

a half breed





1.

When I think of my parents bed  
I think of white skin with black fur  
supple curves with gaunt jaw  
nails that grope without defense  
and law humiliated by a beast.

And this heart, hammering...it hurts!  
Big beast heart, heart too big for me!  
Pale white skin, skin too soft for me!  
Pollution by the strong! Bitter apples!  
Mom, I want to taste their sweetness

and shun meat...please, just don't kill  
another hare for me. One day, I'll learn  
to love bitterness, and cast aside  
My nature!

2.

You told me not to worry about my handwriting  
because you said that no one would care  
Once they took a good look at my hands...but I studied  
and studied, and look  
Look—all in one line!

*Vexillology*

*Uncopyrightable*

Have I improved?

Sorry, but I also need to write something else  
Something special to me, but to you the most!

*Happy birthday!*

or, happy birthday—oh come on!!  
I shouldn't have made it hard to read  
for something that's this meaningful.  
I'll only write like that to brag (to who???—m)

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!!!!!**

*MR*

3.

I know the tree's been here longer than me  
and I know that when you look up to the top  
You dream of a child, swinging on a branch  
who could never wait until fall  
to pluck the green apples  
and eat them with a puckered smile.

I, too, dream of the same child  
staring down at me. I want to grow  
like she does—or as the apples do:  
round, whole and softly...oh softly  
they're all falling now! Sweeter and sweeter  
uneaten! I'd help you finish them all, if only  
If only—  
Red! all red...

4.

After you killed the hare  
I heard you in the dark  
whispering a prayer  
through the cobwebs.

Oh, my pointed ears...!

they give you no privacy...but your words  
are safe with me. I'll take it from your lips  
as my work  
rather than your wish.

You have paid far more  
Than what you thought you'd pay  
That night. It's as if from then on  
you, too, became a beast..

You never needed to repent  
before my birth...where are the days  
when you cut only fruit—from trees  
Or from the market near our home?

The apples don't suffer...here  
let me mix a piece into the flesh  
I can wean it off! Slowly, slowly...

Mom, you are stronger than him in every way  
and I live through your strength  
and love you for it!

5.

I'll hide my hands and shut my mouth  
and not remind her of that night  
of him.

(sometimes, she forgets i'm half of her.)

I can speak as soft as you  
my skin is the same as yours—but please  
don't hold my hand,  
don't brush my hair,  
don't watch me eat! and above all  
please don't cry! I promise I'll be good...  
but I hear things that can't be from you  
and find them less than terrible.

I would tell you them, but my mouth acts up  
up—see? when my big tongue clogs my words  
LLLLLLike this!! you see how I break...

I will learn to sweat in summer and shiver in winter!!

(it's a new year...who knows!)



6.

I had a dream!

In a dark night where only I can see the road ahead  
A beast comes and attacks us both!! and  
and, I growl to him and say: "you're the hunted one!—  
And he flees into the night. And I comfort you  
and hug you and carry you back home  
Just like you did for me!

And you'll see—it wasn't so bad, caring for me!  
Aren't you glad I'm not a normal child? Aren't you?  
Aren't you? Say so

7.

No, no...mother, I cannot.

I cannot renounce him—cannot eat the apples,  
Cannot hug you tight! He clings so strong...  
I love your skin, but need his claws, his fur  
His half. They defile me...but are me. And his half

Is nothing to him, but everything to me. It is mine:  
I own it. Not his fur, but mine; nor his claws, but mine.

And they are *not* his tears. What you deal to me  
You deal to only me. If, by some small chance  
He is in me, then he is that still, small voice  
That begs horrendous things. Please, don't feed it.

And you mock me..."how can a beast shed tears?"  
How? It baffles me. I shed no tears...I am tears.

8.

I'll do it all myself...

It takes you all day to cut my hair  
All of it! It must smell so buttery and bad  
To you. But now, I'll open my eyes  
In front of the mirror—ah! my face!

...no, I don't need scissors. It's just  
I'm not too used to it, being a lass  
Who lugs horrendous things with me  
Though I've carried these since birth.

(I was used to it, until the others weren't.  
Now, I'm not used to it.)

And my food...!

I'll never let your hands turn red again  
Unless it's from those shiny apples  
That our neighbors take in the night  
(Trust me—they do, they really do!)

9.

When I flipped through your old photos,  
I glimpsed my own reflection on the film  
And found some edges poking out.

