

Where the Sailboats Break Free

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Introductory Essay

“Where the Sailboats Break Free” is a collection of poems that delves into a world of loss and sickness, a battle for freedom, the constraints of control, the loss of a long-distance relationship, and finally navigating the world on my own again. Hints of religion will also be distributed throughout. This project means the absolute world and then some to me. It is the reason I am finally coming to terms with certain aspects of my life. But most importantly it is helping me find my voice even more so. Each poem has been written specifically for this project. The subject matter is something I have previously never written about and no one outside of my immediate circle has heard about.

I have spent my life thus far in the same bedroom staring out at the Long Island Sound. But before the water is the New York Athletic Club. There sailboats and other boats are housed year round. Once may hits the plastic covers that protect the boats are taken off and they are released back into the water. On nights I have too much running through my mind or I need to write I sit on my windowsill and stare into the spot lights shining down on either the wrapped or simply docked boats. I have also thought I felt most at peace when looking out at the water and closet to God those nights. Even in winter I bundle myself up and open the window and write or talk my thoughts and feelings out loud to the stars and sailboats. They have been what I confide in most over the years.

My sponsor who has been my professor for four classes now told me I feel everything very deeply, to which I added maybe too deep. After analyzing this small insight she had on me I began noticing why I feel so deeply. Growing up I never had a voice. From a young age, I was

taught that it is better to be seen and not heard. I was merely a figure at the dinner table. My teachers would tell me I was so quiet they forgot I was even there. Now growing up Italian American one would think I would be as loud and boisterous as they are in every mob movie. But none of my family's loudness rubbed off on me primarily because as soon as I left the house I immediately had all eyes on me. Along with being seen and not heard, there was never a hair out of place on my head, nails always done, and I was always dressed very well. Even to this day, I have a certain image to uphold because of my family. All this ensured I would never open my mouth the way everybody else could.

It was not until I came to Purchase that I found my voice. Once I learned critique and classrooms were a safe space I began opening up: through my writing. I had finally found my voice without even having to open my mouth! It was a glorious thing. My poetry is confessional because of this. It holds every swallowed word for the past 21 years (which is probably why I have so many stomach issues now.) After three years at Purchase, I finally found the courage to write about the source where most of the poetry stems- my father. I have witnessed him have four strokes, a brain bleed, open-heart surgery, vertigo on a daily, bladder cancer, and battle doctors relentlessly. Because a major part of his life is out of his control he controls everything around him. One of those things is me. In my project, I talk about our daily battles and the toll it takes on me and my father and I's relationship. There comes a lot of guilt for having to battle a sick man but being complacent is simply not an option for certain things.

Another part of my writing is coming my relationship that recently ended. It was a long distance relationship and I felt his family was more a family to me than mine. Its been a hard

loss- not because of him but loosing a family and a place that felt like home. It was a sudden breakup that came out of nowhere. After a few talks with my psychologist I found out I spent the past two years in a narcissistic abusive relationship. Once I learned that I realized why this breakup has been harder than any other I've gone through thus far. Some days all I do is sit back and realize everything I went through because of him. Now I'm learning to come to terms with my past and to grow from what happened. And I am slowly learning why the healthy relationship after is harder than the chaotic abusive one- you have to let go of learned behaviors and know that your new person is not like the last one in anyway.

My writing process is normally the same for every poem. Some days I have an idea I must immediately get down on paper. Other times I'll be listening to music or driving and a thought randomly pops into my head. This is usually followed by me frantically trying to find a pen and paper or reluctantly typing the poem or idea on my phone. Once I am home in quiet or with a country song blasting in my ears I sit down and write one poem till completion before moving on. If that poem goes into critique I will later go back and revise again. But if the poem does not go into critique I normally leave them as is unless I see something that needs to be changed or added to. Sometimes I get spurts of ideas and write about four to five poems in one sitting. These are all merely outlines of what could be. Those I later go back rip apart and add to.

Purchase was never my first choice and not even on the list of colleges I applied to. I applied to fourteen colleges mostly all of them early decision before I even considered applying here. I had my heart set on college in New York City or Chicago or Texas. But once my father found out those dreams, acceptance letters, and full-ride scholarships literally went into the trash. I did not even know if poetry was what I wanted to go to school for.

