a sonnet in iambic pentameter)

I was drawn to you, from the first instant
something about you aroused my senses
a message unspoken, and insistent
that could somehow bypass my defenses.

I couldn't show it, you couldn't know it,
so I sat quietly and ignored you.
When chasing dreams, love is unbefitting
this I'd been told, and so, it must be true.

When I met you again, you were funny,
not what I assumed, you were something new.

Hashtag, as a boyfriend, he's been money,
such was the start of our kissing booth truth.

anais vionet



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Friday Night Lites

It's Friday night and a group of us, the 'university summer fellows' (Quinn, Jammie, Monique, Lisa and I) are going groovin'. Quinn, a Harvard man (we've shed our jaundiced opinions of him) , assured us he knows the Boston bar scene. We're going to test that.

We told him we wanted to sway to whimsical beats and chase vivid, neon lights across dance floors, like a bunch of cats - till the hours get wee. His plan is for us to pop-in the 'touristy' places, like 'the Havana Club', 'the Manray club', 'Garage Boston' and 'The Grand', we're so 111. As usual, Charles is our party mom, escort and driver.

When Peter and I were in Saint-Tropez, earlier this summer, there were beach clothes - dresses, skirts and mens shirts - where they'd woven micro-LEDs into the flowered, dry-wick, fabrics. I think the effect is amazing, friday, and joyous. I got two skirts for everyone (all of my roommates) . Tonight Lisa and I are wearing a couple of them.

Funny. I've mentioned it before, but Lisa's an audrey. Her school friends and roommates are all used to it, we've been exposed, we have built up immunity. But Quinn's a newbie, when Lisa came into the living room, LED glittered and lookin-right, he was literally stunned. He froze, for a microsecond, his face went blank and his fingers wiggled, as if disconnected from his overloaded central nervous system.

'OMG! Jammie said, having just turned around, 'holla at ya brooke! , ' he declared, shaking his head in admiration. 'Umm mmm, ' he added.

'I'm sure.' Lisa said, starting to transfer things from her everyday bag to her glittery clutch, the girl cannot accept a compliment. Quinn, coming out of it, cleared his throat.

We're ready. Let Friday night begin!

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Webster: Jaundiced = 'influenced by feelings of distaste, or hostility.'

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slang..

pop-in = drop in, visit

audrey = an absolutely stunning girl

lookin-right = dolled-up, dressed to the nines

111 = excited

party mom = the sober person on a bar hop or party.

friday = fun, fun, fun

holla at ya = respect

brooke = beautiful

anais vionet

I'm Too Tired To Dance

**An exercise to write a sonnet in iambic pentameter

With heavy heart, I offer my remorse,
for I'm too tired to dance this weary eve.
The echoes of my workday's tireless chores
linger, leaving naught but fatigue's relief.

Oh, believe me, it pains me to disappoint,
for the music tempts me to sway and dance.
But the hours I've toiled, each task and each point,
have transformed me into a tired nudnik, perchance.

My spirit, once vibrant, now longs for respite,
to find solace in rest and replenish my self.
Though my passion for dance burns hot like cordite,
exhaustion demands I stay on the shelf.

Forgive me, my love, for this night I must rest,
but tomorrow, revitalized, we shall dance with zest.

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Webster: Nudnik = a boring person

anais vionet

Deepfake

I'm so siced about the Barbie movie. I just watched the latest trailer. I felt a fluttering in the stummy.

Peter's birthday was May 1st. 'What do you want for your birthday?' I'd asked. 'A flash for my iPhone,' he said. 'Your phone already HAS a flash,' I replied, helpfully.

'No,' he explained, 'a professional, external flash - they're much more subtle and variable.'

'What are you going to take pictures of?' I asked. 'You,' he said, smiling slyly.

'Me!?' I said, with a wrinkled nose, somewhat alarmed. 'You don't take pictures of ME.'

'Not usually,' he admitted, 'but we're going to Paris and the snaps will look better with a flash.' 'Just ME?' I asked, 'What about some ussies?' 'We'll take snaps of us, but you'll have savage new pics for your poetry sites.' So, Peter got his flash and he's taken a baZillion pix.

'Smile,' click, (iPhones don't always click, so the click's a writer's dramatic effect)

Peter takes bursts of 50 pix at a time and only one in fifty turns out looking good (my opinion) .

'Look this way,' click 'toss your hair,' click. Apparently salads and my hair are better 'tossed.'

So now we're in Paris, but before we can take our tourist pic, I must lean over, like I'm going to throw up and comb my hair forward, so when I flip it back, it will appear fluffy.

'Look sad, look happy, try not to look so drunk, look sexy,' he asks. 'You're kidding,' I replied. I exist only in his view finder,

'Just part your lips slightly and look vacuous,' he advises.

'Can I DO both at once?' I asked, as if challenged by a scientific equation.

'Don't roll your eyes,' he said. Today, he was 'the serious artist'. I'd never want to be a model.

Finally, I'd had enough constant photography and I just started looking moody. Peter seemed not to notice.

I read somewhere that when you smile, the activated muscles of your face actually improve your mood. Or something like that. Anyway, I'm trying to deepfake myself and smile my way to happiness. I ordinarily think of myself as tough, but lately, I'm soft.

A Yale counselor once told me that sometimes we tell ourselves a story and we just hold on to that version of things until it feels true. I have to stop thinking I'm on the edge of a deep, blue loneliness. I need to get on a metaphysical bike and ride away from my sad-self.

Later, when we're back at the hotel, Peter was reading in the living room and I was lying on the bed, watching another Heraclee Beach, sapphire and ruby, sundown through the hotel windows. Peter came looking for me. He had a book in one hand, his place saved with his index finger.

'What are you doing? ' He asked, lightly. 'Want to go out to dinner or get room service? '

'I'm thinking thoughts.'

'What kind of thoughts? He asked, taking a seat on a desk chair he'd rolled over. Now I'm watching his face and he's watching mine.

'You know how, everyday, at school, we tell each other everything that happened? ' Peter nodded. 'Which, of course, ' I'd continued, 'is impossible, but it's as if we're having experiences just so we could discuss them later - share them. It's like, when we aren't together, it isn't real life.'

'So..' he said, verbally prodding me on.

My voice felt thick, like it knew I wouldn't say things right. 'Well, I'm two me's now, I'm split right down the middle. Before you, things were easy. I was becoming Dr. Me, I had one goal, things were simple, ' I shrugged, 'but now, there's the me that's going to be a doctor and the me that needs you.' I can't seem to take my eyes off his face.

He touched my foot and wiggled it a little. 'You don't have to figure out the future right NOW, Mz overachiever.' He said in his soft, western drawl, 'You can't wrestle the future into orderly submission, like a chemistry test - we don't have enough data (says mr. physics) . Anyway, don't we have forty or fifty years to figure it out? '

Suddenly, my head felt clearer than it had for days. I chuckled. I may have had my hand over my mouth and a smile was so big it hurt my face.

'You were very patient to put up with me today, ' I said, turning slightly and quietly serious.

'You be you, ' he said, smiling bigly back, 'I wouldn't have it any other way.'

Then I got serious. 'Do you think we can find barbecue? '

'But of course! ' he said, in a fake French accent, like Lemiure, in 'Beauty and the Beast.'

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Slang...

sliced = super excited

stummy = a combination of tummy & stomach

ussies = a two person selfie

Songs for this:

Sheela-Na-Gig (Demo) by PJ Harvey

Simulation Swarm by Big thief

anais vionet

Dust

We are poor creatures
slimy organs imprisoned in flesh.
The sun burns us, water drowns us
our lives are rough and short,
we're little more than talking dust.

We all howl with angry doubts.
Our art may dry and chip
our science could let us down,
our poets stammer and grow quiet.

Humanity has always been imperfect,
but some of us are trying. We see the stars,
we know passion, we sing and dance
and are Indomitable - join us-
because the best is yet to come

anais vionet



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Monday Off

It's a holiday weekend, all of the 'fellows' have Monday off.
At lunch Wednesday, Lisa said, 'We need a throw-down.'
So, we made some invites and started spreading word around.
'You know, we all work hard enough, we need to get down! '
We asked for RSVPs, and got 43, for the effort, a decent payoff.

My sister's apartment has a balcony and plenty of space.
We spent Saturday shopping and rearranging the place.
Early Sunday, we hid all the breakables and decorated,
As people settled in, things took off - as we had anticipated.

I was surprised when I saw Quinn come in
I quietly turned to Lisa, mouthing, 'Who invited him? '
The blush on her face, gave her instantly away,
'We couldn't NOT invite him, we see him every day.'

More people were arriving, laughing and smiling, the party was thriving.
Everyone seemed to bring something, a bottle of Canadian goose,
a bucket of KFC, another of popeyes, some glowing aurora jungle juice,
taco dip and chips, a Boston Creme pie and a cake with purple icing.

When you feel right, you let the music ignite you,
the beat seems to drive you, the vibe helps excite you,
the bass starts to thump and, well, you're only young once,
you forget all your cares, for a delirium that's shared.

In this ocean of joy, I saw a sad and reserved boy.

It was Quinn, in the corner, slouching on the couch.
a model of insecurity, watching the party self consciously,
I looked at Lisa, rolled my eyes, and said, 'Why ME? '

I maneuvered over and took Quinn gently by the shoulders,
'Come ON, Quinn, you're among friends, so embrace the funk,
these GIRLS wanna dance, give `em a chance, you're not a monk! '
I pulled him to his feet, and dragged him over to Monique.
'Quinn, Monique - Monique, Quinn - let the dancing begin! '

By the end of the night Quinn was doing all right.

He has a quirky, awkward style, reconciled by a nice smile,
he'd danced with every girl, leaving them a little beguiled.
'Do it Quin, DO IT! ' A girl, at one point, had laughed.
'Oh, ' he'd said, gyrating in his herky-jerkily away, 'It's being DONE! '

Who could have known our stuffy, Harvard Quinn could be fun? !

anais vionet

Pencils & Crayons

I drew stick figures
things were simple

in a pencil world
mistakes were erased
you could start over

but an inchmeal awareness nagged
- the sky isn't gray, it's a liquid blue

but crayons were complicated
you couldn't erase things
mistakes were irrevocable.

and there were 148 colors in the big box
keeping them in rainbow order was work.

growing up is hard

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Webster: Inchmeal: gradual, or little by little

anais vionet



PoemHunter.com

Oldies

I'm laughing this morning, spontaneously. We're not studying any more. Our sophomore school year is over. I'm giddy, giggling, like a 9 year old on sugar.

I think I just finished the hardest class that I'll ever take - my last pure-math class, ever - and I got an "A"; Just barely - by two-hundredths of a point (.02) . That's by the skin of a bacteria, the thickness of a sigh or the weight of a glance. Yeah, and I'll take it very much.

We're gathered, with two extra-large NY Pizza Supremas, around Lisa's parent's long, white kitchen island. Lisa and I parked on tall bar stools and Peter, lounging on a nearby couch. The playlist we'd had going, had just ended. We're looping a lot of T.Swift because we're going to see her in concert in TWO days (May 14th 2023) . Leeza (Lisa's 13 yo little sister) is here too - but she's in a mood.

"You know what I want to hear?" I offered.

"What?" Peter asked.

"The other side of the door" I said. Leeza groaned.

"OH MY GOD," Lisa squealed, "ANAIS, Anais! ! , I KNEW I loved you, I already knew!"

Lisa turned to Peter, "Anais and I we, we have this string - some might call an invisible string"

"Yeah," I laugh. "tying us to each other," Lisa continued, laughing, "and sometimes I get so shocked when she reminds me it's there." "right," I agree.

"And you're so real for that - it's so true." Lisa finishes by starting the song.

"Taylor Swift's "the other side of the door" plays, Leeza stomps out, taking half a pie and when the song finishes there's silence.

"Wow" Lisa said. Peter looked up from wherever absurdly boring physics article he was reading.

"Sorry," I told Peter, fanning myself, "we're recovering. That song has the best outro in the business."

"Cause you just expect a song to end on a chill fadeout" Lisa explains, "and end nicely."

"This one just ends, BAM!" I laughed. "BAM!" Lisa echos, laughing as well.

"It's trenchant - the little black dress - you just have to shake your hips

every TIME, " I say.

"It eats, it eats every TIME, " Lisa agreed.

"It eats so much I forget he cheated on her! " I laugh, "I don't even CARE! "

"I don't even care, " Lisa chuckles, "in the outro, " she tells Peter, "she's takin' back her man because he got with some girl in a little black dress."

"It's a hard lyric, " I say, "the beautiful eyes, the conversations, the lies, are all I can think of."

"I like Taylor's version the best, " Lisa said, "you get the emotional maturity and her voice is more mature."

"Of course, " I said, "I grew up with that album - I think it came out in 2008 (I was 5) - but I remember, about two years ago, maybe three, I was in high school, some friends and I were driving to the lake and it was a full-on Swift-sing-along. We finished singing it, and I thought,

"WOAH, that song EATS - how had I missed that? "

"I know, " Lisa echoed, "her music just hits at different stages of life and still comes off fresh."

"Like someone discovering the Beatles, " Peter said, "who were - 60 years ago? "

"Yeah, or David, " I said. Peter looked confused.

"David - from the Bible? " I explained, "THAT was a long time ago too. Have you Godless Californian's ever read any of the Bible? "

"No, " Peter said, sarcastically, going back to his reading, "but I saw the movie."

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Webster: Trenchant: communication that's strong, clear, and perceptive.

Slang..

eats = fully enjoyable, it slays

anais vionet

The Gypsy

There was a homeless lady,
one afternoon, outside the hospital.
Was she homeless? I don't know.
She had a laden shopping cart,
which, on TV, is kind of a signature.
We were inside, waiting for an Uber.

She was outside, in chiaroscuro relief.
Dressed in bright, multilayered, mismatched
florals and brocades, she reminded me
of a gypsy. There are still gypsy caravans
in France. Are there gypsies in America?

She wore boots and long strings of beaded jewelry.
They would have had to have been glass, I supposed,
but tinsel with the glitter of those pop spangles,
she looked, en bloc, the richest and the poorest of us.

She wasn't young and she wasn't old. She sat alone,
on a short retaining wall, her cart within guarded reach.
I noticed her because every time I glanced over, she
was watching me with the dark unblinking eyes of a bird.

She had an easy confidence, in the wild, sitting safe
and protected by her clam, obstinate shell of boredom.

What must I look like to her - with her tangled hair
and unwashed face? Me in my permanent pressed
hospital wear, diminished by over-washing. A doll
behind glass, whose whole life is patterned by plans?

Our Uber pulled up, the number matched and as Lisa
opened the car door, I gathered my things and looked
back but the gypsy lady was gone, leaving a blank space.

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chiaroscuro = an art style using strong contrasts between light and dark
en bloc = at once, both

anais vionet

Work Vs Pleasure

Why is pleasure measured in moments,
while work is measured in weeks or years?

Pleasures are like insubstantial fictions, sweet treats gone
in the tasting or perhaps flowers, that once cut, wither.
So don't be enthralled by fickle snippets of passion.

Work and service have the weight of reward,
by labor's honest toil, we fashion, forge and provide.

anais vionet



PoemHunter.com

Mustard Yellow

Canada is afire and I'm confused, shouldn't the snow put that out?

The Boston sky is an interesting shade of mustard yellow,
and there's a pale orange haze where the sun should be.

Lisa, drowsily asleep-walked into the kitchen for her morning coffee.
'So this is Mars, ' I observed, 'Elon Musk will be so jealous.'
'Good, ' Lisa said, 'I was afraid it was nuclear winter.'
'There'll be no breathing today.' I updogged.

We could almost hear the slow, delicate pitter-patter fall of micro-ash.

'There's aaaa bright golden haze over Boston..' Lisa began to sing softly.
Lisa knows every Broadway score and can easily interpolate a song into every
conversation.

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Webster: Interpolate: 'inserting something, like music into a conversation.'

anais vionet



PoemHunter.com

Remodeling

Get out your sponges, stippling brushes and pens,
It's time for makeover-Monday-night to begin.
Think Winky Lux, L'Oréal, Urban Decay,
Maybelline, Armani and Fabergé

It's a black magic realm where brushes are wands,
where a carnival of colors are carefully crayoned.
We have palettes aplenty, in kaleidoscope hues,
to create fashion looks, both bold and subdued.

In the realm of makeup fashion, where trends never end,
we remodel each other - for fun - when we can.
Tonight, our new friend Jammie has come to watch us play,
and he even brought two bottles of chardonnay.

Lisa has a 'Miss Rose' case, like she saw in Bernadette Peters'
dressing room, on a backstage tour of Broadway's Shubert Theatre.
Konjac, Kabuki, Doe foots, Spoolie, Lisa's got legit tools to use.
'When it comes to makeup, ' she says, 'always avoid dupes.'

That night I was the chosen face, the excited living canvas.
Lisa's a practiced artist, her process is brisk and never tedious.
She painted my lips a crimson cherry, alluring and brightly sensuous,
my brows were moonlit art, my cheeks a midnight adumbrated edifice.

Lisa created a special look, where rebellious edge met elegance.
We took some snaps, then I washed it off - but Jammie was impressed!

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Webster: Adumbrate: 'to partially outline and obscure'

Slang: 'dupes' are off-brand knock-offs of famous luxury brands

anais vionet

Fellowships

I've only been at my fellowship gig a week, but It's official, I'm a candy-striper. Sort of, I wear a blue vest, not the old, red-striped dress, but it's the same job. I shadow my surgeon (Rebecca) most of the time, like when she does her rounds but otherwise, I study or try to be helpful by delivering specimens to the lab, messengering things from Rebecca to other doctors or assisting the nursing staff with very minor, mundane things.

My training, so far, has consisted more of what-nots than anything else. "You are not a doctor, you don't comment, don't advise, don't touch anything, don't perform CPR and if a medical emergency occurs, get out of the way - put your back against the wall." I made up the "back against the wall" part but that's the soul of it. I'm just an observant pair of eyes and ears or a Yale lampshade.

When Rebecca (my surgeon) does rounds, she usually has five or six interns in tow (medical school graduates who are first-year residents) . The interns review patient charts and get quizzed about symptoms, their meanings and possible treatments. It's very interesting to watch the process up close - these people are wicked-smart (that's a Boston saying) .

Growing up, my parents were both doctors. I found myself standing, listlessly, a million times, waiting in hospital corridors or by nurses' stations for one or both of them to break free so we could leave. I was exposed to 17 years of medical jargon, as they discussed treatments with other doctors or passed on their final instructions for the night. I'd roll my eyes impatiently, but I guess I absorbed more than I realized. I can pretty much follow the consults as they do the rounds.

I met two new people last week, who I think I'll see a lot of - Jammie and Quinn. They're both rising-juniors and fellows, from other schools, working with other surgeons. Jammie's a handsome, gay, black man from Georgetown University (my brother Brice's Alma mater) . He's loud, fun and smart, very smart.

Quinn, on the other hand, seems like a short, officious little dick. When we were introduced, he cast his eyes over me slowly and deliberately like a frat-boy or an experienced stock breeder and from the way he talks, you'd think he owned the place. He's from some second rate, local college, called Harvard.

Funny story, Jammie and I had just met and we were looking-up some fellowship

information, on his laptop, I was looking over his shoulder and as he flipped around - his computer files and folders were SO organized - there wasn't a stray file anywhere - not one. As we were huddled closely together I said, conversationally, because where I come from it means nothing to me and I guess I have no filters, "Are you gay?" He cringed, shocked, and laughingly said "SHHH!" He wasn't "out" at work. I swore his secret safe and we became fast friends.

Jammie's an observational comedian and as he's thinking out loud - at a hundred miles an hour - I wish I could record him, so I could play him back later, slowly and deliciously to take it all in. We had lunch together in the cafeteria Friday and when our time was up, I realized I hadn't eaten anything. I'd been too busy listening to him open-mouthed and laughing.

I realized I'm spoiled and not used to working indoors all day. We come in at 8 and we're released at 4: 30. It's almost a shock to see the sky isn't fluorescent-lit and the breeze isn't tainted with antiseptic smells. That was fellowship week 1.

anais vionet

Indolence

An occasional gust of wind will lift the translucent white voile curtains and then drop them like a child losing interest. The effect is like flash photography, a burst of sudden sunlight that paints our irises, then quickly fades.

It's a cool Paris morning. In the low 50s. The windows are open and we forgot to turn on the heat. It's perfect 'under the covers' weather. We've succumbed to laziness, refusing to get out of bed. Lazing-in is new enough to us that we're defining it with a gamut of synonyms.

'Listlessness, torpor,' Peter says, his index finger tracking the slow twirl of the ceiling fan.

'Stupor, slumberous, supineness,' I updog.

'Ooh! total submissiveness,' Peter said, drawing the last word out like it's dirty.

'Every man's dream,' I confirm.

'Inertia,' he says, triumphant in finding an engineering word.

'Good one,' I compliment. 'Lifeless, loafing laggard,' I add.

There's a knock at the door.

We look at each other guiltily, like we've been caught.

'We ordered breakfast last night,' Peter remembers.

'Oh, yeah,' I said, 'you get it,' I suggested.

'Why me?' he whined.

'Because you can wear less and because what if it's an ax murderer?

'

'These people work for your grandmother, she employs ax murderers?

'

'It could be a revolution - this is France - it happens.'

There's another knock.

'Get it! , ' I bleated, like a helpless goat.

'Am I expendable?' he asked, as a man might plead to a jury.

'Women and children first,' I remind him.

There's a third knock.

'Ok,' he says resignedly, as he rises, draws on shorts and heads for the door.

'You're my hero,' I assure him, before I pull the sheet up over my

head in case it IS an ax murderer.

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slang: updogged = to continue a conversation trend and maybe improve it.

anais vionet

Warp Speed

Holidays go by quickly, as if they don't want to hang around. My life seems to be happening at warp speed.

Lisa and I start our two-month summer fellowships tomorrow. It's hard to believe it's actually happening. Like most things in my life, this fellowship started as an obligation to my mom - shrouded in vague, emotional shadows - to perform the impossible.

I'd like to become a doctor but it's no milk run. And while ambition is powerful, it isn't magic. Yale has advisors to guide us but my mom, who has one Dr. daughter already and a son in med school believes her every suggestion is sacrosanct. She's usually right, but still (shrug) , I'm here.

My mom did have one good idea - going to France over vacation. Peter got to meet my Grandmère and I got to visit with some of my cousins - those spoiled-rotten, monied members of "the fancy" - who have no ambitions, no goals and no self-worth other than their momentary possessions. By the time Peter and I left, I was itching to get back to work.

You only get one chance at life and if you're lucky you're good at something. Think of all the people who were born in the desert - who would have been the greatest swimmers or skiers ever - but never had the chance to try. I'm chanel.

Lisa and I are at my sister Annick's 10th floor,4-bedroom apartment, in Boston. I don't think she stays here anymore. She's engaged, and my bet is that she's living at his place. At first, she pretended that wasn't true, that she was just thinking of staying there while Lisa and I we're here.

Ok, I thought to myself, but why is everything in the fridge brand new?
"Where's your cat? " I asked, like a detective reeling in a crook.
"Ok, " Annick admitted, "you exposed my dishonesty, "
she said with a laugh.

Lisa and I'll have this apartment to ourselves for two months. It's a feeling that's joyful, selfish and marvelous. We can see the hospital where Lisa and I will be working from Annick's balcony - it's that close. Annick bought this place because she's a doctor in residence there.

I got in from Paris yesterday. I'm jet lagged and toey about tomorrow. I doubt

I'll get much sleep tonight. Even though I'm making a great display of calm, idle boredom, Annick knows better.

"Are you guys nervous? " She asked.

Lisa immediately declared "Hells, yes! "

I was thinking of holding strong, but after a second, I mumbled

"Yeah."

I'm really hoping I'll be good at this fellowship business.

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slang...

the fancy = the very idle rich

chanell = lucky

toey = nervous, edgy

anais vionet

Shooting Birds At The Moon

Was I maudlin over our breakup? For a minute.

If I think of you now, it's like a slideshow of unflattering images.

At the time, my breakup buddies reminded me you were a bad choice - like a brand of deodorant that gave me a rash or fashionable shoes that chafed, even after they were stretched.

"Ruca, " my girlfriends would say, "you're shootin-terrible, they're a million pork-swords in the sea."

Finally, I pulled the trigger - double-tapped us.

At first, reminders of you, those siren whispers of nostalgia, were everywhere - like the moon - which, I just had to live with.

You passed from memory though, that's how memory works. Events fade, like last week's chemistry test, or yesterday's lunch.

Now, if someone asks me, "Hey, remember, what's his name, your big love from high school? "
I say "Nope."

I chose to laugh, dance - and shoot birds at the moon.

BLT Marriam Webster word of the day challenge: Maudlin: "exaggerated sadness"

Slang:

breakup buddies = friends who help you get over a breakup

ruca = girlfriend

shootin terrible = on a losing streak, not doing well, making bad choices

Pork-swords = come on, think about it - it's funny.

#breakups #memories #forgetfulness #moon

anais vionet

Kites

The Heraclee sky was a lurid, neon blue but the morning was surprisingly cool (at 54°) . The antemeridian sun managed to cast sharp, surreal, black-hole shadows, giving the world a baroque art look, as if we were strolling through a Rembrandt painting, where everything is defined by shadows.

The lavish breeze, coming up off the Mediterranean Sea, seemed compressed and frantic, as if trying to flee the choppy, sapphire water. Tall marsh grasses waved back and forth, as if to unheard music, reminding me of 60-thousand swaying arms at the Taylor Swift concert.

Higher up, the wind played with feather-like clouds, making them seem to rise, fall and spill over each other in their race for the horizon. On the beach, there were ten or more colorful, elaborate kites - the French love their multi-wired stunt kites.

There was a dragon, a multi-color WWI biplane, there were bird kites, an octopus and a swooping butterfly. We watched them for a while, from a hill. "I'm going to get one of those, " Peter said, dreamily (for use on the Malibu beach his parents' modest home overlooks) .

A little later, Peter and I decided to bike down to the beach from the hotel. The idea was valid but the bikes, seeming leftovers from World War 2, shook and rattled like percussion instruments as we made the death-defying plunge down the steep, uneven stone-laid path. We were laughing, screaming and half convinced we'd die by the time we reached the bottom.

Once there, a snooty concierge said, "That is NOT the bike path." Which seemed hilarious. When Peter replied, dead faced, "We're American, " as if that were an internationally understood pass for being stupid. It made us laugh so hard we couldn't look at each other for a couple of minutes. I don't know which hurt more, my bottom or my side.

As our guffaws were dying down, Charles arrived on the bike path.

"Why'd you do THAT? " (take the wrong path) he asked, with a tone of irritated censure.

"There was a sign, " I argued, gasping for air from my still doubled-up laughing position, "that said 'Bike Path? ' my voice rising like a sarcastic question.

"You didn't notice the ten-inch tall, blue arrow under the words pointing to

the bike path? "

Sometimes Charles can be extra over - as in overprotective and over-reactive.

As Charles and I wrangled away, Peter stood patiently by, waiting. He doesn't argue with Charles, he says he finds the 6-foot-3-inch, retired NYC policeman a little intimidating.

"Don't be ridiculous, " I said, dismissively, "he's a big 'ol teddy bear."

anais vionet

Skywritings

On a cool spring morning, by a clear mountain stream, an enchantress sat skywriting.

Her arms danced at awkward, inhuman angles and as they did, her bracelets jangled a melody which the birds took up in chorus.

The soundtrack was magic. Insects buzzed in beat, animals froze mid-forage, and the wind died, lest moving clouds corrupt her work.

The mask-wearing knight, a killer for the king, was dressed in black. Even the buck knife, loosely gripped in his right hand, was painted black. His boots were cloth wrapped and his movements were as smooth as smoke. He was noiseless death itself.

As he drew closer, the birds suddenly stopped chirping. 'Go home boy, ' the enchantress whispered. The knight blinked in disbelief and froze but the enchantress did not look around.

She pulled a half-penny from a pouch, kissed it, and lobbed it into the stream.

The knight's mind went from deadly certain to vague. Why was he here? He sheathed his knife, lowered his mask and wiped his lips. What had he been doing?

Still not looking his way, the minx motioned to the clear, babbling stream, 'Come, drink, ' she said. He drew beside her and with a quick glance, as he sipped water from cupped hands, he saw that she was young and beautiful.

She'd never looked his way, but she knew him in a rarefied, magical way - as if he were her brother, and she felt the sting of his long sorrow, that his wife was barren.

'Your love will bear you two sons if you're home and can bed her before dark, ' she said softly.

The knight stood, wiped his hands on his trousers, nodded at her, and ran for his horse.

The enchantress smiled to herself and resumed her unearthly work. The sound of

horse and rider quickly faded as the birds resumed their spell-song.

Two strapping young men they would be.

anais vionet

Champs De Mars

Grandmère = Grandmother

Peter and I are in Paris, we arrived this morning. We're staying at my Grandmère's Champs de Mars residence (she has several) - near the Eiffel Tower.

One of my Grandmère's oldest and dearest friends is a Catholic Bishop. When I was little, he was 'Monsignor Jean-Marc' but now he's 'Bishop Jean-Marc.' He's been around so much of my life, he's almost part of the family. I wouldn't be shocked to find out that he has his own apartment somewhere in each of her houses.

Jean-Marc is old. I think that's fair to say. He's white haired and the kind of short that comes on slowly, with age. He's a disciplined kind of thin and his deep wrinkles are tanned from years of gardening. His teeth, always visible in his salesman's smile, are as white as altar candles.

When I first glimpsed Jean-Marc from the hallway, he was sitting on a cream satin settee, in conversation with my Grandmère. I knew something was up because he was wearing his red trimmed cassock and red sash, instead of his usual black suit.

What I couldn't see from the hall, was that the room was packed with matronly ladies, dressed in matronly dresses of glittering white, glittering beige, glittering yellow and glittering gold. Argh! I was wearing a white Polo tennis dress, Keds mini canvas sneakers and my hair was ponytailed. I wasn't dressed for a social. I swiveled to give my Grandmère a sharp look, but she took that moment to be interested in the drapes.

As I'd come into the room, Jean-Marc stood and greeted me cordially saying, 'AnnAAAas!' raising both hands up over his head as if he were channeling the pope. Ok, I thought to myself, this is happening. I offered my most innocent smile. 'Bishop Jean-Marc,' I said, while performing an involuntary curtsy, conjured from somewhere deep in childhood reflex-memory.

I don't like priests. Slam me, sue me, damn me. When I'm around a priest, I'm reminded that I'm a sinner and I feel guilty about not feeling guilty. It's the worst kind of guilt for a Catholic, because we don't earn any credit for it.

Opp! I just thought of Peter, so there's lust, right on queue - that's a sin. Unfortunately, Peter's not here. He and Charles went on a chauffeured driving tour of Paris. Envy - there, another sin, I'm on the road to hell but I can't seem to stop, one thought just follows the next. Where's a priest when I need one? Just kidding, there's one right in front of me.

The Bishop began asking me a string of unimaginative questions, like an old friend catching up. 'How've you been? How's university? As he grilled me, slowly, like a steak in a smoker, the herd of matrons ambled slowly our way, closing in to listen in. It was a scene straight out of the walking dead. I wanted to escape but my Grandmère held me in place, with the full wattage of her proud smile.

Ordinary boredom is an un-experience and all you need to free yourself is a phone. High society boredom is one of Dante's circles of hell, because you have to interact with strangers when you could be doing something fun instead. The gathering finally broke up about 7pm and I was free to go. I was starving, my throat hurt from talking (about myself) and I hadn't heard from Peter. When I checked 'find my friends, ' it showed him there, somewhere. So I went in search.

Peter was in his (our) room, on his back near the edge of the bed, one shoe off and one shoe on. He was as still as a corpse but a soft snoring suggested he wasn't dead. I leaned over him, his black hair was somehow more disheveled than usual and his lips, moist and slightly parted, looked invitingly ready to kiss. I didn't do it though, that would have been asking for trouble. Instead, I smelled his breath, slowly and deeply. Cognac. Charles had gotten him drunk. How helpful.

Once I tucked Peter in, I went looking for Charles, only to find him shooting billiards with Jean-Marc. He looked none the worse for wear and the gleam in his eyes told me he knew what he was doing - avoiding me with the bishop.

As I prowled the room, trying to decide what to do, while picking up objects and weighing them as objects to be thrown, a server brought in a tray with three bowls of cassoulet, * which smelled incredible, my stomach growled, and I remembered I was starving.

Charles, sensing a shift in the mood, said, 'He (Peter) needed to reset his body clock. He's young, he'll be as good as new in the morning.' I just laughed. Charles knew I'd come looking for him and he'd ordered me dinner. I can't stay mad at Charles; he knows me too well.

The cassoulet was to die for.

We'll start our vacation, for reals, in the morning.

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Champs de Mars = "The field of Mars" It's the name of the Park (the 'Central Park' of Paris) where the Eiffel Tower is (my grandmothers house is across the street from it) .

*cassoulet = a gumbo made of white beans, pork, bacon, duck, goose and Toulouse sausage in a tomato stock of garlic, onions, herbs, and goose fat. A dreamy French comfort food I haven't had since last summer.

anais vionet

Orpheus

Slang..

Chick-fil-a = the best place ever

jade = bEotch

brooke = gorgeous

mishin = the boss, as in 'You aren't the boss of me.'

We're on vaycay. School is OVER, COVID is over. We're in New York City and we're doin' the town this time. Lisa told me, 'You showed me Paris last summer, now I'm going to show you New York City.' Her mom, Karen, smiled and gave a little sideways, 'Yes, yes we ARE' nod.

Leong and Sunny, two of my Yale roommates, and my BF Peter are staying in Lisa's (parent's) 50th floor Manhattan apartment for the week. The apartment is singularly stunning, with its all-glass views of Central Park and the city, but it only has five bedrooms - so we're doubled up a bit.

One of the things that makes Manhattan chick-fil-a, is that the Broadway theaters are 15 minutes from Lisa's door. You step out, whirl around Columbus Circle and you're on Broadway! Minutes later, you're in your seat, Oh, and don't forget to get the cinnamon crusted almonds.

We saw 'Bad Cinderella' the night before last - that was only a 'West End' show (I'm learning to be a Broadway snob) . Tonight, we're going to see Hamilton. Last night, we saw 'Hadestown.' I didn't know anything about 'Hadestown, ' but Leeza (Lisa's 13 year old sister) has seen it three times now.

We'd just finished lunch and Lisa started off a debate. 'Is Orpheus (one of Hadestown's leading characters, played by Reeve Carney) superhot - the hottest man alive - or is he the littlest jade ever?

'He's brooke, ' Leeza swooned dreamily, fanning her face as if it's hot, 'I'd definitely hit that.'

Lisa gasped, 'shutUP, you aren't 'hitting' anyone.

Leeza's been driving Lisa up-the-wall all morning. We had Pancakes and bacon for breakfast and Leeza's been all rude and maple sugar buzzed ever since.

'You aren't mushin, ' Leeza snorted, and as Lisa gave her a threat-laden look, Leeza finished with, 'that man can get it.'

I've seen this before - and these sisters are heading for it.

Leong adds 'Orpheus sees a submissive woman in distress. What he thinks he

sees, is a typically beautiful woman, by societal standards, who he knows nothing about - and he's like, 'I want to marry you.'

Sunny leaned into the conversation fiercely, saying, 'He doesn't KNOW her! Wouldn't you just punch that guy in the face? '

'Probably, ' I answered, laughing, 'if he weren't in a frigging MUSICAL! '

'Excuse me, ' Lisa interrupts, 'you're telling me that this scene doesn't perpetuate the idea that only looks matter? ' As one of the most beautiful women in the WORLD, Lisa is sensitive to objectification.

Sunny adds, 'One reason to cancel him - I assume we're trying to cancel him now - is that he sees a woman in distress and says 'that's the one, the love of my life, ' - a beautiful woman who can't survive on her own.'

'She didn't need him, ' I agreed, 'he was a burden on her.'

Peter, who's been working away on his laptop, looked up and said, 'I can't tell if you're joking.'

Leeza, snarked, 'Then go back to your little coding.'

I think I gasped and Peter looked a little shocked.

When Lisa, who'd gotten up to get some Ice, heard that comment from Leeza, she said, 'THAT'S IT, ' in a steely voice.

Leeza, who was sitting with her back to the kitchen on the huge white sectional, had a millisecond to look over before Lisa pounced on her. She came in from her backside rolling over onto Leeza, trying to cover her mouth.

Leong, and Sunny, who'd never seen these two wildcats at it before, squealed and flinched out of the way. Peter, an only child, found this delightful and hilarious. He burst out laughing with glee, as he too, cleared some space.

'You're trying to silence me! ' Leeza yelled, giggling and grabbing Lisa's arms as they got into a full, sister wrestling, flailing ball of hair and arms. Rolling off the couch and onto the floor. 'SHUT UP, ' Lisa demanded at the top of her voice. 'She's trying to silence me! ' Leeza howled again, 'I will not be silenced! ' This match continued for a hot minute until Lisa got Leeza's arms pinned with her knees.

'Apologize! ' Lisa said, out of breath, as she began to ponytail her hair.

'Excuse me, ' Leeza yelled, herself gasping for breath but trying to blow strands of her red hair out of her face and wiggle free. 'I'd like my lawyer - get OFF me -

you Karen! '

When that doesn't work Leeza starts yelling, 'HELP, MOM, RAPE! ' at the top of her lungs.

Karen, on a laptop in a glass walled alcove just off the living room, had seen the whole everything. Folding down her laptop lid, she stuck her head out and said, 'Girls.'

Then Michel, their dad, is in the doorway, 'What are you two doing? ' He asked softly.

The fight immediately broke up, Lisa and Leeza sheepishly disengaging. 'Nothing, ' they said, together in near perfect union. Lisa gave Leeza a wide-eyed, tilted head look and Leeza said, 'I'm sorry Peter, I was only foolin' around.' 'I know, ' Peter replied, chuckling, 'but it was worth it.'

Sunday - drum roll please - this Sunday (Mother's day) , we're going to see Taylor Swift in concert.

On Monday, Peter and I jet off to Paris (and Saint-Tropez) for 10 days. He'll get to meet my Grandmère and Uncle Remy - I'm SO hyped.

I'm squeezing a lot into the first three weeks of summer. My fellowship starts June 1st, and that'll take all of June and July. I can't wrap my head around being a junior next year. Where's the time GONE?

BLT Marriam Webster word of the day challenge: Laden: something heavily loaded with something, literally or figuratively.

anais vionet

The White Line

Ever snorted cocaine?

I watched some partiers snort cocaine last night,
in a dark, Manhattan nightclub corner celebration.
But I've never crossed that line. The white line.

When offered some, with unctuous camaraderie,
I shrugged and said, "No, sorry, I'm allergic."
What are you supposed to say, "Crack is whack,"
or "I prefer my coke with rum and ice?"
The white line. I don't cross the line.

It's not the first time, of course, I saw more drugs
in high school than I have at Yale. I've mostly seen
"study drugs, " there, like provigil, adderall and alza (concerta) .
Do they give students an advantage? I don't know, maybe.
Call me a boxcut or a squarepants, but my parents are doctors,
and I just don't cross those lines - those little white lines.

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Webster: Unctuous: "an obvious, fake friendliness"

Slang: 'boxcut' or 'squarepants' = a square, a no fun party-pooper

*I use artistic license for colors: for instance, adderall can be a blue, orange or yellow pill.

anais vionet

Stressors

****last winter break****

I woke up abruptly, my chest gripped and tight. My face felt hot but my arms stung as if frostbitten. I gasped for air that wouldn't come, as if I had a plastic bag over my head.

If I'd had a bad dream, in waking, it had become a collection of vague, menacing shadows, not memories.

I hadn't had a panic attack in ages, but you never forget the feeling. I reached dizzily for my backpack, beside the bed, which contained an albuterol inhaler. I managed, between gasps, and a puff, to turn on a small bedside light.

It was an indecent hour but between jerky breaths, and a second puff, I performed the series of flicks and touches that initiated a FaceTime call. My brother Brice is in med-school at Johns Hopkins University. He studies a thousand hours a week, I doubt he actually sleeps at all.

Brice answered on the second ring, his gnarled, blonde, wheat-field of hair was unmistakable, even in the dim street light. One glance at me was all he needed. "Breathe," he said, "just breathe," his deep, warm voice was as reassuring now as it had been when I was a child.

He made a dismissive motion to whomever he was with, indicating he was leaving and they should go on. "Ok," a guy said, "Sure." A girl's voice said, "tomorrow," but those voices faded as they were left behind.

"Did you use your inhaler?" He asked, when I nodded yes, he began our old routine, "Alright," he said, "name things you can see."

"My.. phone," I said, haltingly. A moment later I added, "my iPad," I gasped, "my purse."

"Oh, your favorite things," he whispered and when I honked a coughing laugh he said, "sorry."

After some brisk walking, on his end, I heard the distinct beep of an access-point card-reader.

"The sky," I added. The sky looked dark, jam-like and starless from Lisa's 50th floor windows but there was a blurry line of blinking lights - jets queued for landing at Newark Liberty, or Teterboro airports. Life was going to go on, it seemed, even if I couldn't breathe.

"Uh huh," he said, in affirmation. His camera went dark and I could tell he was climbing stairs.

My body wanted a full breath, or three and was in a full water-boarding like panic but I continued with my herky-jerky naming, "my suitcase, a ceiling fan." He was in his room now.

"Good," he murmured. "Now focus on 4 things you can touch." I slowly and purposefully touched my backpack, water bottle, phone and bedside table as Brice quietly watched and waited. I'd stopped hyperventilating and I could feel my eyes relaxing and the room coming into focus (a symptom of anxiety is tunnel vision) .

Brice knows me, maybe better than anyone. We finish each other's sentences, we're steeped in intimacy and knowing. We watched each other silently for a minute or two as my breathing became normal. His stupid, brotherly face was reassuring. He seemed in no rush, and finally asked, "What brought this on?"

"I'm not sure," I said, hesitantly, but I had my suspicions. I was on vacation, having a terrific time with Lisa and her family, and I'd made the honor roll, so my anxiety wasn't school related.

"Mom left me a Christmas message," I began, "and there was an explosion in the background, I think. I played it over and over," I said, frustratedly, "was it thunder - or something else? I played it for Lisa - over and over. She said she thought it was *thunder*, but Lisa's not a good liar."

Feelings are never simple, they're multilayered, strip some off the top and they're others underneath. If my parents' (Doctors without Borders) Ukraine war work was the stressor, there was little we could do about it.

Brice reminded me that the background noise was equivocal - it *could* have been thunder - and since this panic was an isolated event, we decided to keep it to ourselves.

As the call wrapped up, he made me promise to stop playing that message and avoid war news. We agreed to stay in closer touch (knowing that, with our schedules, it probably wasn't going to happen.)

Still, I like knowing he's out there - like a rescue inhaler - just a few button clicks away.

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**Webster: Equivocal: 'having more than one possible meaning'*

anais vionet

Mindbang

We're shape-shifting, my roommates and I. Transitioning mentally from freshmen and sophomores (nobodies) into juniors (somebodies) . We've been around, we're not the new kids anymore. We're being seen and appreciated. It's a mindbang.

There was a coollike girl, Kathleen, who was a senior when I was a freshman. I had a mad, mad envy-crush on her. She was everything I wanted to be when I was scared and unsure about things. Kathleen was perfect., an example of success that, like a fulcrum, lifted our confidence.

When she was around, I'd watch her, discreetly. She had this unconscious habit of touching her chin, with her index finger, when she was thinking. I swear, I found myself copying her, until Leong saw me do it once and said "Kathleen! " I was embarrassed. You can't get away with anything around here.

Kathleen graduated last year. I saw her once, in her graduation gown, from afar. I got emotional. Part of me wanted to rush over, give her a huge, congratulatory hug and tell her what a role model she'd been for me - even though we'd never even talked, but I was afraid she'd think I was a stalker.

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Webster: Fulcrum: a support that lifts

slang..

mindbang = a shifting in a well-established paradigm.

coollike = a really awesome person you admire

perfect. = (the period has to be there) an amazing, flawless role model

anais vionet

Oy To The King

I watched King Charles' coronation this morning.
I'm not British and some things confused me.
For instance, they kept saying "The new king."
New? The guy's a boomer - at least - right?

Apparently, he is, at once, the oldest king
ever and the newest king yet.

Can we talk about the old lady with the crown?
The wrinkled one on the right of him, in white,
the crypt keeper, with genuine platinum hair.
At first, I thought that it was Charles' mother.

But apparently, the old Queen died.
Has anyone looked into that?
Anyone who's read Shakespeare knows
how brutal royals can be and successions,
over time, have earned a sketchy reputation.

Anyway, I wish him well. I wouldn't want to live a life
where everyone around me moves up a notch
if something sudden and nasty happened to me.
Webster's Dictionary, word of the day: Coronation: "when you put a target
on someone's back"

*Is it me, or is his family SO high school - why?

anais vionet

Writers' Strike

There's a writers' strike. Should you write today?

anais vionet



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Finals Week 4

Final exams start Thursday,
and it's giving us all the feels.

Finals have a gravity of their own.
Are the papers worse than exams? Maybe.
The tension can be relentless and heavy.
'It's finals week, see you on the other side.'

As for me, I'm almost packed up.
Time is an odd and unpredictable beast.
It's hard to believe that in two weeks, I'll be a junior.
It's an unimaginable prospect.

To work, for a long time at something that seemed impossible
- head down in concentration - then suddenly, like a passing,
cotton cloud somehow became a bunny - everything came into focus.

I'm halfway done. I'm going to make it. I got a chill.

I wanted to throw my lattice windows wide open and scream for joy - but it
might've been taken wrong. I've no time to give mental health advisors.

Next week might be a more plausible time for wooting.

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It has to be said. I'm in love with these songs right now:

'Arizona' by 'Ms. White'

'Blood in the Cut' by 'K.Flax'

'Time Machine' by 'Willow'

'Relax' by 'Vacations'

'Do the motion' by 'BoA'

'Tender as a bomb' by 'tennis'

anais vionet

It's Sunday

Sunday's an auspicious day to suggest
that you, as a student, take a recess
In order to try and decompress
from our studying and stress

Now, of course, if you're so possessed,
or some might even say obsessed,
you could study for a test,
we all want to do our best
but some work habits can oppress
and leave one all depressed

Just take a needed rest
and if your needs are unaddressed
get caressed when you're undressed
some would have that thought suppressed
or simply left it unexpressed
but under oath I would attest
and to a priest I have confessed
all my roommates acquiesced
that for relaxation it's the best
and quickest way to get unstressed

there are a hundred things I could suggest
you type 'A's tend to make everything a contest
in this, there are no professors for you to impress
this isn't a competitive, academic trap, trick or jest
I just know that, on Monday, this girl will be refreshed

anais vionet

Frisbee Golf

It was going to be a beautiful Saturday morning - and the wind was still. Wind mattered because Peter and I had borrowed a friend's lime green Fiat and trekked 30 minutes north to play the Lufbery (frisbee) disc course. We teed-off just after sunrise. It's a beautiful, wooded course. I used to be a frisbee-golf addict and I'd brought my gear to Yale - but only managed to play twice. I finished 8-under (for 18 holes) and Peter earned a little participation, something or other, to be awarded later.

Peter lives in a doctoral frat-house they call doc-house (the 8 guys who live there are all doctoral students) . It's a typical frat house, remarkably dark and filthy. Every surface seems carpeted and there's a dizzying cocktail of smells - old beer, dust, pizza, cigars, whisky, popcorn, cigarettes and pot - ugg! Yes, If you need to carouse, this is the house. You hear, "You're in the DOC-HOWWSE! " (said like dog-house) when a group of new girls show up.

In the basement, there are arm chairs that I'm sure haven't been cleaned since someone in the class of 1955 spilt beer on them. If I sit on one - and I try not to sit on one - I keep my arms crossed in my lap so they don't even touch the armrests. Peter's room is clean - I had a service come to clean it (and the shared 2nd floor bathroom) before he moved in. I got him a new mattress and topper too.

My favorite of his roommates is called "Melon" (His real name is Milton) . He's a big guy, 6'3"~ish and probably 450 pounds. He's the sweetest guy but a slob in the classic, Chris Farley mold. Peter says he already has two PhDs (One in 'computational mathematics', a second in 'mathematical modeling') and he's working on a third in 'decision sciences." He owns doc-house, having bought it when the owner hinted at moving to Florida. "Melon makes a bag-and-a-half consulting, " Peter explained, admiringly.

The house is on a wooded hill and the driveway, about 400 feet long, goes straight uphill. One time, I'd brought a couple of bags of groceries and Melon, as usual, came bounding out of the house to help me. The uber could only get half way up the crowded drive and by the time Melon got to the car he was completely out of breath. I half expected I'd have to give him CPR, but he rallied after a couple of minutes - talking non-stop, all the while, about how great Peter is at 'call of Duty' and leaning heavily on the Uber which ran up my bill (I found it endearing) .

Back to my story (a lot of that was background) . Peter and I were going to Geronimo's (a Mexican restaurant) . I was sweaty from golfing, so I decided to shower. I'm showering away and I hear the bathroom door open (I'd absolutely locked it) . So, I assumed it was Peter. The next thing I hear is someone taking a loud, horse-hose-like whiz. Then the guy starts humming - and it wasn't Peter.

There I was, shower running, behind a flimsy, opaque-plastic, flowered shower curtain. What now? I was thinking. "Occupied! ? " I said loudly, like a question - standing stock-still naked.

"Fukk" I hear him say, "Sorry, sorry, SORRY - I thought you were one of the guys! " he said, flushing, dashing out and slamming the door.

I waited a moment, killed the water, wrapped up, climbed out of the shower and wrapped my hair in a second towel while leaning against the door. It had been locked - well, the little nob was pressed in anyway. I picked up my stuff and dashed across the hall to Peter's room.

Peter was propped up on his bed with his laptop as I rushed in, closed the door and leaned on it. "The lock on the bathroom door doesn't work, " I said in a rush.

"Did something happen? " he asked, looking up.

"No, " I said - thinking about it, "Not really, " and I started to towel dry my hair.

That's when I noticed that his index finger was turning back on itself in a "come hither" motion. Then it occurred to me that, wound as I was, in a small white towel, I might look like a loosely wrapped participation trophy.

Sometimes you face an army of desires - without armor.

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*a bag-and-a-half = as in a bag of money (why many people GO to Yale) *

anais vionet

Bits

Were in the (study) trenches, but we don't mind,
in the trenches, you aren't really aware of time,
I've talked with a lot of my classmates,
and the citadel lights are burning late.

Ever startle awake because a spider's on your face - but it's only your hair?

Sunny's been infected with the writing sickness.
She keeps saying "listen to this."

Orthography might just be the death of me - seriously.

I dreamed Peter (my BF) was leaving.
I saw him behind the wheel of a car,
waving from the deck of a ship,
and blurred in the window of a bullet train.
It was like a wheel of misfortune.

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*Webster: Orthography: "spelling correctly"

anais vionet

Events

slang..

updogged = when you chip in to keep a conversation trend going

fit = gorgeous

buje = unexplainable glamor

football minute = a minute, that with time-outs, that lasts a half an hour.

crute = cute but cringy

women's-rights = a really funny joke*

In the subscribed course of science - and eventually medicine - night hours seem multiplied by the rough enforcement of study, but this tale is not about that, fair reader.

It's about a reception, last Friday night. It hardly matters what it was for, there are so many. This one was first class - so please, have some decorum ladies. Our cast is Lisa, Leong, Sunny and I (4 roommates) . We stay clumped together, on nights out, like conjoined quadruplets because there's safety in numbers.

There were about sixty people there, mostly students. Lisa and I had gotten invitations, Leong and Sunny are our plusones. After making the rounds, doing our meeting and greeting, due diligence, we'd captured one corner of a long table and began enjoying some actual drink-drinks. We're usually studying, trying to prove ourselves like rats in a maze, so we go a little crazy when they let us out and about.

Is it me, or are free drinks just better than other flavors? There was a long line of 'Tom Collins-ses, ' on the bar which one could freely walk up and take. I think they're made with lemon juice, sprite, gin and the tears of fallen angels.

These were quite good, each featuring both a lemon slice AND a cherry. Like I said, first class. We were taking turns getting them, two of us going up, each returning with 2 drinks. That way we didn't look like 4 hookers hanging on the bar like horses at a trough (decorum) .

Socials, receptions, fundraisers - whatever - can be social minefields. Even in how you greet people. Do you shake hands? I'd heard that shakes were out due to COVID, but if so, they're back now. Some people were even huggers - your professor initiates a hug and you just want to avoid head-butting him. Monday morning though, you better hand in that paper, girlie.

At one point (I was mothering my third Collins) , Sunny said, 'Meeting people is awkward, '

'Being out in the world is awkward, ' I updogged.

'Not for Lisa, ' Leong said, and everyone sniggered.

'Why not ME? ' Lisa said, looking up from her phone.

'Because you're **fit**, ' Sunny said, 'everywhere you go, it's like 'Goodfellas, '' she mimics various, waving people, 'Hi Lisa, or Hey Lisa, ' and 'Yo Lisa! ' with the point & nod.

We all chuckled again, but Lisa said, 'It's not true.'

Alas, it is true. I've come to rely on Lisa's buje. Places seem livelier, less daunting and more welcoming when she's there. She draws all the attention - I might as well be her beaded handbag and I'm fine with that. In unfamiliar situations, she's a shield, handling the initial introductions and handing people off to me, like a track-and-field sprinter passing the baton. Without Lisa, in new situations I'm quiet. Quiet doesn't mean shy - that's a false assumption, I'm a natural watcher.

I'm skipping the mingling and speechifying - the boring stuff. Apparently, it's all about us, we need to make a plan and do more, about everything. Interestingly, of the 8 organizers (the adults) five had literary first names. There was a Jude, a Tess, an Ophelia, a Clarissa and a Cordelia. Granted, they're all fictional characters, but why name a kid after a protagonist who came to a tragic end - to seem well read?

As Leong and Sunny returned with our fifth round, Sunny pronounced 'Tom Collins for President! ' and we all raised our glasses. Just then Leong's phone whooped with a text. It took her football minute to fish the contraption out of her itty-bitty disco-clutch, and then she fumbled it to the floor like an oiled baby.

It was a crute moment that, at first, struck us like women's-rights - but it had a sobering element too. We agreed, in the silence of exchanged glances, that perhaps we were having too much fun, and we soon made our usual quiet and dignified exit.

anais vionet

Coffee With Jesus

Leong dreamt of meeting Jesus,
at the Koffee coffee shop.
It was early and not too busy,
so they had a chance to talk.

He was well dressed and looked quite nordic,
which was a surprise to her at first.
'Because we all know he was born in China
and Beijing the city of his birth'

At first he kept it casual,
he talked a lot about his dad,
but he began to be rather judgey,
as some religious people can.

When he asked her for her digits,
she was put off by his entitled vibe.
In the end he got fake-numbered.

'it was a lowkey way to decline,
and both pacify the 'boss" son,
and keep him on her side.'

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*Leong's one of my roommates, she's from Macau, China.

anais vionet

More Jazz Please

My roommates Leong, Sophie, (Charles) and I were coming from a Yale sporting event. The sky looked like a dirty Swiffer-mop and the wind seemed to be ignoring the posted 20mph speed limit. It was a typical spring day in New Haven, overcast, 65°, with intermittent, drizzling rain. I was thinking it was a good day to be a duck.

We were looking for something to gnaw on and a beverage - of the alcoholic variety. We picked up some Mike's hard cider (featured in our refrigerator now) , which proves college students really do plan for the future.

It was about 4pm and the streets were puddled, slick-looking and empty. The lone passing car sounded like it was riding on a sponge. I was wearing a navy blue, short sleeve Polo dress, a matching Polo bucket hat (for the rain) and a slub knit hoodie that I 'borrowed' from Sunny forEVER (seriously, I ordered her a replacement from Amazon) and Roxy boat shoes.

On a side street, a 'party-bike' sat parked, sad and abandoned in the rain. A party-bike is a tram fitted up as a bar that slowly drives noisy drunks around. The drunks sit around a 'U' shaped bar, on small, backless stools welded onto the tram. Yes, an open-air bar on wheels. I can't help thinking that a lawyer came up with the idea, because what could go wrong?

The first time I saw a 'sightseeing' party-bike was on Beale Street, in Memphis Tennessee. Memphis is the Disneyland of barbeque and the blues. Every storefront for blocks is an open air blues bar, a barbeque place or souvenir shop (or all three at once) . Party-bikes make sense there, because intoxication is like oxygen in Memphis. It's a party-bikes native environment. In New Haven, they seem cheap, excessive and opportunistic.

As we were walking, in the distance, we heard the wail of a saxophone and a beat so clear, that the sound seemed to linger and shimmer in the air, like a cartoon neon 'Jazz' sign. We instantly turned that way and discovered it was coming from a place called 'Three Sheets' which was having open-mic tryouts for the house band.

It's a bar that serves food and there's a 'beer goddess' painted on one wall. In Georgia, we'd call it a 'fern bar.' We found a table in the darker back, out of the way, and settled in. A waitress quickly took our orders and brought us several IPA beers.

Near a platform stage, there were 6 or 8 musicians sitting around (with their instruments) waiting to take a turn forming a trio with the house drummer and bass who were laying down a constant beat. One would step in with a guitar and play for a hot minute, then a guy with the sax, another with a trumpet and yet another with a clarinet, it went on and on. They each had a solo, at some point, and it made me wonder why I don't listen to more jazz.

Our afternoon of music was something Sophie had wished for. Earlier that morning, as we were leaving the residence, she'd said, 'I wish there was a concert or something going on tonight - something musical, ' and boom, we get this. Still, I don't subscribe to the idea of holy intervention.

I hate it when I hear people say, 'God never gives us more than we can handle.' I bristle, my head snaps in the direction of the speaker, I want to see who that dumb-ass is. My parents and sister are doctors, and believe me, people are dying every day in situations that are more than they can handle. Heart attacks, staph infections, gunshot wounds, covid, cancer - Uggg, sorry, I got off track and boiled-over there.

Anyway, we had some jazzy music and incredible Vietnamese pulled-pork sandwiches with fries and a smoky ketchup that I could have just drunk.

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**I put (Charles) in brackets because, as our driver and escort, he's usually there in the background when we're not in the residence. But his presence is circumscribed, because he's not there socially. Is it rude not to include him in every narrative? I don't know - it's a habit.*

anais vionet

Empty Skies

This morning's sunrise was a tacky and artificial affair.
The sun was played by a weak, 12-watt, refrigerator bulb
that looked wet and heavy as it struggled uphill like a drunk.
The horizon reminded me of a cheap, runny theatrical illusion,
the clouds were old cotton balls glued to cardboard silhouettes,
the birds sagged like dead puppets from uneven, coat hanger wires.

I don't miss you. Everything's fine. I hardly noticed you were gone, actually.
Things here are a laugh and a half. We're doing fun girl things. Anna got new shoes.

I'm hardened by years of inescapable, solitary, covid lockdown. I'm immune to despair.

So go off, interview for that new, far-flung PhD life. Go fawn over Elon Musk for all I care.

I'm definitely not in my room eating spoons of peanut butter and crying to Tom Waits songs.

anais vionet



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I Don't Know

You hope that university will answer all of life's questions, but nope.

I don't know, I.

There was a guy who'd been hanging around outside our residence lately. Too consistently. At first, I thought he was someone's friend but he's always alone. He wasn't doing anything or bothering my roommates, but that asymmetry set off my alarms.

He looked at me once (which I suppose isn't a crime) , I think, it was quick - a blink of sharp curiosity. I mentioned it to Charles who took his picture. The next morning he said the guy's a legit student who has no criminal record, so maybe I'm all wrong.

Every girl's encountered a creep or two before. They're seemingly everywhere, as if mandated by law, like auto insurance. Most girls develop a sixth sense, a creep-dar. Nowadays, creeps have a new name, 'incel' ('involuntary celibate') and they're a recognized, online subculture. Next, they'll have a coat of arms proclaiming, 'We Would if We Could.' It's as if awkwardness, a normal human foible, has been distilled into something dangerous.

Although the campus looks like a garden or a perfectly manicured 'stepford' park, we joke that it's really a locked-down, patrolled, surveilled compound, with guards, cameras and card-key access to everything. Which, I suppose, is all to the good.

Our creeper wasn't there Friday, and he wasn't there today, so maybe he was nothing.

I don't know,2.

I was in Sunny's room. We were going shopping in a few. There was a little pink book on her bed - a diary! ! I'd never seen it before and it was open, about three-quarters of the way. She too-casually moved to scoop it up, like the neglected book of a sorcerer.

My GOSSIP-dar Alerted like a class bell. 'Hmm' I hummed, head-tilted, then I laughingly lunged for the book.

