

in spite of ourselves

(call & response)

my dearest frank,

i've been dreaming so much lately. thick dreams. almost every night i dream of letters. it seems they are stuck in my head. and so i write to you. i'm not really sure what to call this. something like an ode, something like an elegy. call & response either way. an invitation, as per usual. you can always do what you want with it. i wish you were here, frank. i miss you so much. sorry for the fragments—i know that if anyone understands the need to just put these things down, it's you. here are the words that leaked out of me. here are the impressions; the marks of what i press into and what presses into me. i hope you find something in them.

x: can you hear me?

o: i can hear you—i'm here.

x: i need you.

o: (hold tight) i'm there.

maybe we are rotating doors, (r)evolving.

when i first met you, i was afraid of your legs. or maybe something more like startled. startled because the very sight of them made me lose all sense of mine. knees weak–no sense of weight beneath me–gravity revoked for a moment. you kept forgetting my name.

be honest with yourself & your needs in the space of desire

i never could have imagined pressing into you (then). couldn't have ever imagined you sitting still. i only ever experienced you in motion–(mostly) walking towards me or walking away. coming & going. call & response.

x: hey i was just checking in–are you here?

o: yeah i'm here.

x: oh cool, can i come by?

o: yeah my door is open.

x: see you soon.

instead of saying anything–i’ll let you know another way. tell you by other means (lean in). today my body is a door. when you knock, i pause to think about how to respond, how to answer. weighing my options, suddenly weightless at your call.

score for “how to learn to say no even though you want to”:

- I. wig out
- II. become an undivided monster
- III. hand in glove–turn it inside out
- IV. support this action with your presence
- V. undo it with a valentine
- VI. gargle & spit
- VII. lick your lips, sis

we are two bookends, sometimes no thing between us to support; always in reference to each other regardless.

you decide to love me only when someone else does. you don't see this but i do. you see what it could be like, through someone else—someone not you.

it is not wanting in material (it is gesture)

so get close to me. let's take what we've made and fold it into itself—no space between.

score for bookends:

- I. sit down on the floor, back pressed to another, legs extended
- II. feel the space between your bodies, between your backs
- III. try to make it disappear
- IV. lean forwards & backwards, slowly, keeping the non-space between you
- V. there is no leader, fall into and support each other
- VI. hover in this shared space as long as desired
- VII. slowly move away from each other, still pulsing together
- VIII. keep the shared space between you, in the hovering, the pulsing, as you move further and further away—no thing between you, in reference to each other regardless
- IX. turn to face each other and remember what you've carried together

x: i wrote "subject of desire" on my mirror so i wouldn't get confused

o: two weeks later, you ask me how long the mirror has been there

so much of this seems retroactive.

(like every other person i've ever loved—you happen to be an incredible whistler.)

the night you decided to have me you leaned in harder than i had ever known. i could feel your shoulders, your heat, your head pressing into me. my neck became molten. i still was unsure.

score for apprehension:

- I. wait a minute for every month you didn't.
- II. hold yourself in this moment—one for each minute you didn't; feel your own embrace in the space of wanting.
- III. once finished or when one of you is moved, hold each other for the same time combined, or however long feels necessary.
- IV. whisper to one another: *this is just rehearsal*

honestly i just want you to rip me apart, limb from limb. ravage me the way you do everything else. but i'm on reserve. i can see it in the way you look at me. and i wish you wouldn't. i wish you would just do it. or just let me or both. i know where you are cause i've been there before. i'll only ask once. once & nothing else. take me off reserve. sit me down. shut me up. tell me you want me. please, if you do. you can sweep me under the rug. i know how you like it in the dark. but until then i'm stuck. all i can do is wait on the shelf knowing what you want but too shy to tell you; you know better than to pick me up and see what's inside. or you don't but you won't (let yourself).

(the opposite of lust is obligation.)

fuck a binary, but things that are closest tend to be opposite (in one way or another).

score for some kind of intimacy:

- I. be together
- II. don't let yourself (fully)

sensitivity in the jaws & tongue. sensitivity means speaking with the mouth up close.

x: read aloud to her, see what she can do with it.

o: better yet, see what she wants to.

is this erotic to you? i don't care. or rather, i don't want to know. there's a way in which putting words to something—naming, containing, designating—ruins everything. or at the very least, can if it (you) want it to. with words, it's no longer ours. no longer between us. language enters, and it becomes you, me, & the language between us. in such (a) case(s), words act as a public display of affection. of understanding. of external legibility. i don't want words between us. don't want any part of that language barrier. just you. just us. (press into) no space between. body to body.

you terrified me in so many ways—still do.

to encounter such compassion and persistence all at once; the kind where you find yourself frustrated at your own assumptions (yours & mine; mostly mine).

a confrontation with my own "*question everything, assume nothing.*"

you're the kind of beautiful that runs me into the ground.

the kind that i have only ever encountered as temptation—the kind that shuts me out as soon as i try to take you up on it.

every straight-girl heartbreak.

i wonder often what is lost in rendering you this way.

a symbol of my accumulated queer youth. all these encounters—i pressed them onto you.

you reminded me of each one, i painted you this way.

in you i saw each experiment, each threat, each closeted intimacy, each experience in which (though i should have learned my lesson, if only through repetition) at its core i knew, i was never considered a real possibility; was always counted out.

this is mine, not yours (though it shouldn't belong to anyone).

i thought i understood its affects then.

i know better now.

what happens is this: i never considered myself, always counted myself out.

such behavior is learned.

