

Every Spring

by

Sydney Shaffer

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Sponsor: Monica Ferrell

Second Reader: Lee Schlesinger

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Foreword

Every Spring, is a collection of poems that capture portraits of those close to me and of myself. I wanted to write them as the outline of the people they are but began to write specifically about certain moments that defined my friendship/relationship with them. I write about any small moments in time that I feel define the people in my life. What specific memory or feeling did I think of when I heard their name? That is what I wanted to capture in my portraits about them. By writing this way, I felt I grew to learn more about myself and the people I was writing about. One of my favorite things to do is show the poems to the people I have written about and hear what they have to say about it and if they see themselves through my words.

Portrait poetry is not a popular genre like confessional poetry is, it isn't usually used in a collection for every single poem. There aren't any poets that are solely "portrait poets". This intimidated me quite a lot, it felt like I couldn't make my collection all portraits because I have never seen it done before outside of just a single poem. Portrait poetry is defined as a depiction of another person that shows your perception of them, it could evoke emotions this person makes you feel, and show how you truly feel about them. I found inspiration in poets like Cynthia Cruz and Walt Whitman for specific portrait poems. Cynthia Cruz has a couple poems titled with self portrait in her collections *The Glimmering Room* and *How the End Begins*. Having her poems in front of me when I wanted portrait poems to observe was extremely helpful in how to formulate my thoughts onto the page in a poetic way. Reading Walt Whitman's famous poem *Song of Myself* was beneficial in writing self portrait poems as well. I found inspiration within painting portraits of people, the ones that are all over any museum you step into. It helped because it depicted the person who sat for the portrait in one specific way yet everyone who looks at it has their own interpretation of the emotions of the

person in the picture. I wanted to do that with my poems, write it one way and have everyone who read it get whichever reading came across to them. Portraiture, to me, could feel one sided on the outside but in reality it has layers upon layers of examination in any form.

In my portrait poems, the readers can dive straight into the world of the speaker. The imagination of the speakers comes with a confessional aspect about the people I wrote about and of myself. In the poem titled “in the dark”, the readers can see the person being portaited through the eyes of the speaker. “I think she knows all my secrets./This makes her laugh.” This poem gives a view of who the speaker is and who they are observing in their world at that exact moment in the piece. Hearing the thoughts that are going on inside the speaker’s mind is what felt confessional to me.

A self portrait poem is somewhat of a personal reflection that gives readers an idea of the poet. The idea of a self portrait poem has always had a special place in my mind. When I would read full length collections, the ones titled with “self portrait” always stick out to me, it was something I really enjoyed. In the self portrait poems it was very easy to be transparently confessional. The titles announce that it is a self-portrait, so readers already go into it knowing whose thoughts these are. In the poem titled “self portrait as a hammer”, the speaker opens with a dramatic confession. “Lately, I am so afraid/of men. So I dream of girls/who hate me instead.” Readers are immediately brought into the world of this speaker with this very specific “I” statement.

Besides the aspects of being portrait poems, these poems are deeply rooted in the imagination and personal thoughts of the speakers. The genre of confessional poetry appealed to me when writing this collection. I felt as if each portrait poem, especially the self portrait poems, held a level of confessionalism that was weaved into the lines. Confessional poetry originated in the 1950s in the United States. It is defined as the poetry of the personal, it includes “I” statements. It blends the poetic

speaker with the personal experiences of the writer, which is exactly what the poems in this collection are doing. In the poem titled “cotton candy”, it states “my mother loves sweet things but/she has never been diagnosed with/a cavity.” In that line I was able to blend together real life facts and place them within a fictional “world” (poem) where cavities are something to be diagnosed with.

Reading confessional poets like Sylvia Plath, Louise Gluck, and Richard Siken also helped during this writing process. Plath’s poem “Years”, Gluck’s poem “Gratitude”, and Siken’s poem “Scheherazade” were poems that I specifically read a lot of times over to help me when I needed inspiration to keep writing. Seeing these poets so honestly writing about and painting their emotions/perception of themselves helped me to do the same when I sat down to write about myself. These poets were able to write about real life experiences while placing them on the “I” of the speaker for their poems.