And when I matched your young smile  
And subtracted like in school, I saw  
What the others saw in me. And I cried

As you sat me down on your lap,  
Soothed me and confessed  
That you made only half of me.

You touched my pale skin, and then  
You touched the other half of me  
And bled a little.

I licked your hands, looked up at you  
Then down at the photo: you were to me  
My mother and my sister.

## 10.

The ocean's in the woods, the flood so fast  
That when I snatched the fish  
And whipped it through the air

Its life streamed into mine  
As I stole the shimmer from its eyes  
Mixed it with an afternoon  
And daubed it on my cheeks.

And still, I dove for more! Head-first,  
Breathing bubbles in the brook  
As the fishes fled from my words  
Just like everybody else...you see

Beyond the words they teach at school  
I can make whole hosts of sounds  
Whose sense remains a mystery  
To me, you, and everyone I've seen  
So far. One of them sounds a bit like

Awawawa!! only when I'm alone, so  
Maybe it's meant to call someone  
Near. But who knows where I go  
After school, with no one at my tail?

I wish they'd all be able to see this  
Alone, like I do. Maybe we could  
Write each other little notes...  
The river's nice, but I wouldn't call it  
Friend.

11.

Today, too, in the grove I thought the most remote  
I dreamed of someone watching me—  
Finding these strange clothes on the ground  
Before he found me, dashing along the trees.

I dreamed that he would recognize me  
Faintly—once, as a student in a dress  
Forced to hold a pen with these hands  
And speak with my big big tongue. And I dreamed

No, hoped! That he would see this  
Not as some departure or advance  
But as a return to some old old home  
As everything in me stretched to its real length.

And after I've brought down every bird  
Raised up every fish, I'll come to him  
And faint—he'll have to lug me home!  
On his shoulders, whisper-close. And if he hears me

Choke on my words, fumble with my dress  
And wonders how I bear my life back home  
I'll lead him to you, Mom! We'll have  
A light meal, and he can stay the night.

12.

Today, I really did find someone watching--  
It was you, Mom! I must've stayed a little too late  
But your face, your face! I'm sorry, I didn't know  
The woods were that dangerous at night...

You said nothing on the way back, and I  
Choked on the fish  
Still wriggling in my mouth—of course  
I'd never eat in front of you!

That running fish blood...you turned  
And with your quick glances, I'd think  
You envied me! I returned your gaze  
Smiling, but your eye was slightly lower.

You and the fish were staring at each other  
Each pitying the other.



13.

The past feels more alive at home! More than  
the battles and wars they teach at school.

Holiday cards you couldn't throw away,  
Reminders penned down a decade ago...

And your photos—all of them! Aren't you glad  
You took them all? You looked so happy then.

Once in a while, I try to hunt for new ones  
Taken at my age. I've been doing it more often

Because every day, I seem to grow from you  
A little more: something new that I don't see

On you, your photos, anyone...Mom,  
Besides the albums, notes, expired cards

There's something else from the past  
That'd help me right now, growing so fast

In what direction, I'm not sure. Sometimes  
I feel my own strength flourish, or even love!

But other times, I feel some transformation

Split one side of me against the other

That I'm not sure will kill me with this pain  
Or fade at dawn. And while I know your half

I have no clue where the other's heading.  
Mom, I think you know—and I think it scares you

Not just what I'm becoming, but how weak I'll be  
If I *foresee* what I'll become. But

Remember when you sat me on your lap?  
I was strong, *see?* I can handle these things

Without bursting into tears, you know?  
Please, just look at me again and tell me

Did he have these hairs, claws, strange irises  
Did he bear his teeth as large as *these?*

What's normal, what's wrong? or is everything  
No, we've been through this...oh Mom,

If I ask you this, must you relive the past?  
If you forget it, can't I steal it as it flies?

I wish I could just steal this memory from you  
And free us both. And I'm quite stealthy, but...

I think we'll either share him or forget him both  
And neither outcome will make us both happy.

I don't want to tear your clothes again, soak tears  
on my pillow. Please, just tell me what to expect

You knew him well, right? Until—yes, I know  
It's strange to wonder about your bed that night.

It's strange, and I think we both agree  
That no child should have to ask these things

Should have to scrounge for clues  
About what happened on that night.

14.