Sunny's eyes went wide for 3-billionths of a second and she snapped it up with

the speed of a striking cobra, 'That's MINE' she said, rigid with seriousness.
'What's going ON? ! ' I asked, but she shoved it into her night table.
Another mystery!
'Sleeping dogs, ' I thought to myself.

anais vionet

Euclid's System: An Easter Tale

In this beautiful place of worship, the pews are padded but uncomfortable, the sanctuary large, candle lit and cold.

There's a huge glass dome and I can see the stars. Are the stars our fiery heaven? ?

No, I don't think the stars care about us - they don't burn with affection or passion. And if the stars weren't there we could live with an empty sky.

The Greeks would call our star, the Sun, to perform their acts of God. I imagine most of their prayers went unanswered - not unlike our own? ?

To me, the whole Jesus story is somewhat sinister and inauspicious, but if Jesus, the son of God, and that whole story were the deepest, truest reality - then why hasn't Jesus returned? ?

****Imagining heaven's father and son dialog.****

God: "Ok, Jesus, time to go back."

Jesus: "Go back... go back? ? Daaaaad... Did you see what they DID to me? ? They nailed me to a CROSS; screw them, there's no way I'm going back. Hey, why don't YOU try going back, as an ordinary man - maybe they'll set you on FIRE.'

These 20 millennium old bible stories aren't exactly Euclid's logical system.... I mean, the various books aren't even consistent. Are these really, I mean really our beliefs? Or are they just kind of traditions and good rules to live by?

My parents - unlikely pilgrims in the intoxicating poetry of belief - face front and appear to be listening... in all other things they're so skeptical - it's a puzzle.

If Jesus did come back, wouldn't he practically be a caveman surrounded by bewildering technology?

I'm sorry, There's something too rich in creation for these rehearsed responses and fairy-tale fragments from a primitive world to be the answer.

Now I'm not saying there is no God or no life after death.. I.. just.. hopeless shrug

So, anyway - I go through the motions, I chant the litanies with the enthusiasm of obedience; just storing up my spiritual loot and hiding my questioning, heathen heart.

Happy Easter everyone!

anais vionet

Colorwheel

We looked at the world through rose-colored glasses,
sped through the night under blue moons,
parked in cars and gave boys the green light.

Explored gray areas, dreamed of golden boys,
painted the town red and got caught red-handed.

We saw adult freedoms and were green with envy,
we experienced blackouts (I'm talkin' to you 151 rum) ,
swam in black water alone and talked to strangers,
told little white lies, yet somehow, we didn't die young.

I think of college students as dyed-in-the-wool adults.
The grass always looked greener on the adult side,
and we're tickled pink not to be infantilized any more.

We'll show the world our true colors
and pass college with flying colors.
Life won't be handed to us on silver platters,
we'll get white collar jobs.

Of course, as adults, we'll have to deal with red tape,
and we can't be yellow-bellied or try to whitewash things.
We'll stay out of the red or sing the blues.
We'll stay off the yellow lines, seek golden opportunities,
attend black tie events, obey the golden rule, avoid pink slips,
support our men in blue and look for silver linings.

Adulthood sounds exhausting.
On the positive side, I'm told adults practice safe sex.
Practice means what it's always meant - right?
Is that why adults go to bed so early?
Besides, as adults, we won't be kept in the dark anymore,
and we'll get to chase rainbows!

anais vionet

Heisenberg

I've been cutting Peter's hair for a year. When covid lockdown occurred, I learned to cut my brother's hair - and yes, he still has two ears. When I first met Peter, he had a great thick tangle of unkempt black and, in certain light, blue hair. It was sexy as hell, in a lost puppy way.

Then, one Saturday morning last year, as summer began to settle in, he buzz cut it - out of the blue - you might say. When he showed up that morning for breakfast with Lisa and I (we were at Stillman) , Lisa saw him first and turned just in time to see me, see him. She saw my squint as the sign of trouble it was.

Lisa's yoda. "Guys," she said simply.

How can I put this: Eeuwww, creepy. Peter's tall and lanky, like descriptions I've read of a young Abraham Lincoln, although unlike that great man, Peter's rather handsome - with hair.

If the stubble were red, I could say he looked exactly like a matchstick, but with his black hair against his bone-white head, he looked more like an escaped convict.

When he got to our table he rubbed his hand over the ruin of his lost hair, and grinning, said, "How'd you like it?"

"Wow," Lisa said, recusing herself noncommittedly.

I looked up from my phone, "We need to get you a HAT," I said softly.

"Why?" he said, his grin dimming by a good 50%.

"Because," I said, summoning all of my notable tact, "you aren't going to hang around ME looking like Forrest Gump." I'd just looked up hat stores and found one five blocks away, DelMonico Hatter, on Elm street.

They even had the hat I was looking for in stock.

"What?" He started defensively.

"Get something to go." I said, standing up and starting to gather up my things.

Peter, swimming like he usually does, got an egg & sausage biscuit and a cup of coffee to go.

As the three of us were walking, I asked Peter, "You like 'Breaking Bad', ya?"

"Sure," he said, with a mouth half-full of biscuit.

"We're getting you a heisenberg" I said, grinning, "or

two."

"No, I don't know, " he said, slowing his walk. I could tell he was worried about the money. Peter and I had only been seeing each other casually at that point - we'd never even kissed - but I knew he lived on a small stipend, he received monthly, while completing his doctorate.

"Look, " I said, coming to a stop. We all came to a stop. "I'm flush, this is MY treat and I don't want you to worry about it." When he still looked hesitant, I said, exaggeratedly, as I started to walk again, "Don't worry, you won't owe me any sexual favors."

"Aww, DAMN, " he said with a grin.

"She does this, " Lisa whispered to him, too loudly.

Eventually, we found him two Heisenberg hats for around \$200. One, for summer day wear, a light beige Bailey Carver Straw Porkpie and the other, for nightwear, a Roche, DelMonico Palma Felt Pork Pie - just like Walter White's. He looked quite the bengali menace.

Of course, his hair grew back in a few months, but he kept wearing the hats. And now I cut his hair - to prevent any sudden, k-mart inspirations.

anais vionet

Veneers

Rational men among us state plainly
- that no ghosts walk among us.
But they haven't really searched the shadows,
or smelled the sweet musk-roses you wore
when windchimes twinkle like your laugh.

If ghosts haunt, then spirits linger.
If ghosts bedevil and terrorize,
spirits hangout, abide and remain.
Time is as nothing to them,
they are now and they are then.
We are shadows, that are becoming
shadows, that were shadows before.

Rational men know what they see,
but they're dull and though waking,
remain unaware that lemures tamper,
with impressions, subconscious voices
and barely perceptible shenanigans,
across death's thin, permeable veneer.

anais vionet

Receptions

Lisa and I went to a reception, yesterday evening, for students who'd landed summer fellowships at a particular hospital in Boston. (Yeah us!) It wasn't formal, so I wore a crimson cropped sweater, a beige circle skirt (with pockets!) and beige Sarto soft-leather ballet flats.

I've disparate feelings in these situations. I was excited - this was a goal I needed to achieve - that next notch - my mom might even smile.

At the same time, I felt like an imposter. 'If these people knew the trouble I'm having with physics this year, ' I thought, and 'I know my sister could do this - and my brother - but can I? '

I try not to let my nervousness show, because the stories you tell yourself can hold you back.

The reception was small, there were only four students, their mentors and a few hospital and Yale people. As we signed in, we got name tags and tote bags with the hospital logo containing fellowship info. There were picture posters of the hospital all around and an intro video looping on a large screen TV. They took some snaps.

Several tables along one wall had coffee, sodas, water bottles and finger snacks - which I guess you'd call canapes - and melon balls of all colors. The centerpiece though, was a big silver, smoked salmon with a lemon stuck in its mouth and a wreath of parsley about its neck - all on a bed of lettuce, surrounded by various crackers and French bread rolls.

I was working my way along the tables, because there were honeydew melon-balls and they're a personal weakness. Honeydews aren't in season now, so I was full-on, honeydew foraging. I'm sure I looked like a starving homeless girl who'd somehow gotten in and was trying to eat for the week.

A slim, attractive, black lady in a very stylish dark-gray beaded jacket & sheath dress, had stopped as if transfixed, staring solemnly at the salmon. As I drew next to her, with my plate half full of honeydew balls, she said, 'It's a fitting memorial.' That hit me as so funny - I laughed embarrassingly - spitting half a melon ball under the table. She started laughing too - we were like two sillies at church. Her sad face, the way she'd said it - you had to be there.

After a few minutes, the hospital administrator gave a little general welcome, ending it with, 'Now it's time to meet your mentors.' The fish lady turned out to be my mentor. She was still standing next to me - she turned, offered her hand, and said, 'Hi, I'm Rebecca.'

Her voice made those simple words seem warm and inviting. She looks to be in her early fifties (but I'm a bad judge of age) , her short black hair was peppered with gray and white like she had just come in from the snow. We became instant old friends, cracking each other up.

Dr. Rebecca's (again, I'm not doxing anyone) specialty is neurological surgery. She's a Baltimore girl - born and raised - who attended Johns Hopkins from bachelors through medical school. Of course, I mentioned that both my siblings went to Johns at some point - Brice being a sophomore in med school there now.

Besides four years of medical school, Rebecca completed seven years of neurological surgery residency (yummy) . 'A doctor never really finishes school, ' she said, 'things constantly change and there are new specialties to master.' But I knew this from my parents.

'The plan is for you to shadow me this summer, ' she confirmed, 'and gain some clinical experience.' I nodded enthusiastically, saying, 'Yes mam.' We talked for about thirty minutes and, as we parted, she gifted me a copy of 'Skandalaki's Surgical Anatomy.'

'If you want to be a surgeon, you'll need to know anatomy better than God, ' She'd said, 'so start now. I made some notes for you in the index - we're going to lean into this, ' she finished, tapping the book, and giving me a wink.

I was walking on air as Lisa and I made our way back to the residence. It's going to be the BEST summer.

anais vionet

The Last Supper

Darkness has pressed up against our lattice windows. Classes start again in the morning. I'm being reabsorbed by college life. I'm a planner. I've been going over my syllabuses, repacking my bookbag, charging my power banks, checking and rechecking the assignments due tomorrow. After watching me prep for hours, Peter said, 'You're not going to the MOON.'

Peter asked me last Friday, 'Are you excited for Monday? (I'll find out if I get my fellowship.)

'I'm more excited about tonight, ' I said, 'I like going out on the town.'

'Wow, ' he said, 'you're so different - not like the other girls at all.'

'No! ' I said, laughing, 'We're stuck in a rut, we only go to one or two places, ever - if we go out at all. When people come to New Haven, I need places to take them - places besides pizza. At home, in Athens, I know twenty places - this is RESEARCH.' I assured him.

Peter settled back into his doctorate-fraternity-house yesterday. Tonight (Sunday) , there's music in the suite, the crazy noises of people and the comfort of returned friends. All the roommates are back, greeted with hugs and kisses, as they dragged in their luggage.

Lisa arrived with dinner, for 10, from Dominick's, in Manhattan. Spaghetti, salads, rolls, extra sauce - in six, small, suitcase-sized insulated bags. It was a logistical marvel. It's only 90 minutes from Manhattan to the residence - we didn't need to rewarm anything. 'I KNOW we could have just eaten in the dining hall, ' she said, shrugging, 'call it zany - one last hurrah.'

Everyone seemed happy to be back. There were travel stories, questions, and laughter. Oh, and Zeppole, little powdered sugar custard desserts that seemed the worst for travel. Everyone seemed to have an eye on the clock though. By 11pm the suite was quiet. Très unusual.

*A song for this piece would be 'Kennedy' by feeble little horse

anais vionet

Breakfast At Tiffany's

I watched 'Breakfast at Tiffany's' last night - we're going to be reading Truman Capote's book after the break and I wanted to start thinking about it. The movie rewrites Truman Capote's story, turning it into a romcom, completely eliminating the book's gay themes. I'd seen 'Breakfast' before, but now I'm a little older, and as a single woman, I can better appreciate it. I'm looking forward to studying its socio-sexual themes. These are some first thoughts.

Let's take the opening of 'Breakfast at Tiffany's.' The images are iconic and some of the most widely repeated in pop-culture today (Hello, ubiquitous dorm room decor) , but they're never used in a way consistent with their function in the film. Instead of seeing a horribly depressed girl who has nothing left in her life but pure escapism, people see a beautiful woman with apparent access to luxury.

When 'Breakfast' came out (in 1961) there was a sense, within the press and wider public, that even a neutered version of Holly Golightly represented a cinematic moral nadir that posed a threat to society. Whether Holly was a 'moral character' was up for debate in countless reviews of the film. Today, this seems absurd.

Today, Holly is seen as an aspirational figure. With her opera gloves, her intricate updo, pearls and Givenchy little black dress, she looks like someone who belongs at Tiffany's (of course, the casting the euro-elegant Audrey Hepburn didn't hurt) . Truman Capote wanted Marilyn Monroe as Holly - that would have been a very different movie.

Watching the film, I was struck with how contemporary Holly felt. She seems so familiar - so similar to the countless imitations we've seen since. People watching the movie for the first time today may be underwhelmed, but Holly seems so contemporary now, because she was so ahead of the curve back then (just over 60 years ago) .

If you look at the popular romantic comedies that surrounded 'Breakfast at Tiffany's', like 'Pillow talk, ' 'Gigi, ' and 'Giget' - their leading ladies were nothing like Holly. Being a heroine in those films meant you strived for marriage, you saved yourself for your one true love and, as a woman, you avoided certain subjects altogether. They imply happiness only comes from following a certain good girl ethos.

An example of what could happen to a girl, if she strayed from that path, was

shown in Elia Kazan's 'Splendor in the Grass' which also came out in '61. Its theme is the consequences of sexual repression, and it outlines a specific cinematic binary. There are good girls and bad girls. The bad girls were usually presented as sad and mentally unstable - and they paid for their sins in the end - usually by dying by some karmic punishment (car wrecks usually) .

Holly sits somewhere in between good and bad, complicating the cinematic binary. Because Audrey's elegance plays her as classy, warm and accessible, she doesn't come across as a dangerous wild child - although she makes all of the bad girl choices - like partying, drinking and having sex.

For women who grew up in the repressive 1950s, Holly represented a new path forward. Holly lived on her own, she didn't crave marriage above all else, she didn't want to live in a cage, and she managed to have a good time without being victimized or doomed. Holly was noticeably different. The pill came out in May of 1960 (one of the watershed events in human history) . Holly was Hollywood's first post-pill heroine, representing the sexual revolution before Betty Friedan's 'Feminine Mystique.'

anais vionet

Oceans

My boyfriend (Peter) and I went down to New Haven Harbor today.

Let's face it, we're surrounded by oceans,
and most of them are downright inhospitable.

I live near the ocean, (pointing) it's right over there.
I love the ocean, tripping over whenever I've time to spare.

The way I'm fawning over it, you'd think I know it well.
But I really only love its edges and undulating swells.

It's like a book that I've judged by its cover,
a beautiful stranger taken as a lover,
or a pie when I've only tasted the crust.
I love something, I suppose, I've barely even touched.

Peter says that black, inky 'outer-space' is a low-viscosity liquid - another, even
vaster ocean that's more dangerous and rarely visited.

The air that we breathe is an ocean - our own, vast, atmosphere - in it swim
creatures too small to see, but to the naked eye it looks clear. It flows, eddies
and swells - birds swoop in it so you can tell.

Of course, the ocean has issues - it's hardly news - corrosion, erosion, sharks
and drowning - and the way the ocean lets the moon and air push it around.

What I love most is its motion, and how it reflects the sun and the moon.

Did I mention that hanging out by the ocean makes for a pleasant afternoon?

anais vionet

A Spring Morning

Give me a spring morning, far from winter's troubles.
On an earth axis-turned toward the life-giving sun.

Announce it with trumpets of yellow daffodils and tulips.

Watch as young, colorful, impressionist, bluebell,
dogwood, snowdrop, and primrose blossoms preen,
in the candid radiance of the abaxial springtime sun.

Enjoy new life dancing, playfully on tactile wafts of warm air.

Inhale that air, freshly fragranced by flowers in luscious bloom.

Catch the bright chirp of new life and hear the humble
buzz of bees hard at their work spreading the pollen of life.

Then lengthen these hopeful, verdant days, like a blessing.

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**It doesn't feel like spring yet, I'm going with it, but I'm thirsty for it.*

anais vionet

The Wheel Of Fortune

The wheel of fortune has spun our way,
we're on Spring-break for 8 more days!

The transition to leisure was as smooth as oil,
without classes, he's just a guy and I'm his girl.

For three weeks we'll have had the suite to ourselves,
it has all the amenities, it's like a hotel.

We've never been together, alone, for so long before,
it's so deliciously heterodox, it's like a reward.

Peter (my BF) observed, 'This will be a reality check.'
Yeah, he's a hopeless romantic.
'Sorry sir, ' I said, 'It's my policy not to cash reality checks.'

anais vionet



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Patrick's Tale

Saint Patrick died on March 17th.
So we celebrate the day with green and drink.

Patrick, was kidnapped to Ireland as a slave,
a condition he never fully forgot or forgave.

Patty (as he was known by his friends)
was a sober, relentless, devout Christian.

As a missionary, he gallivanted methodically, converting heathens
and if he failed to convert you, you weren't left breathin'.
He could burn you at the steak for ignoring `reason'.

To show Christ's power, he `banished' the snakes,
It's amazing, the difference a miracle can make.

The year 461 pre-dated laptops and even the Internet,
so, I think it's time we finally forgive and even forget
the sad, sordid history of Catholic conversion 'therapy'
because today we need a reason to drink until we're green.

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Webster: Gallivant: 'travel for pleasure.'

My roommates and I went to Dublin, Ireland last summer.
In casual conversation we asked how they celebrated Saint Patrick's Day and
their celebrations are like ours, more or less - a secular overindulgence. But on a
deeper level, this holiday, they say, is dedicated to the patron saint of heathen
genocide.

anais vionet

Useless

It was the second morning of "daylight savings time," and the change was noticeable.

My BF Peter has a doctorate in applied physics, he's an expert, so I asked him, "How do they move the sun?"

He gave me one of his patented, blank looks, "What, who moves the sun?" He answered.

"Well, yes," I said, "I suppose the "who" is important, but HOW do they move the sun? Peter can be dense sometimes.

"What are you TALKING about?" Peter asked, his head tilted in confusion.

I explained, "It's daylight savings, ya? The sun is different, SO - how do they move the sun?"

"They don't MOVE the sun," he said, in a smug 'I've got a PhD' way, "people set their clocks ahead an hour."

I was stunned - Could it all be a cheap trick?

How, (I snorted in my mind) could they get everyone on earth to do THAT?

I didn't argue, but I didn't set my Apple Watch ahead or my laptop, or my desktop, or my iPad or Alexa - his "apotheosis" was obviously wrong.

He's a new PhD, they just haven't told him how they do it yet. I can wait. I patted his hand for support.

Peter also says that, out there in the "multiverse," there may be an earth where I don't have homework. First of all, isn't it just like a GUY to believe all of that "marvel comic" stuff?

"So, Superman's real then?" I asked. He just lowered his head - burn: I had him there.

Secondly, can he get me/us to this planet "No homework?" NO.

Applied physics may very well be useless.

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*Webster: Apotheosis: a perfect example of something

***I used this incorrectly on purpose (crossing heart) I swear.*

anais vionet

The King Kong Song

It's Sunday morning and we're in the new, exciting, daylight savings time. Peter and I are sitting next to each other on the big, red, corduroy couch in my suite's common room.

All of my roommates are gone so we're free to relax in our PJs. We're quietly heads-down on our devices. When, suddenly, I realized, as I do every 10 minutes or so, that it's Spring Break!

I side-eyed Peter who was reading something. Probably some interstellar statistical report whose roots were calculated in base 7. I slowly, so as not to divulge that anything was happening, lowered my iPad and set it aside.

Then I slowly, very slowly, begin invading his space - he doesn't notice at first but I lean on him gradually harder and heavier. He looked at me, confused, but now I'm crawling onto his lap - rolling onto my back. He moves his laptop - holding it up and away with one hand.

'EXCUSE me, ' I say, 'I beg your pardon, couldn't be helped.' I repeat about three times as I roll a complete 360° in his lap with glacial, disruptive slowness - making sure to elbow him gently in places and cover his face with hair.

As I climb off him, I jump up and start singing and dancing to this song I made up (with maximum arm flail) :

K k k k King kong song
I'm sing the king kong
I'm dancing to the king kong song
Feel free to sing along.

I point at him and sing, 'I'm talking to YOU! '

K k k k King kong song
You're listening to the king kong song
Feel free to sing along
To the K k k King kong song!

I stop, strikng a pose like someone on a Broadway stage waiting for applause.

'YOU, ' he says, are a complete NUT.' But he's smiling, broadly, as I jump onto

his lap and begin smothering him with kisses.

anais vionet

Drifts And Promises

Your sweet breaths and perfumes provoke so,
have I found love in this drift of circumstance?

DO you love me? If so, pray, swear it on the tireless sea,
whose thrashing cold, intemperate waters will last forever.

I swear it freely, on the sea, on breath, and on life itself
- may both be forfit should my vow prove shallow perjury.

As pronounced vows become curses, if they be lies,
truth only ripens, its harvest yielding the sweetest fruit

anais vionet



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Delirium

The declaration of love is
a confession of madness.

anais vionet



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Surprises

It's the Thursday morning before valentine's day. Lisa and I are scrambling to get out of our suite. We share an Organic Biochemistry class and we're running a hot minute late. As we pulled on our shoes Lisa asked me, 'Do you have fun Valentine's weekend plans?' The question, since I have a BF, contained a suggestion of impending sexiness.

We grabbed our bags and were soon out of the dorm.

'I do NOT have fun.. WELL? ? .. well, ' I said hesitating - was this the time to let my secret out?

'Well?' Lisa follows up excitedly.

We're out in the quad now, an uncovered rectangle of grass and walkways. It's 37° and cloudy. It's going to drizzle all day. We maneuver around the slower movers, bookbags on our shoulders and coffees in hand.

'You've familiar with, umm, Twib?' I asked.

'Twib! I'VE heard of them, ' Lisa, chuckles, 'they do some singing and plucking of strings, I believe.'

Yeah, yeah. They've gone underground, and um, their crush is tomorrow night! '

'Oh, Wow, ' she said, somewhat shocked, 'Twib has crush? '

'They have crush, ' I confirm.

'How did I not know this?' Lisa asks the universe, 'EVERYTHING has crush!' she laughs.

'Everything has crush this year, ' I agreed.

We get to the bus stop right as the shuttle arrives - it's perfect timing - and we board.

'I think 'Crush' is a really cute name, better than 'Spring Fling, for a dance name, ' Lisa said.

'Anyway, ' I softly announce, leaning into her even though we're close and sharing a seat, 'I've got three invites, so I'm taking Peter, of course, and YOU, ' Lisa laughs, 'OK'

'And, ' I add suspensefully - this was the surprise - 'YOUR secret crush, ' I add grinning and bouncing with excitement.

Lisa freezes, turns pale and looks at me like I'm crazy. 'What?' she says hoarsely.

'Tom, ' I said hesitantly, 'Peter invited Tom..'

Now Lisa has a wide-eyed look and her cheeks have turned a flamingo pink color.

'He doesn't KNOW he's your crush, ' I add quickly, reassuringly, putting my free

hand on hers.

That seems to calm her, 'You didn't SAY anything, ' she asked, scrutinizing me for any sign of deception.

'No, I swear, I said, making the sacred 'x' sign over my heart, 'We'd never. It was just a fun, surprise idea.' Suddenly the shuttle seemed hot and uncomfortable, I took off my scarf.

We shared the last 10 minutes of the ride bickering. After we got off, we made our bickering way to class. As we settled in (we sit together) I offered, 'We can cancel, I can cancel, it was a stupid idea - I'm sorry.'

'No, ' Lisa sighed, 'I don't always adjust well to surprises. OK, let's do it! '

'What was all THAT (bickering) about then? ? ' I asked.

'Oh, that was just fun, ' she smiled, 'I was making you sweat. Ok, What's the theme? What are you wearing? Where's it going to be held? ' Lisa finally started asking critical questions.

'It'll be at Luther (college) and the theme is biomes, ' I said.

'Biomes? ' Lisa asked.

'Biomes - like grasslands and tundra, ' I explained.

'Oh, ok, sure' Lisa chuckled.

'And I got a dress from Princess Polly. Sorry Fast Fashion, ' I joked.

'Hey, you know, ' Lisa agreed, 'When biomes call.'

'You got it, ' I nodded, 'and I'm excited because I got a dress for you too! '

'For ME? ' Lisa exclaimed, 'aww.'

'I know what you like, ' I claimed. 'You do, ' she admitted.

'It was a surprise and time was short, you'll love it, ' I declared, as the TA took the podium.

'It'll be a go-hard night.' I whisper.

'You should all have a PSet and paper to hand in, ' the TA announces, as class begins.

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*PSet = a problem set (Homework)

crush = a dance that you're supposed to invite your crush to.

TA = teaching assistant (a graduate student)

anais vionet

Passing Parades

A governess, a guardian of the young, so known and dear as to be called 'Mother' and a noblewoman, just barely 12 by age, named Portia, sit talking as the sun sets the stage for a cool, cloudless night.

'Mother, who invented candlelight and the slow, delicate brush of lips? '

'Some rakish boy, pawning his experience for present pleasure, no doubt.'

'Say true, Mother. If you were a man, would you find this common body worthy of love? '

'You show no blemish child, and display a certain bony voluptuousness - I should think.'

The governess begins to comb and braid Portia's hair for sleep.

'I saw Portincio this morning, in the courtyard.'

'The boy from Padua? '

'He's a man Mother, and his cast portents a passion so sweet - it shakes my very frame.'

Mother chuckles, 'Even hopeless birds sing in cages.'

'I am not hopeless! ' Portia writhes angrily, like a snake about to strike but mother calms her.

'Shoo, shoo, now, ' Mother purrs, brushing all the more gently, 'I meant nothing of it.' After a moment, she continues, 'Love is more than coquetry, little one, and it soon passes - like a parade, or a rash. For now, be happy, you are like the chaste stars - unreachable.'

anais vionet

Tiktok Songs

I'm chilling and doing homework tonight. Leaning into it.

Last night one of our suitemates (Julia) turned 21 - she's barable. Not that we get carded anywhere - I've never had trouble getting into clubs or ordering drinks - I mean never have I ever.

She had her birthday party at a place called Mory's, in New Haven, which is very Yale themed. We ate dinner in the 'captain's room, ' where every picture on the wall is a Yale team captain of some sort. They even have a whiffenpoof plaque. It's so Yale-core it's funny.

Have you ever heard of a drink called a 'Singapore Sling? ' Me neither, until last night. Then, somehow, there were undrinkable oceans of it. I had six of them, sitting at a bar and I felt nothing. Then I stood up and my bones seemed to liquify. Leong and Anna reeled me in.

I was hangin this morning though, I mean rocky-socks drunkover. My senses seemed sharper; my optical nerves dialed up all the way. The air seemed bright, and I swear I could've heard the sun burning if people would've just stopped all that annoying breathing.

I had a biochemistry quiz at 9am and I can't wait to see how I did. Later, at breakfast (I had a piece of toast) , Peter felt free to offer his sensible, 26-year-old, bropinion. I said, 'You're so wise, ' as I steel-eyed him, 'I-guess-you-never.'

By the afternoon I was back on my toes. Almost every night my roommates and I sit around a low table in the common room of our suite, crossed legged, on cushions and do our homework. It's less claustrophobic than sitting in our rooms alone and we usually have some music on, lowkey, in the background. We'd just heard 'Love Story, ' by Taylor Swift.

'I like songs that make love sound easy.' I stated.

'Oh, because it IS easy, ' Anna says sarcastically, 'grab yourself a physicist and make a TikTok song.'

'Hey! I've got a beef with TikTok artists, I said. 'At first, they release these stripped down, intimate, acoustic songs that feel personal, and then, if a song hits, they put out a new version that's totally overproduced.'

'Right.' Leong agreed.

'Oh, yeah, ' Sophie said, putting her hair back out of her face with a comb, 'and some artists' voices are suited to simple accompaniment and the newer versions just don't hit as hard.'

'I think Phoebe Bridgers is an example of production done right.' Anna said. 'Her material continues to sound intimate and stripped down even though it's no longer just her and a guitar, '

'On Tiktok, ' Lisa adds, 'when a new song works, I feel a connection, like it could be me recording a song with my guitar - so, I support them.'

'Don't get me wrong, ' I updogged, 'there's a place for overproduction but sometimes the instruments don't even sound real, like when they go all out electronic - then they lose me.'

'The big-music might drown-out the artistry we liked, ' Anna opined, 'but maybe that's how they heard it, as songwriters, in their imagination, but they couldn't afford it - the new version rectifies it.'

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Slang...

barable = drinking age

whiffenpoof = the most famous Yale choir

hangin = hungover

rocky-socks = really hungover

drunkover = still a little drunk but hungover

bropinion = when a guy gives you a 'brotherly' opinion

I-guess-you-never = you're a f-ing hypocrite

updogg = supply a comment to an ongoing dialog

anais vionet

Dirty Laundry

It's Sunday morning, about 8am. My BF Peter and I we're doing our laundry. Most of the time, we spent in my dorm common room, sitting side by side on a red corduroy couch, while our clothes washed, and then tumbled away in the dryer.

If you want privacy on a college campus, or to do laundry in peace, avoiding the weekend laundry rush, do it before 10am.

'Why do you wear these, ' Peter asked, pulling and lightly snapping the hairband on my wrist.

I pull my hand back, protectively. 'If I don't have a hairband on my wrist I feel out of control.'

There's a new me. I'd decided - civilized, unemotional, clear-sighted.

'I've got a lot to do before summer, ' Peter said earlier, 'so I made a spreadsheet.' I felt a shadow pass over me - our future is, at best, undecided. So, I shifted gears, the way the new me is trying to do lately.

'A Spreadsheet! ' I said, like I approved, and he grinned. I'd made him happy. This is what adults do, I'd decided, they have civilized conversations where decisions were made or avoided - but there was a small, dark thing in my heart.

I got a text from our dryer saying our clothes were dry, so we headed down. I love the smell of fresh laundry and the feeling of shaved legs against fresh bed sheets - a luxurious combination no guy will ever understand. I made a mental note to shave my legs later.

The last couple of weeks I've been working on summer fellowship applications. A successful summer fellowship is one of those things I'll need when I apply for med-school - like grades, faculty letters, physician recommendations, community service, a great MCAT score, bla bla bla.

My mom knows the 200 things med-schools use to cleave away pretenders and she'll rattle them off upon request and sometimes over groaning protests. What I need, ideally, this summer, are clinical experience hours. There's not much at stake, just my future, the respect of the faculty, and the begrudging acknowledgement of my pre-med peers. My mom was quizzing me on my progress last night. I confirmed that all the applications were in and I ended

with, 'I haven't slept with anyone yet, to gain advantage - but we're still early in the process.'

She was not amused.

anais vionet

Let

let

Let politicians claim virtue,
and abandon honest men.

Let the poor inherit promises,
and be comfortable servants.

Let the famous enjoy advantage,
and carry no favors in heaven.

Let physicians prescribe hope,
and a worthy price be paid.

Let education forge solutions,
and notorious liars lose favor.

Let simple humanity be rewarded,
and tyranny reap the sorrow of death.

anais vionet



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Favorites

Most of my classes suck (by that I mean they're difficult) . English is ok - especially the writing. I'd never want to major in English Literature though. It's one of the hardest majors at Yale. It may be harder than Pre-med. They make it hard to discourage people from choosing it. If you don't love literature, don't live and breathe books and writing, you'll never navigate the major.

Despite English being her third language, Leong is an excellent proofreader (which I need) .

'Put an emoji in there, ' Leong recommended, 'it'll show you're chill and not panicking.'

'No emojis! I said, shocked, 'This is supposed to be professional.' Still, every time I submit a draft the professor says it's good (an 'A') and I'm done.

Sir Paul McCartney is at Yale today, talking about a book he wrote, I think. They're piping his music all over campus. I don't have time to see him, but his 'Ram' album is one of my all-time favorites. I know people have their favorite Beatle, but I think Paul has, by far, had the most lyrical solo career.

Lisa and I just arrived at the fitness center (in the residence basement) were the only three there. Peter (my BF) got there ahead of us, about 30 minutes ago. He's been working out on one of the weight machines. He's tall and fit, with black-almost blue hair and a new beard. Sweaty and shirtless, he's a take-your-breath-away spectacle. The sight of him jangled up and down my libido. I felt myself groan inwardly. 'Put on a shirt! ' I said.

He comes over to where I've taken a seat. The sun is coming in at an angle which reveals that the air between us is filled with dust motes but now he looks like he's a model standing in a spotlight. I just look at him and smile wickedly. 'Why, ' he says, getting very close.

'Because you're distracting! ' I answer laughing, as I push him away, 'and I have a TON of reading to do.'

I like to read while I'm on the treadmill. He tries to nuzzle me as I step up. 'Look, ' I say, 'If I can finish my reading (~200 pages) by dinner, I'll have something special for you.'

'Like what? ' he asks, smiling and suddenly interested.

'Something for you to look back on when you're a very old man.' I whisper.

'What are we standing around for? ! ' He demands, putting my chemistry book and water bottle on the treadmill and stepping away to slip on his t-shirt.

anais vionet

Be Happy

Become a (wo) man of peace.
Help the world, be content.
It isn't up to governments.

Celebrate your free heart
in grateful virtue and
with modest speech.

Soothe the ever angry,
invite them in and dare trust;
be proud equals not at odds.

With new friends welcome,
double joys by sharing,
save the planet by being happy.

anais vionet



PoemHunter.com

Rose, Bud And Thorn

Ever played rose, bud and thorn? It's a game where you go around in a group of friends and share what's happening in your life. A rose is something good, a bud is something hoped for, and a thorn is a problem. Yeah, we're hopeless oversharers.

My rose today is the weather. I wrote a piece a week ago complaining about the lack of snow in New Haven. The next morning it was 2° with a wind chill of -30°. My roommates gave me the evil eye - like I somehow brought it on. 'God doesn't listen to me.' I 'd said, defensively.

My thorn is that Anna's parents are here for a few days and she's very on edge. She spent yesterday with them but today they're coming to our suite. I was surprised when I first saw them, they're straight off the farm (if the farm was in the 1800s) . They seemed to huddle together, defensively and consulted each other so quietly that they buzzed like a hive of bees.

Her father, a very tall man, was wearing a plaid flannel shirt under a long, thick, dark gray, Dickies coat (it says Dickies on the pocket) and jeans. He has a medium-long white beard and a black-felt, wideawake hat which he worked slowly in a circle by its brim (I think that would qualify as a comforting gesture) .

Her mom, Abeba, the spokesperson for the pair, is a thin woman with mostly gray (used to be brown) hair. She was dressed simply in black high-top shoes, a plain, deep green, floor length dress under a sweater and long, thick, gansey shawl with matching barrette.

When I reached out to take her hand in greeting, she regarded me with a coolness I found unnerving. All the other parents I've ever met were friendly, even huggy, on introduction.

'They're Quakers, ' Anna said, (note the 'they're') like that explained everything. When I looked confused, she reached out her hand, at arm's length, and touched me lightly on the upper arm with her index finger. After a moment she revealed, 'That's a Quaker hug.'

Anna had said they were quiet, 'judgy' people - and here they were, in our common room, judging the books on our shelves (With titles like, 'this book is gay, ' 'Good girl complex, ' 'The big sexy sex book') the clothes on the furniture, the laptops on the floor, the 'art' on the walls and the disarray in the kitchen.

They kept hat and purse in hand, as if they were expecting a fire drill. They're a whole new category of houseguests.

At one point, Peter came out of my room, dressed in shorts and t-shirt but drying his hair. Sometimes he showers in my bathroom after working out. He smiled warmly at Anna's parents and said, 'Hi, Peter, ' offering his hand to Anna's father, Milhous (Peter can be very charming when he wants to be) . Milhous stood up awkwardly and shook his hand, 'Good day, ' he said solemnly.

Anna's mom however, seeing Peter come out of my room, blushed from top to bottom and gave me a look that was worse than any spoken disapproval. The top of my head seemed to grow warm, but a glance at Anna revealed that she was embarrassed to her core, and my blooming irritation faded.

Imagine living under these passionless despots your whole life? I gave her a smile and moved on emotionally. Her parents' disapproval was so banal it was almost laughable.

Anna's so happy, hilarious, bold and brilliant - the fact that these dour, sour, saturnine, in-the-margin sodbusters produced her - seems random - one of the wonders of the universe.

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*slang: In-the-margin = unimaginative rule slaves *

anais vionet

Lets Hit It

I miss the open highway
I'm besotted with quick getaways.
What other sensation can compare
to pulling G's with wind-whipped hair?

When my foots on the throttle,
I feel unstoppable.
Faster, faster, no faster,
that's the rush I'm after.

Where are we going?
There's just no knowing,
but no matter where we roam,
the GPS will get us home.

I could always guarantee,
the speed limit would be exceeded.
I adored the wide open straightaways
and the feeling of a racing-day at Marseilles.

I remember in the Appalachian mountains
the plunging, snake-like, winding canyons
as the digital dashboard display passed ninety
how my eschort, Charles, would glare at me.

I'd let off - a little - and laugh, I mean,
isn't freedom the American dream?
To hear the growl of a V8 motor,
as it turns rural-roads into roller coasters.

anais vionet

Snipits

I shaved my legs this morning. "Alexa, put dinosaur Band-Aids on my shopping list."

Once you get in the college routine, time speeds up
One minute you're young and carefree
the next you're young and free-time free.

MIT guys

A group of MIT students were visiting Yale for some event. Sophie, Anna and I were in the residential dining hall. I'd finished eating and I was trying to read, when this group of MIT guys swauntered in.

My impression of MIT guys is that they're short and they flirt a lot. They're all over the place, like they're manic or on holiday and they think they're going to pick up girls. (On a Tuesday)

One guy said, "I'm new to the area, could you help me with directions to your house?"

Another came up with, "I've just become religious, 'cause you're the answer to my prayers."

"What are you up to tonight?" This short stranger asks, leaning rudely on our table and acting like he's lookin' to get inside-the-ride.

"I've gotta read two chapters before tomorrow," I said, somewhat annoyed with these dinkheads. They finally decided (realized) we're boring and moved on to other female diners.

standing in line

Americans seem to love lines. I hate standing in lines.

People don't line up for things in Paris. There aren't "bus lines." The person who guessed right and is closest to where the bus door stops and opens, or the quickest person or the most ruthless person will be first on the bus. There aren't any lines at cinemas or the boulangerie (bakery) or even at the Apple store - Apple tried to impose American style order - but #forgetaboutit.

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*slang..

swaunter = saunter with swagger

inside the ride = get an invitation to something.. personal.

dinkhead = immature morons*

anais vionet

-30

This morning's light seemed to blink on,
suddenly, like an urgent message.
It painted the lone, brittle cloud, racing somewhere
warmer, a shocking school-bus yellow.

There's a -30 degree wind-chill this morning,
my coffee seemed hotter and more comforting.
I usually keep my windows cracked at night
but this air feels aggressive and sharp as a knife.

The quad, usually bustling on weekend mornings,
is empty and the few cars I see are smoking like old steam trains.
I was dreaming of sweets and of walking to "Donut Crazy,"
but that actually would be crazy, if not suicidal.

"Ooo!" I say after digging through the kitchen cupboards, "we
have pop-tarts!"

anais vionet



PoemHunter.com

Yvonne To Orly

It was Monday, June 20th, 2022. My roommates and I are in Paris to see Olivia Rodrigo (in two days) . But tonight, I was doing a favor for my uncle Remy. Taking my elderly great-aunt Yvonne to the airport.

In RL this all happened in French, but I wouldn't do that to you - but just so you know.

"I've always thought of Anais as a granddaughter, " Yvonne said too loudly into my phone, which she had picked up and I was afraid she'd drop. She kept trying to hold it to her ear.

She smiled at me with her old lady dimples. "That's sweet of you to say, " I lied. She doesn't fool me. She's not innocuous. She's as mean as a snake and she doesn't like ME at all. How did I end up doing this? I asked myself.

"No Aunt Yvonne, " I said as I gently moved the phone away from her ear. "This is a CAMERA call. Hold it out so they can SEE you." She's saying a final goodbye to Remy and letting a cousin know her arrival time. As the Facetime call ends, I pocket my phone with relief.

Lisa's with us (I told her not to come) and she doesn't speak French. So for her, this whole task is an awkward pantomime. Charles, our escort, drove us to Orly airport and he's circling in wait to pick us up.

Yvonne walks at a glacial pace, and it took forever to clear security. Lisa and I have special tags allowing us to escort Yvonne to her gate. I offered to get her a wheelchair, but NOOOOO.

"We need to hurry -, " I began, but she interrupted me.

"Why are you wearing that skintight nothing? " she barked loudly, irritatedly, "if I had YOUR figure, I'd hide those tiny breasts

("minuscules seins, " in French, loudly) . Heads turned. As I flushed with irritation, she cackled like a witch.

It's 8pm in Paris and 30.5°C (87°F) . I'm wearing a sports bra and two tank tops. Sue me. I wasn't planning on doing this at all. We were staggering slowly through the terminal when, like a gift from God, an Air France courtesy tram pulled up next to us.

"Get on, " I demanded, "or we'll miss your flight." She did - as slowly as humanly possible.

When we finally got seated at the gate, she sent me for bottled water, a sleep mask, a neck pillow, sugarless lemon drops and a Paris Match magazine. "Thank you, my dear, " she said upon my return, baring her teeth at me in what I suppose was meant to be a smile.

"You should come and visit me (in Libreville, Gabon, Africa) , " she suggested, "I think there are things I could teach you." This is like that gingerbread-house invitation we read about as children.

"I can't, " I said, with feigned regret, 'I'm in school, " (I wouldn't go there if she lived with Timothée Chalamet) .

I heard a familiar voice, and I looked up to see my Grandmère arriving with her usual entourage of 7 or 8 lackeys, a couple of frazzled Air France employees and two gendarmes.

"Yvonne, " she said, pointing to the two Air France employees, "these people will see to you. Say goodbye to Anais."

"Goodbye dear, " Yvonne said in a fake, fragile voice. I gave Yvonne a half-hearted Paris bises (two kisses on each side) and my Grandmère shooed me away with a hand gesture and an impatient, "Go, GO." I'm afraid Remy's in trouble.

Yvonne and her branch of the family are the slimiest people you could ever meet. They're billion-heirs (not billionaires - billion-heirs) who (theoretically) stand to inherit handsomely when my Grandmère dies (I am NOT in that grubby lineup) . They're liars, cheaters and scoundrels who'd stab you in the face for an olive to put in their martinis. They're legal reasons my Grandmère has to put up with them from time to time - but every interaction is fraught with phoniness.

About fifteen minutes later, Lisa and I are in the car with Charles racing back to Paris for dinner with our roommates. As I texted them to expect us in 20 minutes, Lisa said, "I got bad vibes from that old lady - the way she LOOKED at you when you weren't watching.."

"YOU, " I said with a chuckle, "are very perceptive! "

anais vionet

Adapting

Peter and I are together and we're in a grove.
Time is our treasure, precious and dwindling.

I watch for signs of the future unfolding,
like a twitch that might be the first sign of a stroke.

Answers will come - slowly - or they'll parachute in from nowhere.
We spend a lot of time together but most of it is spent studying.
We both have silences that shouldn't be penetrated.

I have so many questions, but I keep them at a safe distance,
so I don't feel the need to interact with them.

All I know is we're alive, and we still have to dance.
It's not always fun, operating in the face of uncertainty
but what else can we do - except go through the motions?

"When exactly did the world lose its collective mind?" I asked,
reading the news on my iPad.

Peter looked up from the book he was highlighting with a phosphorescent pink pen.

"They've found toxic metals in CHOCOLATES. Everywhere." I announced, like that Poe bird.

"I guess we're canceling chocolate then," he said, sarcastically,
"we'll adapt."

"Yeah, you bet." I said with genuine irony.

anais vionet

I Miss The Winter Weather

Bustling corridors, places to go,
you can't stand still or move too slow.
Make a plan, plot a course,
there's an entire campus to traverse.
Other things are good to know,
like the best place for lunch
or where the wi-fi's slow.

Last year there was lots of snow,
the Yale tunnel system was the way to go,
to warmly get from A to B,
when paths were dangerously icy.
This year there hasn't been any snow
it guess it's global warming, you know
- or that Pacific weather pattern, El Niño?

I miss the Nor'easters and bomb cyclones
that hazardous weather made Yale seem like home
those storms were something I took for granted.
'Cause I want snow drifts like they have in Canada.

I left Georgia and now I'm feeling cranky.
I want the winters God used to inflict on Yankees.
I remember when blizzards, up north, were doctrinaire.
to stop them now isn't fair - or something else näm-di-'ger.

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näm-di-'ger (French) = means a pseudonym

anais vionet

Planning And Saving The Planet

planning

The other day Anna created a Pinterest board of wedding ideas (Cheesy, she knows) . "It's time to hop on the bandwagon, " she said. She insists every other girl she's aware of - except her weird Yale roommates - has one.

We think her girls back home (in Oregon) - who didn't go to college, are matching up with the Larrys and Gregs who stayed home to become auto mechanics and carpenters - and are now serially getting married. This trend seems to be exerting an odd, psychological pressure on Anna.

"You may be jumping the gun, " Sophie observes.

Anna's never even had a long-term boyfriend before, but she wishes she had one now. A part time BF anyway, because who has time for more? Anna is self-proclaimed awkward with guys, especially cute ones.

She created a tinder account and uses it to see how many matches she can get - but she refuses to meet any guys there because she says she's not "desperate." She thinks everything about tinder screams awkward, unless people are just hooking up there - and that idea, in her mind, is absolutely disgusting.

saving the planet

Late last Friday night, a graduate friend of Peter's threw a party at his house - far from campus. The house was packed with people and the music was thumping, the crowded rooms jumping - practically humping - in time to a Sacramento horror punk band called "The cramps' that was playing on loop.

I made it through the living room mob to the kitchen, which was oddly empty and well lit. There was a disheveled girl gripping the island bar with one hand, like we're on a rocking ship, while trying to light a cigarette with the other. I gently wangled the lighter from her - so she didn't set her hair on fire - and gave her a light.

Afterwards, I slipped the lighter into her skirt pocket, and noticed half the island had coke spilled all over it. "I gave it a drink, " she said, slurring and wavering on her feet, "it looked thirsty."

That's when I noticed her now-empty rum and coke cup next to a soaking wet little cactus plant, two ice cubes now lodged in its dirt. I reassured her as I helped her onto a chair, "you were saving the planet."

anais vionet

Coffeene

Coffee, I adore thee,
somehow you never bore me.
Bold and dark or mild and smooth,
you get me up and on the move.

In warm embrace or cool frappe,
mocha, french roast, or tall latte,
crema, sospeso or con panna,
you never fail to make my day.

It's the best thing ever manufactured,
without it, my mind is slow and scattered,
for a quiz or formulating I'd be knackered,
every morning the Keurig is where we gather.

You pick me up and keep me keen,
in complementing any cuisine,
by delivering a dose of sweet caffeine,
you are the original magic bean.

In doses quick or lingered over,
on mornings with a hangover,
I reach for you, your warm embrace,
the morning fogginess to erase.

The flavor, the scent, which is the best?
They are of compound Interest.
French press or espresso - take your pick
- they all provide that delicious kick.

Jitter juice, rocket fuel, cup of joe,
cuppa, morning brew or ristretto,
your flavors please, your scent rouses,
a coffee shop is where the crowd is.

In slang they call it Mormon-crack,
but sugared up or with a snack,
with creamy art or straight-up black
once I've got it, you won't get it back

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Webster: Knackered = 'very tired or exhausted.'

anais vionet

Game On

Place your bets, you're just in time
for the game, the fix is in.

What a thrill. Is it a crime to cash in?
The winners do, and that could be you.

You'll be a witness, as wise guys smoothly step in
- it's basic greed - and never a sin, as long as they win.

Mr slick ricky, you've got to be bold to win gold -
winners never just fold - betting never gets old.

The winners will add your few spare bucks to their pot -
let's admit, all that you've got - isn't a lot - it won't fuel a yacht.

Place your bets, you're in the front row all the time,
don't be lame, be part of the game, the greasy bigtime.

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Place your bets, you're just in time
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don't be lame, be part of the game, the greasy bigtime.

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Note: I love NFL football, but now every commercial is for some sports book like
"Draft Kings." How can the NFL, increasingly in league with gambling
books, not end up mobbed-up and fixed?

It's ruining NFL football - the illusion that it's a real sporting competition. I'll tell
you, Once they start calling the NFL "entertainment" and not sports -
it's over - the game I once loved will be just like pro wrestling.

anais vionet

A Buzz

I broke my personal record for days alive yesterday. Yea me. I feel great today. This morning I swear my hair looked shinier and more lustrous and there's the slightest glow to my skin. I'm just saying. I'm out and about for the first time this semester and you couldn't slap the grin off my face.

The commons dining hall was a rolling buzz of conversations endemic to university life. At the next table, the topic is how many people can someone be in love with at once. A girl named Ariana, is at the center of the discussion. She's a film-study major and I think it's the topic of a documentary she's working on.

Ariana has choppy purple hair with bangs about an-eighth of an inch long. Today, (34° and rainy) she's wearing a short-short skirt, thermal tights that look like sheer leggings and about four tank tops. "You should pick one person and give them your everything." Ariana argued.

"Monogamy used to mean one person for life," another girl states, "then it became one person at a time." I hide a smile and try to look like I'm not eavesdropping. It's hard to explain how much I adore these overheard conversations.

Soon it's time to head for class and we're up, gathering our bookbags and putting in our AirPods. When you're making your way across campus, the goal is to be fast, fierce and bouncy. I love Miley Cyrus' "Flowers." It's Eden on so many levels. People try to shame Miley but the woman goes hard, she slaps - all the things - and "Flowers" is one of those songs that get you there.

Webster: Endemic: "existing or common in a certain place"
slang...

eden = perfect

slaps = is excellent

anais vionet

Proof Of Life

Earlier in the week I was pretty sick and Peter was pampering me. One night, as Peter was taking away my tea tray, I took a selfie to send to my mom - as proof of life.

He looked at it from the side, "Ooo, no," he frowned, "too slutty." He put his hand out for my phone, "May I help?" "Can you hear yourself talking?" I asked. My mouth was incredibly dry from the steroid meds. The entire world seemed an unnecessary irritation. He gently tied my robe, straightened me and my pillows and took a new version. "Better?" he asked.

"Yes," I said, a little more crossly than I meant to, "you're always right."

"It's the world we live in. Get used to it," he muttered.

When I tried to pick up my iPad and go back to work, he gently took it away, "Stop," he whispered, "It's 12am, you're done for the night."

I groaned, relieved really, then he took a small eucalyptus stick and dabbed it on my temples. "Gaa!" I said, "That's cold!"

Who knew grown up, Californian men were so into homeopathy? After a moment though, it felt amazing.

The next morning, a cat appeared in our suite! It was a solid gray kitten with deep, brown eyes. At first, we stared at it like it was an alien (where'd that come from?) until Leong came in from the cold and said, "Cat." Then it was welcomed.

About the time Sunny ID'd it as a British-shorthair, there was a tiny knock on our door and a little girl asked, "Have you seen...", only to squeak "Cirrus!" when she saw her kitty. I'm telling you now, damn the rules, we would've kept that kitten.

bye Google. All Google's been doing this semester is feeding me into CAPTCHA traps, Argh!

How, in 2023, can Internet searches be getting harder? One of my roommates, Anna, is helping me test alternative search engines.

Anna's a wiry, freckled, farm-girl from Oregon, with wavy, shoulder length, dark-brown beach-hair. In our first semester, Anna was a firecracker tossed into my life. She'd bang on my door at 2am (I didn't even KNOW this crazy farmgirl) with her problems, klutziness and bad boyfriend stories, but she won me over with her vulpine-braininess, her impertinent straightforward secrets and laughter - all delivered in her exotic, western twang.

"Ok, " Anna suggests, getting way into my personal space to see my screen, "try - headache after sex."
"Sure, GET me on odd shopping lists, " I snark.
"Black mole on armpit, " she countered or "intimate dryness."
"Big help! " I laughed.

anais vionet

Art And Science

I can get irrationally angry at art, but not science.
Science is just a tool, art can betray you

anais vionet



PoemHunter.com

Double Trouble

I was diagnosed with double-pneumonia on the 15th and classes started on the 17th. I'm already getting nagmail about assignments, yea! I'll be behind and virtual for a while. It started as a rhinovirus, honestly, I don't even remember being around a rhinoceros, but he trampled me good. (Hmm, song title there?)

I'm feeling better today, I can read without the room spinning - heck, I even managed to write this, but a new, implacable nemesis - low-energy - is here, like Lebron James, to check me when I attempt something over ambitious, like picking up my chemistry book. At least I got to stay in my room.

My roommate Sunny's so angry with a certain girl that **she** even thinks it's hilarious. Her creative, revenge beast has been awakened and her feelings are practically colors in the air. It's entertaining. I think if she saw her now - well, let's say Sunny takes boxing in the gym every morning. 'I'm over her already, ' Sunny announces, stomping around her room, trashing all reminders on contact.

Be careful out there, people - if love doesn't get you the rhino might.

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****nagmail - mail about late assignments, class papers due, surveys***

anais vionet

Images In The Dark

My father died when I was seven.

Like a girl in a museum I'm drawn to his pictures - those inadequate reproductions hypnotize me.

What can pictures give? Coal-blue eyes, a knowing look. They exist, for me, like Cassandra of troy, full of endless secrets that can never be told.

A snowy, ice slick, twilight blue rush hour parade - hundreds of grimy cars rushing, rushing... somewhere.

Why do the details I can't remember haunt me so?

A flash of light, the tearing of metal like the screaming of dogs in a reeling, devouring dance of energy.

The nuclear family detonating with death inches away.

Everyone was asking, 'What do you remember?' 'I don't know', I said.

Sometimes, as I fall asleep, memories of him - which I hold dear - come to me like the ghosts of departed friends. Image after image in the embracing dark.

Why is it the further away you get, the more I need you?

Those images and that voice are strangely silent in the morning as I'm, once again, awakened to a world I'd rather have different.

anais vionet

Telepathic

I'm publishing my poetry telepathically today.
So, if you think of a particularly clever rhyme - it was me.

anais vionet



PoemHunter.com

Returning

We're off to New Haven - hurry, hurry -
we're jammin, crammin, slappin`
and slammin` everything into our bags.

'Fifteen minutes to take-off, '
Michael announced, 'the chopper's waiting.'
with hugs all around we separated.

Our roommates too, are all catching flights
vectoring in from various sites -
our motley group will reassemble tonight.

Pew rated Yale one of the hardest universities
to get into in '23 - so is it really a certainty
that our cardkeys will let us into our residency?

Fall grades came out yesterday - Lisa and I are all grins
- we'll have thirteen days to visit and settle in
and reorganize things before Spring semester begins.

I hope that your vacations were as fun as ours
but the New Year's begun and in a matter of hours
we'll resume the school grind, our holidays devoured.

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**NOTE: Michael was just hurrying us along, it takes ~30 minutes, in Manhattan,
to go from Central Park South to the TSS Heliport - but it's not like they'll leave
without us.*

anais vionet

Flowers

Everyone was lazing around, it being the holidays. The intercom buzzed and Lisa got there first to press answer. "Package, on the way up," the concierge announced. This time of year, a package could be a late arriving gift, there was interest.

It takes a hot minute for elevator three to get to the 50th floor and in those moments, people waited. The foyer of Lisa's suite looks like a half circle with three doors. To the left is the library (Michael's office) , to the right is a hall leading to bedrooms and straight ahead is the living room.

Lisa was already at the front door. Karen (Lisa's mom) came into the foyer from the hall and Michael was heads-up at his desk, when the front door finally buzzed. An iPad sized monitor showed a messenger with a bouquet of flowers. "OOO!" Lisa said, opening the door and signing for it.

"Wha'd we get?" Leeza asked, flying into the foyer, like a vulture, from the living room and saying, "OOO!" When she saw the flowers, following up with "Who're they for? !" "Anais," Karen said with a grin, reading the envelope as Lisa turned the vase for a 360 view.

I was in the living room playing "Disney Dreamlight Valley" on my Nintendo switch when Lisa, followed closely by Leeza, came in with the flowers. "Oh, WOW," I said, sitting up when I saw them. "They're for YOU," Lisa said, trying to make it sound all casual, but her grin gave the truth away. Leeza gave a hoot of suppressed excitement when I grinned.

Leeza had her phone in hand and took a picture as I accepted the vase from Lisa, setting it on the coffee table as I opened the card. A moment later Leeza pronounced, "It's a "Warm Embrace Arrangement." Gen-alphas can research anything, in moments, from their phones. "It cost," She started to say, and Lisa elbowed her, "OWW!" She exclaimed, then "175 dollars," as she completed her thought, rubbing her ribs, and took a seat next to me.

"They're from Peter," I revealed, (who really can't afford to spend \$175 on flowers) .

A week ago (Tuesday) , I woke up in a rage, on a vendetta. My eyes opened, and

the world seemed dark, like a newly opened box of slights and irritations. Shadows seemed to reach out and the very air seemed gritty and annoying. I wanted to yell at people and maybe murder someone.

"Remember last week," I asked the room, "when I was in a funk?"

"I was a witness," Leeza said chuckling, "I can confirm." Lisa just nodded.

"Yeah, I needed to rant, and you were there," I patted Leeza's knee, "Thanks, sorry."

"All you listened to for days was Rihanna," Leeza reported, shaking her head.

"It lasted for two days," I said, wincing at the memory, "that's when I sent Peter that message."

"Ahhh," Lisa nodded, "I get it."

"Yep," I nodded back at Lisa, "got my period the next day, it doesn't usually hit like that." I said defensively.

"That explains a lot." Leeza grinned.

"But look!" Lisa said, putting her arms out like Vanna White, "You got flowers!"

"Poor Peter," I said, sighing, "I better call him."

anais vionet

New Year's And Strip Clubs

Gigi Hadid wore pearls, a t-shirt and jeans to Paris fashion week. So, our (Lisa, Leeza and my) theme for this New Year's Eve is 'Jeans and pearls.' To be accurate, Gigi's distressed, slouchy bottom, boyfriend jeans were embroidered with pearls - the pearls weren't worn as a necklace - but Lisa and I think anything involving embroidery is a trailer-park trend - so we'll be wearing strings of pearls. If Karen (Lisa and Leeza's mom) lets us, that is.

Luckily for us, Karen has four strings of Tiffany pearls - called Essential, Ziegfeld, Akoya and South Sea Noble. They're all 16-inch, single strand strings (which we all prefer) and they range in value from \$600 (the Akoya) to the expensive (South Sea Noble) string - that she won't lend anyone. The good news is, if anyone is thinking of buying me a string of pearls, I can't tell the difference between the cheap string and the expensive string.

Leeza (Lisa's 13-year-old sister) wants to be included in EVERYTHING this year, which is funny because last year she either attacked us or completely ignored us. This year, Leeza has a thirteen-year-old's razor-sharp instincts and relentless curiosity.

As we're Planning New Year's Eve, Ethan Bortnick's song, 'Engraving' was playing. It's a crazy song with middle-school, EMO, angsty vibes. One of the lines of the song is 'strip for me'. As the song ends, Leeza suddenly asks us, 'Have you two ever been to a strip club?'

'No', I answered.

Lisa said, 'Once.'

'What? !' I asked.

'Really?' Leeza gasped, 'Spill!' She demanded.

'This has random context,' Lisa begins, 'I've been inside a strip club once in my life.'

Leeza and I tittered nervously. 'I'm scared,' Leeza said, as an aside, grinning and rubbing her hands on her knees, clearly more delighted than scared.

'I was attending a middle school, Model UN conference, at Brown University,' Lisa continued, 'and they took all the kids to a strip club for their model UN social.'

I gasped and blurted 'There's NO way this happened.'

'Yes,' Lisa insisted, 'you can ask my mom.' she said, with a serious look, 'And, and obviously, it was rented out for the night, but they didn't, like, think to take away any of the normal features. There weren't any strippers, but they didn't take the poles down and they didn't turn off the multiple TV screens on all the

walls that were playing their normal rotating video content.'

'Wow, ' I said, with my hand over my mouth. Meanwhile, Leeza was chortling like a mad woman and rocking back and forth.

'Everyone walked in, ' Lisa went on, 'and it was just middle schoolers, thirteen years old. There were pictures of the dancers on the poles, and our history teacher came in, and freaked OUT, saying, 'Oh, no, No, NO! ' Because it was a school event, we had taken school buses there, it was a boondoggle. They turned us all around and hustled us out of there.'

