

PRETTY WHEN I CRY

you might have a tear
fetish

horses with bad posture
scoping clovers

there are signs everywhere

your fingers feeling up
the metal on my teeth

I want to touch you
like a door
I have not walked through

show me yours
and I will show
a portrait of my father

his lunchbox
for patrolling

his shirt
for October

when the sky becomes a pupil
eating light like a rabbit
in a vegetable garden

driving through night
I almost run over a raccoon

it is intimate with you
the future

occurring as an omen

KISMET

i deviate from the metronome and tiptoe
into another undoing. substitute truths
for dumber synonyms. these pale ribbons
have retained their complication. one page
containing botched sentiment, cursive
paradox. the framework becomes
crawlspace. an opaque hour passes
before repeating. i listen for fractures
of dream state. questions are placed
as sealants. what do i value? i can't
reveal. the possibility is wet. an arrival
guesses territory without coordinate.
i refer to the matrix and its complexities.
a murky beautiful thought i want
to club into forgetting.

HEARD IT ALL BEFORE

I'm sorry how that choked me
stopped painting my nails got a finger tattoo

last summer with no AC alone
imagining a baby in some east coast state

I hate my mom but glad to be alive
the saddest thing is losing excitement

your want your please you're sorry
you fucked up

I don't need it
a new night to seduce and undo

the same wilco song
I can fall back on for the feeling

take a walk or drive but how far
would I go for a lie?

DECISION MATRIX

My panorama of prospect,
how union could.
Tonight observing
the other planet,
pining. Terrain
to impose and plant
flowers upon. My orbit
entered. Parallax
effect. Syntax off-
kilter, absent narrative.
Consider texture, crisp
quiet. Fever dream
almost true. I am not sure
what is good without
inspecting its forever.
the variables
to fumble-furl, fall
in crumbs. Do I follow
the trail twice? Love
dumbs me
but I would do anything
to reverse
to grass siesta
slip. Barter breath
and beliefs on French
cinema post WWII
New Wave. Poke the ant
hill with rotting sticks.
How real is this
bad feeling? My total

eclipse of the brain
soaks the ceiling
tonight. Love is conspiracy—
At the absolute
center, I am imperial
-ly alone
and okay.

WITH ANY NEW SKILL

I must learn how to perform a chokehold
before I can kill. In one swift motion,
I toss a coin to the water and watch that wish
run blue. To gain control is to give
up the fear illusion. So I stare down the barrel
void of star. So I eat the bone char
and burn all those hours together in the dark
without asking why. I don't know
how to walk through this exit
wound without goodbye.
Who's skin dust on the dash, yours
or mine? Memory breeds panic
and purple-red and I'm never wise
to put that fire to use. Tonight
I bled that thought through my bed.
Fell off the cliff and woke up
missing it, clueless. I love you and I do not
care to admit. The truth
trapped like a fly in the room.

SLEEPING NAKED

I set the air to a coldness I can tolerate. Open the umbrella inside and now the room is wet. My clothes are wet too. Wet as memory. My choices are mildly damp but still possible. I turn the lamp on and lay a world map on the floor that collects wrinkles. I comb the knots from my head and burn my image in the mirror like a disk. Consider my discomfort toward my comfort. How deadlock starts to feel like safety. How the second a safe spot shows itself it begins to lose credibility. Consider a middle part, a truce. Consider chopping half my hair off and wearing felt berets with collared tops. I bobby pin my bangs far enough to feel like a disco ball. Tonight and last night and all the nights continue by accident. Every draw is unlucky. The moon is blue when my phone lights up and it's you. The silence means exactly what I assume. Inconclusive again. Consider quitting my coy. The summer mating calls of insects. A child hums a song that does not exist. I will disappear if you'd just say it with your chest. Consider a green pacifier. Consider the correct answer. Consider walking down those slick red stairs.

CASEY HARLOE

Casey Harloe is a poet and student in Cincinnati. I'M SO BRIGHT AND LONELY TONIGHT is her first chapbook. She leads writing workshops at Household Books and enjoys placing "allegedly" in front of declarative sentences.