(i'm sorry.)

i assumed so much; to the point of erasing myself.

blinding myself to how you see(saw) me.

to what could possibly be.

x: i see you seeing me.

o: i won't let you; i've been burned here before

i cried to you too early. evening breaking on my old patio, like the sprinklers, i burst. you were too goddamn kind and i knew you meant it—you made so much space for me and i hardly even knew you.

score for (counter)intimacy part I:

- I. be together
- II. don't let yourself (fully)
- III. act as if no one is watching

for so long i only ever heard of your desire for me through other sources. it always felt like gossip, felt swept under the rug. either because i hadn't considered the actual possibility or because your efforts fed into an intimacy that felt safer to me (and possibly you) in the realm of friendship. it is hard to see one's own blinders, but you & i will always try, this much i know. your desire is a hard lesson; i could never capture it; (somehow always running ahead or behind, never on time, always already going, already gone). i am still struck by these inquiries: always from the outside, always from those watching. i am interested in that kind of in-between, that kind of hovering that we do. tenderness confuses people. myself included—even when you wanted me.

(i will not use him as an excuse. i refuse to. not for sake of any kind of purity, not in any narcissistic way. mostly because i always forgot about him. you hardly ever mentioned him. i still wonder if this was intentional.)

though i knew nothing of him, it didn't matter. far too well i know the multiplicity of guilt—especially yours, that which belongs to you. the kind of self-questioning straight-girl guilt that reroutes its own desire. the kind of shame and embarrassment that can't help but become second-hand. it oozes everywhere. between you and me it ensures i exist only behind closed doors. it didn't even occur to me that this was the case until the first time i went to your house. we had been friends for months. it was only after i left that i realized that the extension of the invitation coincided with your breakup with him. i'm so grateful you let me in (your house). i just wish i weren't so aware of it.

score for two bodies as a line:

- I. with a partner, trace every part of the room or designated space with your bodies—you must do so while staying connected—always always touching; using your bodies as a continuous line while making a continuous line.
- II. no walking.
- III. find ways to press together, topple over, support each other while tracing the space, tracing each other.
- IV. investigate together: the perimeter, the crevices, the in-between, the possibilities of moving together, of being together.
- V. press//impress.

these days your doors are closed and i find myself reluctant to knock.
even if you let me in how can i possibly pretend to be unaware,
ignorant to the existence of this barrier?
even if you unlock it, it's still there,
i know.

score for (r)evolving doors:

- I. stand to face to face
- II. (exhale)
- III. stand shoulder to shoulder, facing opposite directions
- IV. think about what holds you in this moment
- V. you are now rotating doors, (r)evolving
- VI. rotate yourselves as such, find what holds you together
- VII. slowly move away from each other, continuing to (r)evolve together
- VIII. find other doors you'd like to (r)evolve with
- IX. listen to the gravitational shifts in this moment, pulling you back to your door
- X. come back to them, shoulder to shoulder
- XI. (exhale)

the morning after i finally fucked you–
the same morning after you invited me to sleep over and at first i said no;
the same morning after i changed my mind and said “actually, yes” after my new object of desire couldn’t;
the same morning after we got back to yours and you told me how much that sucked:
seeing me all over her in front of you, as if you weren’t even there;
or worse (which is what i arrived at),
that even though you were there, it wouldn’t affect you;
i have never been so ashamed of my own actions in someone else’s bed–
that morning after–
you finally let me hold you in public.
let me hold your hand and put my arm around you
(embrace) in a way that had no fear of misinterpretation,
no concern for keeping up the impression of merely friendship.
fast & fleeting,
limbs light from this invitation, i soon felt crushed under the weight of this permission
granted by my hurting you.

score for (counter)intimacy part II:

- I. be together
- II. don’t let yourself (fully)
- III. act as though everyone is

pull out the jukebox
we weren't even aware.

are you aware of yourself ?

x: i am if you are.

o: i'm with you.

you *thank u, next* too late.

once again i am always already gone—i was there, am still here, but am already going, already gone. i'm tired of being the bearer of saying. i'm putting this down because i have to. because you won't. even before, even when i asked you—you could never say. i wish you could understand what this does to me. play with my hair to avoid what it does to you, too. do something else to me.

(*heads leaning in on each other; finding how to fit into the crevice; fill the voids.*)

how to make sense of that: of a passivity that refuses to succumb to noun; asks for an active without asking. how will i ever know what you want? how can all of this transpire out of nothing, out of not saying? [you decide to let yourself (love me) but only through someone else—a watching that keeps us both in your closet—an acting in reaction. all i see is mimicry.] i've been here before & will again. it's why i'm here, why i say, why i have to do this. (lean in).

(*the opposite of lust is obligation.*)

score for surrender:

- I. fall in
- II. surrender everything you've got

all my love,
lydon