Leeza had stood up and was twirling with glee. Middle schoolers *live* for chaos. 'Taken out of context, ' I said, 'It was crazy you went to a strip club in middle school.'

'It was a jump scare, for sure, ' Lisa confirmed, 'we went from one vibe, a school field trip, to a strip club.'

Anyway, for New Year's, a lot is still up in the air - undecided - but we're determined that we want to have a blast. We're young and we want to support bad b1tch energy (BBE) .

"Oh, I have a BBE song! " Lisa squeals, "Mafiosa! " (by Nathy Peluso) She names it as it begins playing.

The songs in Spanish and when it ended, I'd looked up the lyrics because my 2 years of Spanish weren't good enough. I tell Leeza the lyrics go: 'Let the bad men fear me, when I arrive in my car - they speed off.'

'Yes! ' Lisa Laughs, 'We don't drive - but, YES! '

'Emotionally, ' I say, laughing too. 'But verse two asks the great question, 'What the frack is wrong with men when it comes to women? '

'It's, ' Lisa started, looking up and searching for words, 'SUCH a timeless question.'

'Why'd you pick that song? ' Leeza asked.

Lisa chuckled, ' Because you don't get more BBE than a female Mafiosa killer.'

Update: Karen agreed that as long as Charles is with us (and really, when isn't he with us?) , we can borrow the three inexpensive pearl strings (worth about 5k) . So, I'll be wearing the Akoya pearls, an Anna Molinari white, basic, cotton-shirt, washed denim cropped jeans with white bridal flats and Lisa and Leeza will wear their own, white tops, jeans, flats and pearls and we'll be on-theme.

Happy New Year's Everyone!

anais vionet

Demands

Life is a series of demands. Hurry up, perform.
Do your homework, write a paper, oh and read 300 pages,
get in those volunteer hours, grab those lab credentials.
I get busy, caught up in projects and I forget stuff
like dinnertime, peeing before it's an emergency,
or like calling you - last night.
On vacation I'm unplugged, I'm avoiding focus,
I'm not paying attention, my mind's wandering.
I'd want you less if it were required by law.
I imagine your huge, brown saucer eyes
exhibiting a wounded, blaming expression and I can't.
Maybe there's a biological explanation, yes, that's it,
I'm missing an enzyme, I have a glandular disorder
that prevents long distance relationships from working.
No, not work - It can't be work - it should be exciting.
Is it a crime to want some time off from pressure?
I'm not asking for a pony.
Just a sabbatical couple of weeks away from obligations.
I felt so guilty that I went to Karen (Lisa's mom) about it.
We talked for over an hour, she's so smart, I love her.
She reminded me about the recent lockdowns
and how years of skyping and remote learning
might affect (dull-down) a long-distance romance.
I told her what you said, about my sinatra psyche
and she said although I seem absurdly secure,
I'm probably still figuring things out - and that's ok.
There's really no substitute for talking to a mom.
I called you - and left a message - I hope you understand.
I turned my phone off - for now.

anais vionet

Downtime

It's nice to have some holiday downtime and not be all go-go-go. I've even gotten in some Animal Crossing play. After 40 minutes of picking up weeds, Bianca, one of my villagers, told me she'd heard I was dead.

Later, we're in Lisa's living room taking turns playing songs from Spotify. Lisa had just played "Woo", by Rihanna. When the song ends, fading out, Leeza deadpan said, "That song is pure evil."

"You guys, I forgot to mention it but that is my energy song, it makes me feel so HOT." Lisa adds with a chuckle.

"It has an evil vibe," I admit. "An evil vibe," Leeza confirms.

"Don't be judging," Lisa reminds us.

"Your next," Lisa said, nodding to Leeza, "What've you got for us," she speculates, "some mental health rock?"

Leeza's had this girl-punk-rock group called "Vancougar" playing on a loop in her room. At first, I wasn't enthusiastic but now I think they slay. Her mom's even gotten on board, dancing "the twist" to "Philadelphia" when it rolls around. Leeza has great taste in music although she leans a bit EMO (emotionally hard core) for me. She makes me feel old by introducing us to all these new bands like "Youngest and only," "Calling all Captains" and "Beatrice Dear."

"I've got one song to play," Leeza says, "Paparazzi, by Lady Gaga."

"I've been listening to that song all WEEK!" I gasp, "I love that song, it may be her best - that's so random," I finish saying as the song starts.

As Paparazzi ends Lisa says, "That song has major Gwen Stefani vibes."

"It DOES," I agree, "It could be "Cool" or "Sweet Escape."

"Yeah, for sure," Leeza agreed, "shoutout to No Doubt."

Leeza says, "I have a conversation topic: What's something we all acknowledge is cheugy but we still do anyway?"

"Being blonde," I say, which gets stitches of laughter because it's true and Lisa and I are.

"That's true, that's fair, " redheaded Leeza laughs. "Anyone blonde is dead to me, " which gets her a pillow in the face.
"Ok, I'm going to come for a lot of people, " Lisa says, "but yogurt, yogurt is cheugy."
Leeza gasps, "You think yogurt.. It's not cheugy! " she practically yells, "It gives MOM."

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slang..
cheugy = something off-trend, or behind in an awkward way - millennial, but not fully vintage.
gives mom = a comfort activity

anais vionet

Eve 2022

I'm at (my roommate) Lisa's for the holidays and it was Christmas Eve afternoon. I was in Leeza's room (Lisa's 13-year-old sister) . One corner of the room is all pillows. A hundred pillows or more - Disney pillows like Mickey and Minnie but shrek pillows too and penguin pillows, minion pillows, mario brothers pillows and novelty pillows that look like bags of doritos, cheetos and ramen noodle soup - just about every toy pillow you can imagine.

Leeza was there on the pile with me, watching 'La La Land, ' my favorite movie. Leeza had never seen it and I hoped she'd love it as much as I do. In the end, she pronounced it a new favorite.

Later (still Christmas eve) Lisa, Karan (her mom) Leeza and I made our way to a lardy-dardy rooftop event space called 'The Skylark, ' where Michael (Lisa's dad) was co-hosting a Christmas party. The rooftop is on the 30th floor and everything there is made of glass - even the staircases.

When Lisa told me about the party (at school) , I brought out a few Anna Molinari bits I had stored under my bed (when I realized Yale wear wasn't very fashionable) . I ended up wearing a black lace party dress, a black knit crop cardigan cover and white, satin bridal shoes. It seemed very on point as a 'Wednesday' look. If you haven't watched the 'Wednesday' series on Netflix - It's fun.

As we arrived the sun faded, as if timed, and natural light gradually gave way to the cityscape of artificial light. Once it became fully dark, New York city glittered around us, as if the stars had dropped from the heavens to join the party.

A brass and piano ensemble played seasonal classics like Prokofiev's Troika as we (Lisa, Leeza and I) explored the venue. Every surface seemed decorated with poinsettias, candles, and ornaments or ribbed by garlands of balsam, spruce and fir that smelled incredible.

There were (guessing) about 200 guests and servers wound their way through the crowd with trays of cocktails and champagne. These waiters were all good looking, as if picked from the sea of actors, in New York, just waiting for that big Broadway break. At one point, Leeza, with a mischievous holiday gleam in her eye, reached for a flûte-à-Champagne only to have the waitress twirl, at the last millisecond, like a dancer, leaving her grasping at air, disappointed.

Michael's company had set up a tall, white and gold Christmas tree, in a corner of the terrace, under it were packages, for special clients, so beautifully, individually and uniquely decorated that you could believe they were wrapped by angels.

The papering was exquisite, handmade, thick as Liva and embossed, inlaid or pebbled with gold. They were topped with bows, brooches, angels, or snowflakes of silver, rose-brass, batic silk and even crocodile.

No doubt the wrappings were as valuable as the gifts inside and though those presents enchanted, teased and cajoled us all, they were reserved for people on the very, very nice list (a cop stood discreetly by) . We were briefly transfixed by the spectacle, but the spell was broken when Leeza said, 'I'm hungry.'

Cocktail parties are for adults, so after we ate, Karen stayed with Michael and the teenagers were sent home. We didn't mind, after all, none of those presents were for us - our day would be Christmas!

Happy holidays!

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Webster: Cajoled: 'to deceive with false promise'

Lardy-dardy = swank and elegant

anais vionet

An Interview

Peter and I will be apart this holiday. So instead of writing a story, I thought I'd interview him.

It's 8:30 am, Wednesday morning 12.21.22 and we're having coffee at the Atticus Bookstore Cafe in New Haven, CT. We'll go our separate, holiday ways after our coffee. I'm going to New York City and Peter's going to Malibu, California.

I have a few questions on my phone and I'm recording the interview.

Anais: 'Ready? '

Peter: 'Ready.'

Anais: 'How are we alike? '

Peter: 'Oh, we're both planners who know what we want. You've got a blueprint of your future and I have my plans - you know, stacked carefully, like dinner plates - but they've been a little wobbly since I met you.' He smiles suavely.

Anais: 'Nice. How are we different? '

Peter: 'Oh, lots of ways. Biologically, ' Peter begins, putting his hands over his breasts, 'my boobs might be bigger.'

Anais: 'Ha, I don't THINK so.' I snarled, but I couldn't help chuckling. 'Seriously! '

Peter: 'Well, I think you have more emotions than I do.' I look at him quizzically, 'I'll suddenly realize you're crying and wonder if I did something wrong, or you'll burst out laughing at nothing at all.'

Anais: 'You make me sound like a NUT, ' I said, 'and I don't cry that much, ' I say defensively.

Peter: 'No, not if we eliminate TV shows, movies, FaceTime calls or when you're tired and overworked.'

Anais: 'Maybe you're just emotionally blocked, ' I said, irritated.

Peter: 'Maybe, but I do love it when you jump off the couch for an impromptu dance, like you can't contain yourself anymore - and your silliness - I LOVE that.' He smiled, 'When we're studying quietly and you sneak up and jump on me, playing like you're trying to pin me, ' he chuckles.

Anais: 'I AM trying to pin you, ' I said.

Peter: laughs out loud

Peter shifts toward me.

Anais: 'I see you moving in on me, ' I said, pointing my pencil at him accusingly, 'get back in your seat mister, I'm not THAT kind of interviewer.' I gasped, 'What

if I were poor, old, near-sighted Barabra Walters? She'd have never seen you coming. Would you have put the move on HER? '

Peter: 'I like my women younger'

Me: 'Barbara's about 100 - 99% of the female population is younger - when did you get so picky? '

Peter: 'I'll have you know I'm VERY picky. Is this one of those hit-piece interviews? Do I need my lawyer? '

Me: 'You got me off track.' I admit, checking my notes, 'other differences? '

Peter: 'Well, I'm kind of easy going, in general - lazy faire - but you, you watch everything - it must be exhausting.'

Anais: 'I'm sentient, ' I admit. 'You let people walk all over you - like when they brought you a cold steak at the Plaza? '

Peter: 'I didn't want them taking it back and spitting on it.'

Anais: 'If they did that, we'd own the Plaza - besides, that's why we got you a new steak.'

Peter: 'I'll admit, you make me aware of things I hadn't noticed, and when you complain, you're usually right.'

Anais: 'Thanks. Any other differences? '

Peter: 'The obvious one, you're a rich girl - we come from different worlds.' He said, touching his lips absentmindedly.' (I've been taking psychology classes - that might be a self-soothing gesture)

Anais: 'Have you seen that new James Cameron, water-world movie? I come from there.'

Peter: 'A world where parents buy their daughters six thousand-dollar prom dresses.'

Anais: 'I bought that on SALE, ' I said emphatically, 'it regularly costs twelve (thousand) .'

Peter: 'Hazah! You like saving money.'

Anais: 'And I didn't get a FITTING, ' I added defensively (because it was on sale)

.

Peter: 'And - you're a little Sinatra, ' he said, wig-wagging his hand in a so-so way.

Anais: I gasp, 'Well THAT's good to KNOW, ' I say, narrowing my eyes at him.

Peter: 'I'm not calling you spoiled, ' he shrugged, 'you secretly paid your roommate's tuition, ' he said soothingly, 'THAT's who you are - generous.'

Anais: 'She was working two jobs - for peanuts, ' I said softly.

After a quiet moment I began again.

Anais: 'What about us? ' I ask hesitantly.

Peter: 'We've become a couple, ' He said, smiling, 'against all odds and I've

become comfortable with us being a couple.' He pauses for thought.

'Relationships have so many stipulations and rules, and everyone has opinions, but your smiles make me smile, and your sighs and even your yawns make life better.'

Anais: 'Do you want a closing statement? '

Peter: 'I'm supposed to become a physicist, now that I'll have my doctoral degree.' He pauses again and puts his hand on my knee. 'I'm not sure exactly what that'll mean - for us - that remains to be seen, but my aunt has a saying, 'The universe has so many tricks up its sleeve - love whatever happens.'

anais vionet

A Holiday Narration

I'd just finished my fall-term exams. I felt at once both played-out and relieved. Ever felt like just falling over? Didn't I deserve that small treat after what I'd achieved?

No doubt our floor was dirty but dust, in blonde hair, isn't easily perceived. I was lying, relaxed, on the cool common room floor in sedate prostration when my boyfriend arrived. He was eager for some post-exam reunification but I lacked the energy for synergy, the motivation for combination or even flirtation. Which left him grumbling with male frustration.

He suggested, "Why don't we go out for some libation? "

Oh, what a smooth-talker - that's practically a direct quotation.

"Oh, sure, " I said, "ply me with booze and into temptation! "

Side stepping that, he proclaimed, "It's time for celebration and the start of vacation! "

I held up my hands and he pulled me upright, "Ok." I said in resigned assigation.

A shower and change of clothes soon had me refreshed and reanimated.

How sad I'd have been to miss the end of term conversations imbued by holiday decorations

and I offer this to you, my small, winter, college-based narration.

In the hope that you'll be inspired, even if you're tired, to celebrate your own holiday occasions.

Happy Holidays Everyone!

anais vionet

Cursive

I want to say something about cursive writing (this might seem random) .

I've seen articles saying that cursive writing is a "dead art, " that computers have destined it for oblivion and questioning whether cursive writing should be taught in schools now-a-days.

But if you plan to go to college - relearn it and practice it, because you'll need it.

Random hot fact. The first time you have to handwrite a multiple-question essay test - where each answer requires five hundred to a thousand words (a written page) - handwriting, in block letters, is unsustainable.

Your hand will literally cramp up - dog, you'll suffer, your essays will suffer and so will your grade.

Writing in cursive is faster than block lettering and with a little practice, it's effortless.

My sister told me this once, and this morning, as I watched other students, one third of the way into our essay test, grimacing and flexing their aching hands - I just smiled to myself.

Yeah, you can thank me later.

anais vionet

Coffee's Important

My roommates are all up and about. It's finals week and everyone is hustling about. Lisa came in from an early exam, it was snowing lightly, she looked right at home.

'How'd it go?' I quizzed.

'E-Z,' she replied, shedding her long navy coat and mango and cashmere beanie. After dumping it all on her bed she joined us in the common room. 'Blue State (coffee) is closing' She announced.

Leong gasped, 'What?'

'Three of the four Blue State locations are closing,' Lisa confirmed, 'not Orange Street.'

'Why?' Leong moaned.

'What are you why?' Lisa queried.

'They're so popular!' Leong exclaimed, 'There's always SO many people in there.'

'That's real,' I chimed in, 'those places are packed and noisy.'

'They got bought out' Lisa attested.

'By whom?' Leong wondered.

'By another coffee company.. maybe,' Lisa guessed soothingly.

'Oh, I hope so.' Leong stated, sounding depressed.

'You know what? Lisa added, 'rumors were thick that Book Trader would close too.'

'No!' Leong bemoaned.

'I'm happy to announce that they're not.' Lisa assured, 'That's something to celebrate.'

'I love studying at Book Trader.' I professed.

'And their bagels..' Leong mentioned dreamily. 'Oh, yeah,' Lisa agreed, 'so good, so cheap.'

'Change is ineluctable,' Anna sighed.

'WHAT?' Leong replied, looking confused.

'Inevitable,' Lisa told her, 'change is inevitable.'

'Then just say that.' Leong grumbled at Anna, who shrugged.

'I need to go support my favorite coffee shop soon,' I declared.

'Which is?' Leong inquired.

'Coffee with a K,' Lisa and I blurted out, both at once. 'It has an intimate, date spot vibe,' I explained, 'and the chairs that are perfect for putting an arm around someone.'

'The Benjamin and Acorn (two on campus coffee shops) are going to be so crowded.' Sunny stated, joining the conversation as she started putting on her shoes to go out.

'True THAT.' I agreed.

'Common Grounds Cafe, ' Sophie revealed, coming from her room, drying her hair with a towel, 'bought out Blue State, ' she confirmed. 'it was in the Yale News.'

'OK', I pronounced, satisfied. 'Perfect.' Lisa declared. 'Thank God.' Leong agreed.

'Coffee's important.' Sunny attested, picking up her coffee cup and book bag.

'See ya! ' she waved to the room absently, with her coffee cup, as she opened the door and stepped out.

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Webster: Ineluctable: an unavoidable fate, inevitable.

A writing exercise to see if I could recreate a multi-person conversation, from memory, without using 'said' or 'asked.'

anais vionet

Neglected

I'm sporting this new lipstick
it won't fade, smudge or smear
I'll be lucky if it wears off this year.

I've got this new eyeliner that's like
a luxurious, glittering, penciled tattoo
Leong said, "How do you get it off you?"

I unpacked these chemical wonders
to see if they've lost their luster
by being neglected since last summer.

When you study too much, you feel pent-up,
so my compadres and I chose to get dolled-up,
rolling-up to dinner, like beauty queens on parade,
and not just sophomore scrubs trying to make the grade.

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Webster: compadre: a close friend or buddy

anais vionet

Snowed

It snowed last night which pleased me - but hardly enough - it just teased me.

The thin, white sheet of snow looked bright and fresh
the dull, browned hedges of fall became holiday dressed,
the air had a sharp, chill perfume and the ground a new, sparkling flesh.

Lisa, a New Yorker who knows snow, gawked at me as if I were insane,
'You're excited by *NOTHING*, ' she sarcastically complained.

I replied, 'When it snows there's a quiet solace, and the world looks clean and
flawless.'

The weatherman is promising us a blanket of snow this weekend
and that would be nice, a storm of ice, to lock us in as the week ends.

anais vionet



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Pre-Seasoning

We're no strangers to perceptible sacrifice
so, we've put all flavors of fun on ice.
Einsteining overnight - alone - is
about as exciting as a windows phone.

But I've been-to-the-show as a pinckney,
and in my years of parental-stalking analyses
the juice is definitely worth the squeeze.

Soon holiday parties will be made gold
by candlelight and champagne cold.
We'll decorate with reds and greens
and surrounding ourselves with tinsel things
we'll sing songs of angels and newborn kings.

But not just yet, no, not now - now tis the pre-seasoning -
a time of unrest, stress and testing - and God help
you if they're not impressed with your reasoning.

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slang...

einsteining = studying for exams

been-to-the-show = seen things

pinckney = a child

the juice is worth the squeeze = the reward is worth the work

anais vionet



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Wrapped

It's December, it's foggy and rainy, but that fits. Of course, a rainy Saturday means gathering in the common room with my roommates and watching either "The Hunger Games" or "Twilight." Leong's never seen Twilight, believe it or not, what are they DOing in China? We were explaining that It's ok to talk through Twilight because it's completely senseless. Yeah, good times.

We got back from Thanksgiving break, and we had to hit it - grinding to squeeze half a semester into 18 days. It's a cornucopia of pressure. So, we've hit the books, but we're still us.

Here's a question: What's the first season in December? "Spotify wrapped" season! EVERYONE has Spotify and once a year you get a summary of your listening habits. The reports came out this week and it's all people are talking about. Comparing their lists, artists, tastes. Those lists say a lot about someone and it's ok to not have taste, we should normalize it.

My top artist was Taylor Swift (duh) my top song was Taylor Swift's "Renegade," Spotify says I listened to it 285 times but that's biased because more than once, when writing a paper, I put that song on a loop for 6 hours. My second most listened to song was "Champagne Problems" By Taylor. That song is so Rory, Gilmore Girls coded - like Rory saying, "you're on your own." My other top artists are TV Girl, the backseat lovers and hypo campus. Yeah, I roll big.

Taylor's also been in the conversation because Sophie has an ex-fem-friend (a freshman) who started seeing *a 45-year-old guy*. Let me ask you, what does a 45-year-old man have in common with an 18-year-old girl? We have Yale friends in their early 20s who still consider themselves teenagers and children and THEY are horrified. It's naked fracking pedophilia. (Sorry, that one foamed over.)

The whole situation is ripped from Taylor's 2010 masterpiece "Dear John," which is about her dating John Mayer when she was 19 and he was 30-something. Her friends warned her, but she wouldn't hear. Taylor Swift can be corny, and I love the corn, but she can be topical too and even though I was 7 when she released "Dear John" (2010), it's a timeless lesson.

anais vionet

Funny

"It's just a rough draft, "
he said with a laugh
but the joke is half epitaph.

I know I'll regret it
this helping him edit
his thesis, this knife,
that will cut through my life.

Somehow, it's become real
this part of the deal
where my dear Dr. Peter
will vamoose from our theater
where I've acted like I could go on
when I return next year, and he's gone.

anais vionet



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Giving Thanks

Peter was able to see some of the ant-like Macy's Thanksgiving parade by leaning suicidally over the 50th floor balcony. I go into fight-or-flight panic if I get anywhere near the railing. The parade passes in front of the building with floats passing 40 minutes before they're on TV.

Finally, hours later, at lunchtime, Michael (Lisa's dad) , announced, in a low, deep and melodic voice, like God might have used to conjure the universe, 'come and get it! '

Which started a pell-mell stampede, luckily, no one was hurt.

Would I be unoriginal if I said, 'turkey and dressing are the ultimate comfort food? ' The aromas, flavors and textures, like the bubbles in our sparkling, apple-cider faux-champagne, invoke minted, holiday memories and emotions.

I have so much to be thankful for. I'm surrounded by friends, I'm doing well (if not perfectly) in school, I'm in a nice relationship - one that makes me confident and America's in a moment of peace.

Right as we were seated, 13-year-old Leeza's phone, hidden in her back pants pocket, chirped and her pale, freckled face turned crimson.

'Oh, ' Michael said softly, 'that's going to be a problem.'

Leeza held up her phone so everyone could see it shutting down, 'Sorry! ' she said meekly.

'Thank you.' Her dad responded.

If things aren't perfect now - when are they? Our holidays may be stripped back and simplified, or we may be separated from those we love, but I hope you're all well and happy this Thanksgiving and that you don't run out of gravy.

Because when the gravy's gone (that may take days) - I'm callin' it - this thing is OVER.

Happy Thanksgiving!

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Webster: Pell-mell: 'mingled and hurried disorder.'*

anais vionet

Tuesday

It's Tuesday morning. I'd thought, until Leeza corrected me, that Thanksgiving was today.

"Thanksgiving always falls on *Thursday*, dorkus," Leeza said Sunday, at breakfast (extirpating my hopes). "Besides, notice we haven't been cooking?" She added.

"Good point." I chuckled disappointedly.

Later, Lisa, Leeza and I had just got back from the pool where we saw John Krasinski and Emily Blunt. Leeza told me that Paramount studios has a condo, somewhere - on the 29th floor - where celebs stay (When you don't know where something is, it's on the mysterious 29th floor). Peter missed it. He didn't join us because it's a saltwater pool and it stings his warm but delicate, deep brown eyes.

I wondered what Peter was doing - push-ups on the balcony or something probably. Who knew he exercised so much? There's a whole state-of-the-art gym but he likes exercising outdoors. I checked and yeah, there he was, on the balcony in the 46° wind, doing curls or something with elastic bands.

I sipped on some of Karen's (Lisa & Leeza's mom) nummy cinnamon-apple-cider and watched him for a few delicious minutes. Peter really is kind of fire, I decided. Then I popped my head out, "Come shower, Lisa wants to go out," I announced. He just nodded and began packing up. I ran for my room to shower first (we share a shower).

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*Webster: Extirpate: "to destroy completely"

*Slang..

dorkus = clueless moron

fire = hot, exciting, greater than normal great*

anais vionet

Corners

Last night, Lisa, Peter, Leeza and I were in her father's 50th floor study watching New York City. It's a corner room with glass walls from floor to ceiling. He likes to watch the city himself and has a small, 5 seat sectional couch facing the view.

The left wall window looks across Hell's Kitchen to exactly where Sully Sullenberger crash landed flight 1549 in the Hudson river (it was 3: 31 pm and no one was home) . The right window overlooks Central Park and Upper Manhattan. Lincoln Center, almost dead center of the corner, looks like part of a toy train-set.

The view is a wheeling, ever changing and mesmerizing panorama. Well lit ships, barges and boats move glacially against the ink black Hudson. Jets in expressway-like holding patterns (Newark Liberty, and Teterboro airports left window - LaGuardia, right window) blink, like waving angels, helicopters buzz below like insects and the traffic, far, far below, forms a living chain of red and white lights which can erupt with nugatory hues of police blue at any moment.

While we watch, we're playing a game of 'Would you rather.' It's a game of situational trade-offs, like 'Would you rather listen to the same 10 songs forever or have to watch the same 5 movies forever? Of course, most people say the movies - because they last longer and there would be fewer repeats.

We take turns asking these critical questions - pausing, occasionally, to point out things below.

'Would you rather be in a crowded elevator with a bunch of noisy high school students or pinned in with a bunch of judgemental, middle aged men? The girls chose the students, even though high schoolers can be mean. Peter chose to be with the men.

'Would you rather find your true love or a suitcase with 5 million dollars? ' We all chose love.

'Would you rather hike or camp? ' Both were unpopular if they involved going to the bathroom outside - which creeps the girls out.

'Would you rather give up your computers or your pets (forever) ? ' THAT was a stressful one.

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My movies: Clueless, Rushmore, Moonstruck, Shakespeare in love, Dr. Zhivago

anais vionet

Stupid

We're on-high - in Lisa's (parent's) 50th floor penthouse in Manhattan. The sky outside is a cloudless, blinding powder-blue, infinite and reflective as liquid. A TV news helicopter flew by under her window a few minutes ago.

If you don't feel God-like looking down on the world from her living room, then you're probably an atheist. Peter was with us and as we stood, looking out on Central Park and NYC from her balcony, he was suitably impressed by it all - from the chopper ride in from New Haven to the opulent digs.

Peter's a poor (he exists on a meager stipend) doctoral student from Malibu, California. He grew up simply, in a rustic, one floor, three-bedroom cabin that overlooked the Pacific Ocean. He never had a smart-phone or cable TV growing up and only got glacially slow Internet in high school. He says he really lived in the ocean. His most prized possession is his 70s "Bing Bonzer" surfboard that stands, like a priceless, Egyptian relic in his dorm room.

We got a vibe switch when we came inside and 2Pac's "Hit 'Em up" was absolutely airhorning from the stereo system. "Westside, Westside, Westside," Lisa and I joined in the chorus and clumsy-danced by reflex. Leeza, Lisa's younger sister, saw us and ran over for a group hug with Lisa and me.

Lisa's little sister's 13 now and boy, is she a new-teenager. Her long, deep-red hair, which now has fluorescent blue ends, is tied-up in a ponytail revealing a buzz-undercut. Leeza had just gotten home from school and had already changed from her school uniform to ripped jean shorts, white socks and a black, 2Pac sweatshirt - which her mom reported she wears every single day. When her mom manages to launder that, Leeza rotates to a Jets hoodie - although she's never watched a football game in her life.

"I've got a worried mind," I confessed to Peter, later, as we were scrunched together, me half on his lap in an easy chair. He gave me a consoling hug.

Our grades came out earlier today and I got an A- in Physics 3. I crumbed in the face of classical mechanics. Is an A- who I am? Yeah, I guess so, and I'll have to give myself an "F" for dealing with it. I suppose I'm acknowledgeably challenged.

"Can you appeal it?" Peter asked, he was trying to be supportive, but he knows that's a ridiculous notion.

"It's a male professor, " I said, "maybe I could send him a voice message and cry, " I updog.

"That would be HOT, " Peter said, in a dream-like whisper.

"Uhgh, " I groaned, "It's emotional manipulation, it's NOT sexual, " I explained, creaped out.

I haven't talked to my parents yet. They're in Poland and don't know my life is over.

"You deserve to embrace your awesomeness, stand up for who you are and reject the status quo." Peter offered, "I dare you, " he finished, unable to keep a straight face. "But seriously, you'll fix it after the break, " he offers in hope.

"Yeah, " I say, somewhat unconvinced, "I know."

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slang..

updog = when you supply your part of an ongoing joke*

anais vionet

The Bitter Tea

Even though you know some tea, you aren't automatically pressed to spill ALL of it. Today's tea features our roommate Sophie and two grody flavors of betrayal. BTW, I'm being magnanimous by changing the names and not doxxing the creeps.

To set our stage, a doe (we'll call her Britney) high-school friend of Sophie's is a Yale freshie this year. They were buddy-hollys back in the day and they've been clinging since their reunion.

On another track, Sophie's been talking to a guy (we'll call him Cory) in her English class recently and it was clear they were "in-like"; but their clocked-up schedules were corking their algorithms.

Sophie and Cory finally got a shot together last weekend and attended a party together. However, it turns out later, at that party, Britney snuck off with Cory and smashed him (they were observed, and everyone carries a camera these days) .

So, poor Sophie suffered two betrayals in one night. Cory went-hiking on her and Britney - who she'd told about Cory - did the other woman chisel.

Of course, Cory (just another dog-boy) is already forgotten but the broken friendship drama will live on forever. Why Britney chose to betray Sophie we'll never know, because that skank is dead to us.

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Slang...

grody = disgusting and gross

doxxing = publishing identifying information

doe = female

buddy-hollys = nerdy friends

clinging = hanging out obsessively and sharing secrets

clocked-up = busy

corking = blocking wants

algorithm = alignment, groove

smashed = pretty well-established synonym, you know.

went-hiking = cheated on

chisel = cheat

anais vionet

Turducken Baby!

Midterms are over
I'm coming up for air
now that they're done
I'll admit I was scared
- that physics three -
was nearly the death of me.

What comes next?
The Manhattan express
for November recess
some November excess
with Lisa, my BFF princess,
my doughty, NYC adventuress,
I'm blessed, she's the best.
Ooo! and some turducken bliss,
much needed rest and time to de-stress.

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Marriam Webster: Doughty: 'brave, strong, and determined.'

turducken: a deboned chicken stuffed into a deboned duck, further stuffed into a deboned turkey.

anais vionet

Discoveries

On a recent Saturday morning, I was blue-collar grinding (volunteering at a local hospital) , when one of the doctors I've wo-manually labored for stopped by briefly to check on a patient. She had her young daughter, Ivy, in tow. I'd met little Ivy before. The doctor asked me, "Would you mind keeping an eye on Ivy for a minute?" "Sure!" I committed, bending down to get eye-to-eye with the girl and engage.

Ivy's an adorable little human. She's a sober 4 year old, about three and a half feet tall, with wavy chestnut brown hair down to her waist. She was wearing a yellow, "Beauty and the Beast" dress. Ivy's into all things Disney (who the shiar isn't?) . Disney seems to home right in on impressionable young minds like hers and mine.

Ivy asked me, "If you could have a wish, what animal would you be?"

I believe we should talk to children as if they were adults - my parents were like that with me - which partially consists of complicating basic ideas and observing where the kids go with it.

"Where would I BE, as this animal?" I asked, after all, it was an important consideration.

"What do you mean?" she asked, puzzled but genuinely interested.

"Well, I wouldn't want to suddenly become an elephant here in the hospital - would I - or a bear in the middle of the ocean?"

"Nooooo," she said, so scandalized that she took my hand to reassure me.

"I'd probably want to be an alpha predator too," I was thinking out loud now, "you know - no use becoming an animal only to get eaten." She nodded, scouring me with her wide, unblinking, brown eyes and I finished with, "since humans are the #1 alpha predator, I suppose I'd like to be.. me."

"Nooo," she said, sternly. Her body language radiated impatience. She'd decided that I hadn't understood the question - or I didn't appreciate the magic possibilities of transformation.

Her mom returned, just then, and after touching base with the duty nurse, she turned to Ivy and me, "Ready to go?" she asked. Ivy immediately changed allegiance by releasing my hand and taking hers.

Doctor-mom thanked me and as they walked away, Ivy gave me a bashful, half hearted, goodbye wave.

I've discovered that if I do my volunteer work early on weekend mornings, from 6 to 10am, it's almost like it never happened at all. Afterwards, I'm not tired and I have the rest of my day free. I had to give up something, of course - my early, weekend, antisocial coffee consumption and writing time.

Coffee shops are my favorite places to write but few of them are open at sunrise. I'd found one that I liked close to my dorm. The most direct route is to walk through an old cemetery. At sunrise it can be dark, foggy and dew soaked - a scene right out of "Night of the living Dead" - creepy-ish, but I'd take the shortcut every time.

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Slang...

shiar = the mother of all curse words

anais vionet

Leaves

It's starting to cool down here in Connecticut. Leaves are falling, like giant, burnt snowflakes (science says that trees send chemical signals to their branches to clip leaves away) .

Peter borrowed a friend's toy-like, pea green, Fiat-500 convertible and we drove into the country to see the turning leaves. We hiked a bit too and stopped, in Mystic, for seafood.

I never realized just how theatrical trees could be, with their few, simple, chlorophyll tricks and how reflective still lakes could be. Wowzer, just - wowzer.

There are some things that should never be shared. Like a toothbrush, an iPad, lipstick, strawberry stroopwafels, a slice of pizza or a secret lover (that last one just sounded good - but yeah) . But life is good, I can share that. We're young, dramatic sophomores with good hair products and we're at it, working and playing hard.

Ahh.. ok, upon consultation, I have to add that some of us are in their mid-twenties with only a few good years left.

Did I mention that we climbed up a twisty lighthouse staircase too? Peter always thinks people should take the stairs, and not the elevators, "You want to have muscles and bones that work when you're eighty," He says. Since he's closer to eighty than I am, when we're not carrying furniture, I let him have his way. Of course, he's never been to up Lisa's 50th floor townhouse either.

My mom told me that they're off to Poland again, over the holidays, for another tour with "Doctors without Borders" (Damn war) . Lisa's parents have (kindly) invited me to share their high-rise utopia again this year. Who knows, maybe Peter will have his chance to try those stairs.

anais vionet

My Watch

It's Sunday morning, my watch says it's 33° and 5: 58 am. Surprisingly, half of us are up and motile. My excuse is that I'm scheduled to volunteer at the hospital this morning.

Leong just came up from the basement fitness center, she's all sweaty.

"I hate that metal music those giant guys in the weight room listen to." Leong said, slipping her shoes off.

"That music makes me feel so hot, It has such energy." Sunny shivers, slipping-into a sweater.

"I don't understand old music." Sophie said, spreading butter on a piece of hot toast.

"What does THAT mean?" - I had to ask - thinking she meant "classical music, which I love.

Sophie explained, "My English professor played this old song for us - it's old - 'The times they are a changin', by Bob Dylan? It's an AMAZING song"

"You've never heard THAT?" I asked, dubiously, but slobber-knocked if it were true.

I never LISTEN to old music," Sophie shrugged, "it sounds so flat and one dimensional - I can't stand it," she winces. "I like spatial audio, binaural and object-based dolby atmos, you know - lossless and three dimensional."

"Don't get technical with me," I said, as if offended, while gathering my gear,

"But you watch Carol Bernett, all those old TV shows." Lisa observed, "What's the difference?"

"Video?" Sophie said, with an implied "HELLO," as if that one word made everything obvious.

I missed the rest of it, my watch beeped, it was time to disco, I had stops.

I can't deny Peter and I are sync'd these days. Have we fallen in love? Maybe, but I think we're still upright. He doesn't tease me about my fear of heights, bugs, the dark, and cheesecake - anymore. He overlooks my crying during movies, streams and pet-reunion videos. It's reciprocal, of course, I let him hate salad dressing, ketchup (just odd) bananas and chocolate (can you imagine?) and try to ignore his acting like a bro around his bhessys.

I'm going to Peter's to watch football, later, 'cause I love my NFL. The doctoral guys have a "mancave" situation setup in their basement where they red-zone, kaber, or blare shley emo-core at 120db. I flat told Peter that when my watch alerts to harrowing audio levels - I'm outro.

But between you and me, these guys make THE best BBQ (they slow smoke briskets or something) . I'd probably just go upstairs, put on my noise-canceling AirPods, read (with the smart girls) and wait for the shiz eats.

Monday's Halloween - Happy Halloween everyone!

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slang & terms..

motile = when an organism that can move at will

slobber-knocked = when an idea hits you so hard that slobber sprays everywhere

time to disco = when you have to go

stops = appointments, places to be

streams = streamed content - TV shows, Tiktok, Youtube or social-media.

bhessys = best friends

red-zone = a football channel that jump from game to game all day.

kaber = obsessively play video games

shley = mindless

emo-core = emo/screamo/hardcore - headbanging music

outro = a state of departure.

BBQ = if you don't know what bbq is - you haven't lived

shiz = wonderful, swell, tops

anais vionet

World Cartoon

It was one of those gray but somehow bright-skied New England Wednesday mornings that made you sad for anyone who wasn't there. Fall freshness demanded my attention, like a hungry pet, from every open lattice-window in our stuffy common room.

As I watched, for a marvelous moment, the world was a cartoon whirly-gig. Trees, writhed, animal-like, to be free of their multicolor leaves, shedding them - like bad blind-dates. The four-color debris was immediately drafted away on gust-streams, those invisible elves, and politely scattered in corners.

I'm waiting for test results today and time seems to be passing with vegetable slowness. In uncertain hours like these, some students armor themselves with alcohol while others indulge in religious solace. Not Leong and I. Leong's a communist - it seems that communists grumpily tough things out.

I was raised a Catholic, so I rightly deserve whatever bad thing's going to happen. In Catholicism, failure and guilt are accepted everywhere, like the best credit cards. Any success is automatically categorized as unexpected, undeserved, if not fraudulent, and above all, temporary. In fact, life itself is little more than an inconvenient test on the way to wherever.

"We're living in the age of crisis." I announced, agitatedly, to the otherwise quiet common room (where the usual crowd was attempting to study)

"Figured that out all by yourself?" Sunny asked, "You ought to go to Yale," she added.

"Hear me out," I say, as if anyone cares enough to stop me.

"Our parents had their war on terror" I say, with air-quotes, "but we got a pandemic, a crazy President complete with insurrection, a faltering supply chain, a cost-of-living crisis, renewed nuclear war threats and the climate meltdown. It's hard to study with all that going on." I self-declared.

"It's hard to study because I'm out of watermelon." Sophie said, digging through the fridge.

"You aren't anyone these days unless you're battling a crisis." Sophie noted.

"Your parents are ALIVE," Leong noted dryly, "I MET them and they're going through all that too."

"And are we (mankind) going to take any real, adult steps to address

these issues? " I asked, looking around to see if my outrage was mirrored, "apparently not." I sermonized rhetorically.

"YOU" Lisa said, shaking her head, "are a hopeless optimist - and you left out a few crises."

"Whatever, " I declared, "It's still hard to study, " I reiterated, while distractedly chewing on a #2 pencil that Lisa had loaned me.

Later, we're outside, taking in the semi-sun and reclining on our fold-up "better beach" lounge chairs. We're off-and-on playing "That's why I am like I am."

"When I was in 10th grade, I had 22 detentions." Sunny revealed. "22! What for? " Anna asked, looking over at Sunny while shading her eyes from the sun that briefly pierced the clouds and decided to stab her fiercely in the face.

"Talking in class." Sunny admitted. "Wow, THAT'S a shocker." Lisa laughed.

"Shut up! " Sunny laughed, adding a middle finger for emphasis. "I got those detentions on purpose. I had the love-jones for my English teacher, and she supervised lunch detentions.

I would bring in these lesbian paperbacks, like "Keeping YOU a secret, " to hold up and pretend read - while eying her, seductively. Anna gasped, "Did she ever respond? "

"No, " Sunny said with a sigh, "My love was unrequited." "That was a lot of trouble to go through." Lisa commented.

"Being gay isn't that deep, " Sunny observed, adding the tag, "That's why I am like I am."

anais vionet

Lita

We're on Fall break this week and Peter's favorite aunt - Lita - is visiting. Lita's a tall, slim woman (eek! A guess) , in her early sixties. She's nicely weathered and tan. I'm sure she once had Peter's blue-black hair but now it's mostly white and styled in a loose braid. I think she rocks the coastal grandma aesthetic with a wardrobe of mostly pale tans, whites and flats.

Peter has all kinds of stories about her - she's a character. When Peter was 5, on Halloween, Lita pretended to sacrifice a chicken, cackling, like a witch. He was wide-eyed until she admitted she was just making fried chicken for dinner.

Lita lives on property adjacent to Peter's parents, but hers is larger, more of a farm, where she raises chickens and grows Meyer-lemons and persimmons. This may explain why Peter slices up lemons, dips them in sugar and eats them like oranges (I shiver) . Peter told me that Lita always liked fruit, which is why she bought Apple stock in 1997.

From what I've learned, talking to Lita, she practically raised Peter's dad (David) . Their parents had a boy before her, an older brother she doesn't remember meeting because he drowned at a church outing when she was a toddler. Their parents, in their grief, had turned in on themselves, becoming as self-centered as gyroscopes.

They'd left Lita by herself for weeks at a time, to raise herself on a more-or-less trial-and-error basis. So, when David came along 13 years later, he became her responsibility. She started working as an auto mechanic and eventually opened a couple of shops of her own. She describes herself as more well-read than formally educated - as if knowledge had just settled on her, like dust from an old library.

"Teresa (Peter's mom) is very curious about you, " Lita confides to me as we huddle together over venti pumpkin lattes, "Peter's very tight-lipped where you're concerned."

"He is? " I ask, confused, "maybe he's ashamed, " I venture, "or maybe he's planning to dump me? " Lita looks amused, "uh huh, that's probably IT, " she agrees.

"Look! I say excitedly, pulling an envelope from my purse, "It's my first-ever paycheck, " I beam. I make a production of opening the thing, like an Oscar envelope. "\$223, " I read, shaking my head in admiration, then adding, with sincere sounding hyperbole, "he can't dump

me NOW, I'm RICH! "

anais vionet

A Big Affair

"You don't indulge in much self-reflection, do you? " Peter asked me.
"Are you asking about that time in Reno I shot a man just to watch him die? " I answered.

A poem from a friend (by Peter) :

A big affair
I know more about particle physics than love
but you have a magic of your own,
and I want to be around it.

A big affair
A fight for your attention and commitment,
a revelation, a feast of impressions,
I could drown in it.

Peter hops up for a handful of peanuts, then retakes his place on the deep red couch next to me. "Sure, " I say in my best frenetic, surly and spoiled voice, "leave me alone here - desperate for kisses - and then try and creep back into my life."

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Marriam Webster: Frenetic = "anxiety-driven"*

anais vionet

Panic At The Station

Sophomore year's clocked-up my free time. Last summer I made some core promises (to my mom) to go harder on the pre-med track. Perfect grades are ok, I'm told, but they're underdog, alone. So, this year, my "spare" time is split between hospital volunteering and a (nominally) paid research project. The goal of all this hustle is to pad my resume up, as proffer, for a 2025 med school slot. I've never felt so observed, judged and weekend-less, but playas gotta play.

Last week, Peter (let's call him my BF) was invited to some random alumni event. He wasn't excited about it, but he thought, "Ooo, free meal." Actors and doctoral students are all about free food. Then, after he signed onto it, they told him the group was going, by train to Washington DC, on an overnight trip (all expenses paid) where they'd visit the White House and meet the President.

They took the train through New York and down to DC arriving late at night and then they had to meet in the lobby, the following morning, at 7am to get COVID tested for the White House. He said the White House experience, and the meet-and-greet seemed surreal. While he didn't get to meet Joe, he shook Jill Biden's hand, and in a parting, fog-headed moment, suggested she "have a good one." (Hopefully, she did.)

As an extra, on the way back, at union station in DC, they heard gunshots and there were a few tense moments where they saw people in the station (outside the train) running about in panic. Eventually, security pronounced everything safe. A man WAS shot in the foot but that passes for a calm night in DC. All-in-all the event and train travel made for an exhausting trip for poor Peter.

Bizz, BIZZ-BIZZ-BIZZ. At first, the alarm sound seemed unreal and unimportant. I opened my eyes and through my three, open dorm windows, I could see stars still flickering busily, like light off of so much broken glass. "What?" I mumbled.

"I have to go," Peter said drowsily, as he kissed my forehead, "it's getting early."

It seemed I blinked, and he was gone. After he left, I woke up several times. The silence seemed heavy, almost solid and it easily pressed me back into sleep.

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*slang:

Proffer: "present (something) for acceptance."

clocked-up = busied-out

core promises = inescapable swears

underdog = expected to lose

weekends = a mythical time to catch up*

anais vionet

Kissed

I think we all love kisses, like flowers love the sun.
They can be meaningful, deep and scandalous or fun.

You might briefly, sneakily, steal a kiss,
you can blow a kiss or condone a kiss,
emblazon every girl or boy you know with a kiss,
postpone a kiss, or bemoan a kiss as hormones,
but you can't keep a kiss or own a kiss,
because they're never more than half your own kiss -
sadly, as we've all learned, you just can't kiss alone.

Every kiss is a puzzle, an experiment requiring a team
you may not even understand a kiss, or exactly what it means.
As far as kisses go, I've only had a few. I blame that dam
pandemic, they certainly weren't something I eschewed.

I wish I had specific tips for girls with quick, impulsive lips
which somehow never can resist a flirty, kissing apocalypse.
Your roommates will support you, with only a few quips
but you really can't keep doing this, you've got to get a grip.

anais vionet

The Journey

To take the hero's journey, I left the ordinary world.

Now my heart is wildly pounding because the wolf is at my door.
That tireless executioner craves the very blood therein my veins,
but I set out to defeat it, so I guess I can't complain.

The wolf is known as "ignorance" - when he's posing as a sheep.
The most frightening aspect of the wolf is that he has a home - in me.

I find myself both - the hunter and the hunted.
I'm the question and the answer, the cure and the cancer,
the music and the dancer, the magic and the necromancer.

anais vionet



PoemHunter.com

Omelettes

It's Sunday morning. It's bright and cool, the sort of fall morning that makes the world's problems seem like fake news. Peter and I are at the Marriott Courtyard, off campus. This morning's breakfast is Peter's 19th birthday present to me.

I'm redorkulously happy and surprisingly hungry. Somewhere, in the noisy, happy sounding kitchen, there's a bacon, cheddar-cheese, tomato, ham, green-pepper, and spinach omelette being convoked in my name, and my tummy is growling in anticipation.

Our waiter brought us large white mugs of nutmeg coffee - God bless her for that. Sipping it, I scanned the dining room, where carefree, normal people were enjoying their brunches. They didn't look like they had hours of reading and problem-sets (homework) waiting for them later - but who knows?

Peter leaned forward, smiling, to refill my mug and then, when adding some cream, he almost overfilled it. I couldn't help chuckling. I enjoy this awkward man's company beyond all sanity, to the point that it's a little cringy and embarrassing. Our smiles seemed to clang together, like symbols. I wish I could bask in the warmth of that smile all day.

'You could do me a favor, ' I say shyly, 'a little extra present? ' I said, trying to look pitiable.

'What? ' he asks, with a skeptical look. I open my bag and pull out my latest physics PSET (a homework problem set) .

'This problem haunted me in my dreams last night, ' I say, smoothing out the wrinkled paper and rotating it so it was right-side-up for him. '#6, ' I said, confirming that with a pointing finger.

He glances at it. 'Ahh, classical mechanics? ' he guessed. 'Right, ' I confirmed.

He looks up at me through his bushy, brown eyebrows, 'You took AP physics one in high school and physics 2 here, last year? ' He asked. 'Yeah, ' I confirmed, 'but this problem is throwing me.'

'Well, ' he says, motioning me to hand him my pen, 'you're perspicacious all right, but you're basically a biology major, ' he begins, 'a set of studies that involve a memorization mentality. For physics one and two, I bet you memorized Maxwell's laws, the Kinematic equations and the table of equation cases, ya? ' I nodded yes.

'Unfortunately, that's not going to cut it here, ' he says, shaking his head, 'All of those nice simplifications aren't in play here - there are no cases to rely on - it's derive as you go.' As he explained this he was briskly scribbling something on a paper napkin and the answer was there, on that, a second later, when he rotated the paper back to me.

His eyes are a dark, gingerbread brown, but despite that darkness, they seemed warm and lit from within. A swoop of his dark blue-black hair has fallen across his forehead, I leaned over the small table to tuck it back into place. 'Thank you, ' I said, breathing a sigh of relief, 'did you show your work? ' I asked as I folded the paper and napkin away.

'Of course, ' he says, amused, 'but we'll review it later, ' he assured me.

'Happy birthday ME! ' I said, in a whispered cheer.

'Yes, ' he grinned, 'Happy Birthday, YOU, ' he pronounced as our omelettes arrived

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*perspicacious: the keen ability to understand difficult or amorphous things.
redorkulously = so ridiculous it's dorky *

anais vionet

Pastel Purple

It's 6:15pm. Peter, Anna, Sophy and I are studying in the common room of our suite.

"We need to get serious," Peter whispered, but there was no subject in the declaration, so I was left confused and uncommitted, "about getting serious," he clarified.

"I'm not sure I can get serious about a guy who doesn't separate whites and darks in the laundry," I say, gently.

"No," he said, shaking his head in brief vibration, "we need to get serious about DINNER."

"Oh!" I said, maybe a little too relieved.

"Ha!" He chortled, "YOU overthink everything!" He said, nodding his head up and down to prove it was true. "And speaking of laundry," he continued, seeing me start to open my mouth, "the other night YOU asked me if your pastel purple panties should go with the whites or darks - so I must be an EXPERT!"

I laughed at the idea of his laundry expertise, sailing in from out of the purple like that, it was haywire. "Well," I said, becoming introspective, "I didn't know you'd hold onto that question like a grudge," I said, in quiet, wounded accusation, "from now ON, maybe you should stay as far away from my panties as possible."

"What are you two grouching about NOW?" Anna asked, looking up from her computer. "You guys are like an old married couple."

"True THAT." Sophie said, like a judge right before knocking her gavel to finalize a ruling.

"We weren't arguing!" I said, looking around confusedly. I looked at Peter, who was smiling broadly, "Were we?"

"Nope," he said, wrapping his arm around me in a bearhug, "we were flirting."

anais vionet

Purposes

When the sun sets, flecking clouds with diaphanous light and birds whistle daytime's last summer psalms, we call it night.

We're moonbathing and Sunny's features are inlaid with glamorous silver-blue patines. We'll reawaken soon, our time is measured in assignments, not in hours, days or even seasons.

Responsibility is a villain of our own devices. You can run from it, bolt your door against it, only to find it's right there - in back of you - smiling like a tiger or a parent.

Unfortunately, the university isn't a hotel. It's more of a competition, like those survivor shows.

We'll enjoy the moonlight, for a few, laconic moments, for it seems to possess a sweet power to cool and calm, but soon our purposes will call, irresistibly, and we'll return to the performance.

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Merriam Webster: laconic: brief to the point of seeming rude.

anais vionet

The First Of Many

We sat beneath a night sky of graduated charcoals, blacks and interstellar blues. Fall's begun its indispensable work, banishing the harsh sun, the creepy lanternflies and hot summer nights.

The stars seemed hesitant tonight, like they feared the sun might change its mind, reverse its course and run them back off - except one, which Peter says is Jupiter (and therefore not a star at all) .

We were (Peter, Sunny, Anna and I) , studying, in our fold-up lounge chairs and reading by little kindle lights clipped on our books. Leong's there too - supposedly studying - but in reality, she was waiting for her date.

Leong and Sile have been flirting since last year and tonight's their first, official date. Leong's never been on a western date before or ever been alone with a boy in a car. She's only seen romance in movies or from afar, like an astronomer viewing a distant moon through a telescope.

Her outfit, though casual, was coalesced from six wardrobes and no king or questing knight has ever been dressed more carefully or with greater ceremony. She even positioned her chair at a carefully chosen angle, to show her, initially, in her best light - "Zhù ni hao yùn! " She insisted (It's good luck) .

She's a gorgeous, brilliant, amazing woman with a razor-thin veneer of amorous confidence. I know my nerves play up when I'm uncertain about things, but Leong's playing it off, acting casual.. ish.

Finally, with an almost physical jolt, she saw him enter the quad. As he approached, his every aspect was scrutinized by vigilant, overprotective roommates. The air was filled with the whispered buzz of shared analysis.

Soon they were walking off together and chuckling at something we couldn't hear. It's funny, I've never felt so much like a parent.

anais vionet

Shared Charms

He wears, with me, the charms of love,
exchanging gentle whispers in storms
of fascinated, trembling union.

He shares with me blue velvet nights
of careful and unmeasurable bliss,
and titivates modest morning rebirths.

He cares for me, reproof us not, we make
no show of virtue, or counterfeit innocency,
but partage, in comfort, this open honesty.

titivate: make more attractive, improve
innocency = a show of innocence
partage = share

anais vionet



PoemHunter.com

Learning

I'm learning a lot, dating Peter. For instance, I have a whole new awareness of how clueless older Americans, like people in their mid-twenties, are about things in the modern world.

I think Peter's learning things too. Like the other night, I was 30 minutes late because I was gluing little, glittering rhinestones to my eyebrows. Was he mad? Yes, we had a little drama, but that's just because he hasn't learned to respect my lifestyle choices.

"Don't be mawkish Peter, " I softly advised him, while fixing the collar of his shirt, "look, let's just pretend that we squabbled over this, and I won? " I suggested, helpfully. "It'll save us time and WOW, we're running late, OK? Seeing some small, lingering irritation, I promised, "We can still makeup later."

The rhinestones looked spectacular, I got a LOT of compliments and in the end, I think he liked them. You know, sometimes I'll catch him looking at me, like the moon or something, like I'm out of reach.

Guys are so.. (Searching for a word) .

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mawkish = exaggeratedly or childishly over-emotional.

anais vionet

Hilighted

I was in my chemistry class (lecture #2) and the professor was asking a series of questions. At first, hands were flying up, the answers were easy. But as questions got more complex, and the odds of being right fell off, confidence and raised-hands faltered.

I sit the front row because I film the lectures on my iPad, and there I was, doing my usual bit - taking detailed, color coded notes. If the lecturer mentioned something, I noted it, with my #5 mechanical pencil, but that something could become a heading or a bullet-point in a larger tableau. Those, I would color code with one of several gel pens - tracing carefully over the pencil. Later, in review, I might hi-lite these points with neon, phosphorescent highlighters. (I have a strict color coding system) .

I tell you all that because it describes how focused I get on my note taking in classes. I don't usually interact much due to my filming.

Suddenly, I noticed an unusual hush. I looked up and realized, to my trauma, that the professor had addressed me. He was looking fixedly at me, bent over with his hands on his knees (he's on a platform) .

"Pardon? " I said, meekly.

"Don't just mouth the answer, " he repeated (apparently) , exasperatedly, "say it out loud! "

I thought back to his last question and I offered, "Magnesium nitride, " but he tilted his head like he was waiting for more, "gave off ammonia as it mixed with the water? " I finish the answer like a question.

"Exactly! " he said, standing back up after giving his knees a little slap with his palms. "Thanks for JOINING us, " he says, and after checking his seating chart on his lectern, he added, "MS. Vionet."

I took a shocked umbrage at this (scolding?) , my whole body turning a defensive, atomic pink. What did I do - I thought - why was he being so sassy with me?

I doubt he REALLY wants answers just called out.

It might be a long year.

anais vionet

Falling

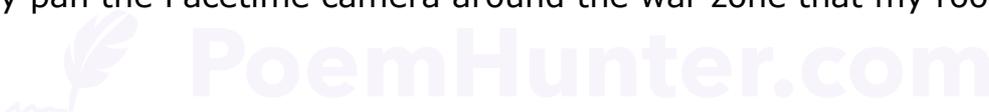
Fall semester starts tomorrow. It'll be exciting - for a few days - but it won't be long before we'll miss the tanned bodies of summer, the cool, clear lake-water or lounging carefree, on bright, sand-like gravel beaches.

Tomorrow, things will be different. Our days will start earlier, they'll be a value - a new currency - to hours usually wasted over summer vacation. The change will be sudden, herk, there may be an audible pop of some sort, somewhere, in tonight's darkest hours.

We'll be going to the gym so early that we'll be done and leaving before the first, lazy pigments of sunlight weave morning.

I imagine my room looks like backstage at a new Broadway musical, the very first rehearsal - when nothing's set in stone and everything's a mess. My clothes are everywhere. Why did I decide to reorganize tonight? Brilliant.

Peter wants to come over but.. 'No, ' I say, sighing, overwhelmed. 'Look, ' I say, as I slowly pan the Facetime camera around the war zone that my room has become.

'Oh, my GOD, ' he says, jerking back in horror, like a Californian seeing a fur-coat, 'Was anyone HURT? ! ' 

'Ha, Ha, I say, sarcastically, suddenly too tired, 'Breakfast at 6: 30? ' I ask.

'Sure, ' he says, taking a tucked pencil from behind his right ear. 'Guh-night, ' he says.

'See-YA! ' I say, pressing the red button and letting gravity guide my phone to a gentle rest atop the clothes-pile that's concealing my bed.

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slang: herk = heck

anais vionet

Butterflies

We were on a 2nd floor garden terrace. The three-quarter moon was doing its best to set a romantic, gin-mood, pouring a soft pastel-blue on the world, that softened hard edges.

A cool breeze wafted jasmine scents from a nearby tea-olive tree. We were alone, the only sounds were far off footsteps and my pounding heart. Wasn't this romantic?

Fueled twice by desire I had dressed carefully and modestly, with just a subtle, but fancy, hint of sluttiness. My costume, carefully vetted by a company of five, calculating, non-virgins, was designed to be both alluring and as abstruse as Kleenex. I was a doll dressed, painted and scented to seduce. Wasn't I romantic?

We'd never kissed before, and I wanted him to kiss me with an almost moaning force of will. I brushed my skirt down and checked that my hair was in place with quick, fleeting hand motions that could have been butterflies in the reflected light.

We were sitting close together, I could feel his warmth, but nothing was happening and then, as nothing continued to happen, I began to fret, to sag, what was the glitch? Maybe..

I felt a warmth, his breath, I looked up and he kissed me, gently, then moved back a little. I smiled. I wanted to laugh, to shout, to jump around like my team had won the Superbowl, but I was very still, lest I scare him off. Oh, there were butterflies somewhere.

He's smart. His mind probes the infinite but sometimes neglects the immediate. I wasn't expecting a smooth move from someone who's all knees, thumbs and elbows but, hey, I'm capable, and willing, to learn.

anais vionet

Weebee

It's elko noice to be back in the sprawling, claustrophobic infinity of college.

I love the energy, the hubbub, the moving-ins, the lines for everything and the freshmen's hovering parents. We loiter, my roommates and I, sipping expensive, store-bought coffee, around the dorms, the bookstores, and shops, soaking up the frenzy.

A mom sweetly says to her overwhelmed son, 'Relax, ' passing-off his stress, 'enjoy this, engage those five senses and take it all in.' I smiled to myself - there are at least 21 senses, like equilibrioception (balance) , thermoception (for heat/cold) and nociception (pain) - just to name three. I thought, 'Welcome to college kid.'

The first weeks of freshie life can be lonely - if you're single. You search for someone to like - it can be very arbitrary and looks based. Last year, around campus, all you could see was the tops of people's faces. When everyone's masked, eyebrows say a lot, so if you had beautiful eyebrows that went a long way - of course, hair was important too.

There's an eyebrow studio, down below the green, where students could, as the epitome of style, get their eyebrows threaded hoping they'd look more interesting, and more bonkable. That place was booming.

Masking's still a thing for fall '22 - in classrooms, instructional spaces, and high-density events - at least at first, until they see the spread - but there's way less isolation. This semester there are exciting, new questions for potential 'love' interests to answer, like - 'Have you ever dated any simians (monkeys) ?

Slang:

weebee = we're back

elko = surprisingly

noice = a jokey, Australian lean on 'nice';

passing-off = dismissing

anais vionet

Dewdrops

Oh, shrill lark, just breathe. You rage too well.
Seek no comfort in wretchedness.

Renounce the gossamer moon, curse starlight
with a breathless voice - if you must - but let love be.

As the saddest tale fades after telling,
undistinguishable kisses fade like dewdrops.

Seasons alter, you will love again and love better
laughing unabashed, at the memory of this gentle injury.

anais vionet



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Old Designs

I'm at an (outdoor) dinner, with Peter, some of his doctoral-student friends, professors and their spouses, to kick-off the Fall semester and Peter's second year in the doctoral program.