I had dreams of being an interior designer and spent a whole summer at the New York School for Interior Design. Poetry was merely a hobby and reading any fiction book I could get my hands on was my second full-time job with creating drafts as my first. But ultimately the decision for where I attended college got made for me and my path set. I often wonder who I would be now if I did not come to Purchase. If I did not give poetry my all would I have the voice I have today? That question can never really be answered.

I went to a small private high school. There were not any AP classes or anything of the sort. I had the same English teacher all four years. She did not introduce us to modern poets or even give us many poetry writing assignments. When I finally entered my first writing class at Purchase I was overwhelmed and scared. I felt so unprepared and so far behind my peers. I remember missing or leaving so many classes my first semester because of the anxiety I would get. Everyone talked about how great their English classes were in high school and I remember wishing I had the same experiences that they did. Now I feel as if not having those experiences and not having the best writing program in high school helped me. I came to Purchase as a very moldable sponge. I absorbed every word and critique throughout my classes. Constantly badgered my professors and friends for extra help with my writing and for them I am equally amazed and grateful.

Through this project, I am gaining an even better perspective of myself and my world. And of course, am inviting others to take a peek into it. So please sit back with an iced cup of coffee and enjoy.

A list of things I wonder about:

Do you hear me at night when I talk

Do you ever admit to yourself you miss him

Do you see him in you

Do you realize there's a void the size of him following your every move

How do you love me

Why do you love me

How deeply do you love me

Is there an "other guy" for you

Did I aid in making you cold and heartless

Did I mean shit to you

What do I mean to you

What did I mean to you

Do you see a future with me

What did I do to you

What did you do to me

Did you just play me

Both of you well did you

Would you do what you had planned for us

Why do I always think of others more than they do me

Why do I always do for others more than they do for me

What would it take to be treated the way I treat others

When will the sadness disappear

Will people ever truly notice

What will it take to be treated the way I treat others

What will it take to be treated the way I treat others

When will I start being treated the way I so desperately crave and deserve

What will it take for me to be treated the way I treat others

When will I explode

I

Convalescent

I fear
I am broken
too many parts
left on beds
made to rot
withered skin on
school desks stranded
tears on leather seats
screams no one
has heard
where is the part of me
that feels
the one that cares
that is scared
and utterly mortified
wants to cry
till my guts leave
pretty colors on
dark floors

The
 First
 time

I
Was
Twelve
The second
Time
Your voice
Wrapped around
My throat
As you
Pinned
Me against
The wall
My mother
Starring in
Shock
Unmoving
From the
Hallway as
If cemented
In her
Spot
The last time
You threw your
head back
And all but
 howled into
The pitch black
sky in the parking lot
By now I've lost
count of how many times
This has occurred
Ive stopped trying
to count

There's no room for
error pain comes
and goes from
all angles and
people it bounces off
objects mouths
tire tracks left
behind broken pieces
of tongues and teeth
left to rot

there's no room
for error you
only get two chances
watch your words carefully
but tell the truth
watch your attitude carefully
but show how you feel

there's no room for error
and your not anymore
special then a lump of
coal that's logged at the
end of a Christmas stocking
as a joke now
lodge that in your
head and see just
what your mouth says

Yes Daddy,

I used to be more responsible but that was before I learned words only bind of you let them. And the tower you built was held together with sand. Fear made it built with cement. But I took your fear and mine, left them on the interstate because fear is not love. And your words no longer leave slashes on my wrists and your emotions no longer leave tears on my pillow.

Daddy,

I am still responsible. Your hold just faded. The new me inflicts worries because I'm no longer home for dinner. I rage against a curfew and wasting evenings on the couch between you and mom. Ni have learned evenings are for drives with friends and Friday nights with the lacrosse team rhinestone faced and cross faded.

I'm sorry Daddy.

For hiding my new life from you. But you wouldn't approve and chain me back to the couch. You are the grim reaper for my happiness. He can't come home to meet you. It is better off leaving you out of my life. I ache to tell you about my long nights and even longer days throwing jabs at each other over coffee talks. I want to gush about this boy to you. I think you would love him like I think I do.

Im sorry Daddy,

But I fear these times might be behind us because you leave no room for error.

Is it wrong to be upset knowing its 12:30 on a Monday approximately 16 hours later and he never texted you?

Is it wrong to hope he will?