The settings in most of these poems are rooted in the seasons. Each season is referenced at least once throughout. In a poem titled “plum beach”, summer is referenced. “the weather a mix between/damp and windy./my hair greasy/from the humidity.” I began writing this collection last April, it was a beautiful and bright time of the year and inspired me to make the seasons a present motif throughout this collection. I wanted to reflect the different specificities that each season holds. Winter being chilling yet cozy, Spring being dreamy and light, Summer being warm and bright, and Autumn being crisp and colorful.

In other sections of the collection there are a couple breaks from the portrait poems that are seen a lot throughout the collection. There are instances where the collection theme breaks and there are different forms of poetry. There are three villanelles in the collection titled, “space exploration”, “to be so lonely”, and “everywhere you go, you take yourself”. There is one sonnet titled, “Sonnet: After

Hours”. One portrait poem is in the form of a contrapuntal, it is titled “a big deal”. I love to write in forms like these because it gives the poem a specific route to go and I enjoy writing like that. I placed these poems between the other ones in the collection so they would act as a “breather” for all the portraits that go back to back in this collection.

The title of the collection, *Every Spring*, comes from the poem in the collection titled “The Goats Grow Bigger Every Spring”. This poem is one I hold dearly to me, I wrote it two years ago and since then it has been through almost three workshops. It has evolved the most out of all of the other poems in the collection. It is a poem that was published in a literary magazine called Gandy Dancer, which was my first publication. This poem is packed with images of spring while also having a deeper/darker meaning. One of the lines in this poem being, “I stuff petals in my ears, I drown the world out, I just want to hear honey.” I wanted this poem to be the centerpiece of the collection for that reason. Although, seasons are a big motif throughout this collection, they represent a lot more than just the weather. For me, The Goats Grow Bigger Every Spring shows the duality of using a season for imagery while also using it to juxtapose the events taking place within the piece.

Writing poetry has always been about creating my own images through words that are unique to my thought process. With this collection, I hoped to create images of those closest to me in my life and of myself. I wanted to paint a picture of the things that stick with me from my memories of others. These poems are something I want to look back on one day and remember each feeling that came with what I was writing about. I am beyond proud of this collection. When I started writing poetry at Purchase, four years ago, I was nowhere near the place I am today. My professors have helped shape my writing tremendously. I was taught and guided on how to better myself and my writing with each class I was in. I am very grateful for all the different poetry collections I was able to read during my

time at Purchase. Being exposed to different genres of poetry helped me figure out which type of poet I was and wanted to be. With every workshop I was able to participate in, I got such helpful feedback which also made me the writer I am today. My goal for this collection was to capture some of the most beautiful and impactful people/times in my life while also understanding how they define who I am as a poet and person.

Outsmart Myself

The lines of my poems are
smarter than me.

They live inside a snowglobe,
swimming through swampy glitter.

My hesitation pulses through every
shake, every music cycle.

My poems are always ready to fall
backwards.

I want to carry them along with me
through the snowy streets of New York City.

In a dirty, old, coffee stained tote bag,
my papers dance - like they are ready to run.

Watching Out For Me

My roommate loves blue drinks but can't drink them.
They make her dizzy and she will puke.

I call her my shoulder angel.
She knits scarves out of Irish yarn to keep herself warm.

We speak endlessly until one of us is too tired to respond
to the last and doze off to the glow of fairy lights.

She wakes up to shut them off - I only sleep
in complete darkness.

