

excerpts from

fragments from Amy Winehouse's stepwork journal

through an act of magic, i've learned how our makers lose their senses like morals & get written into scripts as strength from above. let me see if i can remember the trick. an animal surrounded by glass: pick one: nurture it: chase it. the glass goes black: pick one: it runs: it screams. the glass breaks: a cloud of smoke appears. when it clears: the animal is you: hands & eyes dancing like landing planes. everyone loses their minds over that one, can't even see they've been cheated. i've watched it a million times & i'm always as dry-eyed as the first, sometimes i even have to laugh. the beast in me has bitter taste to burn, gets off on love born to fail. trust me—i'll kick down doors in a hurricane, let in more than the rain God sent. spill blood on the cleanest white shirts, dripping with hearts drowned & dreamed until they learn what *flood* means.

soaking my feet at the end of the day, i try to name all the bird calls. the same songs falling over themselves to reach a lover who knows how blue a sky can get. i give up too easy. if they're outside they're a hundred miles away. do they know the sky is only as natural as what's underneath? the tub is filled with rain while around the way the river's turned red. i wish someone had told me that recognition could be so lonely. showed up at the big house today & punched every buzzer straight down, eyes like they'd been clubbed shut & a kind of hope that couldn't be undone. like history a song must repeat to be a song it must repeat to be a song i hit His number til my hands hurt. to the birds, sang *what don't kill you makes you guilty*.

everyone is busy dreaming in this house on fire. thirty stories high & no telling how many killers inside gambling to turn lovers, breaking themselves to stay on the mend. i snatch a bottle off the curb & let it fly, my eyes following its flight as it lands a hair's width from a bird. i'd separate what's left of me from the ground if i could stomach the height or even the comedown. it could've been weeks ago these tears started falling but i light a Marlboro, tell myself it must be the smoke. truthfully, i'd give anything or just everything for a touch that softened to ache. tiny pieces of my heart stick to my guts like chipped glass, which is i guess a way of saying it's broken, but what a tired thing to call holding the past like a lover. what a bitter reminder that the same slick matter pumping blood in my chest & responsible for my breathing makes me kiss the river until all you can see are my legs, lonely & strong, not even fighting.

as holy as the stars are close, i cried for no relief i couldn't get from a night so black it's blue. cherries, lonely as an alibi, grow red as Mars where the sun won't bleed. some light takes years to fall to us. the stars could already be dead. i've spent a lifetime in the throes of heaven looking for a sky mad enough to save me, but like a headless bird flying in a free fall, i'm still learning how much of myself i don't need.

to make hurt real, a song's gotta be written like a set of rules: tear up all pretense like a bad verse, sniff out what's been dying in the walls, start a fire high enough to burn planes out the sky. all i can remember is what i've forgotten. that guitar i played too hard. the new Badu i didn't play enough. the weed i stole, wearing a Beasties tee i didn't buy. the Moschino bra underneath, the battered pumps & Gucci bag i can't find. Jamaica & Spain, i slept through. Miami sun &

stars, i cried under. at the airport, listening to Sarah Vaughn on repeat after i punched that skanky millionaire outside the mile high club. sure, his wife too, screaming like she was born to play backup in a band with men who have bedrooms for eyes. it's the singer, not the song—what's the difference? you?

you are the blue jay, restless as a lullaby the night before Christmas, blazing above miles & miles of green. i'm sorry i grew brown with no time to lose, useless & inevitable, like a shot you see coming. a plague that could turn the holiest river red. how do i even begin to unlearn touch as song, the sun unmoored, my body a battle lost? i'm sorry all my spite found homes in verse, the letters best unsent or better burned. i'm all churning guts & pride like an unkept kitchen. i save my regrets for the sanctuary—the union between an unmade bed & my lover, breath faded, freshly bludgeoned. i'm sorry i'm stubborn as a losing gambler. i've never loved anyone that didn't come to me clean as stars & leave a crime.

okay, i'll just say it: i cheated. you were on the list. you were the list. i searched under every rock, tore up all the carpets for a new place to hide you—or anything that might make you real. the Diesel jeans, your smoking pipe, the will i wrote the night i couldn't remember my second name, entrusting you with only what i left to the curb. blue light peeks from behind the door & i try to shove the jeans under the frame to stop its shine, its incriminating kindness, but they just go up in flames. i tread the room, tracking my heat from wall to wall, head a fuckery of Freudian fates, knives unclean, heads that rolled. shadows muling lovers' skulls like debts of war, heart an empty purse.

wait—there's a penny from the year you were born.
is that enough?

kitchen clean as a licked whisk: empty bottles
long gone, wrapped in black bags tighter than
the white grip in my chest. outside, the birds
feel closer than ever, flying around a foot
tracks' dead-end where something i can't see
but know is still alive won't give up. i light a
match, relieve the blue flame of the moon's
shadow. as it dances through the room, my
lips as still as blood run cold—& still &
still—how can i swear to God if singing, if
even singing...listen, i promise, after i sleep—
deep as plagues—i'll find the will. Your will.
clinging inside like a baby in a well—sing me
home.

in the final dream a skull kisses a knife. I marry the
nightingale, wearing a dress so blue I become the sky.
sweet reunion—our reflections meet then turn to
smoke in separate beds. when I wake, my body is
bathed in the deepest blue—the moon, newly risen,
tipping out its own warmth to give to the night. I
open the shades to soak in its stars hanging like keys,
the birds pouring in soft with song. I close my eyes
& part my lips, not knowing what to sing but knowing
it has been sung.