Is it wrong letting my heart flutter every time my phone lights up?

Is it wrong to look, laugh, and throw smiles to a man you just met when yours is 100 miles away?

Is it wrong to sit and stare at his hands hoping they will open you up just enough?

Eyes wander is it wrong?

Is it wrong to want to be picked and pulled apart by the man reading tonight's specials?

Can you please pull me apart?

You broke me
lips craving too
much at a constant
speed never satisfied
A fucking insatiable
hunger that disgraces
and disturbs me
to my very core of
my being

You can take all the diamonds pearls rubies emeralds and sapphires out of the jewelry thrown at you and put each on another harmful word said to you and in the tears in your heart but how can I when last week my heart poked out through my ribs and hurled itself out of my sunroof on the 95 with the remaining feelings of love and hope my body had I didn't look back I hit the gas pedal from 60 to 70 to 110 hoping to crash my car dying on impact so I wouldn't have to come home and stitch my heart back with diamonds in front of you

Flowers in the garden

Normal people
See a flower
And either
Admire its beauty
Some will pick it
Others gaze
right past it
Not you
Oh no
You pick it
Admire it for
a split second
Place it in
your mouth
Of gnarled teeth
Tongue cut in two
Then spit it out
Covered in putrid
Green goo
Because
Daddy you're
a monster

II

INTERSPACE

let me tell you
about distance
at first its
unrecognizable
just 21 miles which
turns into 34
which
turns into an
hour and 10 minute drive
without traffic
its seeing each other like
clockwork twice
a week to

“will I see you Tuesday ?”

the distance sucks
even more so with
plans of the future
so far away
pluto is closer
6 work filled days
hoping to come home
to you
but no
not yet

the distance is filled with
love and knowing
you drive me absolutely mad
and knowing you could
do more for me but
just being in your
arms is enough
most days

its walking to
the water fountain at work
choking back tears
because of how much
I miss you and
the pain in

my muscles
from not
being able
to hold you
at night
its walking
in a daze
wondering
is it all worth it
its lonely Saturdays
falling asleep next to
the sweat shirt
that smells like you
and sleeping in your
shirt and your
sweatshirt while
being surrounded by
stuffed animals you
bought because
I can never get
enough of you

the distance is
filled with
our laughter
my tears
by good bye kisses
hello hugs
our bodies intertwining
waking up with
morning breath
as we make a mad
dash for the bathroom
laughing

its hoping that
one day
your sleepy little
beach town will
be my home
and ill drive
home knowing

you'll be there

BBQing in the back
realizing the distance
was beyond
worth it

I've left you in heaps around my room for a while as I mourned what you killed
I never realized the noose you tied around your neck hoping I felt it too
tender choking led me to believe love was still alive

I've left you in heaps around my room as I mourned what you killed but the stuffed animals and
shirts to sleep in still being worn to bed as a ring and paintings met trash bags the constricting
comfort of you crushing me in your arms at night radiated through them but even they met trash
bags but the bags still haven't hit sidewalk yet the corner of my room hides you out of sight out
of mind I tell myself stepping over memories to reach clothes

I've left you in heaps around my room as I've grown comfortable with you viewing my life
from 100 or more miles away I've grown used to you no longer being here and made peace with
the state I no longer call home

to be forgotten
I know I am
through hollow
tongues sending
out cracked
words
“there is just no time”
I can feel
it slipping
through my fingers
rougher than sand
but does not cut
as hard as
glass

I know I'm
forgotten
by the lack of
hidden easter eggs
“well cant you see
we've been a little
preoccupied with me?”

there is a
void suddenly
capturing me
as life revolves
around them
only to be
remembered
when bread and
rides to the doctor
are needed

its ok
to be forgotten
your spot
has been taken

it smells like
autumn in august
damp air ravaged
already over worked lungs
longing to breathe you in

that summer
we traveled
through sunflowers
climbed the tallest
whispered stories
to each color
proclaimed our love
to the smallest
wished upon a
ring of fire
prayed our kisses
would save the dead
endless summer
nights turned to
dazed days

forever could be like this
you look at me and see
the smallest palest
of sunflowers
yet still are amazed

I hope
to save our seeds
to plant again and again
each summer
may we never die
because the
sunflowers saved us

