

ONE LAST THING:

You always let me down. Someone said that to me once but now I can't remember who. I believe the phrase was initially directed towards me in an athletic environment.

I associate the words with a dull voice and brown eyes.

You always let me down.

It is summer now, the year of 2004, the month of August. A mild summer, for all intents and purposes. A lazy, dull dryness. A very bearable heat. It makes it easier to sit around and die. I go in the pool a lot less.

The courtyard smells of basil and dirt. The hose is always running. On the swing set, within the hollow confines of the red metal pipe, is a large wasp's nest. The same nest that someone sprayed with Raid three years ago. The chain links of the swings have rusted and they shower the grass with iron oxide.

Pyrethrins affect the nervous system by causing multiple action potentials in the nerve cells by delaying the closing of an ion channel. The result is seizures, death, and residual affects of up to one month.

I sit on the roof of the barn throwing chestnuts down onto the rock wall of our property line. I listen to the thuds and imagine what it would be like. Would I dive headfirst? More importantly, would my body come to rest in our yard or the neighbors'?

From what I hear from people who have had one night stands, frost and snowfall is beneficial for chestnut trees. I haven't had any so I'm not fit to pass judgment.

There is a crack in the brick of the foundation of the red barn and it will begin to crumble soon. Underneath the barn is a small family of garden rabbits. The rabbits burrow under the high fence of the garden by the pool and eat the sweet peas and butternut squash. Two summers ago, Jimmy Rollins would chase the rabbits around the barn by day until they ran back into their holes. Today, Jimmy is in the backyard compost pile, underneath a large chunk of granite.

The pool smells like chlorine- Molecular weight: 70.9. Vapor density: 2.5. Melting point: -101 degrees C. I have heard that prolonged exposure to chlorine may result in olfactory fatigue. Chlorine is also a severe irritant of the eyes, mucous membranes,

skin, and lungs.

I have eaten it and it tastes of chemical compounds and hell.

The frogs swim in the pool and die, eyes bulging, guts and entrails oozing out of their mouths and I think of simpler times, like swim-team, egg-hunts and paper-mâché. The house is dry, like the air, and I turn the air conditioner off at night because no one is around.

I have a tie and a blazer that Mom gave me that I never wear. They hang in the closet beside the old winter jackets that smell like mothballs- naphthalene and paradichlorobenzene and sublime sublimation- that my grandfather gave me before he died. He took me to Nova Scotia once, on a passenger ship. We shared a bunk with my Uncle. The weather was calm and the sky was gray like the gravel outside our hotel room. They smoked cigarettes with Canadians and I can't remember what I did there.

In the past three months, I have only wanted a person- a living being of some finite infrastructure- to tell me that they ---- --.

I cannot read the minds of these people who I know as friends or family anymore. I cannot pluck the thoughts from their brains. I can only ask. And they can tell me. But even then, they could be lying.

Meg comes over time to time but it's usually as a friend that I do not need. She worries that I have stopped eating. But she is happy that I have started writing. I do not tell her that this is because real life has ceased to become as interesting as the things I can make up.

She leaves for M----- in two weeks. I worry that she will be keel-hauled by this respectable liberal arts university and will return home completely unrecognizable. Maybe covered in blood and barnacles. Or perhaps, she will be dating someone entirely inhuman.

I miss her. Everyday.

Dad is burning leaves and spare brush by the other property limits, the ones that have no rock walls to define them. The air smells heavy and sweet with the smoke. The clouds are eating the sky, infinite and indomitable. A gray blanket of faded fabric and loose threads.

Now, I am lying in the grass, by the swing set, face up, watching the wasps.

Thinking about things. Waiting for the jingle of a dog collar, the sweat of summer, or perhaps the crackly kiss of a certain voice. Waiting for life to pick up steam, waiting for it to slow back down. Waiting.