

AS AN EXPERIMENT

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i.

I ask you to imagine yourself leading a double life.

Imagine yourself as you but in four or five dimensions. Imagine yourself as an adventure and know that no one else can become the storyline that is the Klein bottle containing your life.

Know yourself, a coward wrapped in cotton clothing and clammy skin, waiting for the road where gravity will hold you down to present itself.

Know yourself, a clown in white makeup doing a headstand into a back flip, inventing the closed-lip smile.

Know yourself, an abstraction, a traitor being held in contempt in the court of reality, the early morning dream machine of a magician, a gargoye, a poet made of stone.

Know yourself, the Phantom of Integrity, the architect of moonlight, the type of person who can hold a beating heart in his hand without flinching.

I'm not asking that much, just that you forget the formulas for acceleration. That you choose the illimitable process of being over the fiction of becoming.

Because people like us, presuming you trust me, people like us, we know that Now is a blown glass bowl containing the future.

We know that conviction is just love remembering who we are, and we never forget a face like love.

ii.

I ask you to imagine yourself underwater, and tell me, do you grow gills? Do you eat seaweed? Imagine yourself selling unborn stars door to door, wearing a cowboy hat. Would you wear boots, too?

Imagine yourself in my shoes, with the holes in the toes. Imagine, and tell me how things play out between us. Imagine yourself time, always moving, infinitely misunderstood.

Imagine yourself in a race whose outcome will determine the ways in which you discover the mystery of mysteries that is love. Imagine me as the sweat between your shoulder blades, cataloging how you react when your tolerance for pain is on trial.

Know that you're the only one who will ever know how hard you're trying. And tell me, do you know yourself? Do you know how long you can hold up under duress? Do you know where your strength comes from?

Imagine racing a Jesus lizard across the Indian ocean. Imagine yourself a blue fish, a water spider, a seagull.

Imagine yourself a storm cloud building over an undiscovered continent.

Imagine that I am a landmass you are the first to discover. What questions do you ask me? And how long is it before you start to call me home? How long is it before you forget that you were running somewhere when I got in the way?

iii.

I ask you to imagine yourself holding three leaves of basil, a piece of blue sea glass, and the remnants of what was once a dream in your chapped hands. Tell me what this means to you.

What architectural skill will you need to employ in order to make something of yourself using only these items?

Did you know that refraction lets us see the sun before it rises? And are you one of the few who can hear it shatter before it falls?

It's the sound that was the definition of silence before people forgot where words came from, before they got on the hustle-bustle commuter train of learning to make it through day after day.

Imagine yourself a poet autobiographer with the body of our galaxy and everyone and everything in it, and read me the story you find scrawled in the left-hand margins of the New York City Metro Area phone book, the story on discarded envelopes, on recycled napkins that used to be the greatest unpublished novel of the twentieth century, the stories in the brown-black, gray-green, milky blue mirrors of six billion world-weary eyes.

Describe yourself to me as imagery. It's not that hard, all you really have to do is photograph whatever thoughts you come across in foreign lands at high speed and mail them off to me. Of course, I'll reimburse you for the postage.

Imagine yourself the type of person who lets philosophy stick to the backs of your teeth. Set your coffee cup down on Kant, Foucault, Derrida, leaving sticky rings, and tell me: Do you believe in metaphor?

Let your lips crack when you speak to me and be mindful: what is often called the sound of rain falling on a tin roof is actually love being lost and found again.

iv.

I ask you to imagine yourself as a red dirt desert filled with the fossils of your past lives.

Know that I am waves of heat rising off your body, turning the horizon into a dream.

Imagine yourself an obsidian mine, the origin of glassy black se-

crets. Imagine yourself three definitions of twilight, a polar star, and the afterimage of an illusion called life.

Imagine that you are photographing recognition as it evolves into cohabitation. If you are lucky, love will appear as a lens flare in one of the exposures. As you are working, explain your selection of shutter speeds and apertures to me.

I will help you mount the finished prints on black-and-white mat board under thick glass with green edges.

Imagine you are the reflection of a lazy wooden ceiling fan in an antique silver spoon. Tell me, what story would you use as a metaphor for all of history if a steely-eyed matriarch were relying on you to entertain her guests?

Imagine yourself a sun pyramid draped in green vines. Let me climb your steps and worship the brilliant, blinding sky from above treeline.

Tell me, what names have been whispered at your altar? What language would you like me to use when I whisper yours?

v.

I ask you to imagine yourself as a city you used to love, one that no longer owns you.

Imagine yourself the facade of a red brick row house, repeated ad infinitum, the color of river water as seen by a scuba diver, the rustle of a northern wind in vertical blinds.

Imagine yourself the keeper of secrets whispered in a foreign language.

Imagine that you invented geometry to keep well-engineered German cars from spinning out of control on roundabouts.

Imagine you are the namesake for three separate major news-

papers and a number of small tabloids, that what happens between sun-fall and moonrise is well documented in pages attributed to your collaboration with the associated press.

Imagine yourself a single pear tree growing in a terra cotta pot on a wrought iron balcony. Let me sing you a song in Italian as I water you.

Tell me, what is your take on philosophy? Because when the juice of your fruit drips from my lips onto my chin, I know everything else there is to know about you.