Mother, I can tell it scares you to punish your child  
Who's already bigger than you at this age, who has  
These limbs that speak against you. Should a child  
Have these—or *these*? did you see the same ones  
That dark night?

...do you even hear me among the pitter-patter?  
Damn, left outside again without a meal...outside  
My family tree  
My schooldesk  
My own body!!  
Life's a size too small for me! It hurts...and it hurts  
You, to see me growing on my other half. Or  
Are you happy to punish me like this—revenge?  
Did you lie there that dark night, awaiting the days

When you could make me hurt: his hostage  
Image, child, remains of that night—but why?!  
I have your eyes, your skin—even your sex!  
Do you not see yourself in me—a fragment  
Even?

I am more you than him! Please...do you remember  
Your childhood photos, even? I've pored over them  
Again and again, just to see where I fall short of you

In our summer scrapbook...

15.

Will no one stop me?

My claws are enough to break my soft skin—here,  
See? God accidentally gave me the key to my lock.  
Will no one stop me? And where will I go

Between the hell for beasts, the hell for men—  
Oh, I am the key to a harmony of hells!

Mother...mother!

You have birthed me to your hell...was there ever a chance  
To redeem myself to you? Even if I could act a saint  
in your womb, you'd still judge me the offspring of that beast—

Essentially bad! Bad child, bad child! Pay for your father!  
Give this slap to him—here! Let him feel your hunger!  
Oh, my first child could have been an angel, had anyone  
But your father lured me to the woods! We made a child  
Knowing that she'd suffer,  
The blows we'd give her...!

But what matter is it to you that I'm your child—  
You've used that against me, the horror of your beauty  
Birthing something this vile—with your eyes, your pure skin  
Defiled by these dense, hairy patches of the inhuman—

Human enough to think upon the beast I am!!

16.

I will go into the woods and paint my face with gold  
And descend upon the beasts. they will think me  
God: the beast with pale skin.

I know that if you weren't holding my hand  
If I couldn't take with me your last name  
To the market, to school, to my own home  
They'd all be pointing guns at me  
And I would kneel, bite on their barrels  
And find them sweet.

Through envisioning my next life,  
I have dreamt of so many past lives  
Of beasts, of men.

I dreamed of tearing down the idols  
That you bend me down to worship every week  
And the science that they teach in class.

I dreamed of killing beasts on top of men  
Nearing their climax—as I took their place.

I was the huntsman who shot to death

The same beast I was in another life.

And I remember that, in my last life, I promised  
That I would leave wherever I was sent,

No matter where it was; that I would leave  
Whoever took me in—no matter who it was.

If fate loves most the ones who try to run  
Then let me chase it

when it least expects—and let what will fall  
Fall. Goodbye

Goodbye



17.

The woods! The woods.

Mom, you never drank much  
And beasts never eat grapes.  
So believe me when I say  
My birth made me a victim to the bottle!!  
Without any tolerance, the alcohol  
Raped all my senses and made me  
The first of all my ancestors to see  
*Beyond my birth.*

                                    If there's one thing  
That's able to blend my two halves  
It's wine; one thing that's able  
To completely sever my two halves  
Also wine. The cold wood numbs me  
But the wine spurs me on! Wine

18.

I've never met a child so obsessed with their own birth  
Never met a child so changed by it  
So hurt by their conception bed. And I've never met  
A mother so quiet about it.

But below the stars,  
The first night in the woods gives me the half I need  
The necessary solitude  
To reveal the story of your love.

I must bring together  
Memories of home, the wilderness  
And my own body—and go beyond  
These facts. I'll go through my past

And pull my halves apart—my boundaries  
of skin and fur. Only then will I be in him  
And you.

This would be hard for most children, but I  
Am a being less than two, yet more than one.

19.

Sometimes I wonder why he didn't die  
That day when he arrived to your house

full of wounds—and why you looked at him  
As if he fell out of a nest.

The question wasn't whether you'd unlock the door,  
But whether you could muster all your strength

And lug him in. He looked like turned-off lights  
To someone at the door. But to you

His self-proclaimed nurse, his eyes seemed to glow  
Surrounded by his fur. If they were closed,

You'd check his breath—and if not breathing  
Feel for his heart. And he lets you.

Passivity is not his role,

Yet he sees the warm kettles  
The bookstacks on the desk  
And the wheat growing slowly—  
It doesn't make him drowsy.