She throws up blue raspberry colored liquid - her face always clean.
Her body, warm with a scarf draped around it like a snake.

see a daisy, pick it up

The first time I fell down, I had my father
to pick me up. My knee curdled into red jelly pieces,
and my tears started to roll. *Drama queen*
my sister shouted. From then, I promised
to never play in the rain anymore.
I sat on the benches as my cousins
threw around a muddy soccer ball,
splashing wet dirt, neglecting each and every rule.
They called me referee. I watched
the sky meet the clouds which morphed into mud
caked onto the wings of a honey bee. I remember the walking
and tripping and falling,
and not having my father to catch me anymore.
A daisy padding my scarred knees as I crashed
off my scooter on a bright day. There is something
about the throbbing, I do not remember.
I knew when it started to rain every day, I would have to
break my oath and swallow my crystals.
Protect me from the tripping and falling and
pad my face, so when the soccer ball came at it full force
I'd be left with just a bruise under my eye. *Tough bitch*
my sister shouted. From then, I promised
to ache and trip and fall and
smell the flowers on my way to the ground.

Little Corporal and His Lost Lands

I went back to the museum where portraits
are the only way I know him by name.
It seems there is no better time to fade
than right now. When he isn't around
to look me in the eyes. It is okay to let me burn
blue under the hue of this museum lighting.
The paintings begin to blend
into today like the way I am thinking of him
while looking at paintings of Napoleon.
I would be lying if I said I ever felt safe.
I am dust - hanging from the golden frames.

space exploration

So I fall into continents and cars
I stretch miles to the moon
You you you are my bright blue star

This trip to magic is by far
the faint echo of my June swoon
falling into continents and cars

I want to write myself into your memoir
and serve our guests with silver spoons
You you you are my bright blue star

Let me backtrack, not go as far to say
I want to have a wedding in the heat of June
and fall into continents and cars

For now I take a crowbar
to the depths of my immune
heart, I I I will be a peach star

I sip spiked lemonade from a mason jar
and wait till noon
to fall into continents and cars
I I I will be a peach star

cotton candy

"I am doing a portrait of Mother for myself. "

-Van Gogh, Letter to Theo

my mother loves sweet things but
she has never been diagnosed with
a cavity. she stuffs herself with mint
chocolate chip ice cream and oatmeal
raisin cookies. if she could, she would
live on the beach and paint her body
with sand. using salt water as hair spray.
her nose is always turned up just a tiny bit.
she prays with no answers, calls this
unfortunate. she never sighs, only grins
I ask if I could bake for her, her eyes say no.
so I take my apron off. she just wants to hug
and make sure my head is screwed on right.

to be so lonely

I won't wear shoes to my wedding,
want my feet to feel the Earth's wet dirt.
With each passing day I keep forgetting,

that one day I might not believe in heaven.
The rocks don't hurt
so I won't wear shoes to my wedding.

I envy the idea of mending, of sewing
bodies together - stuck by threads of a shirt.
With each passing day I keep forgetting

that one day I will be sweating
in the streets of Paris - feet burnt
yet I still won't wear shoes to my wedding.

I sew together pink fabric, dressing
up - in my new flushed tulle skirt.
With each passing day I keep forgetting

that one day I was just seven,
eating french fries for dessert.
I won't wear shoes to my wedding
with each day I just keep forgetting everything.

self portrait with a glass of water

Place your hand on my forehead
and check if I am burning up. Please.

My doctor tells me that my tonsils
are almost touching & soon
I won't be able to breathe.

I want to be that close to you.

I feel the soreness of them through
the skin on my neck. They ooze
with red liquid & pulse while I sleep.

Who knows how much time
I have left.

My doctor tells me that I am fine.

If my throat starts to close
I'll find a way to call
for you.

We Don't Even Exist

The first boy who loved me
was a saint. It was not hard to take
his breath away.

I felt unholy with every touch,
he offered to stick his fingers down my throat
in hopes of pulling the serpent out of me.

He loved me even from a very far away
place - but this frame of mine
was always too cold.

I watched him decay, wouldn't let him
exorcise the rotten out of me.
I threw coins into wishing wells.