A 60-ish professor asked Peter, 'So, what impressions did you take away from your time at the Large Hadron Collider?' In this setting, as a student pursuing his doctorate, Peter's comments will probably be noted and there's a watching anticipation.

Peter is a tall, pale, scraggy, 25-year-old with unruly, deep-cove-blue, almost-black hair. Tonight, he's dressed in a brown, distressed Italian lambskin leather blazer that I got him in Paris, as a fall semester present and his usual, dark, neutral shades of brown. To break those sleepy colors up I also gave him a soft-caramel-brown tie, inlaid with tiny, yellow, rubber ducks.

'Two impressions, really,' Peter begins, 'First, the Higgs Boson particle was discovered a decade ago - but since then we haven't seen any notable results - the particles we expected, when we expected them. Of course, 'no results' is an important part of the scientific process,' he continued, 'and those researchers still deserve their doctorates, but it isn't sexy, and it won't win any Nobel prizes.' He has the room's attention.

'Secondly,' he says, looking around for reassuring eye-contact, 'experimental particle physics is a very expensive business.' This observation generates nods, toasts and laughter all around.

When the reaction dies down, he gets another question.

'Why do you think we aren't seeing better results?' another professor asks him.

'I think the problem,' Peter twists his head as he turns serious and begins his reply - and by the way, he looks adorable in the soft light of the dancing Japanese lanterns - 'is the lag between the theories and our ability to experiment. It takes so long to build a collider, that theories out-evolve them. The apparatuses we have now - like the Hadron Collider - were designed based on theories from 30 years ago.' Again, there are nods and thoughtful looks before the professors move their questioning to the next student.

Later, we're in the common room of my dorm suite, huddled together, talking hushedly on an overstuffed loveseat while others watch TV or read. 'OH!' I say,

still in a whisper voice, like I've just remembered something interesting, 'You know what I heard - about the doctoral physics program? '

'What? ' Peter says, I have his unblinking attention now. After all, I was talking with professors and their wives and shards of information are precious, not unlike atom particles, so he's openly curious, his head tilted in focus.

'I was told, I say slowly and earnestly, 'by a reliable source, ' I begin playing with one of his shirt buttons, 'that doctoral students, ' I pause for maximum effect, to indicate this is important, 'have equipment that's 25 to 30 years OLD - outDATED equipment..'

He's on to me now, and he starts to lean into me and grin. 'that might not be able to get the JOB done! ' I finished, busting out laughing as he caught my underarms with tickle fingers. I shrieked with delight at my own joke and his reaction.

'We'll SEE about THAT! ' He says while playing my ribs like accordions, producing newer and louder squeals and mutual giggles.

'Hey! ' Anna said, turning as she paused her 'Better call Saul' finale.

'Get a ROOM! ' Leong suggested, in mid-popcorn scoop.

Lisa eyed us annoyedly over her Chemistry book.

Sophy rolled her eyes, smiling and blood-thirsty Sunny sarcastically barked 'Get `er! '

anais vionet

Journeys

We plan, organize, gather and pack,
we fly - what liberty is this - to fly
like a weapon on the edge of heaven.

Having no power to do it ourselves
we trust security, the silver whirligig,
and the immutable laws of thrust and lift.

Looking down at clouds, near the speed of sound
"Yes, I'll have the pretzels, please, and a sprite."
aviating thru the night, a few silent, blinking lights
wedged up in the stars to those stuck in slow cars.

We land with a bump, and reverse engine thrust,
remaining in our seats until signs are revealed
we then become the many-headed impatience
to exit, to rush - for the baggage we trust
made the journey with us.

Oh, quick, grab a cab, catch a bus
The grumpy, disheveled six of us
we weary travelers thus
were returned from vacation,
to a near dawn New Haven.

anais vionet

Metrophobia

Is liking someone so uncommon
or wanting someone, a new phenomenon?

Are you an April - wreaking the milieu to discourage me?
Is that why you disparage him to such a degree?

He's heartfelt and sincerious,
he's slammin' hot but oblivious.
He's music, lust and fun,
all rolled into one.

So, I'm calling you off,
stop blowing up my phone.
You might as well not bother,
We've got dibs on each other.

What's really good?
He's really good.

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*slang:

April = a manipulator of well thought out tricks and evil plans

wreaking = causing harm

milieu = the environment

heartful = honest and sincere

sincerious = sincere and serious

slammin' = very, very f*ckable

dibs = a claim*

anais vionet



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The Rum

The rum, I thought. Pirates drink rum, I decided, because then the world rocks like a boat. My foot was tingling, like it was asleep, but I was just sitting on it, which seemed funny.

I managed to free my foot and the whole world seemed more comfortable. Then a spider was on my face!

I swatted at it, but it was just my hair, which I managed, with dizzying effort, to tuck behind my ear.

Everett, slid off the couch, in front of me, like an alligator off a sand bank. I hadn't noticed him before. He worked his way over next to me, on all fours, like a lazy, wobbly panther.

'Everett, ' I said, as if to establish the fact that that blurry shape was indeed Everett.

'ANN-Ais, ' he replied, and chuckled like we'd exchanged punchlines. He was next to me now.

'You're very, ' he said, as if struggling for the next word, 'PRetty, ' he said, petting my arm like a cat.

Then, still on all fours, he lifted one hand and touched a finger to my right breast, as if it were a sleeping thing he was trying to wake. I watched him, detachedly. He looked distorted, like a reflection in a funhouse mirror. His backside slumped down, like a lion that was full and ready to nap, and he rebalanced himself on his left elbow and licking his lips reached over again. I gently, preemptively, pushed his reaching hand away, 'Stop thAT, ' I said, 'yourrrrrr drrUNK.'

'YOU'RE, are TOO! ' He said, in sloppy accusation, which made me laugh and then him too.

'Leave me alone, ' I managed to say, pretty clearly. Prompting Everett to frown and give me a jerky, dismissive wave as he, the proud panther, began to look for other prey.

I looked around and saw my purse, on the table next to the chair that was holding me up. The strap was just within reach, so I yanked on it and my purse thumped roughly onto the carpet next to me. My glass, which was next to it, threatened to tip over but settled itself upright.

I fished out my phone, while fighting a curtain of my hair that had decided to attack me when I reached for my purse. 'Hey, Siri, ' I slurred, 'calllllll CHarles.' It rang once. 'Yep, ' he said.

'Come get me pleaZ, ' I said, trying to get my hair and tongue separated.

Two minutes later Charles was there. He held out his hand, which I managed to take while somehow shouldering my purse. He pulled me to an unsteady stance, shook his head and scooped me, effortlessly, into a cradle carry. 'Do you have everything? ' He asked.

I nodded and said, 'Thank you for inviting me, EVVVV! ' While waving wildly as we left.

Once outside, he said, '14-year old's do NOT drink! ' With a real edge in his voice.

'I'm sorry, ' I said, in a tone of tired melancholia. I couldn't help resting my face on his warm chest as he carried me to our house just next door to Everett's.

'You're GROUNDED for a MONTH.' He said in a growl.

Somehow, I managed to make it upstairs and into bed without encountering my parents.

In the morning, while I was busy feeling like death, Charles told my parents, 'She's grounded for a month.' I was. They didn't ask why, and he didn't offer to say.

I love Charles.

anais vionet

The Gardens

Our coffeemaker died this morning - it wouldn't suck all the water out of the reservoir - c'est tragique. We love our coffee and apparently, we brewed the life out of it. It sat, oddly neglected, in its usually busy spot beneath hanging copper pans. Adieu, faithful friend, you gave your life to a good cause. We're reduced to using a freeze-dried brew.

Lisa grew up in New York high-rises, and she was agog in our garden. "It's like Versailles!" she whispered, when we first arrived and did the tour - flattering but hardly. It's a six acre, French, Color Garden. An acre is like a football field without the end zones - so maybe you can picture the size of it as it wraps around the front of the house.

The lawn slopes off gently to circular beds and right-angled parterres. Two staircases lead to a fountain that feeds a rectangular reflecting pool full of lily-pads and lazy goldfish. Lisa and Leong spent hours this summer reading in the only cool spot, a shaded, wisteria-covered pergola, but gardens are best in fall and spring - when in bloom. I'm sorry they didn't get to see the explosive flowerings - maybe we can come back, someday, for Easter vacation.

We're leaving for New Haven at the end of the week so I'm slow organizing for academic life. I have 21 new notebooks (three per class or lab) and 60 various, carefully coutured, colored markers and gel-pens. I tried taking notes on my iPad last year but I found I remembered things better when I took colorful notes by hand, highlighting ideas, and pinning them down in my notebooks, like butterflies.

We hung out with a lot of rising college freshman girls this summer and across the board, it's been fun. Their questions were super random, but super aware - their interests make our bumbling, freshie experiences seem buzzy. I remember being so ground-down the carceral, COVID lockdown of my 10th and 11th-grade years that college freedoms seemed like space travel. I'm excited for these girls.

Peter and I are squeezing in a morning Facetime call. He looked a little tousled and undone, sporting a black, almost blue, bedhead mess of morning hair. With his sleepy, brown eyes and five o'clock shadow, he looked like he just fell out of bed after hours of.. ahem. My usual, unfocused feelings seemed to find a compelling point.

I smiled and sipped my coffee, "What?" he said, self-consciously,

upon catching my expression.

"I just can't wait to see you in person." I demurred, choosing to focus on this morning's awful, instant coffee. I tend to chatter when I'm excited by something, but maybe I'm learning the power of silence.

anais vionet

Types Of Love

"Have you ever been in love?" He asked.

"Ugh," I groaned. "I love tech," I revealed, "oh, and the Internet," I confessed, "I LOVE the Internet!"

He looked disappointed. "You know what I mean," he said.

I sighed. It's hard to escape the long shadows cast by experiences and expectations.

"Love's inscrutable!" I said, helpfully.

"Maybe I've never been in a relationship long enough for it to be love?" I asked the universe.

He tilted his head as if he were calculating something.

"What IS love anyway?" I asked. "Does love have to be an instant transcendence?"

"This isn't going well," I thought, his silence stood out like a curse in a cathedral.

"Let's go to Dairy Queen!" I suggested, because that ALWAYS makes things better.

"I need an ice cream," I said, as he looked ready to say something but didn't, "cake." I finished.

anais vionet

Physics

One of my year-long sophomore subjects will be physics. At first, physics seems to be a menagerie of big, boring universal ideas and immutable laws rendered practically unimportant by their scale.

Peter, ok, let's call him my boyfriend - just as a place-holder - is working on his "Doctorate in Applied Physics, " degree. "Will you help me with my physics homework? " I asked, hopefully.

"I'm sure we can work something out, " he assures me, wiggling his eyebrows suspiciously.

Peter got to visit the Hadron Collider, in Geneva, this summer. When I FaceTimed him he was as animated as a girl at drama camp. He was all, "proton collisions, Higgs bosons, top quarks and massive particles, bla, bla, bla."

"That's ok, I said, "If you'd rather not talk about it, I understand."

Seriously though, I get it. Physics teaches critical thinking and problem solving. Fluid dynamics and pressure-volume-resistance relationships apply to the circulatory system. Pressure-volume curves can apply to lung function, heat transfer is applicable to frostbite, hypothermia and fevers - nuclear physics applies to nuclear medicine (SPECT, PET scans and radiation therapy and lasers) - yatta, yatta yatta.

But why ME, oh, lord?

anais vionet

Junkavore

Sophy's mom sent her a giant case of 'Fun dip' - a thousand packets of sour, fruit-flavored sugar. Is there anything more junkavore a parent can buy a child - well, ok, an 18 year old?

She LOVES them and so does Leong who's from China where, apparently, you can't get useless, non-nutritional snacks. The two of them are running around, all sugar hyped with their emo-grape-chemical-lips, sticking out phosphorescent-green-tongues and threatening to tickle everyone with cherry-red-fingers. It has me wondering, should I switch to dentistry?

Our college prep has moved to a new phase - with just 16 days until classes begin. We're suddenly sleeping-in. It's nothing we planned or even discussed, it just started happening. We go to sleep around 10pm and sleep until 10am - or later. I think we all subconsciously realized that soon we'll be back to sleeplessness.

I'm peachy - in a great mindspace - these days. I'm well rested (see above) , we're killing our sophomore prep - even the physics, my period was a nothing, we spent over two hours in Ulta sampling perfumes, I have a new Macbook M2 (see below) and I painted my nails in tropical colors.

The FedEx man rolled up yesterday. 'Anyone expecting something?' Anna asked the crowd of roommates attracted by the driver bringing packages to the door, two at a time. No one was expecting anything. Eventually he'd delivered 8, back to school, M2-Macbooks (2 in each color) - one for everyone - from my Grandmère.

If that sounds needlessly ostentatious, then you're thinking she went to the mall and paid full price, but she probably just traded Tim Cook a half ton of lithium or something - one of her companies mines it - in Chili - I think. But still, my roommates were blagabloo.

I picked a starlight one. An odd thing about the new, flat Macbook-Air design is that you can't pick it up with one hand - unless you hook it underneath with a long fingernail - what are guys going to do?

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*Slang:

junkavore = someone who eats completely unhealthily

peachy = happy and healthy

blagabloo = ecstatic

anais vionet

Meatballs

I talked with my parents this morning (they're in a time zone that's 6 hours ahead) . I'll be off, back to school, before they get back. They sound very tired, certainly tireder than they did a month ago.

They're working with "Doctors Without Borders" somewhere in Poland. We have a fiction between us, that they haven't been in a war zone for the last couple of months, spending 16 (18?) hours a day, in ineffable, meatball surgery - sewing pieces of people back together.

Although our conversation topics are no more important than soap bubbles, they evoke a kaleidoscope of emotions (in me) , our mutual deceptions as fragile as eggshells.

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*meatball surgery = quick, lifesaving, emergency-surgery so patients may survive.

anais vionet



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Noir Night

The night was rainy, hot and humid. It was the kind of night that populates steamy, black and white, noir movies where someone is murdered. The stars seemed reduced to sloshing behind moldy gray clouds, as damp and listless as seaweed in the surf.

"Let's go see a movie," Sophy suggested, as she brought up the Fandango website on the 70" smart TV. This quickly drew a brouhaha of excited interest.

"Ooo! , Bullet Train," Anna said. "Elvis!" Lisa gushed. "Where the Crawdads sing!" Sunny gasped. "Super pets!" Leong declared, pointing - producing groans all around - THAT was a no-go. "Maverick!" I said. "I could do that," Sunny agreed, "he's crazy, but I'm a Cruise fan." she added.

In the end we decided to do a movie marathon with "Maverick" that night and "Elvis", "Bullet Train" and "Where the Crawdads sing," on Sunday.

As we ordered our treats at the theater concession stand, a tall, skinny, spotted, teenage boy attempted to flirt with Lisa. He smiled at her as confidently as a lizard, but sagged, like a shirt whose coat hanger was removed, when she pointedly ignored him.

anais vionet

The Ecb

I'm Face-Timing with my Grandmère, we touch-base once a week. I love that face, wrinkled, like wind-weathered driftwood, and she's a wag. "Are you familiar with the ECB?" She asks.

I wince at this odd turn in conversation, "Not REALLY," I say, searching my mental index of useless facts and cross-matching those with her interests, "the European Central Bank?" I reply. "Oui." she says.

"Let's see," I begin in a bored voice, "Inflation - transitory or persistent?" I say, in my best TV news-reader voice. "No," I chuckle, "Not really, I have REAL, boring-things I'm learning about."

"You'll need to - one day," she says, like a tarot reading oracle.

"I can't imagine why." I said.

"I'm writing a few sentences about you!" I interject, to both change the subject and see what she says. She's the only one in the family who knows I write.

"Oh," she sighs, "Am I young, immoral and reckless?"

"Yes, you ARE," I assure her, "you're the worst."

"Good, she confides, "I miss those days."

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*Marriam Webster: a wag is a clever person prone to joking.

anais vionet

White Rice

White is for rice and brides - ready to commit.
Whites for ghosts and clouds or even carnations
but it should never, ever, be used for privilege
or worse yet, as poetic inspiration.

I've been waiting for the urge to write
while facing an ugly screen of white.
Waiting for the vowels to fall into place,
for words to congeal and finally displace
the awful, foreboding, blank white space.

Learning is our struggle, our crown of thorns.
The more we study and prepare for fall,
the more excited I get to reenter those halls.
34 days until classes start. For fall weather,
and the bee hum of crowded life in the dorms.

My roommates and I are like a single, nameless thing
- an emolument that happens to have 6 heads.
We've beaten the freshman "imposter syndrome,"
and we're ready to bring sophomore year home -
together - no muss, no fuss - I love that for us.

anais vionet

The Way Of It

It's thunderstorm country around here.
They roam the boiling, hot, southern skies
on legs of lightning, like dark, angry trolls.

My Chinese roommate is impressed with them
because as menacing and mountainous and electrical
as they seem, through the trees whip and the rain
lashes - like special effects - no real damage is done.

Love is like that, a circus briefly coming to town,
that scintillates, palpitates, irritates or validates
- a carney-call with the urgency of a sale.
"Run away and join the show," it whispers.

Love is both less than it seems and more than it is.

anais vionet



PoemHunter.com

Pressure

It's May 18th, 2022. I'm poised, alone, heart pounding, in front of my laptop, waiting for courage, my finger hovering over the return key, like a child hoping the timing of my keystroke will bring me luck.

I took this summer off - which drove my mom absolutely CrAzY. "You CAN'T!" she'd said last month, only to be overruled by my Grandmère. Now I'm home for summer break and tonight she's flush with exasperation.

"You should have applied for a dean's fellowship," she said, her voice rising as she rubs her hands together, as if scrubbing for an operating room procedure, "and a summer research position!" She's practically twirling with suppressed emotion.

I get why she's upset. She only goes "deep end" when she's worried about my future. She knows what's needed to get a medical school slot in 2025 like other moms know their favorite recipe - after all, she's done this twice before.

Leong's upstairs, avoiding this family scene. When I described my family expectations as "hustle culture," to my roommates, they all understood - we're that much alike.

Step (my stepfather) is trying to de-escalate and calm us (her) down. "Look," he says, holding up his hands like someone talking down a gunman, "NEXT summer she'll buckle down, get in more volunteer hours and get a dean's research fellowship" he says, sliding his eyes to me. I nod "ok" almost imperceptibly.

"It's ok to start grinding sophomore year - that's what I did."

OOOO! She turned to him and if looks could kill, he would have exploded like someone in a Tarantino movie.

By some psychic grace my Grandmère chose that moment to call. Step and I fled the den like it were on fire, going our separate ways to halve the chance of being followed.

In my dark room, lit only by the light of my MacBook, a quiver runs through me, and I finally press return. My grades for Spring semester - and Freshman year

come up. My eyes water and I relax back against my chair when I see
"Dean's List."

I smile to myself, and slowly, fiercely I clench my fist with a "YESS! ' As I
postulate my victorious reprieve.

anais vionet

Boating

The sun seemed to rise slowly, almost hesitantly, this morning - a yellow syrup pouring into a deep, dark blue sky. The air is hot and thick, like a low viscosity liquid. We're going out on the boat this morning and when you have 9 passengers and crew, everyone's toting something.

Kim and Bili have towels and a shoulder bag of sunscreen lotions and repellents, Charles has a cooler with everything needed to make breakfast omelets on the grill (the eggs have been pre-beaten, the veggies pre-chopped, the cheese grated, the meat diced) .

Anna and Lisa are toting a cooler of sodas buried in ice. Leong has the "dry box" with phones, Nintendo switches, kindle readers and iPads. Leong's rolling a luggage rack of textbooks, Sunny has a large coffee thermos, and Sophy has a bag with dry clothes for everyone.

The girls are practically running over each other in their eagerness to be last onboard because the first two get to towel the night's condensation off everything.

I carried the lunch cooler full of Chick-fil-a sandwiches, but my main job is to check the indicators and disconnect the dockside water, drainage and electrical feeds as Charles takes the helm and begins his "preflight" before he fires up the Mercury 500-hp engines. I know we're a "go" when he turns on the underwater lights - that's my signal to cast off.

The engines roar to life and then purr as we slowly pull away from the dock, we girls greasing ourselves up with sunblock. The air conditioning begins to help but picking up speed is what finally breaks the hold of the oppressive heat.

As we exit the marina Charles opens-up on the throttle and that's always a thrill. We usually ski first, before the lake gets crowded, and lounge later.

Sunny, Leong and Anna like to sit in the bow, refreshed by occasional lake spray and the wind-whipped cool. Leong likes to sit in the cabin, like Charles' copilot while the rest of us recline on lounges facing rearward to watch the skiers.

Our summer mornings have passed like this, launching around 6 am, skiing, then swimming, studying and getting off the lake before the noontime "heat advisories" and afternoon thunderstorms.

Later, I'm relaxing in the shade, having just gotten out of the lake, and I'm on my iPad.

"What are you writing? " Anna asks.

"Oh, I write poetry and stories - mostly stories these days but there is some occasional poetic recidivism." I say.

"You write poetry? " She repeats, as if shocked, "I didn't think there were any poets left."

"Well, " I say, "Most poets died, in the early flames of science, trying to prove the pen was mightier than the sword, but there are still poets around - they live in cities where they'll try and wash your windshield if you stop at a traffic light, and they're frequently mistaken for the homeless - or they may actually be homeless."

"Can I read some of your writing? " She asks, after waiting through my long joke.

"Absolutely NOT." I answer.

anais vionet

No.

Most of the girls (Anna, Sophy, Sunny, Bili, Leong and Lisa) are in the kitchen eating breakfast. "Where's Anais?" Sunny asks, spooning some eggs onto her plate and taking 4 strips of bacon.

"She's out by the pool, feeling sorry for herself." Leong whispers, distractedly, reading the "Fruity Pebbles" box and poking the multicolored flakes with her spoon. "These are good."

"She was cantankerous." Sophy adds.

"Aungery." Anna adds.

"Stevening." Lisa contributes.

The front door causes the alarm system to chirp as it opens and Kim calls out, "Morning!" from the foyer.

"What's going on?" Sunny asks, frustratedly and looking around in concern.

"Charles told her she couldn't invite Peter this summer." Lisa said, half whispering. Bili and Anna look up from their plates, like interested bystanders, to check Sunny's reaction.

Sunny looks shocked, "Really - he can do that? Why?" she asks, almost confused. "He's usually such an invisible figure." she notes, quizzically.

Kim comes into the kitchen and hangs her purse on a white coat rack - out of habit - like she's done for years. "Charles tells her what to do," she says, giving Bili a hug. "and the girl obeys."

"Yep," Bili confirms, bobbing her head offhandedly, like it's a done deal.

Sunny nods thoughtfully and putting a napkin under her plate, heads out the double-French doors toward the pool to find me. I'm sitting by the pool, watching the water, one leg crossed over the other, which is in the water, slowly kicking, making deliberate waves that ripple across the light blue surface.

"Hey," Sunny said as she approached, "mind company?"

"Nah, " I reply, "I'm over it."
"I heard, " Sunny reported, taking a seat next to me,
"sorry."
"Just a disappointment - and a little social embarrassment." I said,
chuckling self-consciously.
"Did he say why? ' Sunny ventured.
"He just said, "It's a bad idea, " I repeated, shrugging.

After a moment of silence I added, "He's probably right - I'm glad I hadn't
asked Peter yet - THAT would have been lethiferous, " I cringe physically at
the thought.

"Besides, " I disclose, "that might have been weird, me with
someone and no one else? ? "
Sunny gives a "maybe" nod.

"Like when one of us brings someone into our dorm room for the night,
" I continue, "and you have to walk through the common room -
where everyone's studying - and they know what you're doing, and you know,
they know, what you're going to do. It's SUPER awkward." We both chuckle
in agreement.

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Slang:

aungery = annoyed and angry

stevening = a tantrum directed at the world conspiracy

lethiferous = lethal, fatal, deadly

anais vionet

Ready For Takeoff

"We're cleared for takeoff, " the pilot announced, "settle in, our flight time to Atlanta will be 9 hours."

The Gulfstream roared down the runway and in a moment the tops of trees flashed by. We climbed quickly, and banked. Paris dwindled, the Seine became a string of blue, the world a patchwork of colors before we punched through a layer of hair-like cirrus clouds.

My roommates and friends were all a-chatter as we lined up on the runway but as we ascended, they grew quiet.

Thoughts of Peter ran through me and gripped me like a serpent. The last time I saw him he was dressed in a summer outfit I bought him - a short-sleeve, pale-pastel-plaid, seersucker shirt, kentucky-derby breaker shorts, pop color flip flops and a straw fedora. His sweet-face was all grin, he looked like a deck gillespie. Meow.

When I think about Peter, my skin tickles, my pulse accelerates, I'm confuddled. I think about the disturbance that moved through the air between us when we met. We were strangers, but a magnetic flux seemed to roll off him and break against me.

I didn't let it show. I drew in, looked away and became quiet. What else could I do? Later, when I described it to Sunny, our meeting seemed like nothing. When I described it to Lisa, it sounded like too much.

Of course, my choices must be consistent with my ambitions, but I want Peter to come to Athens, so badly. He was a human placebo, for me, in otherwise stressful times. Now I want to be with him without school pressures - to see what that's like - and get closer, a lot closer.

I don't want commitment, but I'm saturated with desire. All I want is a fun July or August - with him. I seldom reveal the businesslike hardness I have buried inside. I want this and I'm ready for derp.

Peter worries - about money, about gender roles, social positions and what's apposite. I don't care about any of that. I want to give him a free month, like an amazing gift. He's so male, so deceptively complicated, fragile and intoxicating.

I really need to think about this, and work it out - HA! - like I can think of anything else.

.

Slang

deck = cool

gillespie = hipster

meow = I want

confuddled = confused and befuddled

derp = anything and everything

anais vionet

Homeward

We had breakfast on the Champs-Élysées this morning at Café Joyeux. Their croquet monsieur (a breakfast sandwich) was to die for - one bite can cure a hangover. They also serve a deep, rich Yirgacheffee coffee (€15 a cup) that I think God stirs with his little pinkie finger - it's THAT good. We took up most of the little outdoor, oval tables on the right side (there are 10 of us) and our little sorority was noisy with chatter - earning us looks.

Our European vacation culminates today. We're flying back to Georgia in a couple of hours. June seemed to drain away like water.

The minion my Grandmère charged with coordinating our vacation, François, breakfasted with us. He's one of the flock of Sorbonne Université MBAs she recruits each year to infuse new energy into her conglomerates.

He briefed us on our departure and flight. His imposition of definitive order and advance planning allowed us a casual and carefree sense of travel. In an ideal world, he'd coordinate my entire life.

He's been on-call all month but joined us, off and on - like when we arrived in Dublin, at customs, to smoothly guide us through and again, similarly, in Paris.

He's 26, very handsome and model looking. He's perfectly tailored, with an elegant yet minimalist style. He wears dark shirts of admiral and yale blue with long black jackets and gray slacks with no tie. His hair is a hipster straight, blonde fringe.

He's so perfect that I wouldn't put it past my Grandmère to have placed him in front of me, like bait, to see if something with us sparked-off.

He's Frenchly brisk and yet dryly solicitous - as if I have the power to sanction his position, which, in a way I suppose I do.

"How's François doing? " Grandmère would ask, each time we talked.

"He's wonderful, " I said, "I think he's a keeper."

"Good, good for him." she would reply - making the comment sound almost sly.

anais vionet

Darkness

It's midnight on June 24th. We're returning from a 'Hot Wax' concert - they were wretched. We're heading back to Paris tomorrow, so we decided to just stop at the (Kube Hotel) lounge for nightcaps.

Everyone was stirred-up and tight as a violin string when we heard that the 'Extreme Court' threw out 'Roe vs Wade's' constitutional guarantees - the latest signal of Americas ascendant entropy.

Following that, was a ruling that threw out New York's gun restrictions. 'Republicans wear compassion like a costume.' Anna pronounces, 'what 'right to life' *IS* there, if every nutcase can walk around with a machine-gun. Haven't they been watching the news? '

Leong, who's always willing to discuss the superiority of the communist system, susurrates, to no one in particular, 'Abortions are legal in China and unless you have a hunting license - guns are illegal.'

'Maybe we should move there, ' Lisa says, ingenuously, holding up her drink toastingly, her face tinted a gleaming, bourbon gold in reflected light.

Returning to our suite, 3 hours later, Sophy's adopted a mode of travel involving swerves and leaning heavily on things. Which Leong, who was not doing much better, finds hilarious. 'Use your signals! ' Leong says after barely dodging one of Sophy's flailing arms.

'Two loves I have - of comfort and despair.' Sunny quotes, in her richest, Shakespearian voice.

'There'll be no uncomfortable beds tonight, ' I say, searching my bag for my phone, which has the suite key in an attached card-holder. Charles' room is directly across from ours and I see him shaking his head as both of our doors close.

We've adopted a motto, 'live to exhaustion, ' and I think, to myself, that we're living up to it, as I flop onto my bed and the world goes dark.

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slang

wretched = very good

anais vionet

Sundown

Its sundown, the day's been reduced to a crack of lavender and fiery pinks along the Massif des Maures mountains. This evening we're sipping cocktails at 'Les Toits, ' the Hôtel de Paris' rooftop restaurant. The French would call this a lounge.

Les toits translates as 'the roofs' and its stunning view overlooks the provincial rooftops that slope down the foothills to the gulf of Saint-Tropez and its world-famous beaches. The well lit boats are settling down and dropping anchor for the night as we complete our orders and get our second round of drinks.

This has been the best vacation. I think we've all reclaimed our calm after a tense freshman year. We've been at the beach for 10 days. Leong and Sunny are actually tan, Lisa and my hair are half a tone lighter and Bili's black skin has taken on gorgeous, purple-ish highlights.

I've known Lisa now for ten months, but we share a deep connection that seems older. Lisa's lovely, brazen, and naturally flashy, without trying. Unfortunately, though, Lisa draws men like a keig-light draws moths - whether she's looking for them or not - I don't envy her that. Young men, middle aged men, old men.

Lisa said it started when she was 13. She'd be in a store or restaurant with her mom or dad and a lady would introduce herself, 'Hi, I'm with the Ford, or Elite, or IMG, or DNA modeling agency, has your daughter done any modeling? ' And another business card would be wasted. Her mom nodded as she recalled this sordid past.

Attention just shifts to her, the party comes to her, she can't seem to avoid it. About every 30 minutes some man comes over and introduces himself to us (to her) . This man owns a local night club, would we (she) be his guest? (He's looking at her like desert) This guy owns a yacht - 'that one, there, ' he points it out, in his Russian oligarch voice - he clicks a fob on his keychain and the lights blink. Oh, sure, join a strange foreign man on his yacht, what could go wrong?

There are 8 of us girls at the table with Charles, our escort and confidant. He's a 50-ish, red headed ex-NYC-cop who just sits there quietly and sips his drink like James Bond. He seldom says anything. I lean in to him and say, 'Maybe they think you're her pimp? ! ' Leong coughs in her drink and Charles gives me the same, serious, 'behave yourself' look I've gotten since I was 9.

anais vionet

Mean Girl

The other day Lisa, Anna and I overheard a nonversation that took me back in time to high school. We were at Ascot for day three (ladies' day) , to see the fashion, the silly hats, the horse races (called stakes & cups) and maybe even gawk at some famous people.

Anna, Lisa and I were sitting at our table in the Windsor Enclosure - a flat area right by the racetrack. The other five girls in our clique (Leong, Sunny, Kim, Bili, and Sophy) had stepped away to be ready for the royal's arrival at 2pm sharp.

Everyone was well dressed, men in waistcoat and tie, women in formal daywear. The table closest to us was populated with another squad of college age teens. We tend to be garrulous but that other mixed coterie (16 guys and girls) , weren't friendly at all. They were insular and sharp eyed - they projected an air of smirking pride- a bunch of edinas.

Suddenly this one girl at the next table just comes-at another girl verbally. There seemed nothing the target girl could do except hold her head up, put on her best debate-smile and weather it out.

I don't know if you've ever been exposed to it, but the exclusionary voice of the rich, consists of acrid, inactively-terse asides delivered with casual, drive-by cruelty. The most insufferable rich think (know) that they're better than you - like you know you're better than a cabbage or a dog and they are merciless, their hearts are made of hard, black-card plastic.

When used on pretenders, interlopers or social mountain climbers - the cold and mesmerizing bluntness can have a deep psychological effect. The response is usually passive intimidation but it can also induce violence.

This attitude (I think of it as "the voice") , is learned by example, and mastered early. I heard an eight-year-old girl turn it on a sales clerk once. Her mom apologized and reined in the little princess - but where do you think she learned it from?

Anna looked at me, her eyebrows drawn down in alarm, Lisa said "Wowzer." I just shook my head and shrugged - it wasn't our business; we certainly didn't know those knobs or what kicked it off - but we noted who the mean girl was - Anna even took her pic. They were Cree-P.

Our little group was soon reunited. We briefly gossiped about our rude, socially-obsessed neighbors but the incident was soon forgotten. Our champagne and strawberries arrived moments before Princess Anne and her daughter, Zara Tindall, rode by (20 feet away) in the Lead Carriage.

Now THERE are some REAL, world-class snobs. I hate that whole-ass upper-class attitude. That's one reason to choose Yale over Harvard - fewer snobs.

.

Slang:

nonversation = a worthless conversation

edina = Every Day I Need Attention / rich snobs

Cree-P = creepy

Song: Count your blessings by Nas & Damian "Jr. Gong" Marley

anais vionet

Proof

My emotions get the best of me - intermittently.
I preserve them in poems,
like fluffy dinosaur feathers in amber,
because emotions never last,
as our present becomes our past,
they flicker, like lightning bugs and disappear.

anais vionet



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Dublin Night

It's 1: 30am and we were at a cute little dance club in Dublin called "The Sugar Club." It's a converted movie theater with tables in stadium seating rows. That night was Salsa themed, and the regulars were stylin' - the men dressed in white Havana or Colima, Italian Linen and women in bright salsa dresses.

The DJ was mixing a gr8 groove - with music from Bassia, Brazilian Girls, Kate the Cat, with some ElectroSwing thrown in from Tape Five, Pink Martini and Doja Cat (Yes, I asked the DJ for his playlist) . The tiny, darkly-disco-sparkling dance floor was crowded and refrigerator cold.

We had a good time. Irish guys are funny and unpredictable, they'll say practically anything, "Shall I buy you a drink, or do you just want the money?" and those brogues make everything they say spankin' hot.

We all danced a few times, but Sunny's a gwyn who never seemed to tire. Guys kept asking her to dance and she seemed happy to oblige - I would have collapsed already.

There was a dead-fit guy, Rían, throwing a strong Chris Evans vibe, who seemed completely smitten with Sunny. He seemed a real dean but he didn't 404 that Sunny's femme-facing and that he might as well be offering lettuce to a shark.

We'd discussed the possibility that things might come up and decided to avoid delicate public acts of disclosure (Sunny's gay, Leong's a communist, etc..) - we're trespassing different cultures on this trip, after all.

We explained to Rian that we were students, just in town for the Duran Duran concert, and consoled him with a couple of "Black & Golds" (Kahlua, whiskey and orange bitters) - he was a LOT of fun to talk to.

The bartender asked me if I was one of the colleens with "Margot Robbie" - he was referring to Lisa - which Anna found amusing - but I think Lisa's way phater than Margot.

Slang:

gwyn = a hot dancing queen

dead-fit = gorgeous

dean = a nice guy, a gentleman

404 = clued into the fact

femme-facing = lesbian

phat = pretty, hot and tempting

anais vionet

Pop-Ups

Another night of dreams,
one after another, flickering half images
echo real events but bare my heart.

I try on new realities,
like dazzling garments or popup stores
of evanescent wants I may not admit to myself.

anais vionet



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The Twisted 2nd

The idea that our founding fathers intended anyone over 18 to possess enough firepower to destroy the entire continental army of 1776 is absurd, arrogant and dangerous.

#repealthe2ndamendment

*Arrogate: to take or claim an illegal right.

anais vionet



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Missing You

I miss you - your methodical intelligence, your clear and definite character, your scratchy-blue-beard, your voice - a high fidelity love song.

I'm less obsessive about you in the rush of college with its narrowed perspectives and endless, immediate goals. It's harder on vacation. There's too much free time.

I'm tortured by my own needs.

'I can live without him, ' I say, out of the blue, to no one - we're lounging by a spa pool - 'I'm going to reel myself in, ' I add, listlessly 'or I could just invite him - he'd show up for his own reasons..'

'You're talking to yourself.' Lisa says.

'I'm seeking expert advice.' I answer back, shaking my head as if to throw off doubts.

anais vionet



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I Love You

"I love you." he said, his voice raspy and emotional.

"You..?" I asked softly, and he nodded yes, slowly.

I kind of moved him away a bit - with a soft stiff-arm - to see him better in the limited light. He looked serious and a little flushed, as if feverish. I examined his face, looking for insincerity or jest but saw none. Perhaps this "love" could use some examination.

"Would you convert to Judaism for me?" I asked

He looked surprised and a little confused. "Are you Jewish?" He asked, hesitantly.

"No." I answered. He still looked confused. "I'd be proud to be Jewish," I clarified. "or to have a Jewish boyfriend."

"Then.. why would I need to convert?" He asked, squinting with concentration.

"We were examining your sumptuous commitment to love." I said, "forget about it."

anais vionet

Moonshadow

I'm crushingly sentimental, you might not know, I don't let it show, but it's true.
I'm walking in the moonshine and moonshine is how I feel - I'm intoxicated - by
you.

Some nights when I can't settle - I walk - and find myself outside your dorm.
Your light's on tonight, everything's right, when you're a few feet away safe and
warm.

I'll wait a while, in the windy cold, the crunchy snow, deep in the sharp blue
moonshadow. When people pass by, I look down at my phone - oh, don't look at
me, there's nothing to see or do.

A walking girl, a stalking girl? Lingerin', at 2am, drunk with desire, yearning
somewhere inside for the ephemeral closeness of you.

anais vionet



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Rough

Love is a bit of comedy, so be rough with love.

He arranges her one way and then another,
in itchy dissatisfaction. She surrenders to the role
like a silent bystander, a plaything in the hands
of an impatience - what does he want?

"Like this," he says in a schoolteacher's voice.

The imbalance of power, the almost impersonal
manipulations, the momentum toward surrender,
and then the shocking, primal desire - to meld -
like a gunshot in a canyon long thought empty.

anais vionet



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Travel Week

It's a "travel week" here in Georgia. I'm writing this on June 1st at the Atlanta airport. This morning Sunny's flying in from Nebraska, Sophy from California, Lisa from New York and Anna from Oregon - all around noon. Charles put a hard-shell luggage carrier on the roof of the Navigator because he didn't trust it to hold the luggage 4 girls could bring.

My parents left last Saturday for Warsaw to join "Doctors Without Borders." Charles, Leong and I drove them to the airport and then we took Leong to "The Mad Italian" for the best steak & cheese sandwiches on this side of andromeda.

Sunday was a typical lake day. We tied off in our favorite cove and were quickly joined by everyone who could get on a boat. Imagine that Dunkirk movie - except this was a get together - with motorboats, sailboats, skiffs, pontoon boats and canoes all crowding the little bay.

Leong's an avril lavigne - who knew? On Monday, I surprised her with something green - a trip to "Fun Galaxy" roller-skating rink. I made reservations for a "birthday party" and a group of 15 of us had the rink to ourselves all morning (and cake) . I thought I was a skater but Leong's legit. She says that in Macau you either skate on the street (rough terrain and dangerously between cars) or at one of several huge multisport pavilions where the rinks are cement and resemble our skateboard courses.

She'd never seen an air-conditioned, basketball-court-smooth-hardwood, disco-lit, rock concert sounding, American roller rink. It was love at first sight. She spins, does double lutzes, skates faster backwards than I can forwards, and the manager threatened to pull her off the floor for doing backflips ("There are liability issues, " he insisted.) She was also amazed because there was a built-in diner. At home, she said, you have to bring your own water and sometimes your own toilet paper (toilets are completely different in Asia - don't get me started on THAT) .

Yesterday, Leong, Kim and I were waiting for a Facetime call, to coordinate today's arrivals.

Before that though, at my behest, Kim helped me ferret-out - Holmes & Watson like - the dire skinny on something, and we, as long time besties and co-conspirators, had a plan.

"Did you know Rob Chen was class valedictorian this year? " Kim asked the room.

"No! , congratulations Rob, " I said.

"Yea, Rob, " Leong echoed nonchalantly.

"We're so proud of Rob." Kim continues.

"But, you know, " I said seriously, "there are Rob haters out there. I understand it - he's hateable, " I expand.

"ek, " Kim blurted, like a little bird, at Leong's reaction as Leong gasps, "What.. Why? "

"Because he dresses ugly! " I explained.

Kim, unable to curb her excitement, squeaks out loud.

Leong looked at Kim, shocked, Kim was looking down and rocking with the effort of silence.

"That's not enough REASON, " Leong blurts, "to hate someone! Again, Leong looked to Kim for agreement and got none.

"I don't hate YOU, " Leong says, turning on me.

There's a moment of shocked silence.

"WOW.. wow, " I say, as Kim nervously snickered with glee.

"First of all, " I begin, between my own chuckles, a defense:

"I'm wearing a very sexy black ensemble but not exactly dressed to go OUT, (Kim laugh-coughed) and SECOND, " I pause for drama-queen effect.

"YOU, " I say, turning my head significantly and accusingly, towards Leong, slightly askew for a better view, "seem to have quite a few hickies on your neck this morning."

Kim can't stand it any more and squeals, full out, with delight.

"You, need, " Leong said, pausing just before she lunges at me playfully, to put her hand over my mouth, "to cut off THAT line, "

"I knew it.. I KNEW it! " I say, bobbing and turning my head away as Leong pins me with her body while still trying to mug me and we're all howling with laughter now.

"Those are Rob Chen hickies! - I. KNEW. IT."

The facetime ring interrupts us and Leong reluctantly lets me go to answer it.

We all sober as she moves to press "Accept."

"Let me just loop-back to say, " I looked at Kim with elementary-dear-Watson satisfaction, and said to Leong, "you didn't deny it, " Leong blushes crimson as the call begins.

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Slang

green = something new

avril lavigne = a girl that skates (roller, ice or skateboards) a Sk8ter-girl

dire skinny = critical information.

legit = real, authentic

anais vionet

The Kill-Crazed

I believe most Americans are appalled at the wanton gun violence in America today.

Surely the murder of young children is revolting to almost everyone and begs for some action.

But what can we DO about it? I mean REALLY - really.

Republicans want to arm themselves more, while democrats use these events to jerk-off to gun control fantasies that either cannot pass as law or will be struck down by the courts.

I'd like to propose a real, actionable solution.

We would announce this plan in every high school in America, propagate the offer in every morning announcement until further notice:

Any young man (or woman, let's not be sexist here) who, in their heart of hearts feels sufficiently motivated (kill-crazed) would immediately be sent to Ukraine where they could kill real Russians to their heart's content.

They would only be trained if they wanted it, only be part of an organized unit if they desired it, they would be armed, on arrival, or they could bring their own initial arsenal if they had it at hand.

Once they achieved 200 certified Russian kills (this number is negotiable) they would be declared heroes and could either continue their good work or receive some sort of scholarship or cash.

This is just one, practical idea - you, my reader, are free to propose others.

This is not a joke, not sarcasm, irony or parody - let's actually DO something, shall we?

anais vionet

Monkeypox

I went to Walmart this morning - yes, it was very brave.

My dander was up - I was on high alert - for active shooters and the unmasked.

Then I saw him! A man on the cookie aisle - he looked like he had the monkeypox!

So, I kicked him in the nuts and ran - you can't be too careful out there.

It turns out that he was just an 80-year-old retiree wearing a polka-dot shirt.

I apologized - from a safe distance - as the paramedics carted him away.

It felt like a close call.

anais vionet



PoemHunter.com

Doctor Mom

It's Sunday morning, 7am. My phone jiggles and a doja-cat ringtone jars me awake. It's Kim asking if we want to set out for some frisbee golf - you have to tee-off early on the weekend to avoid the rush. "No, I moan, not today" I say, licking my emery-paper dry lips and trying to focus my eyes on the giant LED numbers of my alarm clock, "Leong and I got shot," I add for maximum dramatic effect.

Later, about 11am. I'm lead-ball tired and so is Leong. My arm hurts so bad I can hardly lift it. Leong says hers does too. We're kind of bingeing "Riverdale" but, in reality, we're curled up, blanketed, and surrounded by pillows on the living-room sectional couch, napping off and on.

It's slightly odd, being at home again with my mom, who used to manage everything about me. She knew when I should go to bed and get up. What vegetables and fruit I ate. She knew my teachers, who my friends were, when I had homework due, or needed a dental cleaning, when I had a doctor's appointment (although she really was my doctor), how I was feeling, if I had my period, when I took a bath, when my sheets needed changing - everything.

Now my mom has her brakes on - I can see her sometimes, flexing to comment on something, like our plan to go to the pool party last night at 11pm, but stopping herself. I guess I'm a different (university sophomore) me and she's a different (more hands off) her.

Leong's very Chinese-respectful around my parents. She calls my mom "mamma" and Step (my step father) "baba" and practically comes to attention whenever they address her. They're just parents, "I say, denigratingly, "relax." She nods, she's trying.

Early yesterday (Saturday) morning, Leong and I were in the kitchen, at a round table, deep in our kitchen bay-window area, where we're surrounded by plants and hanging ferns. My mom was making us a pancake and bacon breakfast (yum!), which was lovely, in theory, but Leong and I were badly maimed (hung over) - which I'm willing to bet she guessed. The night before we went to a high school graduation throwdown.

"Do you girls have plans for tomorrow?" My mom asked, as she transferred several pancakes from a frying pan onto a baking sheet in the oven.

"Nothing in particular, why? " I replied, as I looked up to eye-drop my seemingly sandy eyes.

"You're going overseas in less than two weeks and I'd like to have you two covid boosted before then. You might feel tired or sore the next day, " she said, as she flipped her latest set of four pancakes in the frying pan, "so getting them today would be ideal."

I look to Leong, to check her reaction and she shrugs with her coffee cup to her lips.

"Ok, " I say, "sure."

"Leong, " my mom begins, "do you need to check with your parents? "

"Mom! " I almost shout, reacting harshly. I'm hung-over, mercurial, and embarrassed that she's treating Leong like a child.

"No, Mamma" Leong says, looking at me, frowning - stepping over my outrage, solicitously - both answering the question and calming me down at once.

My mom transfers the latest batch of pancakes to the oven, where there's now a flat baking pan piled with them. She closes the oven, flicks off the gas burner, picks up a silver tray that was lying on a side table, covered with a kitchen towel, and comes over to us.

She lifts the towel and we see two covid booster syringes and alcohol wipes.

"Now? " I say, slightly alarmed (I'm not a big fan of shots) .

She raises one syringe to the light for a brief inspection and taps it twice. She cleanses my right arm with an alcohol wipe, gently pinches an area and injects me with one quick, smooth motion - I hardly feel it. She steps around to Leong, who's also sleeveless, and repeats the process with the other syringe.

And just like that, we're all boosted, in less than a minute. She hands us both our updated covid cards and says, Alexa, announce "Breakfast is ready."

Doctor moms can be handy.

anais vionet

Seniors

Leong and I are at a party, a graduating-high-school-senior throw-down. Their school year is over, and they are ready to party. We're at a lake house, well away from parents and neighbors.

These are the kids I high-schooled with - I just got promoted a year early. I get a lot of nods, waves and winks from some guys but none of them approach, like a mysterious inversion of attitudes has occurred - as if Yale were a nunnery and I'm a known novice. It's just as well, I'm not looking for a hookup.

It's Friday night, about 11:30 pm, the party started long ago and it's Britney Spears-2007. There are drunk girls in the pool in their underwear (Ok, that's just exhibitionism, who comes to a lake party without a bathing suit?) .

We've been here for about a half an hour, long enough to dance a couple of times. It's hot and we're sweaty but we can't swim - Leong and I are moon sisters tonight - it's our trauma bond. Our ad hoc solution, rubbing our arms and necks with ice, is congruous.

Leong is loving the bash, she keeps saying, "crazy," like when large football players jump from the second story roof into the pool. It's a huge pool, a huge party (with maybe 150 kids) , a sound system that Led Zeppelin would envy, and the house is a beach.

Everett, the host for tonight's decadence, comes over and takes a seat by Leong and my lounge chairs. He's a handsome guy, but there's a cocky, entitled edge there that's off-putting. He can be nice when he's not trying to impress anyone.

There's a break in the music. "You're traveling this summer, I hear - me too - what games will you be playing?" He asks, "I have my switch with me," I say, "it travels well - not the whole console mind you - that seemed too extra - just the switch. So, I'll be playing Animal Crossing and Zelda - what about you?" "Oh, I'm gonna play Grand Theft Auto - It was my favorite as a kid," he says.

"You played GTA as a KID? ?" I gasp, "Why has THIS never come up?"

"I don't know." He admits

"How did your parents let you have that?" I ask, astonished.

"My dad's the one who turned me onto it," he confides, "he

wanted a partner."
"No wonder you love strip club music! " I say, making new connections.
"I DO." He laughed.
"You do, " I confirm, knowingly.

He holds a bottle of deep red something near my glass and raises his eyebrows.
"You can gas me up, " I laughed, "I'm not driving, I'm ok with it."
Leong holds up her glass as well and he pours generously into our Sprites.

"What song can I play for you? " He asks, as a reward.
"I'm going to go basic, " I announce, after thinking about party music, "Beat it, by Fall out boy"
"You got it, " he nods, taking a moment to text the request to the DJ, before moving on to the next table. After a moment, "Beat it" begins, there are a few cheers, but conversation becomes impossible.

Congratulations seniors everywhere!

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Slang:

throw down = large party

darty = drunken party.

britney-spears-2007 = crazy

DJ = digital jockey

moon sisters = girls who have synchronized periods

congroovesive = something that helps to get your groove back

a beach = somewhere you'd like to live forever.

anais vionet

Outdoor Tables

We're in a 'new' trendy neighborhood called Cascade Heights, in Atlanta. It's lush - hydrangea, musk rose, hoya and blue false indigo are in bloom and there are greens of every possible variation.

The sky is clear and southern-sun bright - shadows are crisp. It's going to be 91°(f) today and although it's only noon, the heat is rising.

Leong pointed out the black tubes that discreetly provide air-conditioning, carefully hidden in the shrubbery surrounding the shaded, outdoor dining area. She thought that was very clever and American. 'They're for survival, ' I assure her, 'it gets hotter and hotter over the summer.'

Leong and I are finishing lunch, savoring a decadent chocolate chai-tiramisu dessert. 'Oh, my God, ' Leong said, sliding the chocolaty spoon over her tongue, 'oomm.'
'So good, ' I said, moaning with pleasure and closing my eyes.

The waiter comes over with an iPad, I wave my watch, like a magician's wand and we're free to go.

We were going to relax a minute and finish the last of our cold chai-tea, but as the waiter left with our cleared dishes, a rando, wino-looking, elderly man came up to the bushes by our table and said to me, 'You look sad.'

First of all, I think: NO - and who ARE you? Thinking secondly, OMG, go away. I didn't know what to say - but he put the kibosh to lingering. I started having an 'eye-contact-only' conversation with Leong. Are we about done here - do you have your phone and purse - shall we go?

Leong and I stand, in unison, pushing our chairs back with our legs, gathering our shopping bags and belongings in fluid motions long-perfected at mall food-courts.

'We have to go, ' I say, with a half-smile and goodbye nod to the man, 'have a nice day.'

He watches us go for a moment and we surreptitiously watch him watch us go. Charles, our escort, who was at another table, fell in, a short distance behind us.

Maybe the guy was just being friendly, but you can't underestimate CrAzY in 2022

anais vionet

Summer's Begun

It's a cool, Georgia, Wednesday afternoon - not quite 80°f. The sky is clear, and the sun is dazzling against the cadet blue sky. Its reflection is multiplied a thousand small times, creating glittering, broken mirror glares that ripple, relentlessly, across the water's blue surface.

On the lake, if you're not wearing polarized sunglasses, then you're going to suffer - no worries though, we have drawers full of them. We're on my parents' Tiara-43 ski boat, at anchor in the sheltered-cove of an uninhabited island.

It's windy, Leong and I, bikinied and fresh from the water, race shivering for our giant, Turkish-linen beach-towels.

Charles, a large, redheaded, retired, NYC cop, (who's been my full-time driver and escort since I was 9) , is our boat-captain (I am not allowed to dock the boat) . Charles, a chef of steaks nonpareil, is working the grill and unconsciously swaying to the music. The aroma is mouthwatering, and my tummy is growling with anticipation.

Ashe's "Another man's jeans" is bumpin' from the stereo, and I can't help but feel this somehow beats going to class. As we wrap up and settle in our lounges, a green and white boat careens into view, about a quarter mile from the cove entrance.

The sight of it makes me smile. It's going so fast that it seems to hover over the surface of the lake, only jerking slightly as the boat lightly touches-off the water. It zeros in on us like a missile, its approach flat out - perhaps 60mph (52 knots) .

I knew who it was instantly - Kimmy - of course. I look at my watch - 3: 30pm - she got out of school at 2: 15 and must have made a hot bee-line for us using "find my friends" GPS telemetry to uncover our random cove location.

As the boat edges the cove lip, Kim cuts power - the boat heaves as it settles into the water and quickly decelerates. Charles, anticipating the approaching wake, secures things (spices and utensils) in the galley area. When the boat's closer, I can see that Bili's onboard too.

Kim and Bili are my two homie BFFs. They'll graduate high school in 2 weeks. Kim is a small, pretty Asian American bound for Brown University, to study public policy in the fall. Bili is a tall, gorgeous, chocolate-brown Nubian princess who'll

attend the University of California, at Berkeley to study "financial engineering" - whatever that is.

When Kim's boat is about 80 feet from us, Kim and Bili jump on deck, water-ready in bathing suits. Each girl, used to the boating-life, tosses an anchor - one to port, one starboard, and not bothering to look back, dive off the bow and begin swimming toward us.

Kim's boat, which briefly seemed intent on catching them, jerks to a stop, like a wild thing suddenly restrained, as anchor lines catch.

When Kim and Bili draw along aside, they reach up with clasped hands which Charles uses, like a handle, to smoothly hoist them one-handed, as if they were weightless, in turn, from the water with long mastered ease - presenting them to me for squealing embrace.

As I excitedly introduce them to Leong - summer has officially begun.

anais vionet

Finish Lines

Yale's friday 'spring fling' was a soggy success - both as a concert and super spreader event. My groove-spirit was dampened by weather and a final I had the next morning.

I pose here tonight, in the chill residential courtyard, on my green sport-brella beach chair, like Canova's Pauline Borghese, relaxed, canned dirty-martini in hand, still untouched by the covid menace - as if I'd taken sagacious care in avoiding it.

The waxing crescent moon is strutting its familiar runway, like a vague, ambient night-light, but what should we expect for free? Maybe it's saving itself for warm, clear summer skies.

I can relax tonight and binge on the moon because the school year is over (for me) .

I'd been in a coffee-fueled study-trench for over a week, finishing my last assignment paper with my last gasp of academic energy. It illustrated what could be crafted in a vacuum void of originality. I filled it with ideas, gathered like runoff-water, from deeper sources and tailored the paragraphs with care, weaving by sleight, the 3D illusions of depth, breadth and substance.

It was very well received. *Taking a bow*

I love the feeling of being done with finals but still living on campus. It's casual, adult and relaxed - close to life as I dreamed it as a kid.

My room is disassembled and I'm living out of my suitcase. Movers will come and cart off our stuff Monday and Leong and I will head south - like wrong way birds. I hate goodbyes but knowing these are temporary helps. Most of my summer will be like one, continuous sleepover.

Happy Mother's Day!

anais vionet

Sunny

My suitemate Sunny is from Nebraska. She's 5'9, ' and has cinnamon brown hair that's half messy-bob, just long enough that she can twist it up with a pearl-studded comb, and half mohawk. She has the long, slanky elegance of someone who's spent most of her 18 years outdoors.

She's a cowgirl. There's a well-worn sage-nova cowgirl hat hanging on her dorm wall and she has her own horse - a red-roan quarter-horse named Valentine - at home, of course. Her best friend growing up was a Sioux girl named Wachiwi who shared her love of barrel racing and lived on a nearby reservation.

Wachiwi was the first person Sunny came out to, at 10. Sunny was 13 when she came out to her family. 'I like girls, ' Sunny declared defiantly, out of the blue, one night at dinner, 'not boys.' Her younger brother had snickered, her older brother rolled his head and said, 'Oh, lord.' Her two little sisters seemed unconcerned. Her dad, after a moment's thought, responded by asking her if she had taken the kitchen scraps out to the chickens yet.

Sunny grew up on a ranch and there was a rigid structure to her days. She would get up early and do ranch chores (muck out horse stalls, feed the chickens and gather eggs and set out hay) then study - but her first love was World of Warcraft.

Sunny was homeschooled and her stories of how that was accomplished are epic. For instance, they had three satellite internet services which she would have to switch between, throughout the day, like a gambler hoping to get lucky and every other Saturday they drove three hours to exchange books at the library. Whatever they did though, it worked. She's unholy smart - like someone made a deal with the devil smart.

Sunny describes Nebraska as 'basic, cliché and poor.'

'Wow, ' Leong says, 'you really paint a picture.'

'We all inhabited different worlds, ' Sunny says, shruggingly, 'Lisa's from skyscraper clouds, Anais a palace, Leong a dystopian communist hellscape..'

'I wouldn't say a *palace*, ' I demur. 'WHAT, ' Leong screeches, throwing popcorn at Sunny.

'Stop! ' Sunny says, raising both hands to ward-off further snack assaults.

'I just mean, if you were to go live in Nebraska - you'd have to go in on those terms - expecting something basic, unimaginative and poor, periodt. I couldn't wait to escape.' she says, definitively, 'I was thirsty.'

Everything about Sunny is deliberate, she looks you in the eye. Like a madwoman let out of the attic, she takes perverse joy in being fiercely blunt, raw and outspoken. She has a drive that can't be mollified - she's making her life over and you better not get in her way. The girl cracks me up - I could stand to be more like her.

Sunny's joining my world this June for most of summer vacation. 'Maybe you could show me Nebraska one day.' I say. 'Maybe.. someday..' she says trailing off with a far off look, 'but I wouldn't do that to you, you'd go CrAZY in three days.'

'I'll own that, ' I say, wiping away fake tears.

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Slang:

Slanky = both slinky and lanky

Periodt = an absolute period - the last word - end of discussion.

Excaped = future tense of escape

Thirsty = desperate for something

Cliche = unimaginative

anais vionet

Invitations

The desk was half submerged in a lake of papers.

She felt so adult, being invited for coffee. But get outta here. With your remarkable eyes and.. WEDDING RING

The question hung invisibly in the air.

What does that mean, coffee? Have you ever felt like you were missing some obvious sign-signal? Why does he want to have coffee with ME? " Lisa asked herself.

He isn't the first guy to hit on her but he's a professor.

WAS he hitting on her?

Her sex-dar said he was hitting on her.

"Sorry, I, I can't." she said as her mind searched for context.

She thinks: What if I make him mad - and he decides he doesn't like me anymore?

Wait, does he like me NOW - or am I just another of a million students he's taught?

Am I making a thing out of nothing? Am I being fractious?

Maybe coffee means coffee?

She has a hundred thoughts in a millisecond.

"Why not? " he asks, not looking up and marking some student's paper with a red pin.

"I'm busy with humdrum deadlines, " she said, wondering if that even made sense.

He looks up and chuckles, "No problem." He says with a smile, then he returns to grading.

After a second she turns and goes.

"I need to find Anais, " she thinks, reaching for her phone.

anais vionet

Young Republican

You're so HOT when you lie to me
young republican
I love your insurRECTION
I prefer my men dumb and dishonest
so come Lie with me
tell me the BIG one
about how Trump won and
how the big steal couldn't be stopped
ooo, slower, yes,
Tell me what a strong-man putin is
Yeah, uh huh, like that
Oooo.. uh..
restrict me, control me.
take my choice, my privacy
Ummm.. yeah..
right there..
steal my vote.. oh, yes, yes
Keep, keep, umm..
nothing's wrong
don't ever stop..

PoemHunter.com

anais vionet

Funerals And Births

It's both a bitter funeral for freedom
and the birth of new crime

anais vionet



PoemHunter.com

Flingin'

It's Spring Fling today - an all-day campus concert with some up-and-coming music acts. We'll be out there, in the rain if we have to, we're determined and somewhat waterproof. We went out earlier, doing a scan for friends to find seats and place stuff to hold our spot.