I am trying
to find
my way
but
as lucifer
once did
it was our
turn to fall
to fail
some of us try to
glue our wings back
more fervently
than others do
they say the
Grace of God
will help you set
the pace but you
see we are all
too idle or
too in motion to
stop
because you see the
Pace of Grace
will interrupt and
disrupt there will be
no more
of us fallen
just standing and
breathing with ease

i got a promise ring on my hand
psychics in my head
and god isn't answering me
so what do I do now?
there's a hot guy on my snap
who wants to take me out a date
but he's in a dark place
and there's another one who
calls our weekly hangouts
and fuck sessions
dates and
there's another one
who asked to take me on a date
he's a sweet guy sorta ugly
and thats stopping me
then the last one who's been
around for five years
disappearing and reappearing
but the one with the promise ring
what am I to do with him daddy?
You say my tears run down
my cheeks so often
you'd rather see blood run down his
but Daddy
you're the cause of all this
to begin with
cant you see
the resemblance
in how all these men treat me?
i am a self serving object
to them a little toy
to be messed with and
played rough with
ill be here for their needs

Are you happy now? I know you packed up, ripped out the beating home you made for me but you missed a spot an unswept corner still holds me. I know you can't shake me you've been trying to but even those oracle cards point to you reaching out. Are you happy now ? With me in my state and you in yours my name no longer constantly on your phone no need to pause games with the boys to talk to me. Are those girls making you feel whole and full? I hope they are. Are you happy knowing they'll never be me? They'll never fill my shoes. I'm sorry to put a crown of roses on my head, the one you never put on me, but are you happy now? Knowing you'll have to swipe long and hard to find a girl with no body count? Maybe she'll lie just like I did (you were number 9.)

Are you happy now? I hope you are xoxo

Shirts don't come
off sugar cookie
sweet words
fall from cracked lips
senses fail shutting
down walls crash
a little morals stay
to serve a sort of
functioning purpose to
show I am still a decent
human being to myself
at least but the interstate
eats me alive on the way home
once a week wondering how
I ever did this to begin with
and how im still doing this now
but emptiness cant
be filled with sugar cookie
sweet words when you see
through the cracks in the
cookie itself your
walls want to stay up
they fight to through
smart comebacks and mmhms
through chewed food across
the grey and black kitchen
island and weird looks through
the light illuminating the grey area
you try to convince yourself
its ok to keep doing
this but all the convincing
wont let the thought of God's
disappointment in you open
your Bible for weeks on end
knowing the words will torment you
when they are meant to comfort
and fill but I get filled
another way
and neither has been
satisfying yet so the mixing
bowl gets emptied and
I try again mixing

old flavors
with new
together to see
which one will stick.

The distance grows
Than suddenly halts
Almost to a stop
That glimmer of hope
Is back again
Maybe there is a way out
Of the distance
Becoming something forgotten
Brushed aside
A distant memory
It will turn
Into miles between
Us when we
Leave for work
And not where
My state ends
And yours begins
Driving all the
Way till the
Signs read OCEAN EXITS
And my breath
Finally light again
Home etched into
My eyes but
First how much
Distance must
G r o w

III

MESSY BOX SPRINGS

The sail boats have left again
I find it harder to hear your voice
They would come sending soft
Wave ripples across the island
Pounding of water on rocks
The sound of your voice
Through an empty night sky
With an occasional dot
To paint the night sky
Oh blessed be the meek for
They will inherit the earth
Ill have to wait till may again
When sail boats break free from
Plastic wrappings
For your voice to grace
Broken ear drums again

I like boys
with mouths full

of black lies
rotting tongues

acid words pouring
into my ears

arms falling off
their bodies draped over

my shoulders holding
the weight of two lives

their minds set ablaze
on the track heart lost

in a black hole
I hunt for a beating

heart submerging my
arm breaking my nails

fading my tattoos
But what do I get

for trying to help
walking heaps of rotting flesh?

Nothing but broken nails
and a shattered heart.