He was the first boy that delicately
made me aware that something was wrong
with me, gently caressing my own hair as I walked away.

interior picture

in my mind, I am always
inside a baby blue walled loft.

there is a kitchen island
with a bowl full of ripe bananas.

i sit at the mahogany coffee table,
write my thoughts down on spare paper.

my back against the corduroy loveseat,
i never take my eyes off our baby.

outside, it is snowing furiously so we wait
for you to come home with food covered in frost.

our baby sits next to me in her jumperoo,
lets out a yell when you arrive

i set the table as you change
out of your frost covered clothes.

your skin nearly blue from the cold.

lost and found

I want my red sweater back.
Last I checked, it fit you so well.

Your dryer must have ate it,
the lake behind my house begs for it.

You eat coffee cake and pink juice,
spilling it all over. It stains my red sweater.

The little cat in bed wants its warmth
back, its blood colored polyester nest.

I lost my red sweater,
your name written all over it.

You may keep it but return it to the Earth soon.
Bury it and let it learn how to breathe again.

Sonnet: After Hours

We move from the tangerine light to the dusty corridors of the background.
Sit to mark where we last will be seen before inhaling pounds of fries.
Four in a three seater, ankles on knees, everyone still safely strapped down,
Afraid to move. Not too familiar yet, we breathe in each other's mango highs.

One of us mutters something about death being so close to us,
like it squeezed into the back, followed us from the beach.
Tarot cards burn through a backpack like they are cursed, but *that's nuts-*
another one of us blurts out. His black eyes turn a malignant peach as he speaks.

Blank expressions cover the two door space, other drivers even stay away - as if
Emily Dickinson was right, it was like death came in a Honda. But
none of us got in. We stay glued to seats, we all talk to each other like dogs - *stay*.
Flip the conversation on its head, we talk about marriage, and how we all manage

the feelings that come with being exhausted of this place.
We leave the car with nothing but a faint citrus trace.

winter monotony

Angels on a light post &
pawprints glittering
in the snow.

Fairy lights wrapped
around a bannister
& squirrels in the snow.

Flowers sold on the highway & lights flashing
from a cemetery headstone,
embedded deep in the snow.

Stepping on a rainbow cupcake, reheating
my morning coffee & dumping the steamed
liquid in the snow.

The Goats Grow Bigger Every Spring

In my head, I weigh down pockets with stones in exchange for the clearing of chrysanthemum fields.

I stuff petals in my ears, I drown the world out, I just want to hear honey.

To stay as high as I am, I beg long enough that my molars stop breaking through the glitter. There is no room for soaked sheets.

Sometimes the angels gossip about the feathers in my hair. I cannot remember the last time something I swallowed stayed put.

Wait to hear a pin drop, for the fat to keep me warm. This sweet-toothed jabber too loud.

I tuck into a new gown. It brushes the floor, I am floating. Buttons scallop the skin - zippers indent my back like an opening paragraph.

Say thank you for freshly scraped knees, for the handing out of pastures. Roll in the wind that coats the grass with pesticides. They're no good for me either. Swallow them with my mouth closed, I still have manners to uphold.

The solstice is too yesterday to think about now. I gut myself, sell the rotten parts for market money. I eat all the sweetbread the world offers.

self portrait as a hammer

Lately, I am so afraid
of men. So I dream of girls
who hate me instead.

I have never stopped thinking
of their faces - delightful diseases.

I order my coffee extra hot & hide
selenite in my pillow case.

My fan helps with the quiet.
I wear extra layers for the breeze.

I am trying to make things hard
for myself, a part of me is so sorry
for that.

a big deal

He searches through filing cabinets
in his brain, yearning for anything new.

He gets bored too easily, knows
he moves like a butterfly.

I have seen him break his oaths as many
times as the universe was created.

I ask him impossible things -
promise me you'll never die.

Before
he screamed to the sky, he smirked,

Smirking every time a familiar
thought is reiterated.

I've never met anyone who wasn't
in awe of him.

One day he might be eaten by bugs, he
calls that *nasty* in a nonchalant voice.