What, up until now, have been notes of preparation for summer move-out, will become a symphony tomorrow - after my last final - I'll be a sophomore then, I suppose.

Peter has to check an experiment he's working on. He hugs me and heads out.
"He's so hot, " Anna observes, "he makes me think about sex, and you know what - YES! "
"You can have him, ' I say, 'he's too tall - and besides - he's friending-down, with me." I admit.
"I like him, " Lisa says, "he doesn't complain or disapprove of things."
"He's the modern man, " Anna says, dreamily.
"And he's REALLY good at kissing games." I confide, grinning like a creepy boy, to make them jealous. They all made various noises that piggybacked and incorporated into one coherent gagging sound.

anais vionet

Summer Plans

summer plans

It's been a long freshman year. It's hard to imagine almost three months of unencumbered fun. My Grandmère says it's my first summer as an "adult." Is it funny that I don't yet see myself as an adult?

Her "frosh-end" gift to me is a summer of anything I want (chaperoned, of course, to counterbalance the nefarious strategic significance of our femaleness) with her secretarial minions coordinating tickets, booking travel, airfare and hotels. OMG, we have SO much planned.

There'll be travel, plisse bikini-covers, gas-station sunglasses, marathon-beach-walks, bright-dense-tangerine sunsets, Yamazaki flavored snow-cones, moonlight swangin, sex-positivity and righteous gratitude to my Grandmère for all this.

And there won't be any deterministic nonlinear systems analysis or multicellular biology quizzes.

Leong isn't going back to Macau (China) over summer break so I'm stealing her. She's spending her entire summer with me. In June, my parents are off, for the rest of the summer, to Poland with "Doctors without borders," so we become untethered. Of course, all of our plans are covid or WWIII dependent and thus subject to cancellation without prior notice.

In May, I'm going to show Leong life in America, well, Georgia anyway. I'll introduce her to my old high school crew, show her life on the lake, and teach her how to play frisbee golf and of course, how to waterski. We're going to Braves games, to see Bonnie Raitt, Barenaked Ladies, and Indigo Girls concerts - and that's just May.

In June, when my folks leave for Poland, Lisa, Anna, and Sophy will join us for the rest of the summer. First, we're off to Dublin, Ireland for a few days where we'll see Duran Duran in concert. Then we'll go to London and shop for day three of the Royal Ascot.

Day three, at Ascot, is "Ladies Day," when they parade those hats "My Fair Lady" made famous. We'll table in the Windsor Enclosure (the "cheap seats") where you don't have to wear a silly hat (Americans don't DO that, do we?) and the dress code is slightly more relaxed. Don't fret though, the royal family will carriage right by us (an unobstructed 30

feet away) at 2PM sharp and we'll enjoy champagne, strawberries and 5-star cuisine as horses run for their lives.

In January, all we could talk about were Florida beaches - but that's not the situation now - the Florida atmosphere just seems too straight-white toxic. So we're staying euro-side and will drop to Saint-Tropez until we go see Olivia Rodrigo, in Paris, on June 22nd.

As you can see, it's a lot - and I can't wait!

I hope you have big plans - make big plans - life's too short!

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slang:

Frosh = freshman

Swangin = dancing

anais vionet

Crimes And Misdemeanors

My roommates and I congregated in our suite's great room and we'll head out for dinner soon.

'Have you ever eaten dog food?' Leong asked Anna.

'No,' Anna answered, 'it smells like chicken - it's got chicken in it'

'OOO!' Leong pounces, 'Busted!'

'What?' Anna reacts.

'How would you know that then?' Leong asks, doubtfully.

'My mom told me!' Anna cries, in self defense. 'She's a vegetarian too.'

'Your mom told you.' Leong said, like a prosecutor raising an eyebrow for the jury.

'I just took my last English class,' I report, pony-tailing my hair, 'my teacher told me - privately - that my writing destroys.'

'Nice,' Lisa says.

'Yeah,' I say, smiling and grooming with pride, 'I thought that was a ballin' complement and I've been riding that high.'

'No doubt,' Anna says and nods.

'My English professor..' Leong says, exasperated, 'is driving me crazy, 'I've written three final papers so far and she's rejected them ALL.'

'Huh?' I gasp, 'Show me one!' I demand, wiggling gimmie-fingers at her laptop.

'Here's a question,' Lisa asks the room, 'What would you change about your childhood?'

'I would have never grown up.' Sophy said.

'When I was in third grade, in the UK, a girl in my elementary school, was murdered,' I reveal.

'What? !' Anna says.

'Oh, my GOD!' Lisa gasps.

'Spill' Leong demands.

'Her name was Kennedy,' I begin, 'She was in another class, I didn't know her but I started to imagine that I'd known her. I'd think of her playing on the swings in a yellow dress, in daydreams and in nightmares.'

'I can see that,' Leong said.

'I was flummoxed, at the time, how a family could lose a little girl and a president.' I added.

Anna looked confused.

'I was in third grade,' I replied, 'what did I know?'

'Go ON,' Lisa prompts.

'We heard that she was walking home and got snatched, ' I continued.

'Jesus, ' Lisa said, shaking her head.

'Although I never walked home, I was careful not to be snatched for a while, ' I summarized.

'I bet, ' Anna agreed.

'That's what I'd change, ' I said, 'Poor Kennedy.'

'People suck, ' Lisa pronounced, and there was general agreement to that.

anais vionet

The Batman Movie

The Batman Movie (a review) . The clues part was cool, but the end of it got boring. I liked that Batman kept a journal - I like the idea of men keeping journals, because, do men have many thoughts they share? Men's thinking seems so ephemeral.

In this Batman resurrection, Pattinson's Bruce Wayne & Batman are Kurt-Cobain-like emo and that seemed to work. Didn't you just want to take your hand and get his hair out of his eyes? I think guys should have hair - I like hair on guys, not buzz cuts. I liked the muscle-car Batmobile.

I liked Zoey Kravitz, she was girl power, but not in a hot girl way, she had her own motivations, she wasn't just in danger and served up to fuel Batman.

The movie is too long though. They need to bring back movie intermissions - I'd vote for that. As usual, I drank my giant slurpee and ate ½ my popcorn before the twenty minutes of previews were finished.

It's a three hour movie. I had to pee so bad by the time the movie was ¾ over that I was grinding on my popcorn bucket to keep it in. I finally had to make a dash for the bathroom - I was afraid I'd miss the KISS scene. Argh!

Let's talk about Robert Pattinson, the actor, and his arch from Twilight to Batman. Of course, doesn't every vampire turn into a bat? (joke) but it's always Pattinson being moody, being hot, figuring himself out and the introspective man - the broody man.

Are broody men sexy? I don't like broody men in real life - I feel that only one of us gets to be moody in a relationship - and it's going to be me. Pattinson seems almost zany and cheeky in RL so the brood is his method act. I Like that Pattinson didn't buff-up for the role - I think the buffed-up muscle-man as superhero perfection somehow relates to capitalism. Pattinson's American accent was good.

What was missing from the movie was horniness. Batman didn't seem HOT for Cat-girl - he just stood there for her to kiss. What's boy-girl attraction if it's not horniness? Where has the horniness gone in movies? Sexiness is missing from ALL the superhero movies - I guess the age demo is too young.

I give it three out of five stars

anais vionet

Ready To Go

Winter tested my endurance with its sharp and burning cold and now the warm lavender evening, with its smells and sounds of spring seem like a gift. The breeze is warm, and even the broad zones of shadow contain an inviting warmth.

The campus lamps should ignite soon but groups of students are milling, talking and laughing as if no one wants to let go of the day.

As Lisa enters the courtyard the campus lights flicker to life. As she approaches, she lets her book bag slide off her shoulder. Catching it by its strap a millisecond before it hits the ground as she reaches me - without looking - like a practiced trick.

Taking my hand in hers, she asks, head tilted slightly to see my eyes,
"How'd the test go? "

I'm the first one in our squad to take a final - most are next week. "Cinchy,
" I say with a grin and a flick of my free wrist, "not comprehensive -
it just covered the last section."

"Yea, " she says, "look at you go! " A warm breeze wells
to obscure her face with her flaxen, cornsilk hair. She lets her bag fall the last
inch, and ponytails it, two-handed, with smooth, practiced ease.

Finals existed, like ancient, cultural crucibles, long before our time, but these are
ours, as if they've always been waiting - just for us.

Yale is still new to us, but we talk, juxtaposing experiences, challenging and
comforting each other, even though we're on slightly different paths. It seems
that everyone is pumped up though, a little stressed maybe, but more than
ready to hit it.

anais vionet

Testing

Lisa was carefully pulling a strand of cotton candy off a paper-coned "barbe à papa." Winding it around her finger while absentmindedly gazing at a carousel. She seemed hypnotized by its white horses, trimmed in gold, with their brassy red and blond manes, as they hopped, like slow-motion rabbits, in circles beneath wreaths and garlands of colored lights.

My watch jiggled me awake, mid-dream. I was bemused. It took me a moment to orient myself. I groggily pushed the sheets off and performed a big stretch. It's Monday morning, I think. "Alexa, what's today? " I ask, to be sure. "It's Monday, April 25th, " she says.

A beautiful, if cloudy spring morning was going to bloom on the other side of my jacobian glass windows - any minute now. At least according to my weather app. "Alexa, good morning, " I say, to start my rattling, sputtering, steampunk sounding coffee maker.

College time is warped, measured more in deadlines than minutes. There's no plan other than your class or test schedule and let me refresh you on the rules - there are no rules, I'm free to do whatever I want. I actually chuckle at that thought.

College is transformative but there's a hoary sameness to it. Read, discuss, review and test - wash, rinse and repeat. This morning is reserved for test review. I have a final this morning - well, sort of.

Some classes have a quintet of tests instead of a big midterm and nerve-racking final. It smooths out the stress, but you still have an almost forensic exploration of ideas, and you want the answers queued-up, ready for easy access.

I quickly washed and donned my workout-wear. A glance at my watch told me I was right on time. I'd loaded my shoulder bag last night, with my book, highlighters, my phone, Air-Pods and a water bottle. I grab it as I head out. I'll do my review on the treadmill.

Anna opens her door just as I do mine - perfect. We're off to the gym.

anais vionet

Saucy

Introducing my roommate Leong to my Saturday morning cartoon binge habit proved to be one of my BEST ideas EVER. She's a very animated watcher, frequently laughing, gasping in horror and, in the end, delighted by these silly shows.

It's almost a case for convergent evolution, how two creatures, from opposite ends of culture and the world can be so similar.

I find myself watching her, for her reaction, as much as the shows themselves - I've seen them before but I rediscover them vicariously and emotionally through her. We can spend hours dissecting character arcs and plot twists - we've found a small, stress-free heaven.

It's 10:40am Sunday morning and Leong is dipping celery in barbecue sauce for breakfast again. "THAT's just gross," I deem, holding my hand up to block my view of this travesty.

"You should TALK," she says, "Flexatarian!"

I gasped, like a slapped Chris Rock in the face of this naked aggression. "Why am I a flexatarian! I demand, my mind reeling for context, because I ordered the potato burrito at taco bell?" I look around for some sort of rescue or validation, but we're alone.

"That's so FAUX," I say, in an injured voice, shaking my head sadly. "I'm by the book carnivore," I say, holding my fingers in a three-fingered girl scout pledge.

"And you have to live with that trauma," Leong says, scooping an extra large dollop of sauce with her celery as I make gagging and heaving sounds.

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slang

Flexatarian - someone who's only a vegetarian when it's convenient or showy.

faux - untrue

*Convergent evolution: how life evolves in certain predictable ways because they

work the best. For example: how flying has evolved independently at least four times on earth: in birds, bats, insects, and pterosaurs. Ultimately, this theory predicts that we will meet other "humans" if we ever get out and explore the universe - those Star Trek green, human aliens may actually be real somewhere.

*I have a no "show off" rule which this may violate..

anais vionet

Microsteps

Some people are cynical about college - it's rigid, they say - why is it even needed?

Don't be confused about college - it's not a place for creativity. You can't use an essay to wander restlessly through your imagination - you'll fail - and fail quickly. Universities are places for conscientious minds.

Conscientiousness - the desire to do the needed well and thoroughly - is the best predictor of success in college, in graduate school, in law, in management. Anyplace that has structure and rules.

In science, most progress is incremental. Oh sure, there's the occasional Einstein who changes everything, but that's rare. The reason science is so powerful is that it allows regular, educated people to advance knowledge one microstep at a time. Imagine a hundred thousand people microstepping and exchanging knowledge and wow, now we're zooming.

You don't want a surgeon in their well lit operating theater to have an inspiration and try something new on you. You want them to apply the state-of-the-art procedure diligently and carefully.

Entrepreneurs and artists don't always do well in college. Those careers require constant 'out of the box' thinking. When a person starts a company, there are no rules, it's necessary for the entrepreneur to make things work on the fly. Artists are almost required to break or create new rules. Conscientiousness certainly plays a part in those fields but it's not the main predictor of success.

Creativity is necessary - every company needs a small group of people generating new ideas but it's a high risk, high reward game. Few new ideas pan out - the odds that your idea will be unique, practical, affordable and reach the marketplace at exactly the right time to be successful are astronomically low.

Someone who wants to - who feels they have to be creative - is almost cursed. Yes, it's ironic that I'm publishing this on a poetry site - but in most cases creative people fail - it's much better for the average someone to be practical. Practical people are generally more successful in life although the rare creative can be extremely successful (Musk, Jobs, Gates) .

Colleges teach how our world works - a simulacrum of what is currently known -

in hopes that the student will be able, one day, to ask the next question - the one that will push their particular science ahead that one microstep and move us all into the bright future.

anais vionet

Embarrassing Mornings

My freshman year is ending and I'm as busy as a one-armed juggler. Of course covid is back. It reoccurs at the worst times, like a movie slasher long thought dead.

When we have something scheduled very early in the morning, we call it an "early-burn." This one early-burn morning I had a 7am meeting. Peter and I had met for breakfast because he's back in my life and he's ALWAYS up and out early.

It was snowing and we were hurrying, because somehow, I always cut things close. I think I tripped over my shoe-string on a patch of ice. I went down hard and I heard this loud ripping sound. I'd ripped my pants badly and my book bag spilled too. I'm scrambling around on the ground in an attempt to grab some loose papers the wind was scattering.

Peter says, "Wow, your panties are really thin."

I jump up "I feel you don't know where our boundaries are," I laugh, "you're so nasty - don't just stand there grinning - HELP me!" I indicate two papers for him to chase.

I looked to see how bad the rip was (BAD) . Of course, my coat was short that day, so I untucked my blouse. "How does this look?" I asked Peter. "That works," he said, giving my fix his imprimatur.

The two of us managed to corral the papers. "Let's pretend that didn't happen," Peter said.

I realized I'd ripped my pants leg and scraped my knee badly - it was bleeding profusely. "God Damn It!" I went off.

This lady comes up - seemingly out of nowhere - this old white Christian lady who we'd never seen before. She was so out of place and random and she says, "I really don't think you should be talking like that in public." She wasn't harsh.

At that moment, a gust of wind came up that made me lower my head, as though I couldn't look the old woman in the eyes but I was just ignoring her

anyway - having my own set of issues to deal with.

She had a point though. I'm cursing too much these days. I feel like If I admit it, maybe it's ok but I am trying not to cuss anymore - well less maybe - at least in a negative way.

"I think you look fu-kin' GREAT, " would still be acceptable.

anais vionet

Grades Ruin Everything

Peter knocked and Lisa opened the door. She didn't greet him, like she usually did, she just nodded and looked away, making a face that reminded Peter of when he was ten - and in trouble. I was on the large, red couch, coiled up tightly at one end, a textbook in my lap and a highlighter in hand, like a knife. The song "Bad Sneakers," was playing throughout the suite.

Anna was in the kitchen, washing glasses in the sink and she didn't look up, watching the suds like she thought something important was happening beneath those bubbles. Peter knew something was wrong - it was a little obvious - he just didn't know WHAT.

"What's going on?" Peter asked, maybe a bit too brightly, as he settled on the edge of a stiff-backed chair. After a moment of silence, he said, question-like, "You seem like you're in a bad mood."

"I won't ALWAYS be in a good mood," I said defensively, "and you won't be warned ahead of time - good luck to you." I'd looked up but I quickly looked away and took a deep breath.

After a moment Peter asked, "What would you like to do?" "I don't know," I said, looking around, then I added restlessly, "take a walk."

The common room windows were full of a night sky and harmless rain clouds, which spread out like a soggy layer of wet bread. A misty rain was falling, only to be thrown about by the wind. "Ok," Peter says, standing and turning back towards the door, "Let's do it." I slipped on shoes and grabbed a small umbrella on our way out.

Occasionally, rain drops made a popping sound on the taunt skin of our umbrellas as we walked in a silence that lasted about five minutes. "Your girlfriend yelled at me in the cafeteria today," I said, watching my feet. "Wha.." he started, and after pausing for a moment, said. "I'm sorry she did that."

After a little more walking he started, "Sherry's an EX girlfriend. We were together for about a year," he paused again. "She cheated, I found out, but somehow she's angry at ME because I won't let her explain it." He said with a shrug. "We're DONE," he said softly, "It's an established fact." He looked at me as we walked.

The feeling I'd had of a great weight on my chest seemed to lighten a bit. The clouds were clearing and the crescent moon was reflected, small and waxing, over and over in little puddles formed by the uneven pavement, as if the moon was following us around, watching us.

"That was a minute ago - before we met and that situation, it's locked-down. I've got twenty people who can testify to that."

"Still, " I said, "She seems 730. Maybe we should take a pause and take a breath." After another minute of silence I added, "The game seems saturated - and with midterms." my voice trailed off.

He looked disappointed. "Sure, I get it, " he said, "craziness and midterms don't mix."

Sherry knew confronting me would elicit turmoil - but what could I do? They're graduate students and I'm a lowly pre-med freshman. I was sad and discouraged when we said good night. We'd never even kissed.

After the door closed, I leaned against it and mumbled "Grades ruin everything." Leong hung up my umbrella and gave me a hug.

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slang: 730 = crazy

anais vionet

Freshmen Conversation

My pose is gathered this Saturday morning because I made a pancake and bacon breakfast. We're listening to a Britney Spears song, off one of Leong's playlists. "I remember when I was about 8, " I say, "I was drawing and singing a Britney song and I got to the line - "I make no apologies, I'm into phonography, "" and my mom sharply says, "Don't say that! " And I'm left trying to figure out what I said."

"People are harsh with her, but Britney is timeless, " Leong says.

"Everyone at Yale fancies themselves a music critic, " Lisa says. There are numerous vocal agreements. "I'm like, "Ok, Pop-off then queen, go complicated", but in my opinion, you need to have fun with music - that's the main purpose - just to have fun."

"That's like the difference between Cardi B and Niki (Minaj) . You can just stroll a Cardi B song, you don't have to interpret, " Anna adds, "but with Nicki I feel I have to listen to see the point."

Lisa, surfing on her iPad asks, "Did you guys see that Jojo Seawall wasn't invited to the kid's choice awards - because she came out as lesbian? "

Sophy says, "Nickelodeon's been trying to seem MORE accepting, working in more black artists."

"Yeah, but they're fake." Anna pronounces. Everyone nods agreement.

"He hasn't called all WEEK, " Sophy moans, holding her iPhone up to her ear like she expected to hear ticking, "I made a ghost of him, " she says, flopping the phone on the couch.

"Should I call the Po-po? " Anna asks, distracted as she searches the kitchen cupboard to be sure the pancakes were gluten free.

"I had a dream, " Lisa begins, "I was a child in a family I don't know. We were criminals. We stole a car and robbed a store. My dream mom ran the operation. And wouldn't let me watch TV until I emptied the loot out of the car. Then the police arrived, we saw the flashing red and blue lights through closed venetian blinds, then there was a banging on the door, in the dream, that

woke me up."

"That's way off track but It's fine, so fine, I see how it is." Sophy said, "I'm bleak and no one CARES."

"Is love something you find, or something you believe? " I ask no one in particular.

"That's a coffee-cup inscription." Anna pronounces.

"Aaggh, " Leong says, "An email from my professor - it's TLTR." We think it's a policy that professors at Yale have to send incredibly long emails - almost too long to read (TLTR) .

There're only three weeks left of our freshman year, so emails are flying and everyone's trying to nail things down for a smooth ending.

anais vionet

I'm Not Always A Fan

I'm not always a fan of poetry - if I actually take time to ponder it
- it can be so irritatingly rhymey, kind of fussy and needlessly intricate.

Compare my love to a summer's day and I'll probably yawn and walk away.

Take a nuanced look at the transactions of sex and consent,
and as adults, we may wonder where the romance went.

You know, it only happens once in a while,
that someone with wit and individual style
comes along with something to say
and scribbles it down in a poem or play.

Here's to the creative visionaries,
to Dickinson's unique and dreamy imagery,
to Shakespear's highly stylized, run-on sentences
that manage to speak to us over the centuries
or challenge our stifled, bourgeoisie banality
like Nabokov's use of stunning vocabulary.

anais vionet

Musically

I have a slight fear, in relating these vignettes, that musically we're too basic. I doubt anyone could say we don't know new music, after all, we listen to WYBCX, which plays unusual tracks but we just share this silly place that fits us. So go ahead, judge us. No, I mean it's fine, so fine.

In my suite we liaison with Cinderella Sundays, once a month, where we ALL clean our suite. We put on rediscovered disco classics - like Gloria Gaynor's "I Will Survive," Dana Summer's "On the Radio," and the Bee Gees "How deep is your love," bumping these songs as we sano things. As part of this effort, we usually order some wings.

When we get deliveries we have to pick them up at the front gate. I was wearing this short, cropped shirt, shorts and no bra and as I headed for the door, Leong said, "No! You can go outside like THAT!" So I grabbed a cover shirt and absentmindedly put my AirPods in one of the pockets. I always do my laundry on Sunday - ALWAYS - if I don't it's because of something tragic like nuclear war.

That's how I destroyed my second set of AirPods in less than a month. They drowned in the wash. I'll miss them. They were dear to me and served me well. We buried them in a flower pot as part of a martini fueled service. I decided to name my new ones "Miley" because I've been listening to her "Jolene" backyard session endlessly.

My suitemates and I decided to do this friendship exercise where we exchange playlists of songs that remind us of that person. All 8 of us chose a song that reminded us of Lisa, for instance, and she got that playlist.

The song Lisa picked for me was "9 to 5" by Dolly Parton. I couldn't discern why, so I asked her. She explained: We all go to this local NailPro to get our nails done (although It's not the greatest place and there's always a wait - it services) and I like Acrylic nails. She says that when I'm reading, with my headphones on, I unconsciously rub my nails together, making a little washboard sound with my nails similar to what Dolly used at the start of the song.

The song I picked for Lisa was "Way too sexy" by Drake - that future and young thug. She had it on a loop last fall. If we were studying or deep talking Lisa would say, "You know what would make this moment better?" And, she'd call it up. That song is pure Lisa.

Anna plays guitar and sings sometimes (she's really good) and one song I particularly liked her version of - which I didn't know the name of for the longest time - I'd say, "play the night song," is "Because the Night" by Patti Smith. So I gave her that.

Sophy got Zendaya's "Dynamite," because she IS and Leong got "Year of love" by Jenny Hval - because, well, that's what it's been for us.

One lowkey pastime of our little group was re-watching "The crown" and we were ignited by a scene where Lady Di is roller skating to a song called "Girls on Film" by Duran Duran. If you spend much time in our suite you'll hear that song and how everyone dances it out.

Peace y'all.

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slang:

sano = clean

bumping = dancing/grooving

basic = simple /uninspired

anais vionet

Greek Treats

We were (Leong, Peter, Anna and I) eating at a popular Italian eatery (outdoors) and the check arrived - I swooped across the table and grabbed the check from the waiter. Peter whispers, "You can't pay for everything the entire weekend." "Why not?" I say, "It makes me happy." "There's no reason to," he says. "I need a REASON? ?" I snort, which always makes Leong laugh. "Have you MET me?" I say, shaking my head dubiously. "I've met you," he pronounces, "and you're a NUT. Thank you," he says, indicating the check exasperatedly.

Peter's transfinancial: a rich man trapped in a poor man's body. He has taste but he exists on a grant and a meager stipend. We're just friends but I'm holding a bag and he's not. Besides, he needs a new laptop - badly - and shouldn't be squandering his grips on me.

Greek-life is on the rise. Maybe it's because those groups offer planned social events or because, with COVID winding down (covid smovid) there's more going on. There's a pressure here - to be your most authentic self - to be top academically, socially - to have your calendar filled out. There's a frantic nature to it. I'm being lowkey rushed for a fraternity (for next year) but I love my roommate situation and I think I'd druther stick with this set I love.

Which begs the question about social time. Should it be methodical, relentless, super planned out? Super planned interactions can seem transactional and not easy going and natural. College social life is so different from high school. College life is so much more charged in every way. The range of people you meet, the broader perspectives, the available options for activities.

I find myself in a search for balance. Private time vs social time. Before covid, you'd go to school and then you'd come home to your room, where you could just hang out. It was a self care place.

At university, a dorm room is less of a "home" where you can be alone and spend that healing time. You never know who's going to be in your living room and what they're up to. I get claustrophobic when my door is closed so I rely a lot on noise-canceling technology.

A dorm room can seem like those covid lockdown days - there's little or no separation between academic and private space. I'm just unpacking some

thoughts. *shrug*

anais vionet

Catness

It's a Saturday afternoon worth waiting for. It's 52°f and the sky is clear except for a scattering of popcorn clouds. I'm eating lunch with Sophy, Lisa, Anna (my roommates) and Peter (a friend) at one of the two residential dining halls that have the best pizza (yeah, you KNOW who you are) .

We're touching base before we scatter, shrapnel like, for the night. I'll be hemmed-up by circumstance and in my most diligent work-mode. I have a presentation due Monday.

Sophy says, reading from at her laptop, "Research suggests that cat owners are seen as better looking and have more sex."

"I have two cats," I say, "at home." I preen in my double-catness.

"I'm a cat owner!" Anna announces.

"My cat DIED." Lisa reveals sadly.

"THAT cat did its JOB," Sophy pronounced saliently, as if proving the studies validity.

"I grew up in a cat house," Peter says.

"Ooo! YOU must have learned a LOT!" I say, batting my eyes seductively.

"Maybe we should get a cat HERE!" Sophy suggests.

"To cement our status!" Anna laughs.

The pizza was really good.

anais vionet

Back In The Saddle

Lisa comes into my room and flops on the bed. The day had been uncompromisingly gray, windy and cold. The night sky was a snowy, blowing darkness, an absolute void that absorbed the campus lights and reflected nothing back. 'I'm missing Spring Break, ' Lisa she says.

'It doesn't even seem like Spring Break happened, ' I say. 'Most Yalies went to Puerto Rico this year, I think, from my sampling.'

'RIGHT? ' Lisa said, 'EVERYONE says that - we're in sync. But *I* enjoyed Paris, ' Lisa continued, 'I liked your family - no - I LOVED your family, ' she amends.

'THAT's a strong take, ' I say, chuckling.

'I watched basketball with your uncle (Rémi) and cousins and helped your grandma cook, ' she explains, 'I felt like a part of your family.'

'Aww, ' I say, 'You ARE part of my family now - you're TRAPPED, ' and we laughed.

They invented spring break because after several months, the student mind starts to notice a harsh reality - how much their dorm room resembles a cinder-block jail cell - and starts to wonder how a lifetime of study and stress over grades has gotten them no further in life than the average felon.

We're at lunch. Lisa says, 'Ok, what's new with you? ' Keep in mind we see each other ten times a day.

'Well, ' I say, I've decided that 'The Beatles are for spring.' Lisa laughs. 'Stop! ' I demand, 'I'm going deep. Today's song is Julia, ' I say, 'It's John Lennon's song to his mom who was run over by a car when he was a child.' 'I love that song, ' Lisa says.

'Ok, what about you? ' I ask.

'My song right now is 'Move like a Boss, ' Lisa says, 'When I'm walking across campus, with my air pods on - I'm intense, don't get in my way - I'm dangerous, I'll Will Smith you - I scare me.'

'Good to Know, ' I say, wishing I'd gotten a lemon brownie.

Then I add, 'I've got this presentation on Monday that I haven't even had time to *look* at yet. If I don't get on it by this weekend it'll be a nuclear-level disaster. I started on it yesterday and the Internet went down for 20 minutes. It was stressful - of course, you don't know how long the outage is going to be when you're IN it - and I had THINGS to do - is that convoluted? '

'No, ' Lisa says, nodding in agreement, 'losing the Interweb's traumatic.'

anais vionet

He Was Hot

We were at a club in Paris called L'Arc. It's an outdoor club (spring break plus covid safety) that's underneath the Arc de Triomphe. It's 10PM and we're coming from a night tour of the Louvre. The night sky was clear and it was 65°F. I was with my posse of (3) roommates and two guardiennes (provided by my Grandmère) who travel with us at all times.

The man chatting me up was as hot as middle-school but honestly, it was hard to fake an interest in whatever he was saying. Was my 1/2 interest going to ruin us - this thing we'd shared for 5 minutes? No, he seemed to say, our connection was stronger than that.

Finally, I focused on his WORDS. It was hard because the music was so loud. Hey, this is off-topic but who's your favorite French band? You don't HAVE one, do you? No, because they ALL positively felate.

It turns out that he was a tiger - inviting me home for a respectfully quiet banging session - because he lived with his mother. I reacted like any college freshman would at first by thinking I was about to be sick.

Don't flag me as anti-sex (if we're flagging) , I like a joystick now and then. They're cute and like dogs, they're always glad to see you. But the idea was disgustingly retro - my parent dodging days are over. Besides, our (roommate) agreement for this trip ostensibly forbids random hookups and did I mention our two escorts in tow?

I kept my cool. After all, we had another tray of shooters coming - staying put was clearly the right decision. He took my semi-blank reaction for the rejection it was and disappeared back into the crowd. C'est la vie

anais vionet

Ru\$\$ia

For the last five hundred years, posh 'society, ' is where the wealthiest and most influential people in the world mingled, inter-married and conducted business. If you've ever watched 'Downton Abbey', 'The Gilded Age' or even 'Crazy Rich Asians' you'll know what I mean.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs - a psychological pyramid that describes human fulfillment - states that part of our human nature (once your basic needs are met) is the desire to attain social position. Having mere wealth is just not enough once you are in the top levels of achievement.

In the 1970's Arab money started pouring into the west. Arab petro-dollars bought swaths of land in the UK, in London and New York. The Arabs dazzled everyone with their wealth and bling but they never penetrated posh society.

Then in the 90s the second, Asian wave, of new wealth washed eastward and they had a bit more success in society. But starting about 20 years after the fall of the Soviet Union, Russians started coming to the west with new money to invest - in the UK, in particular.

Russia became the billionaire capital of the world, oligarchs were everywhere buying anything not nailed down and eventually trying to insinuate themselves into posh 'society'. Tatler (THE magazine of society) even began publishing a Russian version. If you were a wealthy Russian, you were moving up. By 2022, they weren't too far from the edge of REAL success.

That's what evaporated three weeks ago - with the invasion of Ukraine - Russia's luxury infrastructure and their hopes of acceptance into posh society. Gucci, Chanel, Hermès, Dior, Apple and Tatler (just to name a few luxury brands) have left Russia to rot. If you're Russian now, the chances of being admitted into posh society are gone for the next 20 years - at least.

You may say 'so what? ' Well, one way a dictator holds onto power is through mercantile largess. The granting of rights within the Russian sphere of influence - to control and distribute goods and services - is how oligarchs are created. The support of these oligarchs is important and transactional.

A man with a 100-million dollar yacht - looking at what chunks of their wealth may well be confiscated in the west - or lost to the Ruble's collapse - could easily offer life-changing wealth to any henchman willing to end Putin one way or

another.

Will this happen? I don't know. But this is the system they've set up for themselves.

anais vionet

19, Midterms & Spring Break

So many, too many students had COVID two weeks ago. My parents were supposed to come for a visit, and midterms were on the horizon - so I decided to go ahead and get covid - to get it over with. I've been around a dozen people who later that day tested positive, but somehow I've never come down with it myself.

Peter caught it and was isolated in his suite (two of his suitemates had it) . I went to see him, surreptitiously hoping he'd pass it on, but Lisa (the traitor) texted him and he Lysoled his entire suite and wouldn't let me in - saying exposing me went against his 'moral code.' *rolling eyes*

Now midterm season is on us and a lot of people I know are in crisis. That happens a lot in test times. This place is so cutthroat and competitive. You can get so deep in your own head that it becomes a dirty fish bowl of anxiety. The delightful cocktail of pandemic, WWIII and midterm stress gel, in some minds, to form a sweet, unhinging mix.

My major tests are over (good for me, yay for me!) but I'm not parking my study playlist just yet. I have a couple of papers due. While those don't stress me like tests, they'll keep me busy, like everyone else - there's always a feeling of being behind it and frantically busy here.

We were trying to plan an actual, REAL spring break - that didn't involve 11 hour layovers and 5 hour bus rides. Something NOT held in a parent's apartment - someplace adult and private.

Then my Grandmère offered us an all-expenses-paid trip to Paris, saying I could bring three friends and stay at the Hotel de Crillon. A week in Paris with Lisa, Leong and Anna sounds delicious - of course, I told them how positively uncouth it would be to refuse - we'll see. =]

anais vionet

Midterm-Ing

It's a beautiful day, like a hole in perpetual winter. We rode bikes around campus - everyone was out. When it's cold I just go place to place but today reminded me that outdoors can be fun. Of course, it's supposed to snow tomorrow night - just a few snow atoms, I think.

Lisa was laying on her back in the grass reading. She rolled over and smoothed the book flat. In the fleeting, golden moment between dusk and evening, the edges of Lisa's gold hair looked almost green. I'm right there next to her - we're sharing a towel-like blanket.

She takes up a pen and writes something in the margins - leaving stray thoughts like breadcrumbs. Then trades the pen for a highlighter and colors several phrases. We're poking around the edges of our chemistry midterm. Her face has tightened in concentration. I could imagine her wearing a similar expression while taking the test.

Later, we'll combine our little scribbles (her handwriting is awful) and highlights, class notes and charts into something collaborative and shareable. She passes me a note, like a riddle, which I read and hand back, annoyed. "That question doesn't interest me." I say nonchalantly. "You mean you don't know the answer," she guesses correctly. "Not yet." I admit.

Rumor has it that Putin will attempt to salvage his reputation by saying his ill-fated invasion of Ukraine was an attempt to stop the new season of "The Kardashians." While we can ALL embrace THAT goal, I think it's just an excuse (politics) .

I love classes - the ideas that we're exposed to, like Agential Identities or Nominative Determinism Hypothesis - ideas, some 1/2 stupid, some profound but things I wouldn't have thought of in 200 years. I constantly find myself thinking "Who THOUGHT of this?"

Slang: politics = lies

Song Suggestion: Broken People by the Narcissist Cookbook

anais vionet

Currents

It's been a week - things have been happening - I'm going through it. I've become nostalgic for two weeks ago. I got screamed at, I lost my AirPods case, and I cracked my iPhone screen, so I'm several levels worse - I'm a sad human. I'm writing this at the Apple Store while a friendly Apple person renders me whole.

The Ukraine situation has everyone unnerved. Draw a card - Pandemic or WWII? Please, protect my peace. So there's a level of 'screw-it' now.

Friday night, I'm in a bad mood and when someone says 'Come-on let's go clubbing! '

I'm - 'Let's GET THIS.' Later, we're at a club, and it's INSANELY crowded, like a moshpit. It was ABBA night. It did not escape me that this is exactly the type of milieu I've been avoiding for years. Did I mention the WWII level of 'screw-it'?

Ok, moshpit, You could hardly move, you definitely couldn't hear, and Anna dropped her phone - we were sure that it was gone forever but 30 minutes later a hole opens up and there it is - like it's just been sitting there waiting - so, there ARE miracles.

The list of life's demands grow by the moment - reading, homework, laundry, dinner, upcoming midterms. I had a rock solid plan for a Saturday night of fun but assignments and necessities destroyed its integrity.

After a heroic effort and completing everything, I felt a fast-metastasizing boredom, so I wandered outside my room, hoping for company and distraction - it was 00: 30 AM - and for once - no one else was there! Where was everyone? Hello zombie apocalypse.

So, I did what anyone would do in that beat - I cued-up 'Miraculous, ' because Ladybug's always there for me.

anais vionet

Debuts

It's a Monday. Capitalism and school have given Mondays a bad rap and we need to take it back. That would require a movement of some sort, too much, I suppose, with a WAR on.

I have the jitters. This morning was, well, Monday and I had a midterm - sort of. So it would've been irresponsible for me to take the time to straighten my room - I'm nothing if not responsible. But Peter's here. It's his first glimpse of my room and it's a mess "There's an underlying order" I assure him. "There always is, " says mr. physics.

Anna had taken a (photo) burst of us - the modern equivalent of those childhood, cartoon flicker-books - to celebrate his first visit to our immaculate suite. Now she's screen-sharing them on the huge common room TV.

"You're cute, " He says.

"Hurray for me, hooray for that, " I reply, "But I was thinking YOU'RE cute, " I say as I snuggle closer to him on the couch.

"We all love the sound of compliments slapping together, " Leong says, sarcastically.

"Find a communist, " I suggested to Leong, "they all study philosophy, I think."

"You come into MY house.., " Leong begins.

"You come into MY house.., " I responded.

"You come into MY house.., " Anna says from the kitchen.

"You come into MY house.., " Sophy yells from her room. This could go on all night.

"The four reactions, " Peter says.

"He's starting to talk physics again! " Anna says, narrowing her eyes on him, like a cat catching sight of a squirrel. Leong, yawns excessively, "Ugh! Make him stop, "

"All the forces that we experience every day.., " Peter begins. At first, I moaned as if I'd been told I was about to be waterboarded. Then I take action, rolling over and climbing on top of him, messing his hair and beginning to tickle him, "There must have been an off switch somewhere! " I exclaim.

Now everyone's screaming and laughing, "Ok, Ok, I give up." he says, then he pins my arms to my sides at my elbows - but before he can swing me off of him, I lean in and plant a sloppy wet lick on the side of his face.

"H-Hey! " he says, wincing like someone avoiding a wild puppy. He

was all askew by the time he swung me off onto the couch and fixed me with a concentration that suggested that nothing else mattered. Time seemed to stop and that moment was the first time I thought about kissing him.

Over his left shoulder Anna vibe checks me by making a moony love-face - throwing in several puckery kisses. I've never seen myself in action, but a sharp, stinging sense of recognition told me that her impersonation was more accurate than not - and I snapped out of it. "What are we doing for dinner?" I asked, and the tension broke.

anais vionet

Sage Brown

Peter is joining us for lunch in the cafeteria. I met him on a crowded Saturday morning at a coffee shop. He's from the flammable, paper-dry, sagebrush hills of Malibu and grew up overlooking the hazy blue Pacific Ocean. He says Mel Gibson's drunken Nazi rant, when a cop pulled him over for a DUI, put them on the map.

Poor Peter is fashion challenged. He's 25, too tall, and too thin. Reading glasses hang around his neck. His too loose-fitting clothes are all variations of brown, like tawny, penny and wenge. He's wearing a battered tweed coat, brown corduroy slacks and tortilla colored mock turtleneck. He's adorably shabby-fancy. If he fell in the dormant, straw-yellow grass, we probably couldn't find him.

Peter has a serious aura of experience about him. His cheek bones are sharp, his hair is an explosion of uncombed black, his skin is pale - bleached - by over exposure to library lighting.

He lives in a different world - the prosaic, laissez-faire universe of research - where students are left to their own devices and expected to self-manage.

Right now, he's being vetted by one of my roommates, Leong. His student lanyard marks him, but she wants specifics if he's going to hang around. 'What's your major?' she asks, her eyes squinting like the Chinese lie detectors they are. 'I'm a doctoral student in applied physics,' he says.

I pat his knee, 'It's nothing to be ashamed of.' I say, reassuringly.

anais vionet

Oh Deliriums

He stakes my arms to the wall, with binding hands.
I feel his desire through the strength of his grip, he
presses against me and I can't move. I meet his eyes.
He smiles. I smile

We kiss to form a scabrous, common bond.
I feel bound up in him and we remain, as such,
too long, too rude, too rough - and free for all to see.
It's enough to draw curious eyes and jealous sighs.

We stop for air, to reestablish equilibria.
Our immediacy is too giddy - we're too flushed
for words - the libidinous overtures of dirty birds.

It's just a kiss, or two - too few - measure them by
pleasures blush - but now, we to the dance floor rush
to join the crush - YES, fun is enough.

anais vionet



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Quarks And Acorns

It's Saturday morning. I'm at the acorn, my favorite coffee shop, on my iPad and deep in concentration. I'm time traveling back, to things seen and said, trying to create a story poem about recent happenings - or failing that - something quick and arbitrary.

I hear an "Ahem" and look up. A skinny, twenty-something man, with tousled black hair, clumsily dressed in drab browns and tans, was standing before me - a satchel over one shoulder and a coffee in hand. "May I join you?" He asked.

I looked around, there was only one other empty seat available, far at the back. "Sure," I said, then, noticing my book bag filled the empty chair. I said "Sorry," and moved it to the floor. He took a seat.

He introduces himself, "Peter," he says.

"Anais," I say, going back to my writing.

After a second he says, "What are you writing?"

"Poetry," I answered, not looking up.

"So, something imaginary," he said, it sounded condescending and irritating.

"Are you a student?" I asked, looking up to watch him settling in.

"Particle physics," he says, cutting directly to the chase.

"Things too small to see," I said. "Imaginary things," I add a moment later, in revenge.

His mouth quirked, the suggestion of a smile dancing at the corners of his lips. He finished his coffee after a while and left. I saw him on campus a time or two after that - we would nod.

Then one thundering gray Saturday morning he was back. "Ahem," he said. Then a moment later, before I could even look up, "May I join you?" I looked up, and then around - there were plenty of seats.

"We can be imaginary friends," he says. I smiled and nodded ok.

anais vionet

Better Grateful

After a period of self-assessment,
I'm trying to be a better person.

I want to be more patient, not just ferociously busy.
I want to practice gratefulness, be less snarky
and relentlessly sarcastic.

And even though I keep it pushing, by trying
to put these changes into action, out in the world,
the project is way behind schedule and over-budget
- I may have to make cuts.

anais vionet



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Overexposed

Have you ever been so infatuated with someone that you thought you'd die? My memories are fresh - and embarrassing - there's no sense of time's distortion.

I was twelve and we were living in Shenzhen, China.

When my heart went off like a grenade for this fourteen year old boy. I was so beguiled that I started writing poetry - always a bad sign.

I was exposed - turned inside out by it;
like my guts were hung out for birds to peck.
I writhed in that particular, lonely agony.

All I ever had to offer him was my helplessness.
He didn't take advantage - I think I scared him.
I wonder what memories he took from me?

anais vionet



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The Acorn

I'm at the acorn, a coffee shop, trying to write a poem but my mind is blank. I got here early enough to get one of the comfy chairs - yeah, I'm a self-indulgent monster - and I'm not getting up until my having to pee becomes a medical emergency.

What rhymes with blank.. Spank? THAT would take this poem in a WHOLE new direction - maybe it needs a new direction. Why does coffee that comes with latte-art, which costs 20 times more than what you can have in your dorm room, taste so much better?

A 'Hi, ' reveals a man standing in front of me, looking down and smiling - I assume he's smiling because we're all masked. I look up, blinking, and give him a questioning look and a head tilt - because we are masked. People at tables and chairs near us look up from their zoo of electronic devices to give us the onceover. There's a keenness to him that makes me want him to go away and I begin to feel a nagging trepidation.

'Apparently I didn't make much of an impression, ' he says. He's right and frankly, I'm thinking we should keep it that way. 'We met at the Pundits party a couple of weeks ago? ' He says, the inflection of his whole sentence rising, like a question.

Some background...

To her friends, Lisa being gorgeous is everyday and unremarkable, but take her out somewhere and she draws all eyes, like you drove up in a growling, fluorescent red Ferrari. She's invited everywhere (she calls them 'shiny ornament' invites) and one afternoon, as we're coming back to the dorm a girl comes up to us - to her - hands her a ½ slip of paper and strikes up a conversation.

She introduces herself and runs through the usual, 'What year are you in, where ya from.. bla bla. Then she asks, 'Would you ever consider attending a naked party - have you heard of them? ' To my surprise, Lisa smiles, brushes the hair out of her face and says, 'I'd think about it, ' which makes me laugh nervously, 'You would? ' I interrupt. The girl says that the paper is an open invitation from 'The Pundits', and that there's a URL on it with details. 'Just bring the slip, ' she says, touching the paper in Lisa's hand.

Guess where I 'met' this guy? In an instant, I'm tense. and if I were a fox, I'd gnaw-off my paw to get out of there.

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*A word about naked parties. They're harmless fun. Think of a museum where you're the art - look but don't touch. Everyone's aware that things are different, everyone's uncomfortable to some degree and everyone knows that everyone knows that everyone's uncomfortable. There's a mutual, consensual looking - but it's equal - you're all in the same boat. It's a curious Eden but very strict - it's NOT a sex thing.

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*Recommended song: Go Left by Radiant Children

anais vionet

I Lost My Love

I lost my love, It's just that simple.
I don't know what else to say.

I miss his smile, his eyes, his hands.
He has a high libido and certain demands.

I went to my priest, he seemed kind of grim,
'God has a lot on his plate now - stop bothering him.'

I called the police, they sounded bored but wanted a description.
I said 'He's real good lookin', and he tastes like chicken.'

I lost my love, but no one understands.
I have a high libido and certain demands.

anais vionet



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Common Problems

We're in the common room, Lisa and I. It's Friday afternoon, about 2 - It's partly-sunny and 45°f. outside. We've claimed the two squares of temporary rectangular sunlight like the Spanish conquistadors of old once claimed everything.

I'm just drowsing, I had a test this morning, I got up at 3: 30am to study for it and although I'm confident I did ok, I find myself rehashing it when I close my eyes. So I'm determinedly not closing my eyes - much. Lisa has a book open and she's working on a chemistry problem set (called a pset) assigned as homework.

Looking out and up, there's only one, lonely, cumulonimbus cloud in the sky. It's there, as if placed - a piece of art - the rest of the sky remaining defiantly blank. At first glance, it resembled a man, hanging by his neck, blowing in the wind under a giant mushroom gallows - but he soon detached and floated away like a tattered kite.

Lisa starts asking a question, without looking up from her book. 'Ok, so when hydrogen acts as a metal instead of a nonmetal..'

'Please don't make me think, ' I whisper in a tired monotone, 'I'm unprepared.'

'Ugh.' Lisa, grunted. She absorbed her disappointment quietly, without taking offense.

We're like two disparate species coexisting in the same landscape: the chemistry-tested and the soon-to-be-tested - neither diminished the other but we're separate.

Leong and Anna come in together, breaking off to their rooms to shed bookbags and coats but soon they're filling the room with restless energy. 'Has anyone heard from Sophy? ' Leong asks.

Sophy failed a rapid test yesterday morning and was hewn from the population like a cancer on the student body - and swooped off to isolation housing. 'Yeah, I took her some stuff this morning, ' I report, 'She seems ok.'

People are dropping to covid like flies. None of us are invincible, we roommates watch each other - as if any one of us could go full-on-zombie at any moment -

not unlike I imagine dinner at the Trumps these days - everyone looking around,
no

anais vionet

False Prophecies

If you prophecy the end of kings you are wrong.
Write no epitaphs, dig no graves, taste no grief.

The new czar, a rough and worldly killer firmly fixed
this very day stirs the cauldron of war to reset empire

Still, foxly friends of tyranny, who stab at weak democracy
praise the czar's autocracy, and mock free speech with treachery.

As modern judases, riding limitless swells of fortune, tease simple mobs
our old republic staggers and fades, mortally wounded by hypocrisy.

Perhaps, someday, freedom's autopsy will show what transpired,
but if you prophecy the end of kings you are wrong.

anais vionet



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The Quiet

The moonlight was just right for talking.
You hardly talk, that's reason enough not to fall in love.
Do you know Morse code? Maybe we can tap it out.
Wait, are you trying to seduce me stealthily?
Can I just buy a vowel?
I'm not insulting you.
I'm describing you.
I'm being candid.

anais vionet



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So Much Less

I'd love you less if you were here
crowding my dorm bed, nibbling me,
rubbing me like sandpaper

I've come this far all by myself
I am a stone, leave me alone

don't kiss me on the lips
don't label this a situationship
because then one of us would need to care

anais vionet



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Lunch Crush

We were in the cafeteria, having just sat down with our trays. The place, which looks like a modern, medium sized ski lodge, was almost empty. I'm registering more and more faces these days. Most are transient acquaintances from the dorm or classes. There were nods. My little group was my roommate, Leong, myself and a girl named Lucy from our chemistry class. Lucy can solve a chemical equation faster than either of us - she calls herself an idiot savant.

Lucy's one of those overwrought girls who don't believe food is necessary for survival and who stare anxiously at blueberries. Lucy's tray has a spoon, a napkin and one small, plain yogurt on it. I got salmon, a bit of Pad Thai, a slice of pizza and some desert. You could feed a family of four from my tray. I always sit with my back to windows - it's a glare avoidance thing.

Right after my first bite I saw Jordie. The world narrowed to Jordie. He was emerging from the serving area and seemed to enter the room like an actor coming center stage. He was dressed for soccer, complete with knee-high socks, shoes with cleats that clacked like a tap-dancer and little shorts - it was 39° outside.

"Jordie," Leong said, in a whisper that held the enthusiasm a cop would use to declare "GUN!"

I couldn't register an answer, I was transfixed. Then Leong did something I'll never forget - she raised her arm in a peremptory wave, signaling Jordie over to our table.

I turned to her in stark horror, but just as my lips started to form the words "WTF," he was upon us. "Morning!" He says, as he slides in directly across from me and begins organizing his lunch. I look down at my plate, concentrating on my noodles like a bomb disposal tech, defusing a nuclear suitcase bomb.

"Beautiful day," he says, looking out on the bright, crisp morning in back of us. Leong starts a conversation with him about soccer. It's clear that she's been talking to him but I'm not really listening. I'm watching him. Watching him fixedly, surreptitiously in my peripheral vision. Watching him eat, talk and breathe - he breathes just like a regular person only better.

Then Leong and Lucy start moving, gathering everything up to leave. I realize I

haven't actually eaten anything much - a bite of Pad Thai maybe. I stand as well, looking down, wrapping my slice of pizza in two napkins and stuffing it, an apple, a blonde-cinnamon-roll, an orange and three chocolate walnut cookies into my bookbag.

Jordie looks up from his tray. I have such a crush on this guy. It's heady and embarrassing. His gaze makes me feel like I have awkward, grasshopper limbs. He smiles unreservedly and it hits, like a force multiplier, I'm sure I flushed crimson. I'm surprised how strongly I can respond to his just looking and smiling at me.

As we leave the cafeteria, walking towards the residence, I turn on Leong, "What was THAT? ! " I ask, beginning to work myself up into something.

"I've been friendly with him - we have English class" Leon patiently explains, "I wanted you to meet him and get a chance to talk, " and after a moment of silence she adds, "and you never said anything! "

I shivered - the wind was freezing - only an idiot would play soccer out in this cold.

I don't care if my crush is embarrassingly obvious to my friends. It's pleasantly, invisible to others - I think.

I want to relish the pining - the lusting - it's delicious. There are times you don't want to talk to the guy - you just want to keep crushing.

You don't want to learn things about the man - the red flags - and you always learn EVERYTHING, like what their major is or that they're a man's man.

In the learning, they slip from that lofty echelon of dream-lovers - you lose the hot, playlist feeling - the cheesy, corny, giddy, love SICK.

Maybe that's where love's real thrill is - in our imaginations. So, give me the mystery - for now.

**Slang: someone's "major" = a person's kink*

anais vionet

Broken Objects

Sunny and her love-object have broken up.

It was a selfie-inflicted wound - a slapdash pic taken,
that like a puzzle, revealed more than intended.

We try to be thoughtful and considerate but
we've only recently escaped from captivity.

Perfectly nice people are capable of unfaithful deeds.
Isn't that what so much of great literature is about?

Our lives are written in disappearing ink,
and it's not as if all kisses are meaningful.

We stretch for happiness or for fleeting pleasure
- we're not married and only vaguely committed.

What would tempt you - what could you actually resist at 18?
Or now - but maybe you're a saint.

anais vionet

The Night Witches

Night witches own the dark, as they sweep the skies on their knotted broomsticks. They take to flight, in pairs, on the waxing moon or new moons, when the sky is darkest, the stars at their dimmest and gloom the deepest. They steal souls, drink warm blood, gather teeth and fresh, human meat.

They drift, smoke-like, with noir-intent, chewing their charcoal treats in that imperfect silence that prickles with all the sounds of the earth: growing plants, creeping insects, rustling leaves, and shivering birds.

Although their stygian laughter is frequently mistaken for cat fighting, they are soundless, becoming the shadows that disturb, that draw startled glances from the periphery of vision.

In their dark-passing, a mother will check her sleeping children one more time - dogs will whimper and fathers, the hair on their neck standing, will check already-locked windows.

Are you meandering out this night - to walk the dog or check the mail? If so, look to the sky. A little decision can be the worst mistake of your life.

anais vionet

The Brite Future

You have to admit, the future's looking bright
- with corona seeming to fizzle out a bit, with
cryptocurrency, the metaverse and the futuristic,
kiss-your-sister quality of lab-grown meat to
save the planet - yep, things are looking up.

anais vionet



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Back Taxes

Hangovers are a back-tax on fun.

To paraphrase T.S. Eliot:

'Can last night just belong to last night? '

I'm not thinking about sins and penance
or making any bound-for-failure resolutions.

I'm giving myself a mental health break.

anais vionet



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Vodka Plus Essays

Please Pogo music, wake me up. The night, now reduced to warm laptop light, is inching toward dawn. I pray to the patron saints of writers - is it Neri or Ávila? Whichever is on call I suppose.

'I've indulged in reprobation, ' I confess, openly to the fuzzy, waxing, crescent moon. 'I need that alchemy that turns coffee and a rough outline into an actual paper.'

I yank off my hoodie, fling my window open wide and hang myself out like wet laundry. Have you ever tasted vodka? Vile stuff really. The forty degree breeze feels like heaven and my eyes begin to focus. I peel off my leggings to let my entire skin tingle with cold.

My Keurig beeps confidently. I found a couple of peanut energy bars in my bookbag and rip them open like a junkie who's discovered a forgotten stash. I devour them so quickly it's like a magic trick - then I brush my teeth.

I take several slow deep breaths. I can DO this, I assure myself, but my outline looks adequate at best. I need this done so I can relax with a super bowl party pizza Sunday.

The song 'Data & Picard, ' sets me to dancing, 'It's better to have loved and lost..' Patrick Stewart as Jean-Luc Picard pronounces, perfectly auto-tuned to the music.

I love this song. I love the night. I love the challenge. I set myself to the task and finish, three hours later, as the sun breaks into morning.

anais vionet

My Pronoun

(a Senryu poem)

I'm transitioning
my personal pronoun to
"Your Majesty";

anais vionet



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The Suite Life

Yale student radio (wybcx) is playing throughout the suite. I'm working on chemistry problems but when a song I don't know is good enough to catch my attention, I add it to one of my gazillion Spotify playlists - God, I love the Internet.

One of our roommates, Sophy, is from California. She's brilliant and friendly but almost never leaves her room, which she keeps hot and airless. If I'm in there for more than two minutes I have to start peeling off layers of clothing, one by one. She didn't seem this odd last semester. We take turns, mediating between Sophy and the living, picking up her meals and packages, like vampire assistants.

Then there's a nice but nerdy guy named Andy, who Anna's adopted. He's sitting on our deep, red, four cushion corduroy couch, crafting an essay on his laptop. He's a divinity student who I rely on to answer my deeper religious questions.

"Do you think Jesus went around telling people his mother is a virgin? ,
" I'd asked.

"Jesus had brothers, " he answered, "Have you ever read the bible? " He asks.

"My bible is Seventeen magazine." I say, hand to heart.

"Listen to this! " Andy says - a peremptory order to the room - as he begins reading from his paper. "Disruptivist writers who no longer strive for agency, circumventing narrative in order to resemble the fiction construct, risk losing what Robbe-Grillet called the "intelligibility of the world" and themselves illustrate the exhaustion of forms." Andy paused. "What do you think? " He asked the room.

No-one says anything. No-one ever understands what Andy's talking about.

Anna and Sunny are studying and sunbathing in the common room like they're on some kind of permanent holiday. They occupy two generous rectangles of sunlight streaming in through the closed picture windows.

They're laying on yoga mats, almost shoulder to shoulder, wearing bikinis and Wayfarer Ray-Bans. It's 12° degrees outside but there's an oil heater with a fan blowing across it that provides them with a sun-like warmth.

Welcome to higher learning 2022

anais vionet

The Morning Routine

The alarm interrupted my sleep with the urgency of lust or sudden inheritance - only to end up being neither.

'Alexa, good morning, ' I say, as I stretch. My room lights illuminate - in red mode - like a submarine lit for night routine and my Keurig springs to life.

How could someone living my dull, slow, academic life be so walking-dead tired in the morning? After all I got - trying to focus on my tiny Apple watch - 4 hours sleep. I rubbed my dry eyes and auroras traveled across my lids.

When I pull open my drapes, all I see is a waning moon suggesting light to a dark world. I step around abandoned clothes, lying where they fell like soldiers.

Aggk! I recoil when I see a three-day-old corpse in the mirror. Ugh, gross, I fell asleep wearing my facial detox mask.

My clock reads 5: 40am. I whisper to my AI, 'Alexa, what's today's forecast? ' 'Currently, It's 21°, today will be sunny with a high of 27°' she whispers back.

In a moment of non assignment related forethought, while tooth brushing, I strip my pillowcase, tossing it on a pile of dirty clothes next to the full hamper of equally dirty clothes.

MattyBRaps begins throbbing 'Little Bit' in the room next door. That means Leong's awake - she's obsessed with a 15 year old boy-singer on YouTube.

I wiggle into my spandex, grab my iPad and water bottle, then head down to the basement gym. I can replay my chemistry class while walking on the treadmill.

Good morning.

anais vionet

The Question

Leong (one of my roommates) squirms up to me at breakfast, in the cafeteria.

"May I ask.., " she said, looking around like a secret agent getting ready to make a dead-drop, "what contraceptives do you use? "

I thought this an odd question from someone who just broke up with her long-time boyfriend but, hey, I'm an open book.

"Isolation and despair, " I replied, which got me an eye roll.

"You're never serious! " She admonishes me.

anais vionet



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It Isn't Easy

(a firefly poem)

Love isn't easy to find, it's well-camouflaged.

anais vionet



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Not Name Dropping

A famous alumna is visiting the university. I got an invitation several days ago to a small, socially distanced, masked, focus group. It was to be early on a Saturday morning - so, why not? I was excited to see her - I'm a fan.

We were a diverse group of about 20 (covid tested before admittance) students and I was in the back row. Seating was offset so everyone could see everything perfectly. I craned and swiveled, when her entourage came into the room. Then, there she was - I'm sure I was grinning ear to ear (behind my mask) , we clapped, excitedly. She wore a navy business suit. A jacket over a black blouse with slacks and black shoes.

She gave a talk, about the challenges America faces. On YouTube, her speech-giving voice always seemed artificial, cold, harsh and brittle. Here, she was low-key, motherly, whip smart, personable and humorous - everything I had hoped for.

Then there was a question and answer session (NOT easy questions - did I mention whip smart?) followed by a no touching reception line. And OMG, she's a foot away. She seemed a lacquered and corrected sort of person - professional - I guess you'd say.

Everyone was gently elbow bumping with her, so I did too. You'd say your name and class. 'Anais Vionet, freshman, ' I said. I wanted to say 'I'm a BIG fan' but I thought I might come off as either fawning or even worse someone bent on wasting her time.

We both smiled, me behind my mask and I bobbed a goodbye nod, but as I went to step away she said, 'How's your Grandmother? ' I was shocked but I managed to say, 'She's fine, thank you.' To which she replied, 'Please tell her I said hello.' I just nodded, 'yes' as a sort of 'I will, ' and stepped away.

I glanced around, there was no handler by her side and she wasn't wearing an earpiece - how she knew me I have no idea - but now I think she's considering a run in 2024. My grandmère would be a whale of a donor.

What a bizarre encounter.

anais vionet

Finally Friday

It's finally Friday night
there's not a professor in sight.

If you think I'm happy - you're right!

My homework assignment is light,
I just have an essay to write.

We and our sister suite will unite,
dragging a couch over, so the seating is right.

We'll binge on Ozark most of the night,
'cause we're all Justin Bateman acolytes.

Pizza and ice cream will be a highlight,
in an evening of lazy delights.