But will I stop ?
No because I like killing myself slowly

Your leaving
She can see it
in fever dreams
was it something said
or the way hurt filled
light eyes

was it desperate prayers
falling from a mother's lips
that finally found their way
to God's ears
or Yours

You can taste
how She wants you
its on Her hips
pungent as lemon and sugar
She's worth more
while running to his bed
honey you won't find love there

a placeholder is all He sees
You tattooed it
with forehead kisses
blue to match Your bedroom walls

in the back
of a black car
we watched
the world
dissolve into
powder blue
in the afterglow of
pink and purple

sunset hues wilt
leaving a gray
world in their wake
my face in your
soft lips gasping
for each other
fervently

your hands
slip away
leaving ripples
beneath my skin
my eyes open
seeing a world
of color
flowing from you

To the man I met during my healing process:

You have been an unexpected wonder. Because of you country songs about a house on a hill are running through an overworked brain. It hasn't even been two months since he left but you came in slow and steady like a sun shower. You saw broken pieces and began picking them off the floor trying to figure out how to make scars unnoticeable. You accept a past that you know nothing of. There are names like sweet girl and my beautiful sleepy girl left on the sheets between us as you place kisses on my right shoulder blade rubbing your beard that I love on me. You supply endless head itches and let me wear your clothes without second thought. You make me speak my thoughts out so its not too loud in my head. You saw my walls and chipped away little by little when I said you could. The walls came down and now tenderness is peaking through and I look at you thinking you can take and keep it. You are my favorite what if. There are no words assembling themselves to love but you look at me like you've never danced in summer rain before. And I want to change that. Because of you I get to fall slow and steady. We dance around names like babe and honey with chuckles falling from our lips. I never thought I could fall again. But now we spend nights sleeping through train whistles waking up in an all too bright bed room. And mornings spent having bright blue eyes looking at bed head are my favorites. You have helped in ways you could never know and there are things I wish to tell you- the things I told myself I would one day. Like how now I can't remember being broken. You are seeing an unpolished version of me and I'm ok with that. You are seeing the product of long nights and pieced together days. Even though we're having fun I know feelings are growing deeper and there are words caught between our gums attempting to come out of the looks we give each other. We still try to keep the other separate from certain aspects of our lives and thats ok. But what would happen if we melded together one fine day? For now you are my favorite what if.

In her tower locked away on the 6th floor she looks out to find the sailboats. It's almost time for their plastic to fall to cement. Her warden walks in asking if she's hiding a little fucking boyfriend from him. Most of her life is hidden only to be spoken to the sailboats. The sailboats know all about those boys she lets in too eagerly. They know that she's resisting the urge to put hearts next to his name but they're already around her head. She's waiting patiently for him. Arms that might not feel like home but comforting all the same. A new smell getting her higher than the weed in her car. A blacked out cadillac that has seen too many boys, but maybe he's the purest one so far. Even fuck boys can change. She likes to hope her smile is what made that possible for him. Those words dripping with charm slip her pants off before he asks if he can take her shirt off. Bright blue eyes bounce off of pale blonde hair. The freckles across his shoulders mesmerize her every time. All she wants is to trace shapes across his back. Maybe etch out her initials so everyone can see he's her's. Even though they have no title but only seeing each other. This is a new world for them both. Uncharted feelings and finding a way back to another. He's been lost for years but he's slowly finding his words again. She promised no more boys her heart couldn't take more pain and more boys running through her. But they put their hearts in the road and played for darts promising each other it's ok to let their guards down. So they did and she allowed him to see her dripping with anxiety, messy hair first thing in the morning. He provided the comfort she needed back scratches and good morning kisses with out loud thought records. Their messy box springs are all alike.

if you were dating
another guy while dating
blank
i'd congratulate you
well no Daddy but
i blew another guy
while he asked me
to ride him
but i was worried
old period blood
would coat the couch
cuz kissing him and
kissing
blank
leads to sex in a
different way kissing
blank
leads to sex three times
in a weekend twice at night
and one afternoon time
same way every time
kissing the other guy
leads to words getting
caught between gums
and giggles on lips
and stains in the
back of a black Jeep
but sex lead
them both to being
immortalized in my
words

Thank you.
Thank you for breaking me
Thank you for the pain.
Those days in bed.
For the three days all I whispered was your name.
Thank you for making life plans and watching them tumble around me.
For hanging up on me and not saying "I love you" back.
For the beautiful promise ring I was too disgusted to wear.
For leaving me to conjure up a new life plan.
Thank you for breaking us.
I was too weak to do such a heartless thing.
But thank you most of all for leaving.