It isn't his fault that he can't
give me the things I wish for.

and reminded me that he was the bad guy.
If he ever were to die, he wouldn't be afraid.

self portrait with a mirror

I am always waiting.

Sometimes at a bus stop,
or on a line for donuts. Mostly
for you.

I stumble on my words because
there are only so many ways to say:
I am face down on the cement sidewalk.

I am restless. Waiting for the people
in my life to remember that I am
the finest person they will ever meet.

Sometimes I imagine what it must be like
to hate myself. The closest I get to it is dreaming
of what it is like to be you.

in the dark

A girl I know sits with her back to the dashboard.
Inhaling different types of smoke, shooting me
a big blue toothed smile between each exhale.

When she looks into my eyes, she is just looking
through me. *I can't look at you too long, it scares me.*
I think she knows all my secrets. This makes her laugh.

She tells me stories of ghosts that have lived in her house
back in Uzbekistan. The way they float through the doors
and make babies cry. She places her back on the passenger

seat in front of me, showing her teeth.
Her words linger through the car's air. Silence
consumes the space but I can hear her stare.

round the clock

I.

An Autumn baby tumbles
into the orange leaves
crunched up on the pavement.

She smears fake blood
over her cheek bones &
collects candy.

II.

Amongst the glittering
white trees she bundles up
for the windchill.

Her rainbow lights dangle
just above her hair while
she burrows in bed.

III.

Every Spring she walks
alongside her puppy &
drinks lavender milk.

She grants wishes
on fluffy flowers for
all her friends.

IV.

Under the electric colors
and loud booms she covers
her ears, the sky fades fast.

Sand in her teeth, she cools off
by standing in the ocean.
Sunburnt like a cherry tomato.

self portrait as a nightmare

I feel my head sink into my pillow
and I am immediately on a train to Brooklyn.

My mother isn't answering her phone
and I just missed my stop. Next stop: nowhere.

I can't catch my breath and people
are laughing all around me - ringing in my ears.

I look out the window and see mountains
and green pasture pasting the horizon.

As the train moves past the beauty
of the scenery, I am no longer afraid.

I am back in my bed,
head deep into the pillow.

I am lost in my thoughts,
my eyes see stars all over the room.

The Angels Are Gossiping Again

My things have gone missing and
I'm searching as if they once existed.

A denim blue fleece, warm and static full.
I've been shivering without it.

My roommate knit a tiny rug out of Irish
yarn and dry hands. That too - vanished.

We step on tiles, searching for a hole in the
ground. Maybe someone else is here.

We make sure our clothes are alone.

It feels like God is in this room with us.
Crossing ourselves, until we no longer feel like prey.

We keep the fairy lights on in our room.
It is 4:30 a.m. and the walls are whining.

Let us sleep
Let
Us
Sleep.

bloodline

I.

Cold skin, too stubborn
to wear our jackets outside
even on Christmas Day.
My mustard sweater keeps
me warm as different types
of smoke dance around us.

II.

Fingers stinky from
the beer spills.
She responsibly
orders us iced water.
Dancing to music that
dates both of us.

III.

Chlorine scented hair.
Red, white, and blue
frosting smeared across
our faces.
She hands me a summer brew
& I crack it open.

IV.

We countdown together,
in a Times Square apartment.
Her maroon blouse smells
of menthol cigarettes & french fries.
Confetti on the floor,
We are up to our ankles in it.

as good as it gets

Over a breakfast of runny eggs
we talk about the end of the world,
but you don't see it as serious.

The waiter refills our coffee more
than three times, we drown
in caffeine. I wish days like this were forever.

A sign next to our booth reads:
life doesn't get much better than this!
I want to cry, you are smiling so big.

One day we will both be gone.
This moment crystallized in the
leather creases made by our bodies.

I smile at the thought of our permanence.

self portrait as a migraine

A woman sits on
my temples and prays
for hours.

One day I'll take scissors
to her shiny locks
and nick her away.

Her golden hair drapes
down her back, she is so
relaxed.