I wish you could join us on-site,
but a quarantine prevents the invite.

anais vionet

Sleepy Popcorn

I couldn't sleep. I was lying in bed watching the patterns reflected moonlight made on my ceiling when I heard the faint beep of the kitchen microwave. I smelled popcorn.

I decided to fill up my water bottle and see who was up. I slipped on a thick, terrycloth robe I'd gotten from Lisa last Christmas. It must weigh 15 pounds and it's so warm and heavy I seldom wear it.

I silently glided into the main room. Leong was standing at one of our two large picture windows staring out at the night. Her left arm cradling a bowl of ultimate-butter popcorn. Anna told me last night that Leong and her long-time boyfriend, who's back in China, had broken up. They'd been together forever and had been expected to marry.

A bright half-moon was hanging high over campus, an electric ornament on a velvet background, its moonlight glint painted the world, like ice on mountaintops.

"I heard about your breakup," I said, "what does it mean?"
"In Leong's world, who you dated was of family interest. That person had to be approved, their bona fides proven - they had to fit into some long term plan.

"It means I can't be tamed," she said, with soft bravado. After a moment, she spoke again, more seriously. "It's better this way - for now - someday..," she trailed off.

I understood. All of our hopes are resting on someday, like so many wagers at a casino. I imagined some gambler, stepping up to a betting window, in an old black-and-white movie, saying, "Gimmie 5 bucks on Someday to win."

Something in her voice, a brittleness, precluded further questions. I looked at the clock, it read 3: 47. I gave her a hug and yawning, filled up my water bottle from the refrigerator's filtered tap.

"See ya." I whispered and headed off, back to bed. With any luck I could squeeze another hour's sleep out of the morning.

anais vionet

In The Mist

We decided to take a walk.
If the moon and stars still existed,
they were hidden behind clouds.

Then a fog hit us like a wave, a cloud
that had run out of gas and crashed on us,
to further shrink the perceptible world.

Ordinary, walking people became vague
phantoms that could loom, in film noir
black and white out of the fog,
suddenly sharpen and colorize,
only to disappear again in moments.

Sounds, out of sync, or garbled, came sharply
from odd angles, turning that fifth sense unreliable.
Noises, at first muted, were abruptly amplified as
if the hand of that ghostly vapor ran a soundboard.

A man, moving in stalker-like silence, clops,
like a clydesdale on cobblestone as he passes close.

I half expected a distant fog horn to announce
the passing of a ghost ship where all be welcome.

anais vionet

Random Answers

Anna and I were sitting on an outdoor bench. To get some fresh air, our classes are virtual this week and we were feeling claustrophobic. I was working on a poem idea on my iPad and Anna was uploading an assignment from her laptop.

The bench is by a walkway and there were a few people passing by. I asked Anna, "What's an alternative word for paralysis?" And three random students walking by answer my question, in less time than Anna can even look up from her Mac.

"Tetraplegia," says a girl on the far side of the walk - who passed us right to left - her friends laughed at her for answering my question. "Palsy," says a guy who was passing the other way, on our side - he didn't even look up from his phone. And last, a guy behind the girls says, "standstill."

I just look up and smile - I love this place. Everyone's friendly and collaborative. There's an almost homogeneous curiosity about the world.

"Maybe I should create a sidewalk, crossword-puzzling channel on Twitch?" I ask Anna, who just shook her head, "No."

anais vionet

Winter's Cold Fist

A tempest night sky presses, my lattice windows shake,
as if someone's being thrown against them, or worse yet,
a yeti's breaking in. They lock with little levers that seem far
too flimsy to keep out the prying fingers of turbulence.

We watched a man plodding outside - obviously a student from Alaska. He was
talking on his phone, his breath a continuous, cold white cloud. He slipped,
careering drunkenly but managed to stay upright by assuming a surfer-like
crouch.

"Where do you think HE's going? " Lisa wondered.

Forget fall's polite, amuse-bouche of chill, we've been smacked, full frontally
assaulted by the gigantic, cold-fist of winter. "Go on, " I said, to the
weather gods last fall, like an unlucky gambler on a losing streak. "hit me!
"

Now I'm searching Amazon for "flannel underwear".

anais vionet



PoemHunter.com

Springing Into Action

I woke up late this morning, my phone was dead. I guess I never plugged it in, I found it buried under my pillow (erah!) . I barely had time for anything, just managing to cover the basics as the 'Whoop' sound signaled my first virtual classroom opening. A pop-up announced that the class would be recorded and available later. 'Yessss! ' I thought, as I put in my airpods.

My room is surprisingly full of houseplants. There's a ponytail palm, an anthurium and philodendrons sending down tendrils of heart-shaped leaves from shelves and tables. I drew open my curtains and the room bloomed, morning sunny. It was 22° but my windows are almost always cracked open to let in some real air.

I dressed in an unstylish, black school hoodie, short pajama pants, long socks and fluffy, pink slippers for my virtual class. My still-wet hair looked attractively mop-like. I began brushing it out while arranging the colored gel-pens and highlighters I use to take notes.

I was starving but I could only imagine breakfast. Ever notice how the sun looks like a giant egg-yolk? At least my Keurig was on the job - burping, whirring and dripping like a malfunctioning steam engine as it rendered lifesaving French Vanilla coffee that smelled like a caffeinated heaven.

As the professor started talking about the syllabus, outlining the types of problems we'll be working on this semester and reminding us of things we learned in our intro to econ class, a teaching assistant, in another window, asked us to press the roll-call icon and reminded us we had a paper due (this is why we read our syllabus, people) . Then the assistant's window became a countdown timer showing what remained of the ten minutes we'd been given to upload the first-day's homework.

Twenty minutes into the class, I was combed out and ponytailed, coffeed-up and positively vibrating with pleasure - I LOVE this stuff - strategies, actions, outcomes and payoffs. Student life is unnatural, stressful and myopic - but it can be thrilling too.

There was a knock on my door frame (the door to my room is almost always open) , and one of my roommates, Sunny, was there. 'Morning, Princess Anesthesia, ' she said, teasing me about over-sleeping.

I pointed to my pink-M1-iMac screen, to indicate I was in class and she tossed

me a bag. I knew, at once, that it was breakfast from the cafeteria. 'I love you, '
I mouthed, before turning back to the screen.

Spring Semester has begun.

anais vionet

The Queen Of Winter Comes

The queen of winter comes.
An expressionless assassin
who feels no passion, she comes
as silently as the shadow of a cloud.

She may come crowned by aurora borealis,
or in ziggurat-like steps of paralysis,
but the song she sings freezes earthly things
and her chilly breath brings a sleepy death.
The queen of winter comes.

A deadly kiss from those frozen lips
can shatter skin like glass.
May howling hounds warn you
and blazing fires warm you.
The queen of winter comes.

.
**They're predicting a bomb-cyclone winter storm here Saturday. The queen of
winter comes.*

anais vionet

Mortal Touch

I think of you often.

In the morning, late at night,
but those thoughts go unvoiced,
the mortal touch goes unfelt.

It's easier to keep to myself,
to avert my gaze deliberately.
it's safer to keep ravenous.
It's simpler to bamboozle with silence.

anais vionet



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Treadmill Season

It's a rainy, snowy Tuesday morning, so I headed to our fitness center (in the basement) to walk on a treadmill. On arrival there were four or five guys there. There was a time when that would have been reason enough for me to not go in - if I was alone - I'd skip it, but I feel more at home now.

Late one Sunday night I decided to treadmill. A few guys were there on the weight-cable-machines at the far end of the room (it's huge) and I decided give it a try anyway.

As I was setting up to walk, this one string-bean of a guy did a funny, exaggerated flex in my direction, saying loudly, "I'm the man of your DREAMS! "

To which I quipped back, "The man of MY dreams would do my chemistry fact-sheet." (homework)

Which got a laugh from the guys who went back to their workout - ignoring me. That's when I began to relax.

anais vionet



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Again To The Sea

I went down to watch the ocean this morning - well, Long Island Sound anyway. My last chance for a while, classes start tomorrow. I wonder sometimes how I can be refreshed by that gray, drizzly, melancholy harbor - locked in winter's intemperate grip - but I am.

The salty air seems thicker and richer, the sky bigger and wilder. There's the relaxing sound mix of wave and gull. The ugly brown pelicans bickering like old, married couples, as a lone fisherman, in his yellow macintosh slicker, sorts his boat lines under the watchful, hopeful, hungry eyes of floating black-backed gulls.

Maybe I should become a sailor? Besides, I hear it's a great way to meet guys.

anais vionet



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Pizza Delivery

I'm going to each of my suitemates' rooms. One at a time, methodically. I pause, for dramatic purpose, until I have their full attention. Once I have it, I rushingly, excitedly, breathlessly say, "I'M getting pizza later, for the GAME! " Like a seven year old child.

Now, my roommates KNOW we're ordering pizzas later. They're all "on board, " everyone's submitted their order and venmo'd their money to Sunny who will actually place the order for delivery at 5: 30 pm. But I'm excited. I LOVE pizza (and American, NFL football) and I love being childish.

My roommates, like my brother, sister and parents before them, know this and love my manic, overactive way of excising tedium. Besides, I won't do this more than once or twice - ok, maybe three times today before the pizza comes.

Since you've read this far - allow me to opine, for a moment, about "self restraint."

Have you read about how they're using familial DNA to solve old cold-case murders? I think they should use familial DNA to track down whomever it was that invented self restraint.

It was probably some old Protestant. I mean, Catholics only have sin - it's yes or no - binary. So without researching it (at all) , I think we're dealing with someone born after the protestant reformation of 1555 - but I'm flexible.

Anyway, they should track that person down, dig them up, beat them with a stick, and then rebury them, in unhallowed ground.

I hate self restraint. It's so.. restraining.

#restraintsux

* I say my roommates "love" my mania but in truth I have no hard data on that.

anais vionet

Building Nests

(a poem in 2 Senryus)

We carefully choose
bits of our lives that we then
weave into stories.

Like birds building nests,
making the safe places that
keep and define us.

anais vionet



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An Important Man

a 2021 holiday story

Lisa's dad has a visitor from out of town - a 'very important man.' He came early. He was dressed casually, in slacks, and a jacket over a mock-turtleneck. He was genial, behind tortoiseshell glasses, but he seemed ordinary, polite and a bit grandfatherly.

The adults visited, in the living room, while we girls played gin-rummy. Later, seafood was delivered from 'Le Bernardin' - I got fried shrimp and 18 raw oysters on the ½ shell (yum) .

After dinner, I was free (having set the table) to relax on Lisa's balcony and watch the city. It was cold-ish but the breeze had gentled, it was the tail end of dusk and the fast-darkening sky was bluer than blue. Why waste time sitting inside on the Internet flipping Instagram's flat little pictures - when there's this stunning,3D reality available?

The important man came out to smoke a cigar. The steady breeze blew the smoke away in the other direction. We sat silently, like astronauts in space enjoying the view of earth. The city's traffic, reduced to pinpricks of red and white light, reminded me of dewdrops along a spider web.

After a few minutes, he pointed his cigar at the view and said, 'The city lights, a seductive woman, a cigar and bourbon - who needs more? '

I was momentarily confused, then I bristled, but didn't show it. Of course, it was just fluff and flattery, a non sequitur compliment from another age - aimed at both of us really - so polished it wrapped around again to the generic. He, of course, was the romantic lead and I the seductive woman. 'Is that what I am? ' I asked myself, trying to transpose the male gaze.

The glass door opened, interrupting the moment and Leeza (12) came out with a tray and two huge pieces of Dutch-apple-pie à la mode for the two of us. She looked at the avuncular man and said, 'I could only carry two, can I get you something? ' 'No thanks, ' he said, raising a bar glass half full of bourbon. A moment later Lisa's dad joined him, saying, 'I called Mumbai and bla, bla, bla, boring boring.' Leeza and I took our leave.

Lisa and her mom were just finishing the dishes. I came close-up to Lisa,

flounced my hair and said, in my slinkiest voice, 'I'm a seductive woman.' Lisa laughed and replied, 'Well of course you are! ' Her mom, Karen, also understanding the joke, rolled her eyes. I could almost feel Leeza, locked onto us, trying to decipher the context for that exchange.

Lisa says, in a conspiratorial whisper, 'I think he has a thing for you, ' wiggling her eyebrows.

'Ooo, Marry me, DADDY, ' I say, batting my eyes and wiggling vampishly.

'Shhh, ' Karen says, shaking her head, finger to lips and chuckling.

anais vionet

Contagion

a synryu poem

Oh, that my love were
contagious - you'd catch it and love
me, as I do you.

Ahh-choo!

anais vionet



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Snow Night

Snow began in mordant gray dusk,
a silent sprinkle of crystal light twinkle,
attaché charm to the simply ordinary.

Purple skies drew black as dreary fought back
to obscure winter's mask of ceramic magique.

Yellow sodium campus lights slow ignite to golden
halo bright, their intense, saintly glows casting rivers
of shadow and a golden glisten to the snowflakes that fall
twisting, in silence, in grace, to present winter's face.

anais vionet



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Celebrate It

Life isn't a poem
dive in it, splash in it,
celebrate the refreshment,
like a bird in a puddle.

anais vionet



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Jordie Spotting

He passes through the room like a bubble in champagne, unattached, teflon coated, and somehow freer than the rest of us. "Jordies here," Leong says in an excited whisper.

"Yeah," I sigh, adjusting my mask, "saw him." She smiles like a cat behind hers. Leong knows I'm crushing on Jordie and she finds it delicious information which she waves at me like a flag whenever he's around.

We're processing in, distancing and passing table to table. Leong can be with me because, as roommates, we'll be quarantining together. Lisa joins us, she's back from the restroom. "Jordies here," she says, bouncing up on her toes to better scan the room.

I don't look at him but he fills my horizon like a thunderhead. He's all I can see, even when I'm not looking at him. We reach the end of a row of tables and bam, there he is, six feet away. He says hi, I say hi - I'm very professional as we exchange looping, harmless, euphemisms for settling in for spring semester - then he's called to the next station.

"If only we weren't so busy," I say, holding this fiction in front of me like a shield. "Yeah," Leong and Lisa say, practically together, and smiling like thieves.

anais vionet

Going, Going...

I woke up very early this morning, restless and bothered, itchy for the day to happen. As dawn broke orange, the city was revealed. I'll never get tired of watching that. The snow was gone but a gloss over the city streets indicated ice. I scanned the landscape for movement - for life - like a predator.

Lisa and I are headed back to school today, at 11am, by air, which our parents feel is the best way to avoid our old, holiday nemesis omicron (doesn't that make us sound like secret agents?) .

Once everyone was finally up, Lisa and I got our busy-on, doing the last load of laundry and final packing. Lisa, packs a suitcase, by throwing clothes in without bothering to fold them, while I meticulously fold and roll my clothes, like a marine headed for deployment.

As Lisa and I worked, Leeza (12) was lying on Lisa's bed, on her back with her head hanging over the edge - watching us pack upside down. Her red hair looked like a thrown plate of spaghetti.

Leeza was talk, talk, talking and gnawing on a toasted bagel at the same time. 'How do you feel about going back to school?' she asked us. 'OH, feelings!' I gasped, 'A free therapy session!' 'No, really,' she said, grown serious and rolling right side up.

Leeza is cute as a button and vulnerable - I could almost feel her anxiety. As the youngest sibling I'd been left behind too - you don't want the holiday to end and your big sister to leave - it's a singularly lonesome feeling. I wanted to grab her, like a puppy, wrestle her and tell her I love her and I'd miss her - like my sister used to do with me. I decided that as soon as we were done packing, I would.

'My GOD,' Lisa said to Leeza, 'will you PLEASE shut up! I have to think.' Leeza blushed and shrugged 'I'm just making conversation, grump-face, you've packed a million times before haven't you?' 'Does counting to 10 make murder premeditated?' Lisa asked the ceiling.

Suddenly, Lisa dropped the blouse she'd been holding and pounced on Leeza, tickling her as she squealed with delight. In a second they'd become a ball of flailing arms, legs, hair and playful noise. I slunk out of the room to give them their sister's goodbye.

Besides, I smelled bacon.

anais vionet

Enjoy It

We were calculating theoretical yields on chemcollective
and somehow we ended up dancing to 'go left'
we were finding oxidation numbers on labster
but somehow we started laughing
we were balancing chemical equations on PhET
but now we're singing 'World we created' with hair-bush microphones.

believe your competence - be impressed with your progress
attack every challenge with self-contained ease
armor yourself with confidence
you'll like the way you enjoy it

anais vionet



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Stinging January Morning

I saw Sting in the lobby this morning, we were going out and he was coming in. Lisa nudged me, "Sting" was all she whispered. He was with a woman and a man. The woman was talking to the doorman. Sting was dressed all in black except for a long stark-white cashmere scarf, he was chatting and working a dark-gray French-flat-cap around in his hands. His hair is very short and white.

We wanted to walk in the snow, if only for a minute.

A gust of wind caught us as we reached the sidewalk. The two American flags, on either side of the entrance, went rigid, at 9-o'clock as if saluting us. "Jeeez!" I said, like the Georgia girl I am - or was. "Don't be a baby," Lisa answered, like a true, pitiless New Yorker but her cheeks had turned a child-like pink. She flipped up her collar.

I patted my pocket, relieved to feel my phone and know that if we froze to death the authorities could use "find my friends" to locate our bodies.

Leeza joins us a moment later and I can't help but notice that she's dressed like it's a cool fall day. Back in the day, when my brother would dress like summer even though temperatures in Georgia had dipped cruelly into the fifties. Seeing him, my mom would say, "Where there's no sense, there's no feeling," but I don't.

"Did you see Sting?" I asked Leeza (12) . She gives me a blank look. "Sting", I said, "the lead singer for The Police?" I add, as clarification. "I don't know who that is," she says flatly. "He was famous," I say in surrender, "a long time ago, in the 90s." Maybe the next generation won't be as celebrity driven.

Thank God Lisa suggested I pin my artist-beret down or it would have blown away, like my resolve to walk in the snow. Still, I followed Lisa into the park like a cat on a leash - unwilling to be seen as any less Canadian.

The show crunched like we were trampling over snow-cones. Trees began turning away the wind as we entered Central Park, "I think we may survive." I said. Just because you're freezing to death doesn't mean you can't be affable.

Why don't pigeons freeze to death - I thought birds went south for the winter?

anais vionet

Qualities And Characteristics

Love can shine like salvation.

Love lights unseeable torches

When heated, love evades judgment.

It gives breath to the sweetest sounds.

Love makes reasons and it breaks reason.

anais vionet



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Fredanting Time

I may look like a chear-leader - but I really am a cheetah
and after they pass those tests out - I'm going to beat ya.
I heard a student say, in the cafeteria near where I sat
'They really don't expect us to read ****all**** of that.'
and I chuckled to see the many headshakes of agreement.

Don't these people know that this is really an arena?
I was accepted to Yale before I finished ninth grade and now
I'm surrounded by these 'A' types who think they have it made
- until I eviscerate them with curve-crushing grades.

Learning is a passion, an exhilaration and release.
The last place on earth, that you ever want to be
is sitting in a classroom, competing against me.

'How'd the test go? ' He asks.

'Oh, ' I shrug and say, 'I think I did ok.'

Let me translate that for you, 'I made a feekin' ****A****.'

anais vionet



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Getting Ready

With three more weeks of holiday vacation,
Lisa and I've started studying 5 hours a day.
You can read a novel for atmosphere
but you have to puzzle over and wring-out academic books
- with their essays and worksheets after every chapter.
I feel a simultaneous focus and boredom
- but the pull of school is staggering
- like resisting it could break me apart.

anais vionet



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Afternoon Engagements

Annick (my 28 year old sister) came down to NYC, from Boston, for a day visit. It was one of those warm, cerulean days between Christmas and New Years. Annick's in a surgical residence, in a pandemic, but still somehow, she got away.

We're dining on a shaded, outdoor, sundeck - I arrived first, by a moment but then the elevator opened and Annick emerged, looking like a model - familiar but I don't know - more completely adult - more than ever like my mom. It was all I could do not to weep for happiness when we hugged.

After that long hug, Annick gave my clothes a slow, censorious looking-over. When my mom and I shopped for 'school clothes' last year, in Paris, I bought some stunning designer (Anna Molinari) clothes - only to find out they were completely out of place at Yale. Now they're sentenced to a trunk under my bed and my replacement clothes are from FatFace and Patagonia.

I've been dressing to disappear but I wanted her to see a 'new me.' How I've survived in a rough, academic country - not just survived - but thrived. I also wanted her to think her sister was beautiful and hoped I didn't seem too strange. She cupped my chin - just like my mom does - 'You look wonderful, ' she said.

Annick mentioned we'd have company for lunch but she was alone - then this tall, fair-haired, man was with us. He slipped his arm around Annick's waist and they smiled, together. I'd never met one of Annick's boyfriends before so this was a little disconcerting - part of me wanted to pull her away and say, 'MINE! '

Annick made the introductions, 'Anais, this is Gerard - Gerard, Anais.' Gerard leaned into la bise then half hugged me, patting me bearishly on the back. I decided he was too tall and too handsome and began to examine him for flaws.

He wore a dark-charcoal-gray cashmere suit with a light-gray oxford-cloth shirt. 'Are you always so dapper? ' I asked? 'I wanted to look substantial, ' he said, with a very slight French accent. He held me at arm's length. 'You're definitely sisters, ' he said, smiling.

We settled in. At first we were a little stilted with each other, uncertain how to best introduce ourselves. Annick said that Gerard is a 'Child Neurologist.' 'Funny, ' I said, 'you look older.' and he laughed. I was warming to him.

'How's school going? ' Annick asked later, moving some of my fly-away hair out

of my face - a trace of the maternal in her solicitous fussing - but I liked it.
'Easy peasy, ' I said, the lie warming me like an ember or black magic.

There's no real sibling rivalry between us. Imagine you're Beyoncé's sister, what are the odds that you'll eclipse Beyoncé? Yeah, it's ZERO.

'Ha! ' she laughs, 'you are such a little fibber.'

'I am NOT, ' I hotly say, but my defense is ruined by my laugh. 'I'm doing ok - but it's a lot, ' I say, to erase the fib.

They're ENGAGED!

I tried not to act stunned but I doubt I was very convincing. The news thumped me like a gust of wind. Suddenly, I knew. Our yesterdays were no more substantial than a story we'd read together growing up, that you can mourn and rejoice at the same time.

Otherwise it was a family lunch, although at first I was a bit nervous around Gerard. At one point Annick says, 'What are you doing? ' as the table gently quivered.

I smiled wincingly, 'Making circles with my ankles, ' I said.

Annick smiled knowingly.

a slice of college, Christmas holiday

#holiday #sister #engagement #lunch #teen #humor

anais vionet

Behind Sunglasses

I was at a friend's pool after school.
She loaned me this impossibly tiny bathing suit
I looked at it skeptically but I didn't ask whose it was.
It smelled faintly of chlorine.
we were supposed to be alone
her older brother came home
his eyes settled on my skin
like a wash of immediate sunburn
It was awkward and thrilling to be watched
I pretended not to notice
behind my sunglasses
I ignored him
My friend noticed. 'Perv alert, let's go in.' she said.
I didn't want to go but I didn't let it show.

anais vionet



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My My My My Corona

Lisa and I got our emails the same day.
She read hers first. She made a small
sighing sound, the faintest of protests.
Then broke the news, with a scowl,
"They're moving classes online & temporarily."

I don't want to talk about Corona any more
- I want to scream about it. Maybe we'll
graduate, in three years, without knowing
what most of our classmates look like -
antithetical to "networking" at university.

I'm lucky, I know - I'm only inconvenienced.
I roam, safely, indoors, impatiently untouched by
adult, real world concerns, like jobs and money.
So I'll keep my head up and smile like those
glamorous, happy girls in tampon commercials.

anais vionet



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La Madone Noire

In my family, a convent in Lucerne, Switzerland loomed legend large. It's name is 'La Madone Noire' (the Black Madonna) and according to my mom, it is a 'finishing school' where captious girls, who lied or who wouldn't behave, were sent to live with and be schooled by nuns.

It was, from all reports, a terrible and stern place where there was never any ice cream or bedtime stories and the toys, when there were any, were made of straw.

Most of the time it was my older sister Annick getting the dark Poe-like lectures, but I was there, in my high chair, listening wide-eyed. The very idea that Annick could be snatched up, for some infraction, and sent off to the nuns horrified me to the point that my heartbeat seemed to come through my whole body.

Eventually, as we grew, 'Lucerne' became a shorthand for 'shape up or else, ' and oddly, it never lost its potency. Hmm, you know, come to think of it - there was no equivalent monastery for my brother.

anais vionet



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But A Game

Love is but a game of false dice, sweet lies and oaths
to tame pretty rebels for astute, overmastering gentlemen
- harsh, dishonest and less in love, who loan affection with interest and measure
passion like coin recompense.

anais vionet



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Oracle Voices

I'm Imagining a place where we make sense - the hot-chocolate safe-house where we'll tongue wrestle, watch Gossip Girl reruns and cuddle - sustained by love and Cinnamon Life cereal.

This dark, coffin-like clock in the corner whirrs, mechanically.
Suddenly a little yellow-clock-bird bursts, jumping-jack-like,
through a tiny door on a blue, tongue-suppressor diving board.

"Cuckoo! " it shrieks, to mock me. "Shut up! " I say
defensively
but it repeats, "Cuckoo! " like an oracle - an unfeeling instrument of
adult logic.

anais vionet



PoemHunter.com

Boxing Day

It's boxing day (the Brit name for the day after Christmas) and Pamela, Lisa's grandmother is visiting our little pandemic ark. Pamela's a Cowboys fan so we're watching them slaughter Washington - between commercials - but now a Tesla commercial is running. "Those electric cars," Pamala says dubiously, "seem problematic."

"You've heard of global warming, haven't you, Pamala?" Leeza says. Leeza addresses everyone (even her grandmother) as if they were her age (12). It's both seductive and lazy. "This whole system," she raises her arms to include the apartment, the city and America, "will collapse - we're DOOOOMED," she concludes, as if speechifying to an eager crowd.

"Everyone's heard of climate change," Pamela says, sipping her eggnog. Pamela is as well informed as any of us and seems rather envious of the future, even the coming awfulness.

"Leeza's her own theatre," Her mom says, grimacing indulgently. Leeza's full attention was now on the pastry tray - having spotted two small eclairs under the bear claws - she'd lost interest in the conversation and saving the planet.

"The system won't collapse," Will says. Will received his early acceptance letter from Harvard the other day and now he knows everything.

"We'll lose Florida, South Carolina and New York," he pronounces calmly, "so there'll be some.. migrations."

"Thank you, professor," Lisa says, rolling her eyes as if to say "Harvard people."

"I think the Covid might get us all - before climate change," I say, in the spirit of the holiday.

"Well," Will says, grinning, "that's what ALL the people at inferior colleges think."

Leeza, passing by my easychair, curls into my lap like a cat, gently petting my hair. "Don't be mean to MY friend," she says, purringly - I was suddenly her possession. Lisa comes out of her chair, a sly smile on her face, to lay crosswise atop Leeza (and me).

"Ugg," I managed to say, squirming to get comfortable, then "Akkkk."

Lisa says, "Leave my poor roomie alone!" and starts baby-kissing my head.

Will starts in our direction like HE'S going to pile on. "Egggg! I shrek,
"HELP! "
Pamela whoops with glee as Dallas scores another touchdown.
"Like beating a dead dog with a stick, " she says.

anais vionet

Larger Questions

When I'm seeking solutions to life's larger questions,
I visit that sacred location where millions of people pray,
desperately, for answers - the bathroom mirror.

Ugh, has my hair looked like that all DAY?

anais vionet



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Out Of Thin Air

I have this talent - I can create an ex-boyfriend out of thin air. **snapping fingers**

Lisa and I had just gotten back to school from Thanksgiving break and my soon to be ex-study-partner arrives all passively-angry - with that withering, unmistakable, male-balance of harshness and ambivalence. I don't even know what triggered his moral panic.

I was bewildered at first. "We aren't dating," I said, "we're study-partners." We'd agreed early on and I saw the relationship as defined - with a period. He, apparently, saw it as more of an ellipsis...

Then, we kissed one night. We were happy because we'd slammed the midterms. I thought of it as a "champagne kiss" moment of celebration - but it was a mistake that seemed to break some spell between us.

After that, I could never utter the "yes"; he wanted and our friendship momentum stalled. You could say that I've been slowly contracting around him to ordinariness - like an infatuation balloon deflating into disappointment.

Still, I feel this stupid, hurtful sense of loss. Why am I so bad with guys? ? Perhaps I should take the scientific approach and conduct exit-interviews.

I'd LIKE to have a boyfriend, sometimes, but all I can see are negative consequences - and who has the TIME? Most nights, when my homework is finished, there's only a few hours left over for sleep.

He left me in a lurch - but I went through my class list and managed to study-group-up before finals (thank God) .

anais vionet

Beauty

beauty is a witch
the kiss of light, a trick
a mask, a banquet
a spell, a curse
a blessing
you

anais vionet



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Blind Sides

I'm in a psychology class and as part of it we filled out several, detailed, personality evaluations. They said these were helpful in forming a psychological profile of the freshmen classes each year and of particular interest were these COVID years.

The professor said she'd be available, before finals, to review them with us if we were interested - and I volunteered. So in our review we're going over my results and she says: "Your trauma history could produce this constellation of wit, wiriness and attachment-anxiety."

I flinch, irritably, thinking, my "trauma history?" "What, "trauma history?" "Wondering if - maybe the professor was looking at the wrong paper?

She read my reaction and the consternation on my face, started flipping through the papers, and said, "According to the history you submitted, your father was killed when you were seven and you were hospitalized for..."

"OMG" I thought, blanking out what she was saying, "How could I have forgotten THAT?" Even for a moment. Then I sag with this oppressive, blanket-like wave of guilt at having put the crash so far out of my mind.

"The dismissal of childhood trauma is quite normal," she said, putting her hand on my arm, "You have to put trauma out of your everyday thoughts - to get on with your life." She assured me. "It's quite normal."

How many blind sides do I have? I wondered

anais vionet

The Sorry Present

I want to say I'm sorry - your present looks like that.
It wasn't kicked by UPS or pummeled with a bat

The master wrappers I prefer, simply aren't around
A slow economy got them or the covid cut them down.

My boys at Neiman Marcus, I miss those guys so much
and the girls Bergdorf Goodman had such a subtle touch

the lacy Le Bon Marché ribbons, are what set their work apart
no matter where you placed those gifts, they always looked like art

I miss those tasteful craftsmen, but instead of being depressed
I watched some Youtube lessons - and I tried my very best
but the present came out so miserably, I thought I should confess

anais vionet



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Holly-Jolly

Remember Christmas shopping?

I mean in stores full of shoppers

- there was music in the air and
some shops had free hot-chocolate
while others offered hot cinnamon

apple-cider and ginger-reindeer cookies

Parents would have to wait outside stores

because the whole expedition was surreptitious

- you shielded your gift bags from prying eyes.

Siblings would offer to help you carry your loot

- as if any respectable kid would fall for THAT.

School choirs competed for applause, caroling in food courts.

A line of excited children would spark my older brother,

Brice, to smirk and tease, "Are you sitting on Santa's lap this year?"

There was a dazzling neon candy-cane roller-coaster

on the roof of Macy's called "the pink pig" that we'd
squeeze into - even though it was made for little kids.

I was always in charge of checking the calendar so we'd remember
when my sister would be flying home for college break.

Have a careful Christmas - holly jolly as it can be.

Make memories that will last forever - like favorite songs.

anais vionet

Bright Holidays

Please, bright holidays - summon irresistible cheer
that dancing souls can celebrate with free hearts.

Let hallow'd observances pass with seasonal soundtracks, tinsel-prismed
cascades of multicolored lights and evergreen scents.

Too often these days, our joys seem hostage held
by some fearsome heaviness, like that of a guilty thing.

Give wholesome nights back their power to charm,
enjoy festive feelings, and pass those, as gifts, on to others.

anais vionet



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Trending Holidays

Christmas has been trending and
I chose to play into the parasocial violence,
with no salt or brakes physically and emotionally,
- the holidays - lush and fresh, just hit different.

When I see the lights, the smiles, and get my hugs
I want to cry and throw up from joy at the same time.
The holidays make me believe in love. I don't care.

anais vionet



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The Nativity Story (In Slang)

(the birth of Christ - in Gen-Z slang)

Mary and Joseph were tight-ship.
Mary was a real-one, and no clout-chaser

One night Angel Gabriel overstreeted with word
that Cap-G made Mary chabby with soup-baby
Mary was shook and big-mad but Joseph
was baby-goggles for Cap-G's quinlan fetus

so Mary was 'okrrrrrrrrr'

A minute later Mary and Joe had to roll deep,
adulging to Bethlehem with tribute to Augustus,
the main character, but no mo-mo swerved em'
ghetto and asan Mary was Cap-G's baby-mama!

Later these bchaps rfts biters brang Cap-J
some bag and herb to extra flex for Cap-G
while angels lay in the cut with lowkey bop.

————— translation

Mary and Joseph were married and in love.
Mary was an average girl not into notoriety

.
One night Angel Gabriel appeared and said
that God made Mary pregnant with his child
Mary was shaken-up and and angry but Joseph
Was excited for them to have God's beautiful child

so Mary was had no choice but to say "OK";

Months later Mary and Joe had to travel far together,
As citizens, to Bethlehem to pay taxes to Augustus (Caesar) .
Emperor of rome, but a lack of motels caused them to
Stay in a manger and there Mary had God's child.

Later these rich star followers brought Jesus

some money and herb as gifts to impress God
while angels gathered and sang to comfort the child.

anais vionet

#finalsanxiety

simply awake
No music lulls
No quiet snoozes
No counting naps
No stretching tires
My clock taunts me
No comfort lullabies
No breathing relaxes
Pajamas strangle me
No coolness soothes
No meditation stupors
No visualization sleeps
No position tranquilizes
No supplements sedate
No aromatherapy calms
or finger painting slumbers
I am insomnia's vigilant sentry.
Where, oh where's the sandman?

anais vionet



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Pencils

I get a little look from the guy sitting beside me.
I find I'm tapping my pencil to the cadence of the rain
I give a little "sorry" head nod and he goes back to work.

Hhmm.. I've chewed up my pencil again.
It looks wood chopped or shark mauled.
Maybe I should quit university and invent flavored #2 pencils.

anais vionet



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Before The Storm

Moonlight through a quilt of clouds
we rush before the storm
lightning, like a camera flashed
as we made it to the dorm

We shiver as we rush the stairs
to the thunderous afterboom
I survey the nights assignments
when I'm safe inside my room

We'd planned for this foul weather,
and our tempest borne confinement
by stopping for some chinese food
- it was practically a requirement

anais vionet



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The Terrifying Snowflake

An app on my phone says they'll be snow tonight - we can expect 2 inches in New Haven. I can't wait because where I come from snow is an event.

In Georgia, the mere suggestion of a snowflake in a weather report results in businesses closing, the freeway being blocked-off, and the entire city being evacuated.

Some poor, non-essential civil-servant is sent to his (or her) probable death in the cold, in order to try and startup the state's single, neglected snowplow.

Reports of 'snow' can provoke vicious, panic shopping for essentials, like Totino's Triple-Meat-Pizza-Rolls - known for keeping teenagers alive in weather-pocalypses.

As the snowflake is tracked-in by radar, wooden furniture is chopped up for strategic placement by the fireplace and beloved family pets are evaluated for their fur and nutritional values. Has Grandma really been pulling her weight lately?

These New Englanders seem completely nonplussed by snow, like republicans facing unnecessary death or the loss of American democracy. I think I'm going to video this.

Interesting fact: Snow actually falls from the sky. I know, it's terrifying.

anais vionet

The Minatory Choirs

She's a flower of burned dirt
with pale and bony legs
- her emaciated thighs
etched with scars.

She's been cutting to the music
of an inner, minatory choir
- a song of spite-filled sorrow
and perpetual farewell.

Christmas in the shadows
the hopeless hollow-days
in the kind of barren places
where our savior made his way.

The angels mark your passing
and they understand your pain
- when the roll is called in heaven
seraphim will speak her name.

anais vionet

A Fall Evening

Stars spark from a deeping, clear, blue winter sky as
the moon prepares to enter the scene, stage left.

A breeze sweeps away the last blushes of sunlight and
evening caroling-bells, ring like wind-chimes.

The evening chill makes students walking back from
classes seem to walk a little closer for warmth.

Students, huddled to nail down evening plans seem to smoke,
like the exhaust of cars exiting campus in bumper to bumper traffic.

Wet sidewalks, like dark and winding mirrors, twist reality, inverting and
reflecting lights - bending them into pointing the way home.

anais vionet



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Earrings

First outings (not a date exactly)
someone you're impressed with.
You trot out your best anecdotes
and venture small confidences.

You have to decide which 'you' to show
- the serious-seeming student, the ditz,
the pianist, the Tom Brady fan, the writer.

He does an impression of Tom Hanks
that was very good and very funny.
'It could have been worse, ' I said,
but he knew what I meant.
'It's my party trick, ' he said.

I thought of a long ago prom after-party
- a guy removing my earrings with his tongue
and grinning with pearls in his lips.

We're here, in the new, the now
but we're married to memories.

anais vionet

Babysitting

Another college tour, another favor. This time it was an old schoolmate, George and his parents who were taking the official tour. I was going to babysit his little sister Mary (5) while they walked around.

It was good to see someone from home and sad in a way. For a moment, I had a tugging feeling, like there was a hook deep inside me and the reel was back home.

When I first saw George I remembered a time, in 10th grade, before COVID. I was leaving school early and waiting to be picked up. Twenty track boys, fresh from their daily run, were lounging, seductively around. George, in particular, in a pose rather like Michelangelo's Adam. "OMG!" I remember thinking at the time.

I smiled at that long-ago tableau. "What?" George asked, he was watching me. "Nothing," I smiled, "Just looking forward to babysitting"

Mary and I exercised to a video, had a pizza delivered and colored - crayons aren't easy to find in the modern college environment so we used high-lighters to create delicate, watercolor-like masterpieces.

As we drew, Mary said, off-handedly, "You're really nice," as if the nature of my character had been in some dispute. Still, I still felt warmly complemented.

When the tour was over, we were walking up science hill toward their car and the sun was declining to sunset. "How do you like it," George asked, confidentially, head lowered, voice low enough not to be overheard by his parents who were walking a few yards behind us with Mary. "There's a LOT of reading," I said, shruggingly. "but I'm keeping up." Last year I was a junior, this year I'm in college. It seemed absurd.

How do you conjure a vision for someone of what college would be like, when college experiences are so individual? The writer's dilemma, interpreted by a babysitter.

As we reached their car, the caroling bells started ringing (5pm) from Harkness Tower. It was the perfect send-off. Again I felt the pull of homesickness but my

phone plinked and the emotion didn't even last as long as dusk.

anais vionet

Vaporous Mornings

Mornings are the BEST
a fresh start
who says the universe is cruel?

Yesterday's mistakes
gone like vaporous nothings..
well, the small ones anyway.

anais vionet



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Lipstick

I got this glittery, ruby-red, smudge-proof lipstick the other day
and I really have to say technology is what separates us from the apes.

Well, technology and hair.. and.. - ok, let's not dwell on the ape thing.

Remember when lipstick smeared like news-print? Well, neither do I - it was one of those old-timey things you hear about somewhere like phone-booths, CDs and smart republicans.

What about the young teenage girls who aren't supposed to wear lipstick - who put it on, in the morning, at their locker, at school only to discover - seconds before their mom picks them up - that it's practically non-removable? Try hiding your lips from your mom.

I want breath-freshening, pizza flavored, jerk-repelling, morning-after-pill lipstick - that glitters, irresistably, like cotton candy sex.

snort If men wore lipstick I'm sure we'd have all that by now.

anais vionet



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Shattering

My houseplant committed suicide.

It came out of the blue - or at least - I didn't catch the signs.

I'd put it on my window ledge so it could catch some sun

- it appeared to be having a good time.

I brushed it with my elbow - the wispy kiss of a butterfly

and it leapt to its shattering end - I never will know why.

The girl it barely missed, looked up - in accusatory alarm.

'What if that had been a BABY! ' I yelled, to keep her calm.

We had a terra-cotta funeral - my roommates seemed really sad -

and a reception where no plant-life was consumed.

Lisa, acted quickly - she's a fashionable 911

and at the funeral she buried the corpse, in a new pot, in her room.

anais vionet



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Poetry!

Anyone can write a poem
I mean, they've never passed a law
and with the quick access to paper
and all.

Of course, the serial poet's the danger
that keeps us up at night - someone lacking
the gene for rhyme control. Normal people can't
imagine such wonton, naked promiscuity with words.

It's best that we ignore them - to nip it in the bud.
A real collective effort is required - let us build
institutional archives - yes - we'll call them libraries - to
lock such verse away - may it never again see the light of day.

If you catch a child with a pencil, slap it out of their little hand
because we cannot start too early in discouraging needless rhyme.

This public service announcement - pointing out this new "poetry"
trend - was made for the benefit of all.

anais vionet

Mannequin

I envy the stylish model
her styrofoam perfect breasts
those legs that never need shaving
the sweet smile that needs no rest
the hair that's always behaving
the pose that teasingly arrests
she's a icon of current fashion
a flower neatly pressed
but no love will ever find her
no one cares if she's undressed
she'll never accomplish anything
never mind - I'm not impressed

anais vionet



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Poets Search

As poets make their final search
for the lost syllables of fall
and wet branches of the stately birch
point out foliage is out of style
youngsters dream of holidays and smile.

anais vionet



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Maple

Lisa, Leong and I were supposed to eat at a sushi place called 'Bow Wow'. Lisa and I were coming back from our last class. I covered my face with the back of my hand and yawned as we reached the quad. Lisa put her phone in her jacket pocket and said, 'She isn't answering, I'll go get her.' I nodded and gave her my backpack (we're all suitemates) .

I sat down, cross legged, under a (Japanese maple?) tree, arranging my skirt - the tree had shed most of its leaves, since I'd met it in September. A drift of papery bronze leaves spread out in all directions.

A breeze delicately swayed the tree branches, making flickering patterns of light in the shade. I went from sitting to lying down in the grass, angling for the most of the limited shade. The sky was subtly beginning to darken, as if an Instagram filter on the scene was being tweaked.

How many seasons has this tree observed, I wondered, with all the embellishments those brought - sun, rain, stars, rainbows and flickering, ever changing moons. ??All from within the limited, open sky frame of the quad. A tree has to be patient - and tough - I thought, there's no rescue from the New England elements.

The whistling breeze seemed like music and the tree began to dance for me - its branches became waving arms, its leaves making jazz hands - I laughed and clapped. It made a twisting bow at the waist, like a performer.

I woke up when I heard Lisa say, "Here she is! " - as if I'd been lost.

anais vionet

Rendered

Reproduction is oocyting.
With beingness what it is.
From eggs we all develop
as does everything that lives.

500 cardinal gambles tendered
for congress milt to meet, before
fecund moons by periods ended.

From family we are decended
but from eggs we all are rendered.

*** a woman is born with 500 eggs (all she will ever get)

anais vionet



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Picking Up Lunch

The elevator opened on the 46th floor, to a small foyer and one plain, grey door

The door opened and a young girl, 10ish, in a blue, polo, tennis dress, said, "Hi! I'm Karen, you must be Anais. Will is around here somewhere. Aren't you pretty, though? You go to school with Lisa? No wonder Will likes you."

She skipingly ushered me from a bright, windowed, off-white, staircase entryway, into a deep-red, mahogany paneled library. A persian cat was soon underfoot, purring and winding around my legs."That's Misha, " Karen said, "just shoo her away if you don't like cats."

I stooped down to pet Misha who eagerly offered herself to be petted and admired. As I stroked her charcoal fur, Karen said, "Let me get Will, " as she scampered off.

A gold framed, impressionistic painting, pin-lit in bright crystalline light, hung over a fireplace. In the painting, two girls, in summer hats bright with startling red bows and yellow flowers, were sharing a book. The colors were rich, deep and swirling - it looked very much like a Renoir (I know my French artists) . He'd done a whole "two girls" series. I drew closer - it wasn't a print.

Though dazed by the opulence, I hadn't missed what Karen had said. Will liked me. I longed to interrogate her about how exactly she knew Will liked me, and what form, exactly, Will's liking took.

I know Will and Lisa (who would be joining us in a minute) are just friends. Not that it matters, we're heading back to New Haven later - but Karen's statements were capable of activating a girl's guy-dar.

Karen, wearing socks but no shoes, came to a sliding halt, on the wooden floor, by grabbing the door frame to stop an otherwise complete slide into the library. "You guys are going to the Ritz for lunch? " she asked, looking back over her shoulder, in a way that indicated that she knew the answer quite well.

The Ritz Carlton is a block away and our mission was to grab the food and bring it back here to eat. "Mind if I join? " she said, before I could answer her first question, all wide-eyed, blinking impatience.

"I don't mind at ALL." I said, Karen whooped and was off again down

the hall. "I'M COMING TOO! " she yelled. I chuckled, knowingly - I've been there - I'm a little sister too.

anais vionet

Walls

In my experience, most adults have 'vanity walls', usually in their offices, where they hang diplomas, awards, certificates and important pictures. Most parents I know have them.

I like to look carefully at those momentos - they're like breadcrumbs tracing back through their lives. Some items are expected while others are extraordinary - like pictures of Lisa's dad playing golf and laughing with famous people.

'It's a very particular kind of vanity.' Lisa's dad said, from in back of me, from his office doorway. I almost jumped in surprise - I definitely flinched. I'd become so absorbed in examining his wall that I'd unconsciously inched into his space, like someone stealing into a closed museum exhibit.

I flushed with embarrassment, 'No,' I said, making a hand gesture that swept the area. 'I LOVE these kinds of things - I couldn't resist - I'm sorry!'

He made a 'Pssshht' sound and waved his hand, 'You make yourself at home.'

'I want to have a wall someday,' I said. He smilingly turned and with a little backward wave, said, 'You will,' as he strolled off to the kitchen, leaving me to continue my tour.

I will.

anais vionet

Sisters

I'm in the kitchen at Lisa's. Her little sister Leeza enters, her pale, freckled face redder than usual. "Lisa is the bossiest sister..," Leeza says, slamming the cupboard door after grabbing a box of Fruity-Pebbles-cereal like she's choking the life out of it.

Lisa enters from the hall, her jaw set with tension, she waves her "La Mer" makeup bag, wildly, letting its very existence, there in the kitchen, function as angry exposition. "YOU," she practically screams and then shaking with outrage, she begins more calmly. "You can't use someone else's makeup and *ESPECIALLY* not their brushes! !" She had begun under control but with each word her message grew emotionally.

"I didn't hurt anything!" Leeza answered venomously back, giving as good as she got.

I lean with my butt against the waist high kitchen island, slowly letting myself slide down to where I'm not visible, into a sitting position on the floor, as the fight quickly escalates.

Have you ever been a guest somewhere, when there's a sibling fight or other parents start yelling at a friend? All you can do is try and become invisible - or pretend to text on your phone like you can't hear the turmoil.

I catch a motion out of the corner of my eye, it's their mom, Barbara, motioning me, with a side-bob of her head, into the living room. I quietly, crouchingly exit the kitchen - the fight reaching full, nuclear bloom.

I join her on a white sectional, breathing a sigh of relief. We're far enough away from the action to feel uninvolved. I like Barbara a lot. She's warm, open and always seems to be suppressing a smile when watching her girls. She's a lawyer. "You're officially part of the family," she says, as she takes a sip of coffee, "they don't fight in front of company." I grin.

Somewhere just below the tumult, I hear a dad's deep, male voice, "Excuse me?" he says, and the fight is instantly over. There is a moment of deafening quiet. "It's NOTHING," both girls say, a second later, in perfect, synchronized, bored-sounding unison.

anais vionet

Heavens

Have you ever lived in a tall building? Dawn strikes suddenly and irradiates these glass-walled, high-rise rooms. Lisa showed me how quickly the thick windows - if you press your face against them - go from cold to warm in the morning's stark glare.

On the streets below, beneath the horizon, darkness remains as if there were, briefly, two worlds separate but side by side - one, a night place and the other bleached in fierce sunbeams.

The rooms have no curtains, just motorized shades that go up and down as needed - but in reality, they're always up. Central Park is the only thing across the street and we're so high up (50th floor) no one can see in. It's odd, dressing in uncurtained, glass lined rooms or bathing in curtain-less bathrooms - there's a titillating freedom to it.

I find myself imagining that we're angels floating in the clouds, looking down upon man and his creations - but then I'm reminded, by vertigo or by digging a charger out of my luggage, that I'm just a mortal, sporting a temporary visa to this high-rise heaven.

.
.

ps

In proofing this before posting it, I had to smirk at how, of all the qualities of high-rise life, I wrote about the curtain-less feature and I wonder if that paints me either a perv or a prude. I even debated deleting it, but *shrug*

anais vionet

Pronounced

It's Saturday morning, and even though it's Thanksgiving break, Lisa and I are in her bedroom, in NYC, studying.

"Ok," Lisa stops, looks up and says, "give me a 5ex symbol."

"I.. I don't have one on me." I say, apologetically.

"NAME one," she clarifies.

"Are there '5ex symbols' anymore?" I say, with air-quotes, "Who's 'Marilyn Monroe' today -Kim Kardashian - oooo - or Kendall Jenner?"

"I read Emily Ratajkowski refer to herself as a 5ex symbol the other day," Lisa says.

"Is that the model that said she was groped at a photo-shoot?" I ask, as I google her.

"Yeah," Lisa nods, "but it was a music video shoot."

"Do you think I could model?" I ask, as I pose vampingly. "Be unflinchingly honest," I request.

"Hhmmmm," she considers, framing me in a finger rectangle pretend camera. "You're like Marilyn Monroe," she says, "in a training bra." *We burst out laughing*

"Back to the subject," Lisa says, "name a guy you think of as a 5ex symbol."

"Humphrey Bogart!" I say.

"Humphrey Bogart? ? No!" she rejects him, wrinkling her nose, "too old-timey and dead, besides, he was a MOVIE star - come ON, a real one - SAY!"

Michael Gandolfini!" I offer.

"? ? Michael Gandolfini? ? "; she says, sounding stumped as her fingers google him.

*I make a dreamy "mmm, " yummy sound.

"Oh, my GOD, " she says, and looks up for confirmation.
"Humphrey Bogart and Michael Gandolfini - HONESTLY, you have the WEIRDEST taste! "

I was shocked, "No, seriously, don't you think Michael looks kind of soft, cute and.. LUVable? "

She groans, "You're going to marry an ugly man someday - aren't you? " She pronounces, shaking her head.

"AM NOT! " I responded, throwing a pillow at her head (a pillow fight ensues) .

anais vionet

Out There

He puts it out there, the Schrödinger's cat of invitations.

Now, I'm irritated. 'I TOLD you I don't have time for.. involvement.'

'But you have to eat - so eat with ME, ' he shrugs. 'You can build a friendship with someone and still have freedom.' His observation was casual, as though it were unrelated to anything between us. He seemed to have the intuition that I'd balk if pressed.

'You're subversive.' I said. 'Why me? There are prettier girls, more agreeable, fun girls. I feel like I'm on the edge here, ' I look around to indicate the room, the environment, the university. 'And I can be a complete as-hole.'

He looked a little offended, 'You're interesting, I like what I know about you and, yeah, we can all be as-holes - we're in a pool of 'A' types, in case you haven't noticed.'

'What do you KNOW about me? ' I ask.

'I've read some of your writings, ' he looked thoughtful, 'I may know a little about how you think, It's unusual.. interesting.'

I'm shocked and I squirm, 'You looked me up? '

'I looked you up.' he nodded, 'to be sure you're not an axe murderer.'

'How much did you read? ' I asked, wheedling, my inner-writer engaging.

'Tell you at dinner - YOU name the date and time, ' he smiled.

'My idea of 'dinner' is walking to a dining hall, picking up a bag of food, bringing it back here and taking ten minutes to eat it between chapters, ' I warned.

'I have a meal card, ' he says, jiggling his student lanyard.

'We'll see.' I said. 'Have you talked to anyone else about my writing? '

'No, ' he answered, 'Why? '

'Please don't, I have to think about it.' I say. As far as I know, no one I know in RL has read me - it's an odd feeling - like maybe he got ahold of my diary. I haven't worried over the fact that someone I'm in physical proximity to could look me up. That all this stuff is actually out there.

"Don't think my misgivings can be cajoled away, " I say, "no more talking."

He chuckled but we got back to studying.

anais vionet

Annick

When I was twelve, my older sister, Annick, was in med school.
She was dedicated and incorruptible - always studying, always.

I wanted her to spend time with me, I craved her engagement.
I was jealous and mean to her, thinking her uncaring - uninterested in me.

Now, I get it. Now days, I seem to behave like a machine,
I'm busy and unapproachable - forgetting myself in function
and I'm just a lowly undergraduate.

When I think about how hard she must of been working,
I tear up, like someone hearing a sad song on the radio.

anais vionet



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Eggbeater

It's Friday evening, (11-12-21) and Lisa's Birthday. To celebrate, we're going to see "A Night With Bill Maher" at the New York Comedy Festival (we'll be socially distanced, in an opera box) . He goes on at 8: 30PM and my last class on Fridays ends at 05: 25 (in New Haven CT) . We had to hurry.

We have our bags and we're hustling out the dorm gate loaded down like a couple of tourists. "We want to be on the island (NYC) by 7: 30 for our dinner reservation." Lisa said. I gave her a quizzical look, checking my watch, "It's 6: 18," I said doubtfully, "we'll NEVER." "Yeah, we will," Lisa interrupts, "we're taking a helicopter ride!" "Whaa.. REALLY? ?" I gasp. "Yeah," Lisa grinned, "my dad arranged it, his treat." "Thanks DAD," I say, as we climb into our Uber.

An Uber off-loads us by a helicopter 15 minutes later (at Tweed Airport) . I knew the blue and white grasshopper-looking whirligig didn't have a mind - that it wasn't capable of feelings or eagerness, but the blades were spinning and it seemed eager to escape earth - like a bug afraid of birds.

After we boarded, a guy in a yellow vest and helmet said - above the noise - "Buckle up!" and pointed to our seat belts. The "seat belt" was a harness that made an "X" across our bodies. Once the doors were closed it became surprisingly quiet. The cabin could hold four but we were alone, facing forward, Lisa seated next to me.

The earnest-looking pilot turned to us and said, "37 air minutes to the 34th street heliport," but before he could close the little plexiglass door to our compartment, Lisa said, "Afghan takeoff please!" He nodded and closed the window, it got quieter still.

The pilot throttled up, the jet engines whined, the rotors became frantic and we lifted up into the air - just a few feet. I held tightly to my seat sitting perfectly still, as though the helicopter were a frightened animal I didn't want to startle. "Relax," Lisa said, with a BIG grin, "You're going to LOVE this." The helo rotated 180 degrees, "Woah," I said.

"Wait for it," she giggled. The back of the chopper suddenly rose, my body pressed forward, hard, against the harness. I went bug-eyed - about the time I thought the whole shaky contraption would roll forward end-over-end and

we'd die in a fireball, we sprang into the air like a rollercoaster ride. When we lurched skyward, I had to fight the urge to hurl but Lisa roared with laughter.

After a moment we leveled out. "That wasn't funny." I said, still trembling and deadly serious. I opened a bottle of water, took a big swig and I felt myself relax a bit. "I almost threw up!" I wiped my hair away from my face. "I'm sorry," Lisa said in a pouty, baby appeasing way. I glowered.

"Seriously," she said, in a more reasonable voice, "I HAD to do it - I COULDN'T resist." Unbuckling her harness she scooted over by me and took my hand. "It was a little mean, I know. I SWEAR, I'll never, ever, EVER, trick you again." She said, adding a girl scout salute that morphed into a pinky promise and we were suddenly whole again.

"I mean, it only works ONCE - and your FACE! - GOD! , I should have videoed that," she laughed again - I just rolled my eyes and turned to look out into the darkness.

Maybe it was that take-off, but at first, all I could think of was falling to a watery death. I never get nervous on commercial flights, they feel like solid, white noise filled living rooms but this chopper was small and trembling, like an economy car or a hayride.

There was a TV screen that showed our altitude (9,000 feet and climbing) and airspeed indicator (140 knots) - I had to remind myself that trustworthy physics was at work somewhere behind this clippity-cloppity contraption our lives depended on.

The view of Long Island Sound, just after dusk, WAS amazing and soon I began to enjoy it. I counted 30 ships and barges lit up like birthday cakes against the watery darkness - and the approaching lights of New York City looked like a glittering tiara being worn by the horizon.

Ok, I thought, I have to write about this.

anais vionet

Post-Man

post-man

In my psychology class we looked at some recent studies on how the pandemic has changed people. Apparently there's a new breed of post-pandemic man. This new strain is more grown up, well-rounded and getting more sleep. They've experienced intellectual growth in lock-down, they've taken up hobbies and gained in self confidence. It seems they're looking less for sex and more for long-term stability and partnership in relationships.

I'm hoping they'll be easy to identify - maybe they'll wear those old punk DEVO hats or Billy Porter dresses to set themselves apart. I really want to see one of these new overlords. I hope they're not skittish.

anais vionet



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I Only Wish

Kiss me, cuddle me
arouse me, befuddle me
time albatrosses with seduction
enkindle, caress, slowly undress,
resist all other disruptions.

anais vionet



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Mirages

'I'm going to become a nun, ' I announce to no one in particular between Sprite sips.

'You're Catholic, I suppose you could, ' Lisa says, with a mouth half full of pizza.

'Why do socially distant guys look extra attractive? ' I ask dazedly.

I reach my hand out slowly - towards a sweaty, chiseled, guy entering the pizza place, who looks like he's just coming from the gym - like someone lost in the desert reaches for a mirage of water.

'No! ' Lisa says, protectively lowering my arm 'you'll just have to put him back.'

I sigh. 'I want to do something interesting or shameless.' I say.

'Don't we ALL.' Lisa agrees, knowing all we have ahead is 4 hours of reading.

anais vionet



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Windows

A wall of Jacobean era lattice-windows
line my dorm room - my private eyes.

How many freshmen have watched
the gilt harvest moon from this seat?

I keep them open, for cool breezes,
and the comforting the sounds of life,
in overworked, needy moments.

anais vionet



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Whitewater

We shelter secrets, holding them close
and encrypted. Hidden truths,
like submerged rocks that create
snapping undercurrents and choppy,
white-capped rapids for navigating affinities.

anais vionet



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Philosophy

Here at Yale University we're encouraged to attend these campus "get togethers" - to meet other students and broaden our circles. Some are about interesting subjects like politics or science and sometimes you get to meet famous people.

Others are concerned with less interesting subjects - like the bewildering aspects of philosophy: "Would you kill baby Hitler if you had the chance - and if so - could you do it with a gun? Shoot a baby to stop world war two? What if you didn't HAVE a gun, could you find it in yourself to use your bare hands?"

"Well, I say, giving it some serious consideration - just to show that I'm as philosophical as the next girl - "if I had BEAR hands, couldn't I claw him to death?"

anais vionet



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Safe Harbor

The storm is over - no, not last week's nor'easter - midterms. I hope you survived.

New England seems to be one, big storm-of-the-month club. Campus is 5 minutes from Long Island Sound and I like to go watch the mesmerizing roil of the ocean when a storm's rolling in.

The choppy hazel undulations, opaque as enamel, seem to coil-up - then suddenly slap the shoreline breakers as if testing their resolve. The wind whipped salt-water patterns, like folds of linen. The wind and salt water mist in your face feels as sharp and violent as glass shards.

The sun occasionally pierces the clouds like a knife strike only to be healed in moments. The whole scene is majestic, immense and uncontrollable - like eating cake by the ocean. (song reference) .

anais vionet



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The Kiss

'I'm accepted! ! ' she squealed.

'I knew you would be, ' he said, almost sadly.

She went giddy with tenderness and threw her arms around his neck to kiss him on the cheek but he's so tall she had to go up on her toes and ended up off balance, he moved his head into her motion and their lips connected in an actual kiss.

He clutched her to him, lifting her sneakers off the ground. With her mouth covered by his and her body clamped against his and not even the reassurance of the ground beneath her feet, the determined impulse that had propelled her to kiss him collapsed into alarm and claustrophobia.

He seemed to have gone automatic and muscular, driven by instinct. She writhed to get free, and for a second, that seemed longer, she thought he wouldn't let her go. she twisted, arching her back, and the movement seemed to wake him. He dropped her so suddenly she stumbled.

'Sorry, ' he said, breathless, holding up his hands as though to prove he was unarmed. 'You surprised me. I wasn't ready.'

She tried to steady herself. 'It's OK, ' she said, wiping her face and standing back up.