Because now I have the nights I dreamed up in high school.
Nights where I'm on the arm of an athlete.
Stumbling home late drunk and high.
The nights I stay out at bars making memories you didn't allow me to.
But above it all
The nights on an athlete's arm have been the best.
Being the part of the team
Knowing someone wherever you go.
Strobing lights and too hot dorm rooms with his arms around me.
Glares from girls at every angle.

Thank you for letting me be the envy of the party.
Thank you for letting me know he is better than you could ever be.

I'm still cleaning up
boys and pieces of you
sprawled around town
careless questions asked
about where you have been
those boys came after
your disappearance
i wish i got one last
glimpse before you boarded
that train with intent of being lost
among railroads for eternity
but those boys
so so many
even they are becoming
immortalized in my words
they don't deserve it any more
than you do
they made me realize how many
pieces of you are still in me
how many cracks you left in me
i hate Subaru STIs because of you
and any car that sounds as if the
muffler should be put back on
you fucking ruined me
to the point of a FaceTime call
making me freeze dead in my tracks
you should not have such a hold on me
its been months and yet you are here
the mess in the corner my psychologist
is trying to clean up

You were supposed
to come back
When the crescent
moon hung in the
sky that's what
the cards read
But now we're in a
Full moon and
You're still not here
I prayed begged and pleaded
With the moon, stars, and
Sail boats to hear your voice
Just one more time
The one that doesn't hang up on me
When I say "I love you"
But the one on sleepy
Sunday mornings and
Late night drives deciding
Which houses we like best
For when we build ours in
Two years but now
I need to find someone to live with
The cards were wrong
And they never are
And that's ok I guess

EPILOGUE

I still remember the smell of bacon and eggs waking me up in the morning. My father's horrible singing voice echoing from the kitchen. My mother whisper yelling for him to shut up but that only made him sing louder. I remember the color swirled pancakes before school and our matching velour jump suits. The races to the front door at the end of the day. Of course you walked up six flights of stairs while I took the elevator with mom. You were always faster than the elevator. Our weekly trips to Lord and Taylor would put any adult woman's closet to shame. You didn't mind because it was *always the best for your little girl*. You would take me to the nail salon after, constantly picking out the weirdest and brightest of colors. I remember being taken to the father- daughter dance and kindergarten graduation in a white limo. And my birthday parties? Totally over done (my eleventh birthday party was in a recording studio.) I remember the boyish grin plastered on your face and your blue topaz eyes constantly lighting up. But all this was then.

Now the races stopped. Because the first two scars on your brain came along. After the next two the light in your eyes went out. Then came the scar on your chest. And now? Well now I'm the one making color swirled pancakes. For my boyfriend. He's the one coming to the nail salon with me- although he chooses the strangest colors much like you. And mom? She's no longer whisper yelling because prayers are too busy being spoken to the kitchen sink. She takes me shopping but doesn't know my style like you do. Nothing interests him now. Our days are spent yelling at doctors and making sure your medication is taken. He no longer gives a fuck about birthday parties and white limos. But yet will still argue over unicorn balloons for a 21st birthday party. He let those scars consume him while his ass made an indent on the couch. Some days I sit and I watch him get hooked up to IVs and hear doctors give diagnosis out of their asses. Other times I'm the one diagnosing my father to the head of neurology for New York- Presbyterian Hospital. She mentally checks out to the the couch with her preachers on full blast over taking her phone. Dishes left leaning as though the Leaning Tower of Pisa walked into my kitchen. I'm left to take care of the family business while, running a house hold, going to school, work, and trying to keep a steady relationship. He comes home and medication engulfs the kitchen until it resembles a pharmacist work space. Some days I see a spark crawl back in. I wait for it to reignite some sort of something in him. The flame only catches for a day at most till it sputters back out again. Leaving him even more vacant than before. But when it does stay for a day suddenly diamond earrings come out of the wood work, a stack of money to go shopping with, and dinner at the best Italian restaurant in town. Most importantly happiness. Those eyes finally blue topaz once again. I can only thank God for days when the spark comes back. Occasionally I turn into the blubbering fool that spews prayers out my bedroom window just asking God in the form of sail boats to keep him around a little longer. He deserves to see his daughter graduate, walk her down the isle, and hold his grandchildren. He deserves to give another little girl the same world he did for me.