A lulling drum
plays behind her
prayers.

She sounds like music,
a thunderclap appearing
during a blue day.

When I start to hear her,
I drown myself
in peppermint.

The woman is used to me,
she has made cushions
out of my brain.

Dug her heels deep
into the
sockets.

She sleeps, snores loudly,
I hide a scissor
under my pillowcase.

Hidden Gem

Wet cherry blossoms stick
to the soles of my sneakers.
Walking in circles under the sun.
My mom curses at the man
riding his bike. This is a trail
made for feet.
The ground frosted with sugar
like a fancy martini glass.
We cozy up to the pollen around us.
The hawks screech while searching
for their baby's lunch.
Finding a safe spot at the top of a hill.
We eat white bread with no crust.
Sipping water, breathing
so deep, our vision blurred by the sun.
A hawk flies so low, swooshing right
by our ears, my mother screeches.
Watching the world we squint in sync.
The sky is clear now.

self portrait in a lighthouse

I'm looking out to the sea
wondering how far it goes.
My feet glued to the damp wood
& the breeze is so cool, the hair
on my arms stands tall.
People on boats hypnotized
by the light, it pokes through
the quietness.
The waves mock the movement
of pulse. I know I have been here
many times before, I recognize
the saltiness on my lips
from the air. I lick them.
The sea is too mesmerizing to sleep.
A small bed covered
in bright white sheets waits
for me.

plum beach

I walk the side of the highway
like a duck, following
the person in front of me
until we recognize street lights.
my stomach full of pink
strawberry liquids that slosh
around between the hunger pains.
my striped crop top smells
of fresh firewood & dirty salt water.
I walk with anger in my fists
& a pep in my step.
I am thinking
of the greasy fried food
I will inhale
when we finally arrive
to our familiar setting.
every step I take
my slip on sneakers
crunching with sand.
the weather, a mix between
damp and windy.
my hair greasy
from the humidity.
in the near distance
a bright orange light glows.
I start to run,
I am starving for a seat.

everywhere you go, you take yourself

“Why can’t I try on different lives, like dresses, to see which fits best and is more becoming?”

-Sylvia Plath, The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath

Brooklyn is calling, telling me to come home.

I cry until my eyeballs fall out.

Here I am, raising my family in Rome.

My garden is filled with green gnomes.

I have not a single doubt! - (but)

Brooklyn is calling, telling me to come home.

My unborn child has a double X chromosome,

So I think of a name for my baby - (Scout!)

Here I am, raising my family in Rome.

I am on a tour into the Catacombs

damp and dark, my face begins to pout -

Brooklyn is calling, telling me to come home.

Maybe if I had a working phone

I would find a way to loudly shout -

Here I am, raising my family in Rome.

I am stuck under a dome

surrounded by a crowd.

Brooklyn is calling, telling me to come home- (but)

Here I am, raising my family in Rome.

self portrait as my bad side

I am unsure how to say: I am
falling. I have no bruises to show,

but if you give me a newspaper
I will ruin it, I don't care very much

about the way other people feel
pain. As long as I am brand new

flesh in place, I will smack a smile
on my face properly. There is one

thing I am sorry for: I didn't mean
to slam your finger blue in the hallway

door & then your foot on the way out.
At least I offered a plastic bag of ice.

My secrets spill out of me like foam
from atop a glass of cold beer. Certainly -

Yes, I would enjoy a drink right now.

sailing through

Do you hear the church bells ringing?
It is never April where you are.

The lilacs grow from the breath
of the Earth but it is still mournful.

Everything is warm,
coffee has never tasted better.

There are mountains, so many mountains.
Crickets scream their lungs out. A cat meows loudly.

It is hard to concentrate on anything but the noise.
You observe the moon from different heights.

You drink a cup of pond water
with crushed ice.

Isn't that the way the world ends?

With a whimper, a soft one
with so much misery inside of it.

Promise me when I turn to dust,
you will place me amongst the flowers.