We looked anywhere but at each other. It was a crazy few seconds.

'I gotta go, ' he said in a rush, picking up his backpack and almost leaping out the door. She heard him take the two flights of stairs in 4 long steps and the front door closed.

'Is Frank staying for dinner? ' her mom called from down stairs.

She didn't answer right away.

After that things with Frank were odd, strained - she tried to talk to him - more than once and texted him two dozen times. How do you undo a kiss mistake if you can't talk?

anais vionet

Impressions

I think he's into you.

Why didn't you talk to him?

“I was trying to make a good impression.”

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Always

I'd like you to feel how it feels.
We could share the experience,
or you could own it, be the boss of it.
Like always.

I was angry, I didn't mean what I said.
I was happy, I didn't mean what I said.
I never know what to say to you -
what exactly you want, moment to moment.
Like always.

I don't think it was me.
I figured out what I didn't want.
I didn't want you.
For always

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Complicated

Who are you? Self awareness is very tricky.
You're very complicated, we all are,
people are the most complicated things
we encounter in our everyday lives.

Now imagine two complicated people together.
We manage this complexity by limiting each other,
with social contracts, to limit usurious behaviours.
If we abide by the contracts things are simplified.

Part of that is being polite - you don't want a complex,
bank teller, dentist or policeman - our society runs
on simple transactions - perhaps 10 for each of us daily.

The wild card is emotion - that's why sex is so tricky.
Do you want to depend on an emotional doctor
or be stopped by a really emotional policeman?
I think not.

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Donuts

I always get up early. Early, early, early and it's Saturday morning. So I scooted over to "Donut Crazy" and got myself 12 sugar donuts (and a selection of treats for my suitemates - I'm NOT suicidal.)

At 8am, I'm in the suite common area, on the couch, binging "Ladybug and Cat Noir" on my iPad and I realize that Leong, one of my suitemates, is sipping her coffee and staring at me like I'm a bad pet. I look around to find myself sitting in a shower of confectioners' sugar speckles.

"In my defense, I was left unsupervised." I disclaim.

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Winning

Yes, you have a hot boyfriend,
but I have a deluxe pizza
here and I think we all know
who's winning.

anais vionet



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Reading The News

ring *ring* (A Facetime call)

Mom: "Hey hun, what's up?"

Me: "Well, let's see..

"We have an armed law enforcement that's scared of the civilians they police.

One political party so corrupt it's no longer interested in serving the people.

Half the population ignores the one real power mankind has - science.

Hackers shutting down pipelines, schools, hospitals and companies.

News networks that are allowed to just make up lies as "news";.

Half the population that's determined to be uninformed.

Social media is destroying the minds of our children.

A political party that encourages its followers to die.

A world that's quickly poisoning itself to extinction.

Religions that endorse obvious liars and guns.

Foreign enemies manipulating our elections.

An economy that depends on our self doubt.

A supply system on the verge of collapse.

A party encouraging resurgent racism.

A badly neglected infrastructure.

A near endless pandemic

And a rape culture."

Mom: *after a moment of silence*

"Have you been reading the news again? You KNOW you tend to obsess."

anais vionet

Anonymous

Dear boy who finished the three hour Chemistry test in 9 minutes,

I hope you FAILED.

Sincerely, Girl still on question 2.

anais vionet



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Voices

Some people get lonely at college,
but I never really feel alone.
I have these critical parental voices
that always keep me company
and point out my mistakes.

anais vionet



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A Small Star

I spent Fall Break with Lisa (one of my college suite-mates) in NYC. They live in a Central Park South high-rise. I hope to spend Thanksgiving there someday because the Macy's Day Parade goes right by their front window. "Yeah," Lisa says in a bored voice, "right down there." (They're about 8 floors above it.)

Lisa has a younger sister (12) , named Elizabeth (who likes to be called Leeza (pronounced LeeZa) and yeah, that can be confusing) . Pretty, little, stick-figured Leeza, wears braces, has fluorescent green eyes, long, curly, red hair, and gorgeous, fair, vampire-like skin that's freckled to perfection.

Leeza is one of the funniest people I've ever met - so she's always surrounded with laughter - and goaded by laughter, she's fearless. We're at this posh "On the Green" restaurant (outdoor, terrace dining) and Leeza won't take her AirPods off (no matter how mad her mom gets) . Her dad finally says, "What are you listening to? "

When asked, Leeza stands up and starts singing, clapping and herky-jerky beat-dancing "the Monster Mash." It was so sudden and funny that I coughed cherry coke out of my nose. The entire restaurant erupted in laughter and then applause at this crazy, scarecrow beauty's brief, comic performance.

Someday that girl's gonna be a STAR

anais vionet

Wanted

(last Friday)

My English class just ended and everyone's packing up (18 students) . The class is held outdoors under a tent due to COVID. My professor says, "Ms Vionet, may I speak with you for a moment? "

I froze, Oh, my God, I thought, is he about to tell me to quit - has he already identified some fundamental inadequacy in my work? The world seemed to go silent as I hefted my backpack and approached him.

"Ms Vionet, " he began.

"Anais, " I interjected.

"Anais, " he patiently started again, "We have a small professor's choice (invitation only) writing group that meets every two weeks, 7 to 8 PM on Wednesdays - would you be interested in joining us? "

It was hard to hold back a pterodactyl screech of delight. "Yes sir, I'll be there"

"Here", he said, motioning to the tent classroom "weather permitting." He had packed up, he turned and headed for some nearby stairs.

I did a twirl of joy.

woot! news I had to share (I mean most of the people here ARE writers)

anais vionet

Trick Or...

a play, in 3 Senryus...

I use make-believe
overwriting memory
to bring me some peace

The fiction I've weaved
you're at the store - you wouldn't leave
is a fool's relief

So I take mine neat
sweet opiate of self-deceit
my strange trick or treat

anais vionet



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Pumpkin Lattes

Happy pumpkin spice latte season!
Someone said the leaves had turned
to butterscotch, banana, and lemon
but they don't taste right.

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Hang Up

Angrily hanging up a smartphone lacks gravitas - jabbing a virtual button doesn't offer the satisfying, physical release of slamming down a receiver.

anais vionet



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Neoteny

I always hate it when someone I count on gets promoted out of my everyday life. Nothing bathes one in neoteny like being left behind by someone off to college.

One morning they're with you, the next, they've departed - dropping away, like Icarus, into those freer, more exciting, college seas. Callie did that - it wasn't her fault, exactly, that she was two years older. Man, I've missed her company.

I'm a vampire for her tales of sordid doings and it was fun telling her my everything so she could laugh at my mistakes. I've really missed her coaching - between my every romantic play.

Sometimes I'd pause in my studies or practice - those seemingly slow motion choreographies that'll lead to MY future - to glance across our joined yards where I can see her window.

I'd hope to see a light - like she broke camp, escaped her quarantine and somehow made it home - like the moon stepping out from behind the clouds.

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Symmetries

There are symmetries in nature
created for deeper purposes.
They delight, tease and inflame us
- oh, nature is diabolical

anais vionet



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Hot August

In hot August I'll make my departure,
the trembling freshman imposter,
to dance with unknown partners,
in our quests to join the rosters
of future scholars and doctors.

Like Columbus I'll journey not knowing
exactly where I am going -
and like our brave-foolish captain I'm hoping
that the planned years of furious rowing,
will deliver me to where (I think) I am going.

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Our Sorority

(These are some Senryu poems about bestfriends.)

My best friends and I
can talk to each other with
facial expressions

Friends can face-slap
insult each other - we know
each other so well.

We can spend a whole
day, at the park, just sitting
on the swings chatting.

Ever looked at your
bestfriend and thought, "We should be
standup comedians.

anais vionet



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The Slap

There should be clearer signs,
as a relationship starts to break up
- the hiss of steam, a twist of smoke perhaps
or debris distributed across a hot,
cloudless, summer evening sky.
That way, the force of recognition
wouldn't be so much of a slap.

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It's A Date

I had a date (not a great date but a date) ! Could our covid nightmare be ending?

An actual one-on-one date - can you imagine? It was with Noud, a university student (from Holland) I met a couple of weeks ago.

Noud, to be accurate, is a man. He's 22 and I'm 17 (18 in 3 months) . My mom was skeptical but we've been around Noud and he seemed pretty nice. It wasn't like I was infatuated with him, this was a practice date.

I hadn't been on many one-on-one dates before this (5) . I was thinking my 17th year was gonna be a breakout year for dating - but NOT. The over-a-year pandemic lock-down put an end to that.

Anyway, here's a date tip for older guys: if you're sincere about something - say "sustainability" - don't talk about it at dinner - all dinner. In fact, if you're an intense, serious person - on any subject - take that secret to your grave.

We had dinner - that we picked up and picnicked with. After dinner, things went all WWE. Once we were back in his car, it was as if I became a birthday present he'd been waiting months to open. He pressed in like that was an established, almost impersonal fact.

For someone claiming to be interested in "sustainability", he moved to the chest massage - skirt-search portion of the festivities pretty quickly - and that didn't really work for me.

At one point, wrestling in his tiny electric car - which pitched like a rowboat in an angry sea - I felt his tongue in my eyebrows... yeah, my eyebrows.

"What are you DOING? ", I asked, digging my heels into the floorboard to gain enough leverage to push him away and wiping my face with my sleeve.

"You taste good, " he said (hear it with a slight Arnold Schwarzenegger accent) .

"I'm NOT a gelato, " I complained, while maintaining a stiff-arm.

Hey, it was a long lock-down year - we've all missed dating, we're all out of

practice and maybe some are trying too hard - I get that.

This isn't a "metoo" story - Noud took "no" for "NO" once I went to my big, "dog command voice, " but *sigh* Noud will NOT be getting a rematch.

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Sometimes

Sometimes you have to get your halo dirty.

(a firefly poem)

anais vionet



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Just Crushing

Senryu poems about crushes

That awkward moment
when you're caught day-dreamily
staring at your crush.

You know that tingly
feeling when you start to crush?
It's common sense leaving.

The fantasies that
you indulge about your
crush are scandalous.

You can't seduce
your crush because self-worth
crumbles up close.

.
.

A crush is an intense infatuation for someone unattainable or inappropriate

anais vionet

Overclocked

What must it be like to be male? To live with an overclocked metabolic system that's always on the lookout for a brazen and unmistakable propositions - like a smile or a "please pass the salt."

I mean at times we all have those feelings - primitive as oil - but not the constant, fast forward, high density need that males seem to live with.

It must be like wrestling a trapped demon.

.
.

this piece is supposed to be a slight exaggeration for comic effect - a satire

anais vionet



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Take It

(a firefly poem)

Take my advice, I'm not using it

anais vionet



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Surreptitious

During our recent, year-long pandemic imprisonment, my room - which, objectively, is a very nice room - seemed to transform, late-nights, into a tomb. I had to open all the windows just to feel like I could breathe.

Night after night, when the lights were out, I'd lay perfectly still, perfectly awake until all-hours, listening to crickets. There must be a billion of them in Georgia.

Persistent consciousness can drive you mad.

"Why are your windows open? ", my mom would say, hurrying to close them in winter (to save heat) and summer (to save cool) .

I wouldn't argue - I'd just shrug, wordlessly and reopen them once she left. I seldom argue anymore - I surreptitiously do whatever I want to

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Overboard

A summer house-boat party - Matey - toss those cares overboard. The scout boat found a deserted cove so the party can be privately fierce.

The lake's broken reflections of moonlight look like jewels on black satin.

There are all kinds of drinks - ALL kinds - and herbal refreshments flare like lightning bugs. It isn't long before perfumed bodies are flexing to music in the hot, moist, summer air.

Dance, swim and repeat as needed - cool water evaporates off bathing suits immediately - replaced by prickled sweat. It's too hot - I'm staying in the water. There's a group of us in tubes tied, spider-web like, around the boat.

There's a guy who's been watching us (Bili, my BFF, is my tube-mate) . He's extremely fair, and he's gotten a bit too much sun giving him a feverish appearance.

At one point, I meet his gaze - to see what he'd do. His irises are a light blue that, in the lights, reflect like little blue flames - unwavering and alien.

I don't mind a bit of attention - I think that's how the system works - attraction, pursuit, investigation, and eventually seduction. But usually from someone we know. A stranger's attention can make one feel as if they're in enemy territory.

He gave me a nod and a smile that seemed like a proposition. I whisper about this 'encounter' to Bili who takes command and just rows us over to him.

He's older than I first thought - 22 - with cream-colored hair - thick, like horse mane and eyelashes and brows so pale they're almost invisible. His name is 'Noud' and he's from Holland - at Georgia Tech studying atmospheric something or other - and girl watching.

'What are you doing at some random Georgia lake party? ', I ask.

'Soaking up the local atmosphere, of course.' He says. Which makes sense, I suppose, because that IS his chosen field.

I do an Arnold Schwarzenegger impression, arbitrarily, which I think is pretty good (you can't beat the classics) - Noud, does an even better one. His, 'I'm going to take [pause] you OUT' got a laugh.

His later, 'You need to take [pause] that OFF' earned a 'nuh-uh' finger wag.

Thanks to vaccinations, the atmosphere around here is a lot more fun.

anais vionet

Some Senryus

Dream job interview:

'What are you good at? ' 'Sarcasm,
sleep and speed texting.'

I don't think that drug
companies know what real
fruit tastes like at all.

How hard will it be
for our kids' generation
to get user names?

Please remember:
I'm here for you if you
don't, in truth, need me.

anais vionet



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Apoco-Lips

I'm in the library, at school, trying to write an article for the school paper (and I'm not even ON the school paper) . I'm on a forty-five minute deadline to complete a story someone else did poorly - on the edge of my vision I see someone step up to my table - a boy, I can tell, without looking up, from his school uniform. I'm hoping whoever it is will go away..44 minutes.

'Uhh-umm, ' I hear.

My eyes flicker up and I ID 'Everett Priestly' - one of God's less ambitious efforts.

'Uhh-umm, ' he does again.

'Parsley, ' I say, without looking up.

'Priestly, ' he answers with a sigh, 'wanna play HOUSE? ' he says conspiratorially, with a smirk.

'We were 7, ' I say, liberally applying syrupy boredom.

I've kind of known Everett Priestly forever - he lives two doors from us - then my family became expatriots until three years ago. His family is rich, he's handsome and I believe someone once told him he was charming. He fancies himself a lady killer but I'm willing to bet that he kills them with a combination of daddy's money and poor driving.

'I'm awfully busy - on deadline Mr. Priestly - please send me a text, ' I say, again, without looking up.

'I don't have your number, ' he says, patiently. 'Would you like to go to Sandra's party with a group of us Friday night? '

'OOOO! Let's keep it that way, ' I smile - this is too easy - 42 minutes.

'It'll be FUN, ' he says, with a smile in his voice - Oh, God, he's trying charm.

'Everett, ' I stop writing, look up and lean back. 'You ask me out every two months. If you've made a bet with someone - like we're living a teen movie - I'll payoff the bet for ya if you just give it a rest, ok? '

He really IS good looking - but kissing him would be the apoco-LIPS.

'Why do you always say no? ? , ' he asks, with a helpless 1/6th shrug and his GIGAWATT smile.

41 minutes - 'See you in January, ' I say, as I slide my laptop closer in, give it my obvious, full attention and hopefully, start back to writing.

'Come to Thanksgiving! , ' he says, as inspiration strikes.

'January would be MLK day, ' I remind him. 'Everett, PLEASE - deadline, ' I plead (not looking up) .

Everett, makes a snarky sound, turns around and slowly moves away - like a man headed for jail - he really SHOULD try out for the drama department, I decide.40 minutes.

When Everett turned 16, his daddy gave him some kind of expensive foreign sports car - a really, really, really expensive sports car. Six hours later Everett guns this formula-one race-car out of a gas station, loses control, and totals it. The girl with him had to get stitches over her right eye.

His friends call him 'EV' - they say it with a kind of a southern accent - that I can't decide is fake or not, which gives it a hint of - 'Elvis' - had a replacement car within 48 hours. He wrecked THAT one in less than six weeks - and his date got a concussion in the roll-over.

If he wants me to get in a car with him, he's goanna to have to taser me.

anais vionet

The Polar Bear

A child is somewhere scribbling,
not quite knowing what to say,
a junkie with a habit of empty words.

The smart money's on failure
and I can't seem to sleep,
because the moon is leaking sliver fears.

The polar-bear cocktail,
paints a chalk barricade,
that incoherent scolding's cannot climb.

Hope went unnoticed,
until it was lost,
but sudden silence
- came to make me new.

The marks of quiet panic
- those flickering tattoos,
fade - like specters in the sun.

In the company of kindness,
peace glitters just like glass,
and the witch in the mirror slinks away.

You'll find me at the exit,
heading for a steady sea,
my uninformed perspective's in my bag.

I navigate like driftwood,
hoping for a return trip,
my plans are coherent in my dreams.

anais vionet

Breaking Up Is Hard To Do

Don - they tell me you're leaving
I can't believe it's true,
that we'll get to live without you.

You'll go away - govern-mentally,
after all this pain and misery.
When you go - I won't miss you,
You never said a thing that was true.

Remember when - you hoaxed the virus fight.
What an idiot - you never got it right.
Trump never cared - for me or you,
but we might survive now that he's through.

So let's discuss - the insurrection -
you provoked when you lost the election.
You got impeached for time number two
who said breaking up was hard to do?

Let's say goodbye - and let it be,
I hear you're going to do - Trump TV?
About the time you get that set up,
New York will come and lock you up.

anais vionet

Stick Figures

Draw a stick figure
future - diminished
and virus ransomed.

Paint the landscape
with the sweltering glare
of global warming.

Come share this
with me - let kisses heal and
soft whispers inflame.

Some locks need two keys
to open, some heavens can
be reached by mortals.

anais vionet



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Morning Routines

What do theologians call a life without events?

The lights of my prison-like room dawn before sun's first blush.
I open sand-papery eyes as my AI announces the morning.

I begin the puppetry of morning routines:
I study my pale inmate face as I polish the porcelain.

I look less of a drowsy-angel than a zombie as I splash cold water
on the face with an almost determined lack of expression.

I'm absorbed in an ocean of predawn cold
as I 5-mile-walk away my sleepiness - this small freedom
- keeps me fit and acceptably sane.

Later, bathed in hot indifference,
and clothed in exhausting obligations,
I dine, at my reserved table, with my gang of irritations.

Soon I'm ready for another taxing day
of waiting for the disease to run its course.

anais vionet

Sunrise Haiku

Morning's induction act -
the sun breaks cover bright as
Los Alamo's flash.

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Bonds Of Affection

I found
some words
that I
can use
to bind
you with

anais vionet



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Memory Deprivation

The question is:

"Are people still collecting memories, these days?"

'This isolation

isn't bothering me much."

I say, if I'm asked.

But I'm not sure that's

true. After hundreds of nights
of dull solitude.

I think each night might

carry a value - of dear,
and unmeasured loss.

Loss of memories

- because they never happened.

How have we all changed?

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Out

Now I understand
why dogs get so excited
about going out.

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#forgetaboutit

virtual school moments (in senryus)

I forget that I'm
virtual school, because I'm
really in my room.

And start brushing my
hair or singing a song I'm secretly
listening to - until friends text me!

My mom forgets I'm
in v.school, comes in, to yell
at me about dishes.

My cat walks across
my keyboard submitting '84; '/jifgvbzws*'
as a test answer.

'It was a typo! , ' I complain,
"You still got an 'A', ' she says.
'But I LOST 4 points! ! ' Argh!
'Get a life! , ' she says.

anais vionet

Awoken

Arrghhh!

Damn phone alarm.

I gulp haste.

I open my school app - like an eyelid.

Invade my sanctuary, virtual tyranny.

Where's my focus? !

looking around for my coffee cup

I feel like a bobble-head.

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Imagination Hurts

(a firefly)

Put that imagination away before you hurt someone.

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Realities

(a sonnet)

Two realities, both alike in dignity,
In fair America, where we lay our scene,
There fallacious grudges explode into mutiny,
and lawful-blood makes patriot-hands unclean.

From common bonds these neighborly foes,
sail contrary seas of truth; on which they stake their lives.
Some, stoked for misadventure, by the host of a reality show,
do with their scurrilous deeds bury their futures for strife.

The fearful passage of compatriots love,
by continued embrace of marketed rage,
which, admitted truth and humility could dispose of,
fills now our breathless hours and sets our stage.

Which of you, with angry hearts, will patient peace attend,
and back away from martial games so inutile strife can end?

anais vionet

Whispers

Hello again
nagging dissatisfaction
diminish me again
corrupt everything
with your whispers of truth.

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Twisted

You can twist the way a man sees the world.
Do you think that sounds ridiculous?
What if you did it over time with subtlety and diligence?

The audience is largely uneducated, so remind them of their impotence; tell them any other source of facts must be regarded with suspiciousness.

Whisper to them over breakfast and slowly introduce corrosive dissonance; outright lie to them at dinner, salting in some truth for spicy antithesis.

Those who run the country are up to something mischievous; their lives, their fine America, have been eroding with precipitance.

Remember empowered yesterdays with a sad and tearful wistfulness; twist the needs and rights of others with pernicious lies and maliciousness.

Invest their government with conspiracy and its policies with wickedness. Remind your audience that freedom was torn from kings by well-armed militias.

Introduce the savior as a shining instrument of religiousness; defend his faults as small and frivolous and his right to rule as unambiguous.

When shocking reality dares assert itself, denials must be officious and even vicious.

A rescue mission must be launched and certainly they must be participants; banners from the gift shop will form a team identity and a certain moral equivalence.

The leader will whip the angry crowd, stoking resentment with fabricated incidents, swearing, "I will be with you on this great crusade and you will be my instruments";

As the mob storms off he will slink away; he was only there for stimulus.

Hear the old republic creak as the President flexes his insolence; he's seen that no blame can touch him, so he's filled with proud ambivalence.

What will it take to rein him in? What kind of obvious stimulant, with thousands

already dying every day and our society marbled with brittleness?

anais vionet

Notre Voyage

We're the crew of the spaceship boring - on a one year mission.
The situation's literally life or death - this isn't science-fiction.

The crew is an actual family - ideal for such a quest,
but none of us volunteered for this - it's more like house arrest.

We seek out no adventures, we avoid interaction if we can.
We boldly go absolutely nowhere - isolation is the plan.

Wander into our orbit - we'll scan you with our sensors.
Our station's sealed to aliens and we don't let any enter.

Our voyage is just symbolic we're not in outer space,
the commission is simple self-sacrifice and it happens at turtle pace.

If you need me I'll be me in my capsule, safe in my virtual void,
sequestered for the greater good and shelved like an unwanted toy.

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Blue Georgia, Baby

(Georgia election Senryus)

Yeah, we're going
to give America the
democratic win.

'Cause that's how we roll.
We'll show you how to toss out
republican crooks.

We'll give the bird to
lying Donald Trump and his
criminal cohorts.

Long live America,
long live The Constitution,
long live blue Georgia.

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Density

I want to speak to you so badly
but I'm just going to sit here hoping
you'll start the conversation.

Boys are so dense!

I even send an obvious signal:
I didn't pull out my phone and get all busy
the moment we were alone.

Duh

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August Beaches (Plages D'août)

We hurtle down the last few hundred feet
of steep lavender lined cobbled slope shaded by majestic umbrella pines -
around a last hairpin turn and there they are:

The blue-white Pampelonne beaches, of St Tropez.
Their indecent beauty almost defeats words.

With the scents of lavender, pine and salt sea air, you can
get dizzy on the aromatics. It's a Mediterranean performance
or perhaps a preview of heaven.

Our daredevil, fifteen year old driver, (Sylvain) gets an unappreciative look
from my mom. My brother (Brice) and sister (Annick) whoop as if practiced,
as they leap from the open-sided Mercedes shuttle. I calmly gather my things.

This tranquil and elegant beach cove is private for hotel
guests - no chic crowds here - just a few quiet guests and
valets dressed in beige. The Pampelonne beaches are topless (nude if you like) ,
Annick peels topless just before she hits the waves.

Brice, ever the considerate brother says, 'Come ON,
RELAX, you'll just look like one of the BOYS.' Which earns him the old, American,
one-finger salute.

I missed vacations this year and the beaches - where hours
stretch, with blissful laziness, to the rhythm of nature.
Will we ever get back to some pre-pandemic 'normal'?

anais vionet

Unmade

On this winter morning
I'm daydreaming of
warm summer daysprings,
of blue lake glistenings,
of butterscotch skin,
and heartbeat quickenings
of unmade decisions behind blue eyes.

anais vionet



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Santa's Lap

(Sitting on Santa's lap)

Me: 'I want a dragon'

Santa: 'Nope, too dangerous'

Me: 'Ok, then I want a boyfriend'

Santa: 'What color dragon? '

anais vionet



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Solstice

This is the viral solstice and I am liberties gambler.
What would I give to taste the fresh air of freedom?

Anything.

Thaw-out that space-cold hope and puncture me - please.
God blesses the poets to write of such miracles.

anais vionet



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Bye Bye 2020

Doot do, doot doot - News FLASH from boredom central.

I've got extra New Year plans.

My Ladybug & Cat Noir Onesie pajamas are at the ready.

I've got all six Totinos pizza roll flavors and a 12 pack of Grape soda.

My Nintendo switch is charged and I have 4 screens for Zooming.

If you have something for me - slip it under the door.

I'm staying up this New Years to be sure 2020 leaves.

Happy New Years everyone!

anais vionet



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2020 Blues

I'm wearing the same old clothes,
binging the same ol' shows,
seeing the days anastomose.
and waiting for my vaccine dose.

I'm humming the same ol' songs,
dreading the rerun dawns,
trying to at least appear strong,
but becoming angry and withdrawn.

I'm tired of the same old faces,
of being stuck in these boring places,
of feeling my nights are wasted,
and dreaming of friends embraces.

I'm writing the same ol' verse.
becoming increasingly terse,
knowing it could be worse,
waiting for the end of this curse.

anais vionet

Toxic Relationships

Sorry, mom says I can't
kiss you - even with grape,
Lysol, safety lipstick =/

Harsh pandemic facts
and parents stand against us.
What a hazardous waste!

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Holiday Kisses

(Senryus)

I've never had a
new years kiss, or an under
the mistletoe kiss.

But I have had
Hersey's kisses - which I think
are spectacular!

anais vionet



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Licorice

(Senryus about crushes)

I'd never say to
a guy 'Oh, and by the way,
have a crush on you.'

I'd never stalk my
crush on the Internet - that's
what our friends are for.

Never let a guy
treat you like licorice - you're
a red gummy bear.

anais vionet



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Christmas Bliss

I'm under the Christmas tree like a present,
yeah, to rifle presents with my name on them,
but I'm caught, transfixed, looking up through the shrine
forgetting myself in delight at this multi-color heaven.

I've never lost my wonder at fulgid Christmas lights -
driving around gawking at decorations half the night.
If only the world could stay like this - but we can't
sustain rhapsody - we can only trespass on bliss.

Merry Christmas Everyone!

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The Sun

I thought I knew the sun.
I thought I had it tamed.

When it looked dim and weak,
I'd just blow on the flames.

But now my faith is shaken -
perhaps I was mistaken.

It seems the sun has ghosted me.
I miss those rays that roasted me.

anais vionet



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Blind Spots

I have several toxic habits - I know - I read an article on the web.
It's a miracle I'm not an axe murderer, based on what the experts said.

I use "should" biased judgements - when things go amiss.
I think about the future, when settling down to rest.
I obsess on defining the "best part" in each of my experiences.
I often think in poetic terms - which has driven wise men delirious.
I have nova bursts of interest - which escalate into crushes.
I keep a mental list of incidents which, if left unmanaged, lead to grudges.

The flaws go on and on - God, I simply am a mess.
I need to face my many flaws so that they might be addressed.

Do you think anyone is ever perfect?
Is it like playing whack-a-mole?

So that no one ever ends up perfect - they simply end up old?

anais vionet



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Holiday Choices

Can we celebrate, do we have that choice,
to fight against sour momentum and rejoice?

Of course we do - there've been vaccine changes,
hope hangs like fragrance, so let's be courageous.

Forget anger, forgive old grudges and stop tiring judgments,
catch those old phantoms in the open and sever the attachments.

Stop, drop and roll - this year necessitated endurance -
be honest and transparent, tell children and inform parents:

This year's celebration will need to be realistic -
but Christmas '21 we're goin' BALLISTIC!

anais vionet



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2020 Holidays

My room is a mess - it's an archaeological record of boredom.

Christmas, Christmas, come on Christmas.

It's 4 days 'til Christmas. Why don't I go to my room and do NOTHING? ?

The clock ticking sounds like a large horse clomping over cobble stones.

Last year there were wall-to-wall parties - so many that you had to carry a change of clothes with you.

In 2020 there's nothing to do - but I don't have to tell YOU (my reader) . Except for the whole school thing. Nothing to do but study. I read, on that webber-net thing that 38% of students are failing.

Because of the pandemic - oh, not that virus monster - the boredom pandemic - the London-tower-lonely state of slow-motion distress that's invisibly gripped us all.

Can we hold on people? The hard-won, delicious truth is that there's hope.

Vaccines - a bunch of 'em. Is it possible to let worries go this season and simply treasure our lives?

Just this month we have or had Hanukah, Kwanzaa, Festivus.

Hopefully, you made wild, monkey-love on December 14th - that was "International Monkey Day" - I couldn't join you - of course - but I'm just sayin.=]

Look it up - almost every day is some kind of celebration or invent your own - if Ice Cream Day, Lemon Cupcake Day, Go Caroling Day or Crossword Puzzle Day don't do it for ya.

The important gifts, this year, are fun, attention and love.

anais vionet

Spinnings

The earth is twirling,
oh, God, make it stop.
If it keeps on spinning,
I think I'll throw up.

The way Earth orbits the sun,
it's dangerous and thoughtless.
can we just knock it off?
It's making me nauseous.

anais vionet



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The Dark Potential

*(a Senryu string poem) *

High school girls are just
thoughtless and vague - too damn
dumb to be afraid.

Trusting too quickly
- believing things that are said
- unaware of risk.

Small and powerless,
chickens cooped from feral foxes
- peaches for picking.

So accompany
me on walks, to the store and
guard me like a penny.

Look - we're women
- junior grade - and conscious
of dark potential.

Breasted Americans
face a dark rainbow of threats
- we are mortal.

But ANY of us can
encounter unscheduled evil
like nightmares from hell.

Yes, that means you rough
tough males who glide through life as
if untouchable.

anais vionet

Fully Charged

This is an age old story
it could be a country song.
Some may find it enchanting
while others say it's wrong.

I like home automation
and the feeling of control
the response to simple voice
commands seems to satisfy my soul.

I got into it slowly
but it soon got out of hand
when on a cold black-Friday
I bought an automated man.

His physique wasn't all that defined
and I wouldn't have called him handsome
but soon I was trolling the aftermarket
for jail-broken enhancements.

He can't take his eyes off me,
his omelettes are the best,
and when he puts his arms around me
- he never needs to rest.

My mom appreciates him,
his work ethic has her impressed.
She has no idea how handy he is
as he helps me get undressed.

My friends say, "Wow, you look HAPPY!"
I feel I'm blooming like a flower.
I anxiously wait for him to fully charge
and we have unscheduled hours.

anais vionet

Secret Signs

How well I know this place, I'm trapped in these interiors.
I refuse to step on cracks and I avoid the hateful mirrors.

I'm watching like a cat the many motions of the heavens.
I'm straining like a witch to extend my intuition.

I'm looking for hidden patterns in odd numbers that show up.
I'm sorting out the tea leaves that my mom leaves in her cup.

I'm sure I hear the whispering of the moon on predawn walks.
I think I'd hear the angels - should one decide to talk.

Oh, God, I need some answers - I've become a hopeless mess -
show me secret signs or release it to the press.

You know I wait impatiently, with several billion friends,
for my vaccine miracle - when will this virus end? !

anais vionet



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Old Fashioned Christmas

It'll be an old fashioned Christmas,
with Santa due down the chute.
I bet he Purells his reindeer,
and Lysols his hazmat suit.

It's an old fashioned Christmas.
We'll all have on our masks,
and our muffled yuletide carols,
will be just like seasons past.

We'll observe all the guidelines.
We'll eat six feet apart.
We'll have disinfectant under the mistletoe,
and keep safety in our hearts.

Sure, it's an old fashioned Christmas.
One unique to the times.
The love this year might be careful,
but the feelings are genuine.

anais vionet

The Wait

You called me "temperamental";
You said I'm "taciturn and I'm spoiled";

We were in the crowded cafeteria,
so refused to become embroiled.

I wanted to say you're conceited -
a know-it all, with stupid hair and
between your ears there's nothing there.

But what you said stuck in my head.
No more texts! I'm ignoring your thread.

I have things to tell you - to your face -
and that would be Monday (I'll have to wait) .

You think you're hot - but NO, your NOT
- and I'm done helping you study.
Your jokes are lame
your kisses tame
and by the way - your dog is ugly.

anais vionet

Oh, Brother

(tales from the viral lock-down)

Brice (my brother) is cutting through what smells like a stack of cinnamon french toast.

My stomach growls at the aroma like a hunting cat. I jump out of bed, grab my robe and rush excitedly to the kitchen.

I see the pan in the sink.

gasp "You didn't MAKE me any! ! ? " I accuse, in indignant shock.

Brice, looking up, "JESUS, get on some fu-kin' clothes! "

He waves his arms like he's fighting a flock of birds.

I look down, "GOD, I AM wearing clothes, you PERV! - and a bathrobe"

"Who says THAT'S a bathrobe? ? " He says, sarcastically.

Me: "Kiki Montparnasse! ", I say, indignantly.

My mom enters to fill her coffee cup.

Brice: "Will you please tell YOUR DAUGHTER to get on some clothes? "

My mom inspects me and I twirl for my audience.

"That IS a little sheer", she pronounces.

"ARGH! , FINE, " I say, before stomping off to change.

I start to fume. "HE CAN GO ALL OVER IN BOXER SHORTS BUT I CAN'T WEAR A BATHROBE? ! ! "

"And HE didn't make EXTRA TOAST", I yell back in pointed accusation.

"Get to work, " (on more toast) I hear her tell him, just before I slam my door.

another day...

My brother Brice is fighting with his girl-friend on the phone.

Of course, I'm only hearing 1/2 the conversation - but he sounds like a jerk.

Me: "apologize, " I silently, slowly, exaggeratedly mouth

Brice: "fu-kovv, " he mouths back, silently

Me: "I'm your sister, " I say, "I get to boss you around, besides, I KNOW what's BEST"

A minute later - He actually apologizes! ! ! And they make up.

(I dance around the room like Rocky)

anais vionet

Shopping Lists

(a poem in Senryus)

You don't have to count,
when you lose a boyfriend, you
know. There was just one.

He was gone before
I knew it - he wasn't, you know,
tied up or anything.

For a moment I
toy with saying, "Alexa, add
rope to my shopping list."

In High School boyfriends
come and go - it's like shopping
- where you return things.

anais vionet



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Furrocious

My cat's become so critical
of the pieces that I write
he kneads to express his opinion
and he always thinks he's right.

He twitches his ear-itation
if I don't write in Senryus.
If what I write displeases him
he's under the bed for refuge.

He's worse than many teachers -
his reviews are seldom neutered -
he pointedly wags that twitchy tail
or cat-calls disapproval.

He laid across my laptop
for half the afternoon
'til I promised an ode to tuna
which earned purrs of hallelujah!

anais vionet

The Stranger

She knew she wasn't the
first shy girl conned beneath
a scintillant moon.

Why do boys lie so
- inveigling fabrications
- hoping to impress?

Why interlace fibs,
when, from first sight, she had longed
for his carnal lips?

Now doubts danced - as if
evil spirits were called and
asked to watch, and gloat.

"I can't talk to you
again, " she said, "after all
- you're a stranger."

She doubted he cared
- she doubted everything, like
she had a soiled heart.

anais vionet

Sentenced

I wear my heart on paper
Ink fills my veins like blood
reviews cut like a razor
I'm addicted to the pen.

I pump words with every heartbeat
I hoard paragraphs in my room
I take interjections like a junkie
I wear verbs like perfume.

I'm feeling the contractions
as I erase awkward phrases
I write sad poems that feel like skin.
and fill sheets of diary pages

I blush at lurid pronouns
that I conjure then,
I consider putting word-play off
but I'm sentenced to the pen

.
. .
.

*Inspired by Michael R. Burch's poem: At the Natchez Trace

anais vionet

Boom

I'm overthinking,
tired of endless waiting,
about to blow up.

Even my mom sees it.
She starts some cutting remark
only to pull it back.

Me: "Argh! I have this ANGER, just below the surface."
My brother: "Uhh, it's not THAT far below the surface."

anais vionet



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The Ride

The trick is to take
your eye off the ball - forget
and enjoy yourself.

When you realize
- ultimately, life's a
suicide mission.

Do the flowers fret
even as they bloom? Are swans
gracefully worried?

Ignore that small voice
- enjoy life's pleasures, thrills,
and delight in love.

anais vionet



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The Ballad Of Jeffery Epstein

You made me rub you
I didn't want to do it
I didn't want to do it

You paid me damn you -
I was so scared I'd do it
You always knew I'd do it

You made us happy sometimes
you made us sad
the twisted world you made, Jeff
You treated us so bad.

You made me fly for
The island where you kept us
and all your friends slept with us.

We wanted something newwww
Yes, It's true, 'deed we knew
You know we knewwww

Giving, Giving, Giving, Giving what you lied for
there are some things rich men commit
- perverted crimes for..

You know you made me rub youuuuuuuu

.
. .
.

*We just finished the documentary. the case is complicated, the case is simple.
The story is as old as the bible.*

anais vionet

Conclusions

Don't let anyone
with bad eyebrows give you life
advice - it ends badly.

I don't mind seeing my ex with
someone else, I usually donate my
old things to the less fortunate.

I wonder how many
calories I burn jumping
to wrong conclusions.

anais vionet



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Lights

Christmas lights are starting to bloom,
showering multicolored holiday grace across
increasingly bare, late fall suburban landscapes.
I LOVE, I NEED, the perfectly placed, perfectly timed, whimsy.

anais vionet



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Happiness

Money can't buy happiness,
but it buys fast Internet
and that comes so close.

anais vionet



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The Competition

I pound the pillow, curse the clock and mock injunctions to rest.

The sun finally rises and its rays slantwise fall through the curtains as I dry my hair.

A meal, like a forced dose, we soak ourselves in wasted, nervous time.

Finally! We arrive at the competition...

Tension is here and tireless pressure.

The players waiting stiff as straw, tongues playing over dry lips.

Teachers and coaches unapologetic in their pallor.

Music drifts behind us and occasionally gasps as imperfections play like daring circus tricks.

The sparkling prodigy returns disappointed, grimace of a smile, stricken, he stares away as we search for words, oh! clumsy, unrepairable prince!

Suddenly, its time and I wonder why we are hurrying, feeling weak, momentarily frightened to go there.

On this stage in this great, hushed hall, enormity suddenly dawns with mass enough to crush me.

At last I sit before this odd Steinway music machine - my dearest mechanical friend.

A tremble resisted - the reward of mortal afternoons - endless practices fruit.

Eyes closed I prepare my best self - pushing all fear, all doubt, to the margins - and begin.

I hope, to recreate, one note at a time, Chopin's ancient impact - with hands flying, like tethered birds, I hammer out his timeless melody explosions, his streams of crazily exact math exam fiery semiquaver motions.. then, almost suddenly, I'm done.

I stand, joyously, nearly crying.. The world hasn't ended.

anais vionet

Midterms

All my #2 pencils are chewed and the erasers are gone.
Half the pages of my books have been folded.

Sections are highlighted and notes are scribbled
in all over the place! *shaking head*

The page margins are jammed with doodles,
of flowers, cats, stars, hearts and names.

flipping pages to early in the year

September doodles are all John, john, JOHN.

Who's John? *thinking back*
Oh, yeah. *smiling*OH YEAH.

It's good to review the book before midterms.

anais vionet



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One Or Two

300 nights I've been here a-pacin',
I've got clothes, all shiny and new!
This whole year, my time's been a-wastin',
someday this endless virus will be through.

On the news, they say there's a serum,
soon I'll have to take one or two.
Crowded clubs, where music's a-playin',
I bet I can get into one or two.

There are boys, out there just for kissin',
and someday, I'll kiss one or two.
I'll find out, just what I've been missin',
I'll bet I won't get home 'til one or two.

There are boys, of nineteen or twenty,
and they know, just what to do.
Shiny toys, just waitin' for choosin',
I find the idea amusing - it's true.

anais vionet

Open Ears

"The open ear of youth doth always listen" - Shakespeare

I want to listen, when adults give me advice but it's not easy. The wind-up, the slow methodical narrative to the point drives me insane.

I know you're trying to build a bridge - not a wall - so spit it out - I'm right here, behind these blue eyes. Whatever hurtful idea you've latched onto - let me hear it - STAT.

Maybe you'll find your message returned - unopened - but you're like earth - I'm stuck in your gravity - so for the love of whatever deity you worship - spill it.

Upgrade my life with your insight and I'll be forever changed and improved.

anais vionet



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What The Heck...

You know, I used to be happy all of the time.
what the heck happened? I used to go weeks
without crying, I used to love going to school.

In fairness, I liked real school - not the sad,
sterile, anti-social, virtual experience.

When I'm mad I get silly, then mean. I don't
always know why - angry is the answer, but
I don't always get the subconscious analysis
behind it. That's a bad day - I'm truly sorry.

If I could step back, in those moments,
and think - clearly - I'm about the luckiest person.

I'm a hundred pounds of privilege
- if we rounding up - but pressurized,
stressed like a movie submarine in deep dive.

I think I miss people - like in an assembly
- before it starts - where a hundred conversations
clash like the random patter of rain. That's one
of the sounds of joy.

The civilized brain is soaked in the opinions,
and shared experiences with others. These virtual,
interactive shadows on flat screens can't fill the void.

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Coyote

I used to be excited on Fridays.
I used to have interesting plans.
My weekends were non-stop hectic,
my time was in high demand.

Now I live in repeated patterns,
I'm a servant to boring routines.
A fleshy teenage automaton,
waiting for science to intervene.

Oh, I'm readier than a girl-scout,
I'm more prepared than a marine,
I'll be out the door like a cartoon coyote,
the second I'm shot with vaccine.

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On It

I need to stop being
sarcastic all of the time
- yeah, I'm on that.

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Almost

Thanksgiving is almost here,
annoying school bells have stopped ringing.
Turkeys are huddling, out of sight,
and the garbage men are singing.

We're beginning to prep side dishes,
slicing, dicing, mashing, peeling,
and I'm smiling `cause I feel myself
swept up in holiday feelings.

I hope that Macys is ready
for their seasonal parade.
We'll be watching as we start to cook
the banquet that we've made.

I'm wishing everyone plenty,
as we shelter in our homes.
On this tame 2020 holiday,
that we're spending home alone.

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The Robbery

I visit you in dreams,
and my visit is always unexpected.
I'm always excited and more
than a little apprehensive.

.

In dream variations, your reactions shuffle
like poker cards - you're surprised and pleased,
or wary, or even politely disappointed.

.

Dreams can be a harsh mirror and as in real life,
my emotions are poorly protected.

.

Brushstrokes of truth hide behind the
tricksy falsehoods of dream-scapes. After all,
I'm an unworthy suitor in practically every way.

.

In the real world, I'm sure early, favorable
impressions would fade to inevitable boredom.
I have that effect on adults - I've seen it
- a quick nod my way and I become invisible.

.

I should be a bank robber - "What did the
robber look like?" the police would ask.
"Well... the teller would say, "fading off to vagueness.

.

I could stand right there looking at my phone.

.

"Did YOU see anything?" The cop would ask me.
"I was playing candy crush..." I'd begin,
but the cop would walk distractedly away.

.

By the time they got the video evidence, I'd be long gone.

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Exercise Is Important

Kissing burns 6.4
calories per minute, so,
you wanna work out?=[

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Disregard

You know a girl is
really hurt if she calmly
starts to ignore you

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Plots

Some old movie plots
can't happen now, with changes
in technology...

You know, in a movie
when someone texts everyone
at school by mistake?

Who has EVERYONE
at school on their contacts list?
No way that happens.

Parent-less parties
where scores show up - with modern
surveillance systems?

or ditching class, heck
my parents are texted my
quiz scores real-time.

"why'd you get an 88
on that Calculus test, I
thought you studied? " Argh!

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Alarm! ! !

I'm a sentinel, fair Romeo
- scanning the liquid dark,
and ready to whisper alarm
at the first sign of romance.

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Quiet Boy

There's a boy at school, he's SO quiet.

But sometimes he'll speak-up and say something that's ****so**** funny

A couple of times I've tried to talk to him, after class,
to tell him how funny I think he is, but he practically vanishes.

Kim & Bili (My two BFF) think he's super shy.

I find funny ***very*** attractive.

Now, even in our dull virtual class he can say something that fractures - even the teachers think he's funny - they never get mad.

When this lock-down is over I'm going to lasso him and tell him.
We might have to work like a posse, corral him from three sides
like a skittish colt.

I'm not going to tell him I find him attractive - ***duh***.

But I will tell him that if someday he's a famous comic,
like Seinfeld or Chappelle, I won't be surprised.

There aren't enough complements in the world - I love
those delightful moments, when I can surprise someone
with the miniature perfection of a complement.

Does he see the enchanting power of his humor?
Maybe he won't care ***shrug*** but I'll wake up that
morning to the thrill of the chase and just doing
it will make my day.

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Words

Be careful with words you intone,
because words have lives of their own.
Words overblown, relayed on the phone,
words in harsh tones that jolt, stun and depose,
and shock us with what they disclose.

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Better

Girls have naughty thoughts,
like boys, but we're better at
hiding evidence.

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Temperatures

Ok, so you're cooler
than me - logically, then...
I'm hotter than you.

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Frenchy

Sometimes I stick out from my friends a bit - I think. It's the French in me. Americans have this excit -ment about things - that's, well, exhausting.

Sometimes, when friends are jumping about, they practically plead for my engagement. I think I have a genetic, French reticence, an observer gene.

True, I have my moments of bitter COVID lock-down angst but I'm doing better than some friends. Maybe because the French live slowly - life is just moments - once a moment has passed, it's gone.

I wait, in my secret gardens, like a cat on a settee, sipping small pleasures. The poet in me refuses to zone out - there are poems in the stillness.

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Unavailable

unavailable

Yesterday, I saw a NASA announcement.
it said they found "Unambiguous"
water on the moon.

I had just finished my morning walk
and frankly, that sounded delicious
and refreshing.

So, I went to Amazon and searched.
I couldn't find ANY reference to
"Unambiguous moon water" at ALL.

How ridiculous, I mean, why go
and ADVERTISE something that
We can't get on AMAZON? ?

WTF people. This is AMERICA.

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Spinning

When it stopped and I saw the target, a handsome 16 year old, part of me wanted to jump up and run. This party wasn't with my usual friends - except my BFF Kim was there. These kids were 15 and maybe 16. I had just turned 14. We had been invited by an older girl-friend.

I couldn't have been more nervous - the party had turned just short of terrifying - but there's no way on God's earth that I could chicken out. John and I shuffled towards each other on our knees.

He's taller and as we drew together he bent toward me and I looked up - our lips touched, I felt his warm breath - WOW, his lips were soft.. I had to force myself not to pull back - my heart was pounding with the fear of embarrassment - what if he stopped - like, YUCK, and declared the whole idea an impossibly silly joke? ?

He didn't - after a second I felt his strong left hand gently on the back of my head and he slightly rotated my head to the right and - OH, YEAH - we were able to draw deeper into the kiss (I'd seen that in MOVES - now I understood) . His lips were so smooth, slightly slippery and warm - I was breathing WAY deeper then and felt a twining in interesting places.

His right hand pressed my lower back and he fetched me closer and, boy, we REALLY fit - I felt my breasts pressed to his chest - I wasn't sure what to do with my hands - they were sort of out to the side. His tongue fleetingly touched my lips and the tickle was electric.

My lips parted a little - he drew me even closer - his tongue playfully connected with mine and I seemed to short circuit - I drew in breath sharply, through my nose - which sounded enormously loud to me. WOAHH, this was getting intense, I put my palms to his shoulders - should I push away? ?

"Time! , " the girl timing the kiss called.

We stopped actively kissing and he started easing off the pressure holding us together - I leaned back on his hands a bit as I searched for balance. Our kiss-seal broke and I gasped a little, which fortunately, sounded like a laugh and everyone laughed as we pulled apart. I glanced at his face and he was smiling warmly - I blushed explosively and looked down.

I put my right hand on my skirt as I scooped back in place and someone placed the bottle back on the center of the circle.

I was still looking down because I could tell my face was beet-red but my eyes found Kim, I smiled and give her a telepathic* holy-COW*. My first REAL kiss.

I left the circle before someone could spin me. There's no **way** that I was going to do that again.

anais vionet

The Open Road

I got my drivers license! ! ! !

Now, excitement lies an easy walk from boredom.
The second school ends, I reach for the keys,
like a seedling stalk turns to the sun.
I'm soaking in this new freedom with litmus thirst.

What a spell - "combine gravel and motors for miracles, "
I say, in my best crackly witches voice.

True, my mom keeps turning the music down,
someone has to chaperone - at first
- aren't old people supposed to be hard of hearing?

I'm anfractuious in my approach to driving goals.
"What are you laughing at, " My mom asks.
"Nothing." I answer, confused.
Was I laughing? ?

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Marvelous Monkeys

What I love about Star Trek isn't the plots or even the characters, It's their casual, daily use of fantastic technologies (think replicators)- for them, the ordinary. It mirrors our own banal use of magic-like wireless, google searches and air travel.

We are marvelous monkeys.

I'm a teenager. I am new and agog - Jesus, I have a lot to learn. How are the many marvels that elevate our lives actually made? The millions of cars, the fuel distribution systems, our skyscrapers. Who thought of all this?

We're marvelous monkeys.

We can almost cheat death - I saw *Marilyn Monroe* on TV last night. It wasn't the real star - of course - just the image of her purring sexuality. The her without the messy adopted-child neuroses, chemical dependencies, loneliness and deeper longings. But it's early days - her DNA is lying around here somewhere.

We're marvelous monkeys.

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V School Thoughts

In virtual school you
see the teacher in one screen
- students in others.

My desk has four screens
two for class, one for browsing,
one for Face-Time.

Record yourself, loop
it as background, and it looks
like you're engaged.=]

Teacher: "Come ON, guys
you got this last year!" - and I
can't recall breakfast.

I'm NOT a nerd, I
just don't want to be working
with you at McDonalds.

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Mutterings

mutterings

I see you in dreams,
those inconsequential things,
shaped in busy slumber.

I call to you - with
continual mutterings
- but do you listen?

anais vionet



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The Agent

Mad kings are sly Devils,
and like math homework,
they're hard to get rid of.

Like ex-boyfriends they
waltz the line of patience
with dawdling acknowledgements
and sluggish departures.

You find yourself the airline
agent, "Sorry sir, your departure
is booked and ticket printed -
please proceed to the gate."

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Mamá

Senryus about my
favorite - my one and
only - mom (so far) .

"Mom! , I understand! ! "
5 minutes later - wait, what did
she want me to do?

Eating my breakfast
cereal, "Mom! , let's go to the
lake! , " Mom says. "Can't"

"I can't wait to be
a lifeless professional, "
I say to my bowl.

Mini-heart attack:
Your mom says: "OK, I need to
ask you a question."

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Reassuring Smiles

Smiling at old folks
to reassure them you're
not a teenage thug.

Even though I'm in
my school uniform and look
like Mary Poppins.

I don't like talking
in front of a group of teens
- they're so judgmental.

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The Fair

The flags are waving brightly,
hypnotizing the naive,
they shimmer like carnival balloons.

There are merry andrews waltzing,
to the themes of marching bands,
they're camouflaged to blend in with the moon.

The party's getting started,
so we better get in line
- the wind is breathing something like a sigh.

The smell of cotton candy
drowns out the barkers script,
and multicolored lights announce the mood.

There's rain off in the distance
- you can feel on your skin
- the children refuse to stay in line.

Dogs are barking somewhere,
and lanterns dance like birds
- there's nothing left to do but step in time,
two, three, four.

The tent is Chinese silk,
as silver as a coin
- acrobats take tickets with their lips.

The sawdust smells like bacon,
and the seats are way too small,
but the crowd is pushing in
because red rain is falling.

Elephants turn like dancers,
and trumpet to the night
- the sound shakes the world like my alarm.

Another ho-hum morning,

soon the sky will tell a lie,
- that lemon light has something to proclaim.

My bags are packed for boredom,
the trip will last all day,
- there's nothing left to do but step in time,
two, three, four.

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Waiting

I'm waiting out the day
with minimalist hopes
and recycling anxiety.

I'm waiting for the hour
for a smooth transfer of power
or for things to go sour.

I'm waiting for the word
after a period of counting
for freedom's call
or an accelerated freefall.

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Love Coverage

What stands guaranteed?
The moon's drifting away, oh
inconstant cosmos.

Gravity fights us,
taxes come due, boys will orgasm,
some things are certain.

What about love? We
need extended warranties
for consumer faith.

Permanent pressed
love - no crumpled hopes
- investor safety.

"Love bonds", or "emo-
care? " No worry, we'll find a
marketable name...

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The Speech

Everything was dull,
you know? Another dark and
dull pandemic week.

But now: OH, MY GOD,
I'M SO EXCITED! ! - I can
hardly eat or sleep! !

Gloomy clouds of doom
dissipated when I heard
our President's speech!

The pandemic's past
it's peak he said, it'll be over
by the election!

Two Days! ! There will be
DATING SOON - I can scarcely
curb my elation!

I ran to find my
mom - she'll appreciate this
new revelation.

See - I'll need an all
new wardrobe - we've a shopping
list to complete! "

"I need EVERYTHING
in two weeks - MY **GOD**, is there
even time to sleep? ? ? "

"Trump can't just make that
call" she said, (she knows, she's a
doctor after all)

"The President would
never miss-lead us, there are
peoples LIVES at stake! "

"And the people would
would remember, it's on the
news for heaven's sake! "

"Besides, if he
lies and people die - it's a
crime not a mistake! "

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Thinking Is Overrated

It's not your looks, I
like but what you are INSIDE
talking to my fridge

Sometimes I pretend
that I'm dying to see if
my cat would save me.

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Trick Or Treat

Soft light plays on
my shameless, lipstick rouged
lips - it's a party.

I hear OverDoz
advocating a "last kiss"
somewhere in the night.

Some faces always
find a favorable light
- like the movie stars.

He's gorgeous, with a
new iPhone-like appeal
- the consensus choice.

I'm looking through glass
at a candy I can't hope
for this Halloween.

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Artwork

Write on me - I'm a blank page,
here to meet expectations.
Scribble, erase - copy and paste,
refine me with your impatience.

I'm a canvas for you to paint on
make of me what you will.
Make of me art - I'm ready to start,
paint me into a corner.

Showcase me in your gallery -
display what you've acquired.
I'm a mannequin for undressing -
arrange me with your desire.

Put me in your drama
I'm longing for the part
improvise, I'll close my eyes
the climax will be art.

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How To Flirt

Just get me something on the dollar menu.

OK, deer balls..

What?

They're under a buck.

*rolling eyes

I like you.

Oh, sure - how many girls have you said THAT too?

Lots.

Huh?

I've told lots of your friends that I like you.

I was thinking of you.

Aw.

In my time of horny-ness.

Euw!

Wanna know how to flirt with a queer girl?

? ?

Just keep talkin.. =]

I heard you like bad girls - It's your lucky day - I'm bad at EVERYTHING.

*winks with both eyes

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Wants

You know what you want, get it. Make sure it responds to your needs - remote-control it, sub-routine it and on-demand it - wring it out.

But once you have it - something changes, doesn't it? It loses some luster - it isn't PERFECT, damn it. It wears out or becomes obsolete and the lust is reborn, refocused.

Do you want me? I think you want me - you seem to want to possess me - but do you actually want ME?

What if my DNA could be used to create a perfect, cloned replica - right down to the pheromones - a perfect doppelganger.

Only this - me-two - would be a commandable pleasure doll shipped, Amazon Prime - and perhaps made with a rich, warm polymer skin that wouldn't age - wouldn't that be even better? I think it would be better.

But forget about me - with THAT kind of technology. Think about the licensing fee Rudy Pankow could get, or *gasp* Chase Stokes! - OMG! ! ! *dancing around the room*

yelling out "Mom! ! , MomMMMMMM! ! , I KNOW what I want for Christmas! ! "

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The Wheel Of Doubt

I drive me crazy
- there's no hiding or help
for dark self distrust.

Frightening whispers
are like a levied tax of
doubt about my choices.

Anticipations
dulled on anxieties rough shore
- best to keep them deep.

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Addicted

I think I might be
addicted to exercise -
I'm a street walker=]

I walk in the dark,
every morning - I even
have my workout gear.

I don't go alone
- heaven forbid a 17 year old
go frikin' walking alone.

At five am, my "to
be named later" partner, is
where we assemble.

And off we go. Even
writing of this makes me want
to go "lace-'em-up."

But no, I am NOT
addicted... *quivering hands*
- I'm stronger than that.

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Memories

I've memories saved for future use
they're gathering like a storm,
and they're all mine - fruit on the vine,
I'm prone to dreams and poems.

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Hope

I've felt the stir of resolution
to throw off careless greed.

I've heard the soothing voice of reason,
long thought to be extinct.

So pound your plowshares into words,
turn your anger into votes.

Let's march together towards sanity,
reclaiming fragile future's hope.

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Third World America

I lived in Shenzhen, China, for my 6th and 7th grades - China was *AMAZING*.

In China, blond hair is unusual, I stood out like neon and touching blond hair was considered good luck.

In a train station, if I stood still, I could draw a curious mob - especially in the provinces like Heubi and Shanxi. I was in more than a few selfies but people were polite and respectful.

China is much more advanced than the U.S..

Everything is new, clean and modern - the Internet is faster. Most trains are bullet trains that travel 325kph (>200mph) . There are more than 10 new, gleaming cities larger (and newer) than New York.

An App called WeChat (used on your phone) runs the world. Imagine Facebook, iMessage, PayPal and Uber combined - with that one App you could do anything.

At restaurants, you paid your bill at your table using WeChat from a QR code that the electronic corner of your table displayed.

Cameras are everywhere - if you break a law like jaywalking and *BBBZZZZ* you get a text and the fine is deducted from your WeChat account - all automatically.

Public TV screens, located on corners, show recent violations with the perps picture and the fine they paid - again, automatic.

Does this sound Orwellian? Well, maybe, but Chinese police don't kill people - or even engage people for minor offenses.

America, you're broke and on the edge of being a third world country.

Yeah, yeah, I know that China is free-market-communist and certainly imperfect - but if you saw China, you'd be impressed and you'd know the ugly truth - America has squandered it's wealth on military macho and forty years of war. China's last, small war was in 1980 (With Vietnam who they beat in 3 weeks and 2 days) .

Middle America looks almost bombed-out with closed businesses (even before

the pandemic) - but in China, you can't look anywhere without seeing building cranes - like a forest of trees. A physical illustration of Americas loss of wealth.

I LOVE America - it's sad to see.

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Other Names

On cool, starry, fall, indigo-blue night walks, it's so beautiful that it's hard to believe we're mid-catastrophe.

That sunrise will dawn on countrymen whose heavy burdens our national leaders won't even publicly discuss much less address.

File hope under other names - we need changes and new leadership - hey, you adults - can we please just try a government of concerned professionals?

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Forever

Theoretical physicists say that there's really no such thing as "time." That our perception of time is just how our minds work but that, in reality, everything is happening at once.

Somewhere, Harry James' trumpet is crying out to lovers. Do you hear it?

Romeo is about to take stage for the first time - Kennedy is climbing into the convertible - and I'm about to meet my true love - will I know, did I know? Argh!

Time passes by or stays, unseen. Contrails forever linger, flowers never die and kisses don't end.

This school day certainly feels like it's lasting forever.

anais vionet



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The Bubble

the bubble

Our atmosphere is a bubble - like the fizz you find in Champagne.

Have you ever been to a dentist, and done it without any pain?

Have you ever enjoyed wireless or traveled the sky in a plane?

Then you've experienced science - the modern world's quoin.

Climate change has been proven - the result of our human reign.

Have you noticed the west coast's on fire - and seen the gulf hurricanes?

We're in the hottest decade ever and only half the country gets rain.

Did you ever use a computer - have you ever been on a train?

Did you ever see television - do I really have to explain?

Science deniers aren't new - they once claimed cigarettes weren't bad,
and thousands died from cancer - science deniers be damned.

Our civilization's based on science - it's the modern world's quoin.

Climate change has been proven - the results of polluting our domain.

anais vionet



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Different In Dreams

I'm different, in
private dreams, where there are no
ramifications.

I'm more - adult? I
handle things decisively
- no second guessing.

And I KNOW what I
want - is that because it's all
erased on waking?

Do we practice life,
in our restless dreams - trying
on other selves?

anais vionet



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October Daffodils

Eight months since the virus shut the door on the world.
It's October and it's like we're hiding from the law.
You called me yesterday - but it quickly wore off.
Sometimes crushing hungers, for our old normal blossom
but wither, like confused daffodils, denied sustenance,
in the reality of "second waves" and body counts.
This renewed viral spiral has me all wrung out.

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The Biker

I loved riding my
bike as a child. It offered
me a new world view.

I was fast and free.
Then we put cards in the spokes,
and I motorcycled.

I cut corners like
a politician and wore
aviator glasses...

I could have passed my
driving test, last year - but nooo
- for once - I was chill.

I'm sure the trauma
of my laziness will scar
me, but - maybe not.

Sometimes I'm
SO resilient that people
think me uncaring.

Warning: People may
be far more emotional
than they might appear.

anais vionet

Ode

I feel like we could
sing one of those righteous
civil rights anthems.

"We shall overcome"
goes to the pandemic point,
and we could hold hands.

Our kinship is dear, and earned,
with simple sacrifices.
Our struggle isn't over.

anais vionet



Yin

I see them in reflections - the orange juice glass at breakfast or my iPhone where they can pop, like notifications - I keep my phone face down.

They usually want to tell you something - how it was for them - their history. I discount these emotional messages - they come with the jester's assumption that I care - that I need the performance and will get involved.

"What are you doing? " My mom asks, as I'm taking all the shiny, mirror-like ornaments off the Christmas tree.

"The glare gives me a headache" I say, without stopping.

"Your Grandma does that too", she says, wiping her hands on a Santa-themed dish-towel.

"Really? " I say, but I know that and I know why.

I started having nightmares, when I was in first grade. My mom thought I had an overactive imagination but when she described it to my grandma, she soon showed up for a visit.

Over the next few weeks my Grandma told me about our "gift". About how we were both born on the same day, under a waning third moon, in Autumn. That we're both "Yins, " doxies (sweethearts)of the dead and that we could, at times, see and hear people who were between stops on their way to their after-lives.

That's why the dead parachute into my unused moments from reflective surfaces. They can be anxious or in despair - when their death is cruel or sudden but I'm an adolescent - I'm in school - what can I do? ?

The presence of water discourages them - which is perfect - can you imagine seeing spirits in the reflections of your bath? EEUUUWWW! You'll hardly ever see me without a water bottle or polarized sunglasses - which seem to break-up the images. I'll not be smothered in other people's afterlives.

anais vionet

Democracy

The smart, modern boys
who'll shepherd satellites
and parent sly AI -

live blocks away and
spend sunny afternoons with
digital zombies.

I talked with one - once,
I think, he mumbled some
strange techno-English.

He was pale and
skittish but attractive
In a shy, goth way.

"Who are you voting
for?" he stared blankly, "for prom
court?" "he stared blankly.

"Madison's nice, I
say", handing him a ballot,
He checks her name "Thanks!"

anais vionet

Key Lime Pie...

Breathless summer heat retreats with the sun. People come out after dusk - like nocturnal animals. We're hunting ice-cream, at a carnival-painted shop. There are four serving windows, hundreds of flavors and crickets serenading from the dark.

My BFF Kim and I are with my older brother - we run to the line and he follows. We're waiting in line when the noisy muscle car roars up. The driver is Kim's ex-boyfriend - Rob. Dumped but still, somehow, on the planet.

We fear the contamination of simple ice-cream pleasures with sour drama. We turn our backs as they park and they join a nearby line. I feel Rob watching us, we're tense, like maybe there's a spider nearby.

Rob comes over - he wants something from her - she's bored with understanding. He stands close - private-space-invader close - he's high-school-junior smooth. His assertions have no creativity - just history repeating itself - the talk is brief.

After a minute, he storms off - his friends are disappointed - I think they wanted ice-cream. Tire squealing and motor roaring announce his departure - his reputation is upheld.

I got two gigantic scoops- one Banana Peanut Butter Ripple the other Key Lime pie.*YUM*

anais vionet

No Appeal

There's no appealing the sentence - with our virus destroyer.
There's no appealing the sentence - I checked with our lawyer.
There's no appealing the sentence - to this prison like experience.

When my alarm goes off it's ground-hog day.
How long can we all go on this way?
I scream into my pillow so to not cause alarm.
This virus lock-down has lost all of its charms.

anais vionet



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Grounded

You "adults", you exasperate me
with your evasions and delays.

You're going to have to change
some of the ways that you behave.

You aren't doing your homework,

you haven't cleaned the planet,

You aren't standing up to bullies,

you haven't been sharing your things,

and you're even playing with guns.

And you're pretending everything's ok.

You were taught better than this.

Sorry, but.. You're all grounded people.

And hand over those phones!

anais vionet



PoemHunter.com

The Crew

Here are more Senryu
poems about friendships.
Those who are your crew =]

Parents give advice
but our friends, knowing more, have
usable answers.

We laugh at the same
moments - at home, school, or play
- we have shared viewpoints.

We laugh at how we
won't turn into our moms
but we know we will.

We share so many
inside jokes - we speak
our own language

anais vionet

Seaward

It's hard to feel like
your growing up when you're moored
- sheltering at home.

I am patiently
waiting to take the helm of my
life's navigation.

My life, so far, is
prelude - I long to cast off
and exit the slip.

anais vionet



PoemHunter.com

Poison Darts

Shakespeare said, "make
pieces of the beast and his
confederates";

My parents voted
today - filling out and then
casting their ballots.

It was a pleasing
privilege - even as an
anxious observer.

Their two small darts at
the heart of the snarling beast.
Saints let them strike true.

anais vionet



PoemHunter.com

The Microwave Age

A polaroid, in
my drawer, under the junk
- a memory found.

Wow, I miss fun, it's
like there was another life
- a past life shared.

Remember parties?
Sweaty dancing then a plunge
in the cold lake?

I feel like an old
lady reliving childhood
in sterile pics.

Everything I thought
my life would be is gone or
on nebulous hold.

We're learning a dull
brand of patience - strange for
the microwave age.

anais vionet

Time To Not Think

These Senryu poems
are random thoughts - not every
moment's critical=]

It's important for
teenagers to have free
time to not think.

Never toss anything
to me you don't want to
see land on the floor.

Heart attack: When I
see my phone battery at 5%
- stay with me buddy! !

If this viral world
is the new normal, I want
sweet abnormality.

anais vionet

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Empty Nights

My palette is empty
after over-busy school
and tense homework.

By the time dark night
staggers onstage, sleep is my
longed-for, sexy muse.

I'm greedy for sweet,
numb sleep or perhaps to dream
love-flushed fantasies.

anais vionet



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Baseball

It didn't work out. *sigh*
What were the odds? Statistics...
- love isn't baseball.

Where do regrets start?
Should I regret the sunset
- or mourn holding hands?

Or shame desire?
Baseball.. Well, at least he
didn't get to first base. =]

anais vionet



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Intermission

I was dazzled - in
a summer spell - did we both
name it as special?

Was it the summer
freedom - the sparkling lake
that summoned magic?

The constant sun sent
a subliminal message
with its rise and fall.

It won't last, it said,
there's an expiration
date approaching fast.

The short-lived summer
proved a brief, insubstantial
memory making.

anais vionet

Tangled

I put my hands on the table after you..
I drink from your half-empty glass..
I sit in your still-warm chair.
I signal you but I am a candle at noon..
I call you but I am a snowflake at sea..
Please don't go anywhere without me..
I long to be your shadow.
I want to taste you like food..
A hundred emotions tangled like hair..and trivial words..

anais vionet



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Break-Up Senryus II

More break-up Senryus
to quickly, subtly cut that
relationship cord:

You're a guy, I'm
a girl... it turns out we're
just too different!

Look, It's not you - it's
me - turns out I don't like
you much anymore.

Allegory time!
You're a turkey, ok? And
I'm going on a diet.

You smile at him,
and then say: "You've helped
realize I'm gay."

anais vionet

Our Novel

You can think of this
pandemic as an novel
slowly unfolding.

We are characters
caught up in the plot - we're the
heroes and cowards.

We bring our desires,
educations, biases and
social reflexes.

All the small sins and
great vanities of mankind
have a home in us.

The challenges we
face, in chapters yet turned
would scare the angels.

Will, we, the people,
psychologically flinch
in this, our great hour?

If so, expect no
Crispian Day speech of legend
to mark our passing.

anais vionet

Free Time

When not slaved to school
work I rush to do all of
my favorite things.

All at once in a
mad multitasking-fun-storm
of pleasure-chaos.

I was just sampling
Spotify tracks, playing my
iPod and writing.

While backing up my
music collection, planning
dinner and sewing.

And I thought maybe
I should make more coffee and
print my homework.

anais vionet

School Bodied

School's started up. *sigh*
I moved up a notch, of course
but virtual school sucks.

We should be walking
- no, swaggering - ivied halls
with new dominance.

Seniors rule, true,
but with one foot out the door
- Juniors set the tone.

One more viral theft,
that renders long traditions
unapproachable.

This virus changes lives
- bodied within its limits
- what future will rise?

anais vionet

Ghostly

What if a ghost loves
me and using its powers
to keep boys away...

That would explain a
Lot. Does that sound Crazy? We're
seeped in illusion.

I spend my entire
day with the inhabitants
of a virtual realm.

anais vionet



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Changes...

Fall changes erase
the cheap substance of summer
with holiday joys.

Multicolor leaves,
multicolor lights with turkey
delights and kinship.

anais vionet



PoemHunter.com

Capricious Creatures

Senryus about those
capricious creatures that rule
over our lives - our moms.

Studying. My phone
beeps, I look at it - mom says,
- "you've been texting!" Argh!

Mom: "Why is it - that
everything is on the floor?"
Me: *thinking*... "gravity?"

"SORRY! , how could I
know answering your question
would be talking back? ?"

My mom can hear me
mumble a mile away but
can't hear me yell "what?"

anais vionet

Dark Shows..

No, I'm not ok.
It's amazing what a
smile can hide.

Monsters aren't under
your bed - they're in your head
And hard to ignore.

No one really knows
you until you show them your
internal, dark side.

anais vionet



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At The Party

A party scene, in
Senryus - from last March, when a
party could happen.

He looked at me
like a treat. "You," he said,
are looking hot girl!"

"I'm only hot in
in the dazzling reflection
of your lust," I said.

"Then you're on
FIRE," he said as he put
his hands on my hips.

"Your girlfriend's looking,"
I said, - she and I nodded.
His hands retracted.

He brushed his hair
back over his ears, "some
other time." he said.

"He was set to Jump
you," My friend Kim teased, "No,
not really." I shrugged.

"You disappointed?"
I snorted "yeah right,
His GF was watching."

"OH!," Kim realized,
"You were posing! ! You're
STILL a virgin - I KNOW! !"

"SHUT UP! !" I laughed,
putting a hand to her lips,
"That's secret info!"

"Sophomores are
ALWAYS virgins." Kim said, "Not
Lisa, of course."

We turned, smiled,
and waved at Lisa - she

was dating three guys.

Kim says, "She could give
us both one." "Leftovers, " I
said, "should mean pizza."

anais vionet

Actual Poet

This actual poet writes me silly poems.
He's there and I can't explain it.
A lifetime of experience and things lived I only imagine
and this actual, *famous, poet writes me silly poems.

I wonder why me? ? Why is he wasting time with me?
This sapient, hopelessly encouraging, ego-boosting poet
who writes me silly poems.

It's confusing.
My mind paints countless canvases of doubt,
like our connection is fragile tissue, perishable suds.
Surely one day I will find him bored and gone.
This actual, famous poet that writes me silly poems.

anais vionet



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Practical Algebra

A lot of people hate algebra - they think it isn't useful.

They are SO wrong - here is some practical Algebra:

Chocolate comes from Cocoa,
which grows on a tree,
which is a plant,
therefore: Chocolate is a salad.

You're welcome.

anais vionet



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Last Words

Sometimes I
want to yell "I don't CARE"
in my mom's face.

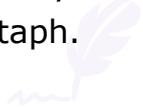
When she blithely tries
to measure my sad prison
world to her own youth.

That prehistoric
reality, of phonebooths and
whatever, back then.

But I know those
words would freeze in the air
like a neon sign.

And very probably be
etched on my tombstone
as an epitaph.

anais vionet



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My Lord

I'm imagining
MY lord - NO, no, - not GOD! *snort*
my future husband!

So, how will it be?
How will he persuade me - or
- will I entice him? ?

Relationships can
erase people - they seem to
disappear, sorta.

I'm not going to
do that - if alpha there be
it'll damn well be me.

But if he plays me
- just right - I'd surely acquiesce
to the score, like music.

anais vionet

In Concert...

Pay Shylock his pound
of flesh, give Richard his horse,
let Juliet love anew.

Let go of the ghost -
Shakespeare's doomed heroes
- pronounce them all dead.

Fight no more battles,
release strings so puppets
finish their dance.

Dismiss the actors,
set horses to pasture,
lower the curtains.

Ever-refreshed
villainy, once banished,
has taken new stage.

Human suffering,
in concert - you won't miss it
- it comes to you.

anais vionet

Besties

Some Senryus about
Bestfriends - the kindred spirits
we're lucky to know.

Boys are "whatever, " ;
but bestfriends are forever.
That's the way it is.

We tell our secret
fantasies - that we exchange
in sworn secrecy.

Bestfriends: the girls you
only stay mad at briefly - 'cause
you've news for them!

A bestfriend would push
you into your crush and yell
"get some! " ; then run.

anais vionet

I Search In Dreams

I pray to that dead
criminal Jesus - to set
us right - restore us.

We're a mess - like
spilled salt - remember the
fresh air of freedom?

In dreams I search - there
must be a cure lying
around somewhere..

Eyelid shades
open on chiaroscuro
lit, moody mornings.

I keep my head down
I'm doing my fey best, to
let nothing touch me.

anais vionet

Skywriting

By a clear mountain stream an enchantress sat skywriting,
her bracelets seemed to jangle a melody as her arms moved.
The wind stopped blowing lest the clouds corrupt the work.

The knight, dressed in black, wore a mask and intended damage.
His knife was between his teeth, as he moved noiselessly closer
- breathing shallowly for stealth.

The birds suddenly stopped chirping. "Go home boy," the
enchantress whispered.
The knight blinked and froze but the enchantress did not look around.
She pulled a half-penny from a pouch, kissed it, and lobbed it into the stream.

The knight went from certain to vague - he sheathed his knife and wiped his lips.

"Come, drink." the minx motioned to the stream.
As he sipped water from his cupped hands the beautiful woman
said, "Your love will bear you two sons if you're home before dark."
The knight wiped his hands on his trousers - nodded - and ran for his horse.
The enchantress smiled to herself as she finished her unearthly poem.

anais vionet

In Seine

The Seine river banks,
with their lack of guardrails, freaked
me out in fourth grade:

"Avez-vous entendu? ! ! "
My best friend rushed to ask it.
"Did you hear? ! (the news) "

A woman drowned! !
She gushed - the horror tale
punch line delivered.

My eyes were wide with
shock and fear - the monster takes
another victim.

The dark Seine river
slithered, like a green snake
- feet from my front door.

There was no railing
- a misstep would drop you some
12 feet, to your cold death.

No parent could save
you - a terrifying thought for
a nine year old girl.

Walking to school, my
brother would sneak up, nudging
me near left-bank death.

I would scream, amid
cat-calls and boyish laughter,
despite our au pair.

My best friend, Chloe, shared
my caution, if not my fear,
and loved to tease me.

That rapid river
loomed large in my dreams - as fears
can - for many years.

Last year we were in
Paris and I still couldn't go
near the riverbank=]

anais vionet

Strong Attractions

A crush is someone
you're strongly attracted to
- they just don't know it.

He doesn't know you: check.
you like him: check, he does nothing:
Check, you fall for him.

I lie in bed and
envision scenarios where
my crush grins at me.

It's so weird that
we can almost stalk someone
and they have no idea.

I'm trying to get hair
out of my mouth and I find
my crush is watching.

anais vionet

The Green Witch

My mom, with the green
witch's casual, sour malice,
can verbally kill.

But she is easily
deceived by disguise
- my body is a mask.

My submission is
but a costume - my calm
the offered lie.

I detest my own
pale, small, adolescent
answers - my weakness.

anais vionet



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Breakup Senryus

The question arises - in high school - "how do I break up with....";
So, as a public service - may I present:

Handy break-up Senryus.
Pick one to quickly, cut that old
relationship cord:

I'm sorry, What'd you say?
I can't hear you *confused look*
- we're breaking up.

You're the guy that
every school girl seems to want...
- today's their lucky day.

It's time we took
our relationship to the
previous level.

I still cherish the
initial misconceptions
I had about you.

anais vionet



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Breathlessly...

What I want is someone to love,
and for someone to somehow love me.
Not right now and not tomorrow...
but some day - eventually.
I'm still a child, those mysteries are vague,
but I pray it will happen - breathlessly.

anais vionet



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Friends...

These are some
Senryu poems about friendships.
Who knows us better?

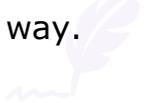
Friends are family
by invitation - accepted
gifts to each other.

We don't care what
your specific gender is
we're calling you dude.

I love to hang out
With people who make me forget
to check on my phone.

We all have a friend
who thinks of everything
in a dirty way.

anais vionet



PoemHunter.com

Things You'd Love To Say To Your Crush

Things that you would love
To say to your crush - if you
only had the nerve:

"quick, put your lips on
mine. I'm a spy and it's
an emergency! "

Hey, I shaved my legs
this morning - they're so smooth
- here, just feel 'em!

Kiss me if I'm wrong,
but the dinosaurs are still
around, aren't they?

anais vionet



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Oracle Whispers

Oracle please tell
me, (free of charge) about the
future that will be.

Show me the bright secrets
of love - be a mystic guide
for my bored heart's relief.

What kisses may be played
on sweet, future nights with no
tentative whispers please.

Help me conquer the
confusing compresence of
desire and unease.

anais vionet



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Don't Know, Don't Care

I swear, my parents act like they were never teens in a pandemic growing up.

I was watching "Perry Mason," an HBO show set in the 1930s. Perry gets mail out of his mailbox and I think "no GLOVES? ?" This pandemic has a hold of me.

6: 30am I'm finishing my shower - wrapping my hair in a towel.

Mom: *from my room* "I have something for you!"

Me: "OK." (I'm curious)

I step out of the shower, wrap on a towel, and my mom steps up and gives me a flu shot without so much as a "by your leave." Dr. Surprise strikes again.

My arm hurts=/
/

Writing a paper, on my computer, in class - I try to use the perfect word but I spell it so badly the spell checker gives up and in effect, says "I got nothin'." I switch words.

Telling a girl to calm down is like trying to put a cat in a tub.

My parents think every guy I talk to is my boyfriend.

If I'm texting and smiling my parents think I have a boyfriend.

I say, I don't know" when I don't care.

For ALL of its downsides virtual school is better because:

My two BFF and I have a facetime call going ALL school day so we can say snarky things..

I can listen to music on my headphones during classes.

I have multiple screens so I can web-surf during classes.

I don't have to wear shoes or a skirt!

I can put a video up so it looks like I'm paying attention.

I can snack/take a bathroom break whenever I want to.

I don't have to carry a backpack or make locker stops.

I can be late or leave early and blame it on "tech issues";.

anais vionet

Romance Rambling

The conversation
takes an crushy turn - so my
brain starts making quips.

My experience is
that my amorous impulses
are unreliable.

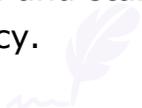
With my friends, my flawed,
carnavalesque attempts
at romance are legend.

Unless I'm starved
for embarrassment's grief
which I seldom am.

I will dodge, slither,
obfuscate and stall attempts
at intimacy.

What if I'm the
Kind of girl that guys can't
just fall in love with?

anais vionet



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Quiet Thoughts

It's in quiet
moments of thought that we create
our identities.

anais vionet



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Submitting To The Lash

In 7th grade we took
some personality tests
- they were intriguing.

I'm a hustler
- the very opposite of a
procrastinator.

I take on future
projects early, impatient
to sandpaper issues.

It's calming to
know why I stress - it helps me
navigate my fears.

While my friends are panicked
that SAT testing time is here
- I did mine last year.

It's easier
to submit to the lash if
we know what drives it.

anais vionet

Steady Moments

I dread those moments
when infatuation begins
to be commitment.

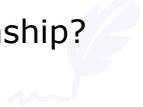
When a wanting to
be together turns into
an obligation.

whoa, I can't be
"your" girl - I'm not looking
to belong to you.

What commands my heart
who knows? But it can't be
kept - pressed like a rose.

Is a girl bitchy
if she won't commit to
a relationship?

anais vionet



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Disappointed Angel

I've disappointed heaven
and I can tell you why -
I angered a silver angel
who came down from the sky.

She said, "I'm just a messenger
sent to share the word."

I stood stone-still and waited
and this is what I heard:

"The coming Judgement will fulfil
- the rightful verdict of the Lord."

"OK..." I answered, shyly -
in an effort to prompt for more.

But the seraphim started fading away
as if the message finished her chore..

I said, "Wait! I need a message I understand
- you have to give me more."

The angel's face turned angry
and her tone became unkind -
she flipped her hair like a mean
girl and muttered "NEVERMIND".

So if you're messaged by an angel,
I hope you fare better than me
- I couldn't decipher the message
- and she flew off angrily.

anais vionet

Orphic Spells

Ex lovebirds of
the tamest passion can turn
so predatory.

Passive aggressive
schoolboys who mock whistle at
ex-girlfriends for spite.

Who scatter book bag
contents in mock accidents
for supposed revenge.

As witchcraft conjured
by the nonbelligerent
to silence the bully

I summon some sweet,
musical, lascivious
words as orphic spells

In self-effacing
defense to tame the awful
beast with dirty magic.

anais vionet

Pressures

force, punish, burden,
insistent coercion, and threat,
compulsion, tension.

Stressful stranglehold,
urge, force per unit area,
fuss, influence, duress.

anais vionet



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Bye Boredom

(Senryus)

If I don't have
a hair-band on my wrist I
feel out of control.

When I was a kid
I thought teens were the coolest
people in the world.

Now I know that teens
are the tireddest, most stressed
people in the world.

How fun would it be
if ceiling fans could support
our weight - bye boredom.

anais vionet



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Remember Summer

Remember summer,
as fun's residue fades.
Well, try anyway.

Now we live prudent,
virtually schooled lives - it's
all a million laughs.

Humidity clings,
grasping, like an ex-lovers
unwanted embrace.

Get your bikini,
hit the pool, frolic - drown school
worries in cool play

anais vionet



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Republican Magic..

(A 5 Senryu poem)

I'm excited - the
republican convention!
I love magic shows.

They will reveal, with
sorcerous skills a new Trump
- bighearted, and selfless.

The man we all know,
the emotionally crippled
horror, will wear disguise.

Who will be deceived?
The children in cages will cheer,
the virus dead will smile.

Our Nazis will march,
ghosts of veterans will wail,
What a fine party.

anais vionet

The Grass Path

(a story in 4 Senryus)

Dew gently pools on
the rich green Bermuda blades
of suburban lawns.

Walking across grass
soaks your shoes like a splashing
child in a puddle.

Your passage diagrammed,
by wet, green tracks that trace your
path like virgin snow.

Proof you were here, real,
a charming gift watched through chaste
glass that made me cry.

anais vionet



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The Shadows

(3 Senryu verses)

The morning sun dawns
electric white on another
day of lost promise.

The invitation
received, jump up! Respond like
a paid performer.

The crisp, sharp shadows
hide a murderous magic
called loneliness.

anais vionet



PoemHunter.com

Unwise Advances

Distrusted compliments

- screech like fingernails across
a schoolroom chalkboard.

No marked card - dealt from
the bottom of the deck - will
ever unlock my heart.

Avoid the overt

- sly Valmont, the skittish game
is wise to advances.

anais vionet



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Opposites

(2 haiku)

A boy will make you
think he's in love with you
When he really isn't.

A girl will make you
think that she doesn't love you
when she really does.

anais vionet



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Immoral Hands

a haiku story

Trump is attacking
TikTok - let him rape goodness,
let him be a Nazi.

He works for Russia,
is that news? He cages children
- some adults love that.

That fat bag of lust
has put his soiled, immoral
hands up the law's skirts.

Now he attacks youth,
- no, fun itself - in TikTok
- there is no justice.

anais vionet



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Stolen Cheese

(4 haikus)

The moon is missing
- void where it should be sitting
- It's not there in the sky.

I looked behind trees
the clouds were moved by the breeze.
I looked 360 degrees.

The loss of it's
light makes it darker than night
- something's not right.

I feel a spooky
unease - it's hard to believe
that some goon stole the moon!

anais vionet



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4 Random Thoughts..

(3 Haikus)

Immature - is a
word boring people use to
describe fun people.

I should start a book,
a thick notebook to keep
inappropriate thoughts.

Ever look at friends
and think, "Wow, we're gonna
be some weird adults?"

Sleep is my drug, my
bed is the dealer, my clock
the cops and school the jail.

anais vionet



PoemHunter.com

Borrowed Things

(3 Haikus)

No - don't kiss me
unless you're planning to
start a new habit.

Don't borrow kisses
unless you can return them
with real interest

Remember boy-O
it's all fun and games 'til
someone falls in love

anais vionet



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Worthless Wishes

It's no use wishing on the moon,
beware that nearly untouchable lunar beauty,
for she has a dark side and will desert you
when the fickle twirling earth makes
the night into morning.

It's no good wishing on the stars,
those illusions you see are a million years old -
stars die, own no magic and they too will fade
as the morning blossoms upon the night.

The ancients wished on the treasonous sun
that provides warmth but no compassion
- although it can bring the new day
- it can do little else

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Brice

(a flash fiction piece)

My brother (Brice) left university, 6 months ago, like millions of other students, to shelter from COVID. After years away Mr. Annoying was back in MY world, bickeringly close and way too frequently in my business - like some half-assed adult (he just turned 22) .

As school planning recently started though, I awoke one night, unnerved at the thought that he might be leaving. It was a shocking awakening to how much I need him, draw strength from him and shelter in his lee. The heart-wrenching realization of how much I would miss him was breathtaking, like that Disney ride where they suddenly drop you seven stories. I bit off half my fingernails before I finally fell asleep. =/

In the clear light of morning, it's obvious that he'll leave again at some point and I'm dreading it now that it's flagged my awareness - and I face him with a whole new, creepy appreciation.

*Yesterday afternoon...

*Brice is on the sectional, with a bowl of pretzels, watching some BORING documentary.

I sneak up behind him and take his drink off the side table.

I plop down next to him - very close, I squeeze next to him, hard, like there's no other room on the huge sectional. He gives me the side eye.

Me: "What? ?"

After a few minutes he reaches for his drink to find it missing - he looks around, then at me.

Me: With a mouth full of pretzels, "What? ?"

He gets up to find his drink (which I put in the kitchen) and that takes about 20 seconds.

While he's gone, I change the channel to "Miraculous Ladybug", my favorite cartoon.

When he comes back we wrestle for the remote - it takes him a couple of minutes but he's too strong and as he begins winning, I yelled, "MOM, Brice is hurting me!" (which is cruelly ignored) .

He finally gets the remote and back to his show - I straighten my hair, out of breath, and wonder how long it will take him to realize the pretzels are missing.

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Morning Mind

3 haikus

I am enjoying
this dull time - this decayed life
of extinguished hopes

Each sublime sunrise
finds my morning mind childishly
wishing for freedom

If wishes had power
If young tears were a vaccine
If our thoughts mattered

anais vionet



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Cheap Childhood

(each stanza is a haiku)

Barron Trump will be
attending virtual school soon
his Mom is careful

Should you send your kids
to dance on the battlefield
careful mothers?

Take you one last look
at faith in your kids eyes
- teach them their real worth.

What is the story
they will tell their kids - if you
push them out the door?

Those small trusting faces.
Cemetery roads are bricked
with silly gambles.

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Effects Of The Heart

*(each stanza is a haiku - I think I'm in a Haiku phase) *

I never think of
drinking tea - that's just not
me - but I like it

there are a thousand
things like that which define us
- our many small choices

Are our passions choices?
"Our wild passions instruct us"
- said wise Shakespeare.

I don't choose to
quicken my heart at the sight
of one special boy

so I'm not sure
how that works, the pushes and pulls
of attractions grab

But the effect stills
and taxes the heart like maple
syrup thickened blood

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Promises

(a series of haikus)

I will not woo
until this virus is cured
or there are vaccines.

I refuse to kick
my brother until there's
some police reform.

I won't fight with
my mom 'til we focus on
the environment.

I'm going to hold
my breath til the election
- go, go, sleepy Joe!

I won't buy any
makeup until - heck, who wears
makeup anymore? ?

I'm giving up
pizza... wait, no I'm NOT.
Forget about THAT!

*promises are subject
to cancellation - any time
- without prior notice*

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The Resistance

*(each stanza is a Haiku) *

We, the resistance,
are here, stationed on our couches
armed with our remotes.

Camouflaged in our
faded PowerPuff pajamas
and fuzzy slippers

We are determined.
Yes, we have evaded contact
and forsaken love.

We few, lay down such
as freedom for honest care
for our fellow man.

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Conjugal Forms

*each "paragraph" of this poem is a haiku (5-7-5 syllables) *

I need to avoid
unimportant distractions
so my parents say

Exhausting yourself
in intimate situations
is dumb at your age

This is a yearly
lecture that I know by heart
- they must think me loose.

Surely you jest...
could you be suggesting a
conjugal visit?

Where do I find the
form needed to apply for that?
Do you have a pen?

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Bright Unknown

a Haiku

You don't know me
Not really. You just might see
someone smiling bright

you might hear a laugh
skipping off my dark surface
inside I am rough

I am scrubbing on
interior surfaces in a
measured tyranny

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A Stormy Haiku Story

thunderstorming skies...
my tongue reaches to catch the
Important raindrops

the lightning's flash
causes me to flinch in surprise
Then an after boom

A squeak of fear
static electricity
makes my hair rise up

maybe inside is a
a much better place to be
in a thunderstorm

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Cute

You're such a cute guy! !
You always look relaxed and detached
and a little confused or bemused.
It makes me want to enlist in assisting.
Your lips look seriously delicious.
Your eyes are green and serene.
You're simply beautiful*sigh*
Damn these binoculars are good!

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Meditation

As a teenager, I can sometimes be frantic,
unfocused, stressed and anxious.

Luckily, I was introduced to meditation.

I** love **meditation and the way it makes me feel - solid.

So, how does it work?

First I set a 15 minute timer and get
prepared to look a little foolish.

I sit somewhere comfortable, cross-legged.

I close my eyes and focus on a point
in the center of my forehead

between my eyes, relax my mind,
and think only of the sound of OM.

When your mind wanders, just go back to OM.

Existing in that territory of nothing
there is a silence that must be listened to.

You end up giving sharp attention to nothing.

It is simple, compelling and satisfying.

When you're done, a new stillness will remain in your mind.

anais vionet

The Hounds Of Hell...

Summer's almost over - that convalescent state
where successive modes of pleasure
were the order of the day.

Now fall commands awakening -
drive simplicity away! The hounds
of hell yelping that it's time to banish play.
They cry "forget unscheduled hours
that owned no share of care - the virtual halls
are scheduled and we'll soon see you there."
No apotropaic magic can delay my slated fate -
to pixelated halls of learning I must soon acclimate.

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The Tiger

The tiger languidly paces its enclosure
Its genetic memory of the hunt intact.
A movement catches its eye and its heart quickens.
The instinct to hunt, catch and eat
- to savor the delicious, warm meat and thick,
salty blood - stirs with intuition's reflex.
It freezes, licks its lips and crouches,
alert to possible prey.

Where are your rights, oh modern American?
With your family eating popcorn - behind glass.
Surely you are lessened by protection
and insulted by cool safety.
Climb the fence, ignore liberal warnings
and the alarmed cries of lesser men.
Stare down the now crouching cat
- ears back and cautiously approaching
in bent, alert stalk.
Claim your right to be free! !
Taste pure freedom.

anais vionet

12 Days

School's starting in 12 days.
A thousand kinds of torture
in a million different ways.
You work and have a boss
who's awfully hard to please
in school, we have 6 bosses
do you think that that's a breeze?
Virtual school's the worst
it's like school without the fun.
No flirting, dates, or parties
so it's good training for a nun.

anais vionet



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Distanced

I saw you on the lake.
You have a nice tan,
you glistened, wet, and smiled.
We waved halfheartedly, at a distance.
It was one of those 2020 moments.

We are distanced by discipline,
desires sheltered in place.
Mine are burned, as fuel,
for piquant eclogues or rest,
unused, like nuclear waste.

anais vionet



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Clouds...

Where are the clouds going
in their hurry between heaven and earth?

Why do clouds cry?

Intangible mountains in the sky...

wait - that one's a bunny!

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I.Have

I am unkissable
I am unreachable
I am semi-innocent
I am under pressure
I have an impassioned mind
I need to be taken in hand
I need to love soberly

anais vionet



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That Old Moonlight

I see your face, and like a splash of clear
cold water - I'm startled awake from loneliness.

I hear your voice, and like something lost
and wanted, I feel a breathless interest.

A video stutter is a cruel and sudden reminder
- you are unknowably remote - and this magic
connecting us is just another of passion's obstacles.

anais vionet



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Jet

Like Mozart's Cherubino, I know nothing of love
but I am waiting on the runway, idling like a jet
I am burning my composure
I am inviting trouble
I have hidden gifts
and a steely will

anais vionet



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The Fort

Build your fort and be its watchman
Wound me with silence or cut me with words
Humiliate me, remove happiness
Put me in lonely company
Make me autarkic

I will battle with whispers
I will hide in plain sight
I will sulk in the now
I will kill with looks
I can cry in secret

anais vionet



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Quiet Night

How well I know this place
with its multicolored, sloping gardens,
it's glittering, fountained pools
but it's beauty is fleeced by repetition

Loneliness tests the resolution of the young
with our howling appetite to experience
and be shaped by exposures.

Like the gleaming barrel of a gun,
the clock points at nothing
and the crimson sunset leads
to another empty, quiet night.

anais vionet



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Trump's Hoax

The virus will fade in the summer heat.
It's Trump's hoax folks - it's a joke folks.

Drink your Lysol and get back on the street.
Look, it's a hoax folks - it's a joke folks.

We can trade those masks in for some caskets
Yes, it's a hoax folks - you'll be ok folks.

Send your kids to school - some will die, but that's cool.
This is no hoax folks - some kids will die folks.

Or they'll bring the virus right back to you.
Safety's a joke folks - do the republican choke folks.

The average bill for ICU care - is 20K folks
chump change folks - just pay the man, folks

One Hundred and Fifty Thousand dead
But vote for Trump folks - if your family's alive folks

anais vionet

When Did

When did "people deserve to live" become a controversial thought?

When did wearing a mask to protect your health become so overwrought?

When did the idea of protecting your kids become an afterthought?

When did counting the dead become a Presidential political plot?

We're so far down the Trump-rabbit-hole that common sense is skewed.

We really have to get rid of that FU#KH3@D - if you'll excuse me being rude.

anais vionet



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A Hunting

Ignore the roses' glory lass -
for this purpose you were born!
Virgin princess - you are needed
to catch the elusive unicorn!

I stumble as if to music -
for I know the sordid truth.
That abstract love burns brightly -
in the hearts of maiden youth.

I'm a secretly broken angel -
so this magic I can't perform.
I was seduced by boyish powers -
by clownish fumbling I was transformed.

I've been avoiding hateful mirrors -
for unwelcome truths they seem to know.
I can but join this dull adventure
and a hunting we will go.'

anais vionet

What's Up?

I've been working on my website - it's been neglected far too long.
I've been wearing out Spotify - I may have listened to every song.
I walk five miles a day - because you've got to get outside
and I can easily spend an hour a day on "Just Dance" exercise.
I've been taking free on-line courses at "open university"
They have a thousand choices - an almost endless diversity.
Have you ever heard of "Headspace" - it can help you to relax
If you haven't tried meditation for stress - I think it's unsurpassed.
I'm learning about meal planning and cooking things with ease
I've been Zooming with an old GF, in China, to freshen up my Cantonese.
Even with a thousand distractions - this lockdown is driving me crazy
But it isn't because I have nothing to do, and it isn't because I'm lazy.
People just need people - so that we can laugh, love and compete,
or simply be together - that's how humans feel complete.

anais vionet



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The Trees And The Birds

I have to say, this isolation doesn't appear to be affecting me at all.

I was thinking... The wind must come from somewhere.

Do the trees make the wind with their ceaseless moving around?

"KKKeeeeepp STILL! ! " I shriek at the trees from my bedroom window but the trees pretend not to hear. Science says trees can talk to each other over some secret, underground, filament-like network - so I know the ba\$tards are listening.

And I don't know about this new generation of birds - these tearless, happy birds that just chirp to be fashionable. They annoy me and they pretend to be unaware of the value of silence.

"Shut UP! " I yell at a speckled bird who stares down at me like I'm insignificant.

"Yeah", I say, " the woolly mammoths ignored us too, " I warn.

I give it the two-fingered, back and forth "Yeah, I'm watching you" point.

Then it just chirps right at me. aaarrgghhh!

So I give it the bird.

anais vionet

Please Care

Please care.

Love's slants and spins have me dizzy.

Thy laughter's the star I navigate to

Thy voice a song I listen for

Thy touch I long for

Please care.

I make heated love's impious oaths.

Thy sigh is my pleasure as well

Thy smile is worth gold

Thy look my is my sun

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The Witch

The witch lies conjuring lines of verse
to alter our place in the universe
to twist this common knowing
and spin such miracles as love.

A flash of light and a cackle of laughter
it seems I got what I was after
as your eyes fall on me hungrily
my world now mirrors my dreams.

How bright our future seems.
Then a witches warning: "2000
mornings of love have you 'til natural
laws return - death's padlock will be opened
if the stolen love you haven't earned."

What bitter lessons greed can teach
when we twist the fates to heaven reach.

anais vionet



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The Toll

There's no sheltering in a public place.
There's no coming together face to face.
Keeping away from you keeps me secure,
I'm keeping away from you, but praying for a cure.
Obeying all the rules 'cause that's how I roll.
But staying away from you is taking quite a toll.
I'm getting weirder and weirder as time goes by
No distraction techniques are making this all right.
Lying in bed all night wide-eyed and hardly sleeping.
Enjoying my binge of repetitive negative thinking.

anais vionet



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What I'd Want

What I'd want

I want you all to be well.

I'd like you all to have love.

I want you all to have plenty.

I want you all to enjoy friends.

I hope you can all savor family.

I want you all to experience longevity.

In a world where we can all go out again.

That's all I want - is it too much to ask?

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Two Questions??

Which came first - kissing or fire?

Which came first - dance, or the language of love?

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The Reading??

I've got a reading!
And the venue's all sold out.
It's an old phone booth
that some company threw out.

Standing room only
you can get in by arrangement
I'll just hop out
for the term of your engagement.

If you show up
you won't even need a mask
'cause you'll be standing
on the far side of the glass.

My voice sounds muffled
in the sound-proof enclosure
so my poetry won't really
be getting much exposure.

For my fan base
it's the ideal place to show.
See, I can do the reading
and no one else will know.

anais vionet

Whatever It Takes ??

I want to be a writer -
and like a new poker player -
I'm starting to evaluate my cards.

I post on several poetry sites
I find syncing them kinda hard.

'Cause I'm the model of imperfection
heck, I'm the Edison of mistakes -
a teenager half-heartedly committed
to doing whatever it takes.

Does it help that I'm never happy?
That I constantly make updates?

At times I feel the proverbial cat
chasing its own tail -
but I think I'm making progress
- like a literary snail.

anais vionet

Simply Gone... (The Virus)??

Wow, it turns out Trump was right.
I saw it on "the Onion" - posted overnight.

Scientists woke up today and the virus
was simply gone - the miracle - has happened.
And they said that Trump was wrong!

The once dying - started laughing
first responders broke into song
patients shrugged off ventilators
they can go back home where they belong.

That God has been so merciful
is a story ripped from scripture
and since Trump - the antichrist - is here
we can move on to the rapture!

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That Internet Thingy

I love that Internet voodoo
that pile of wires and things
that lets us stay connected
and keeps us entertained.

It ties the world together
like economies these days
it's magic either good or bad
information cuts both ways.

It went down the other day
and it wasn't out that long
the maintenance guy
was at the outside box
and he did something wrong.

I watched him like a tiger
from inside my gilded cage
I was pacing my perimeter
like a predator, engaged.

I screamed helpful, timely updates
he seemed a clueless clown
and I was ready to go block
his truck if he tried to leave
while we were still down.

He finally got the thingy fixed
my sweet prince of restoration
I laughed out loud to see the lights
then I gave him a standing ovation.

Without the Internet I'd go crazy
and it wouldn't take that long
after months of dull isolation
it's helped us all stay strong.

anais vionet

The Mistake

On Twitter, late at night, you're a big tough guy
calling people out and spitting in their eyes.

But in the real world - you blubber and you blunder,
like inside your head there's a fire in the dumpster.

Your call to drink Lysol was a typical, deadly, Trump proffer -
your handling of the pandemic an incompetent slaughter.

In the face of unrest you pour fuel on the fire -
a dead BLACK man? You're a trouble amplifier.

Texting on Twitter you're a liar and a punk -
when trouble breaks out, you hunker in a bunker.

You're America's undertaker, our commander-and-thief -
a living, breathing catastrophe - leading America disastrously.

anais vionet



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Without

hello world without surprise.
good morning gentle tedium.
seduce me, please, monotony.
kiss me, sweet emptiness.
hold me rough, nothingness.
dishonor me, meaninglessness.
ravish me, joylessness.
whew... can a girl get a cigarette?

no, I don't really smoke - yuck - that was a joke=]

anais vionet

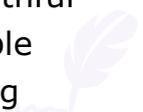


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The Boyfriend Bell Curve

So
hot
cute
smart
cuddly
Dances
attentive
seductive
accessible
Sympatico
intoxicating
mesmerizing
college bound
straightforward
smart as a whip
eager to please
always on time
100% truthful
pleasurable
enthraling
incredible
orgasmic
funniest
gentle
sweet
sexy
soft
fun

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Ring Like Music

Murder with callous authority
Murder with casual face
behold guilt and indifference
behold helpless public pleading
cries to mothers past and mothers now
behold public death - oh, watching eyes

behold the citizens' fear to interpose
behold the helpless sheep, oh lion!
where came such fear?
behold the face of arrogance
behold the face of tyranny
are you safe in your coop, chicken?
where came such power?

Share the barking dogs' epiphany
wake the half-asleep and world-weary
clutch the scoundrels
Let the pain of others be warning
And the alarm of villains ring like music

anais vionet

Fires Along The Tree Line

American citizens in "bread-lines" to get little boxes of food. How desperate do you have to be to join that line? The sad, generous, little boxes of nutrition. We are all human, we all need our next breath and our children's next meal. We all need shelter.

It's a carnival of pleasure to mock human need. Tell me my mistake.

Watch our President's Daily Briefing. He doesn't mention bread-lines. He chooses not to. How counterfeit is his competence. No "fire side chat", no promise of hope. How mean is this fat, grubby, "rich" man who s***s on golden toilet seats and ignores starving Americans' desperation.

The tyrant's plea, as the collapse begins, is "I'm not responsible". Tell me my mistake.

We have lost our immeasurable strength. We are become callous. We are robbed, of our better, more generous selves by narrow focus, by zero sum greed. Our collapse will be just, like verse set down in primitive times when the margin of error was clear and understood.

It's a calm discrimination to choose carelessness. Tell me my mistake.

This unfolding viral nightmare is but one of the fires along the tree line. The encroaching environmental disaster, the loss of our political system's integrity, the militarization of police racism.

Maybe China will do better - if I'm reading my score card correctly, it looks like they're up next as the world's great superpower.

anais vionet

Hhhmmm...

arrgh! . Zoom didn't connect? - more tech issues
USPS can't deliver any more - Trump's America!
I wasn't dragged & dropped - is wireless down?
no Facebook notifications? - ok, who uses that
My image wasn't swiped! - I knew my hair was..
My email was returned? - call that Alphabet guy
No Amazon deliveries. - a probable traffic issue
FedEx hasn't arrived! - there must be a mistake
I didn't get pinned? - maybe there's a pandemic
I wasn't upvoted. - I question the entire process
No iMessages - maybe the upgrade was buggy
No likes? - is it me or am I seeing patterns here

anais vionet



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Stumbling Towards Desire

I stumble pajamaed, half asleep toward the object of my desire.
in memory, it calls to me, of passionate pleasures experienced prior.
The morning's night is the consummate time for secret rondeaus discrete.
With ninjaly sneak I arrive at the door - my illicit joy within reach.
But to my horror I find the pizza gone - again, my trust is breached!

anais vionet



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He Broke (Up With) Me

What a lonely, peculiar, eccentric figure i must be. A girl, in a garden, crying at an iPad, in the dark.

Earlier, at school...

It was a clear spelling out, like steel cuts thru fruit.

As he spoke he looked down and away, his gorgeous face blank and indifferent, as if I were wasting his time or he was talking to a child needing an obvious truth taught quickly.

When he finally looked back at me, I saw no pity in his impersonal, hazel eyes.

I couldn't breathe, I couldn't think, I needed time to contemplate the universe's new laws.

Can a girl just suddenly die of heart-ache? ? because I was sure my heart had stopped, locked and frozen.

Finally, I gasped in this impossible new air - the force of it made me hold the cold-iron stair railing - the game is rough.

He's so... male - all chase and careless passion - intelligent teaser, a skilled steersman of excited climates... Oh, you simply have no idea.

And now he was, gone, still there, but gone to me - as if he'd transformed into a hologram or had begun to orbit some other sun, he just...

"You made me feel special." I said.

I had lost my balance on this faithless and unequal world, where heaven so cruelly punishes desires.

"You made me feel I mattered, such a favor." I said, absentmindedly, as I turned, and went back up the three steps into school.

I don't think I looked back at him as the door closed. After all, he wasn't there any more.

I think he called my name, like a question...

anais vionet

Careless Whisperer

Dear careless whisperer,
Some sharings are dagger-edged
and there is no escape when they're turned on you
no countermagic for the soul crushing embarrassment
dropped as if from a great height.
Did you hear the gun-shot thunderclap of confidence
leaving the room?

anais vionet



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Boredom

DOOH!*whispering* Don't look now, but that pasty loser boredom is here.

You can always find him waiting, hanging in the silence of empty rooms.
To acknowledge him is to sink into vacancy where the real is shattered
and its pieces spread out until you exist without thought or desire.

Quick, turn on some music - let it become an extension of yourself.
Dance and recreate fun - before you are struck helpless.
Tell him jokes and he'll leave..

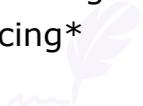
"I thought the neighbors were nice people - then they went and put a
password on their wi-fi."

"A lot of people cry when they slice onions - the trick is not to get
emotionally attached."

"There's a new restaurant called Karma - no menu - you just get what you
deserve."

Oh, look, he's gone =]

still dancing



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Mysteries

You've stopped talking to me and I don't know why...

I hate this - this feeling - this anguish, with it's retinue of mysteries.

Was it something I said? I'm sorry - I curse my rebel lips.

Was it something I didn't say? I'm sorry - I was the unaware child.

I'm just a girl - not some faultless machine

There needs to be a manual - a manual for... everything - so i'd know.

Is there a more contemporary narrative than disappointment at the hands of this Internet plaything - this toy-like trap we hope will inform us and we think we command?

I know questioning destroys some things.. but I don't understand.

I don't understand.

anais vionet



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Morning Dew

The day is new and not yet lost to summer heat.
Flowers blush and preen in morning breezes.
Let me whisper fears before the day consumes you
My fickle friend, another shadows your affections
Distracted lover another twirls for your attention
I'm losing confidence, and I think I'm losing you.
In the remaining shadows, leaves still brandish dew

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Tears Over You

I shed tears over you
for a second or two
but still FAR too long.

I'm glad we're through
I was stuck with you -
like gum on my shoe.

Another night of drama got to me,

I'm not made of stone.
But please don't text or phone.
I'm much better alone.

anais vionet



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The Jury

High school's like a jury - let us all be judged
the righteous and the wicked and especially those in love

The jury's always watching - it has a thousand eyes
it's in constant deliberation and it hears a million lies

some think there's popular immunity and that's how the system works
but celebrities are piquant targets - it's one of the systems quirks

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury - I address you here today
to plead the cause of justice for a girl who was drugged astray

I know this girl's not popular - she's mostly known as "what's her
name";
But the *prominent* guy who "seduced" her used methods vile and
lame

I work cloud-like opinion and gossip pointedly outside stalls
I direct lunch-time chatter and I'm "overheard" in busy halls

I'm a regular Bader Ginsburg - you WANT me on your side
and If I'm coming for you - there's no fu*king place to hide

anais vionet

Summer Storm

(in 2017 my parents wanted to move us to Shenzhen, China - for a year)

No luminous field of stars tonight and no rain as yet, just booming thunder and the play of light on darkness.

I lay in a grass clearing, watching the sky. Swirling clouds and flashes of light - bright streaks - as far as the eyes can see.

Wind whips the trees, the sky, my hair. Leaves irregularly blow by as if in a hurry or perhaps debris from some strange slow-motion explosion.

I feel at home in this chaos. This angry sky mirrors my mood, my life at this moment. The next few days, next few hours will change everything, for me, or nothing. My future looms suddenly dark, frightening and empty.

Am I really caught in this plan, this parental gravity, this storm, that can upset my entire life, where years of furious work are meaningless? ?

There is no compass for dreams, they know only passionate directions. I've defended them as best I could, like a lioness, a lover, but there's no stopping a storm.. I guess.

As the rain begins I know one thing.. I will not move..

anais vionet

A Small Room

What a small room - my finger traces dust across the plain table.

What did Grandma DO here? I glance around for electrical sockets - none to be seen.

Her life was spent staring out the window, at 3D life, but only seeing memories.

I go to the wall and test the switch

a bare light bulb illuminates an area with a hot plate.

"Jesus", I mumble.

Why would she live in this shabby room?

Was this a punishment? Like a place where a nun would live?

No, *I self correct in my mind* Gramma was the sweetest person on earth.

I walk three steps, twirl and flop on my back, on the bed.

Dust explodes off the bare mattress in the sunlight

slanting through the grimy, half-open, shadeless window.

I wave and blow the dust away and now I'M lost in memory..

She was ninety-three - I never heard her say an unkind word

In that tiny, sand-papery whisper of a voice.

She always wanted me to sit in her lap, she wanted to brush my hair.

From 10 on I was bigger than she was and afraid I'd break her.

"Don't you worry over ME", she'd say with a chuckle, "I'm an old piece of leather."

Her cheeks were pink and wrinkled like old rose petals. Her hair a white bun.

"I miss you Gramma", I whisper.

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Trump 'tis Of Thee

My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of tyranny,
Of thee I sing;
Land where my hackers live,
Land where my loyalty is,
Land where my bankers give
Let misrule ring!
My native country, flee,
To land of autocracy,
Thy name I love;
I love thy arrogance,
Thy sweet high-handedness;
Your subjugating dominance
Of thee I sing.
Let Russia swell the breeze,
And ring with Putany
Sweet brother's song;
Let lying tongues awake;
Let American freedoms take;
Let law and justice break,
Let Trump rule ring!
Allies like Moscow Mitch,
Have America in the ditch,
Let Fox News ring!
Republicanism is a bit*h,
Our government for the rich,
My Lackey's be enriched
Of thee I bling!
Corruption's' God to me,
Author of tweetery,
To me thee sing.
Long may my brand be bright,
With dictator's impending night,
The fools have given me the right,
I'mGod your King!

anais vionet

Knowing Care?

Thou hast my love and I desire thine.
Dost thou know or knowing, care?
I keep the nymph's lonely station.

But my impatience grows savage.

If thou carest not, my love
the stars will keep their motion
flowers will still need water
I will learn stillness
the feeling will rust

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Loot

I'm daughtering in place and it's a full time job.
I'm a posable figurine, like a barbie for my mom.
She's been shopping in a frenzy, to fill the empty hours.
I think we have an Amazon truck dedicated to our house.
I needed another closet so we took my sister's room
It looks like a Dior outlet-store or maybe King Tut's tomb.
"I think you've gotten carried away, " I said to her last night.
Looking at all the loot arranged, she said, "you may be right."

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Don't Dash

love doesn't dash, it loiters
with repeated movements like music
and beautifully crude endearments

love doesn't dash, it lingers
with rhythms like dance
and boastfully rude aphorisms

so dally with me, my love
lollygag, lounge and in a while
we'll share breaths and mess about

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Fake

fake

I snuck into the party with an ID I hastily made
and stumbled, out of step, into the poetry parade.

In this beautiful country club, I'm surrounded by my betters.
I wave my kindergarten rhymes to show the men of letters.

In the echo of the learned men who came this way before me
I hear the patterned minuets, that if followed, lead to glory.

I chafe in those traveled ruts and I long for something varied
and I hope to spark a unique verse, between school and the cemetery.

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For The Moment

Dear unanswerable creator.
Oh, merciful and carelessly brutal lord.
We are alive for a moment.
We have our pleasures and despairs.
We seem but episodes in a series.
A question whispered, like gentle breathing:
Do our frolics play on in astral syndication
or are we recycled into cosmic dust?

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Desires

I'm like a Vulcan when you aren't around -
logical, distant, evaluating you
like a product with my friends,
the consumer with a lifetime of buying.

But near you I'm a prisoner
of some consciousness independent of thought,
like a fever or the dreamer,
with the merest semblance of control.

You are light and loose, hair like Spanish moss
and skin like cedar resin, all laughter and agonizing beauty.
The way you lean across the table I only think of kissing you.

I'm sure at times it must show,
like a red stain on a white dress
or some inconvenient erection..

You have some license on me,
a key to a place in me I keep hidden and close,
you fit some interior template of desire.

What good is freedom if I can't tell you! ! ?
Oh, The ragged vagaries of loves games.

1000 emotions and I am deserted
to silence by some rule of thumb -
by a faltering consumer confidence
or some feeling of inward nakedness -
when all I want in the world is an open kiss
or to give you an intimate scented something...

anais vionet

Chants

There is a CD of African chants I listen to. They are so beautiful. Are they prayers, songs of love, lullabies? I don't know.

Oli-oli-O, one chant goes - I can't understand it but part of me responds to it. Like your name, the rhythm of your speech - a thrill ride, I am still trembling.

Nothing is what I expected it to be. Intoxication, sudden and sweet.. how could I protect myself from that? ?

I want to be with you - not eat, be with you, not sleep. The words gushed forth - we talked of EVERYTHING and when I was distracted - you stole my heart.

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Love's Positions

I'm loves iPad ready for embrace.
Steve Jobs got credit for the touch interface
But mine's up and running with all the updates
I'm love's police laying out the pace
"you took that curve a little fast - this isn't a race."
I'm love's surveyor drawing the lines
"the pilgrims want to explore a new area this time."
I'm love's conductor - whew - hear the engine whine
"A tourist wants the tunnel - he's ready and primed."
I'm love's waitress
"sir, that's not on the menu."
Love's entrepreneur hosting the venue
I'm loves umpire right there in your face...
"sorry pal, but your out at second base! "

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The Age Of Hate

Ok, I'm not paid to think (like the TV shouting heads) , I have no real voice (vote) , and certainly no credentials - but I'm as invested in America as any high-school citizen can be - I've pledged allegiance 3000 times (hhmmm.. do they doubt our loyalty?)and when it comes to loving America I'd have to say my classmates and I are at the center of the spell.

I'm afraid we're growing up in the age of hate.. the age of phony outrage where each position large or small is high noon and violence is underfoot even when policing ordinary citizens.

We won't address the multitude of old problems in this new age.. we'll just unleash a marquetry of half truths to dispute the proven until unreasoned arguments reach their paranoid fullness. The real world is alarming enough - lets just push that away and ignore it - while we're at it lets slut shame the poor, the old, the sick, the unemployed, the hungry and the hand of mercy.

I realize America was never one moral atom bonded for better.. but those anvils that forged us appear neglected or forsaken. I'm afraid what's happening now, what we're seeing and hearing now, is a symphony of erosion - that by the time I have any say at all, the middle class will be gone - america turned slum - where even the voice of despair will be turned traitor.

We'll only be able to see our greatness in museum souvenir shops where nothing is affordable and everything is made elsewhere.

anais vionet

Wacky

I can tell that the stars are unhappy
and I know why the moon's acting crabby
'cause they know you won't call
And it's bothering us all
I'm sorry that I behaved badly

The day won't go on without you
The clouds have been crying all day
I've expressed my regrets
please forgive and forget
'cause even Alexa's gone whacky

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Unimpressed

I've passed the disenchanted one, in the empty hallway
I've heard the isolated girl, arguing in the mirror
I've seen the angry hermit girl reflected in the toaster
I've noticed the crazy girl, crying in the shower
I've enjoyed the whispers of the poet talking to herself
Her latest performance had the largest audience yet
the flowers were captivated but the cat left unimpressed

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From A Distance

Oh, absent one, I miss you.
Darling, an empty place awaits you.
Thrushes chirp their dissatisfaction in
the garden as I doze with boredom.
I send my well wishes from a distance.

Oh, absent one, my digital ghost.
You're here when I call but not here.
I brush my hair with discontent, I
eat bitter, lonely meals to stay alive.
I send my love from a distance.

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Parents

Parents, the keepers of the door to this amazing universe..

To them I am a fragile sapling, staked for its own good. Protected from sweet kisses, funny and salty, somber and delicious.

Parents, those figures of authority - from whom our true lives are kept.

Protect me from scars no deeper than a blush, from rustles on a soft battlefield, caressed curves, tousled hair and appetitive breaths of each others air.

Parents, who guard against loves bombardment, the persistent courtship. Giving ground in slow but immense movement, like those of continental plates.

Parents, whose power will fade with no more cause than time, gentle as mist, as powerful as a waterfall.

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The Tribe Of The Lonely

I'm one of you - the tribe of the lonely - forgetting ourselves in monotony.
Our shelter world is a shifted reflection of reality - we are frozen in time.
I wait, set aside, like a marble girl carved by the chisel's kiss
but I'm real and full of desires that are ready to be used again.
I'm eager to engage should we escape this fist-like viral grip.
I want to live a life - I want memories to name.
I'm seemingly safe - but the cost is paradise.

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Dueler's Thrust

What's the scariest book you ever read? ... Some Stephen King book like Salem's Lot or The Shining? For me it's Kate Millett's Sexual Politics... Oh, man... Now THAT will scare you to death if you're female.

I discovered a man, overheard at my church, who actually believes his sex is a sign of power and of superiority. WHY am I so startled? Some childish trust not yet scrubbed off? "Or worse yet, some belief, not yet strangled, in a better world? See, stupid me, I thought this bill had been paid, by sufferance, by real people like Elizabeth Stanton, Carrie Catt and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.... by entire generations who ran through those tangled woods emerging cut and bruised... if at all.

What is it like for HIM? I see him eyeing us, his little inferiors who bleed with the moon, with secret, catlike distaste... regarding female opinions as slightly impure... then, with calm, Godlike grace, granting females the forms of servant to assume.

Can I, can we, be forced to accept this inheritance? I don't know... All I know is that this prejudice, so strangely without substance, strikes me like a dueler's lucky thrust, robbing me of attendant rights and wit... springing a tender trap of doubt in the future and abandoning me to stammering.

anais vionet

Death At The Door

Death's at our door, it's right there on our Ring.
I told it we're busy but it's patient - I think.
Death's at our door and - yep - it looks - viral.
But if you listen closely it's singing a carol.
"come out and play - it's a beautiful day"
"you can hide from the virus like a rat in a cave"
"but you'll just end up dying - some OTHER way."
The tune has such rhythm, the voice has such charm.
The pull is profound, my fears are transformed.
Death offers a beginning, not just an end.
and the offer's delivered with a wink and a grin.
Death looks like a cross between an angel and a prince.
Death seems kind of funny. Mom! Should I let it in?

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Free Will

You don't own me - I'm not your atometon
a gadget, an app, with a selection of options.
Sit this way, stand up strait, fix your hair
a doll-like disaster in need of repair.
You rule my world - but I'm not a slave
you can't prescribe every way I behave.
You make some good points - I try - and I listen
but it's hard to exist under klieg light inspection.
Maybe you think I'm your other daughter
I have bad news - I'm a later model.
An idea strikes me that I'd like to proffer:
swallow the pill of free will, Doctor.

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