The shutters are down at noon; at midnight  
Lamps and hearths. The lights are strange

But soothing—and at one point, he smiles.  
You couldn't tell what that gesture meant to him

but believe me *it really is a smile.*

You'd read him every holiday card  
And he would stare at your mouth  
Listen to its soft, intriguing sounds  
More stilling than his father's roar

And at dusk, you'd check on his wounds  
That heal, perhaps, in spite of your help.  
But he smiles! And soon

Instead of worrying about infection, you can laugh  
When he walks with weak limbs and wobbles  
The whole house—and goes outside, flustered.

*Is autumn always windy?*

Never seen him actually move, have you?  
Never seen his legs, even—tucked before!  
He was heavy, sure. But who, at that size,

Could leave so fast? And who would leave

So soon, with the care you gave him?

Gone—you sighed at the soft apples

Trampled. But the day eventually runs its course

And at dusk, you sigh again when he returns

With an elk. And despite your sighs

Despite the blood, you let him in

And ate. But what was in the house

That gave him an urge to return, Mom?

For the gauze attached, stitches sewn?

No—but the oil that you pressed into his fur

That must have done it: to touch his skin

Beneath. The next day, he comes again

And knocks this time! You open your door

And he, the world. The woods become for you

A journey, rather than a scene. See

That peak in the distance?

He carries you to it—and then

To the peak uncovered by the first!

And when you return each night, he dallies

Longer than the night before—until, one day

He stays until dawn. And with no need to knock  
His journey ends, and he is home

Leaving hairs that pop up even to this day  
And a smell I don't think you can smell

(I can tell his favorite spot  
Was the corner of the library.)

Your kettles were not as rusty back then  
Your bedside, not as cold as now.

It's dark. continue this tomorrow.  
Headache I await you.

20.

I didn't want to wake up before you.

The first night was too easy. But now  
At dawn, all I can think about is when  
You'll wake up and find me gone  
Your tears. And as the sun grows  
So does my certainty that all of this  
Is happening to you right now—now.

I wish I'd woken up at noon—  
But the dreams! Mother...!  
When I first set off, your tears  
Spurred me on. But now  
They have a taste beyond regret

As I see in them his flight, his absence and  
The hours, minutes—breaths before my birth.

You always wondered whether it was instinct, or  
You know. But believe me when I say  
that you made him, whose old law was strength

Love. Love! so odd to him that when he found it  
Mistook it as a will to guard the weak.  
Him! The one who'd thrive in any other place

And him, whose heart was dark coal  
That burned so slowly and so red  
He didn't even know it turned to ash

Until, on a night he felt the most at home  
Most close to you, most warm—most able to dream  
He shivered in your arms and woke  
His jaws around you—and cried.

You soothed him, but knew from then on  
That you would have to overlook his soul—and he  
Yours. You both thought the other fell asleep  
And at dawn, he did not go outside. Instead

He explored each room inside the house  
And stared at what he'd never seen before  
Caressed what he'd never put his nose upon  
And accidentally burned his hairs on the stove.

Each apple had a different scent to him  
As he bobbed them in his bath outside  
And stared at the setting sun's reflection  
On the window where he saw you peek  
And blush—yes he knew what it meant.



He stayed in the bath until the full moon rose  
And on that night with much logs in the hearth  
A night where everything was almost done  
Where you just needed him to knock on the door  
To understand his dreams, his capacity for guilt  
He ran away,

Left you—Mom, don't! Don't you follow! Look,  
The kettle's loud, so stay! The soup will get cold  
and in your plate, there's just one apple-slice left  
*So stay!!*

But you left to find him. And the home's light  
Broke into panes that shrunk behind your back  
As you traversed the woods and found his track  
All too familiar. And for the first time in a while

*You see your breath.*

21.

Mom, as sharp as my ears are  
At times, my feelings overpower them  
And I swear I hear you calling my name  
Stumbling in search of me.

If I close my eyes, I can even see  
You, appearing right in front of me  
And I, in the same place he waited.

Between that night and this,

The trees haven't thickened too much.  
I can see how they looked back then  
What slashes he made to their trunks.  
I suppose you heard the birds retreat  
And followed his cries

His cries, his cries!

They sounded like mine, I'm sure!  
But he couldn't write them down.  
Neither can I. Awawawa is stupid  
When it isn't mewed...but if you heard that one cry  
When you encountered him, then I'm sure

You'd understand just what he held back  
What it did to him: when his injuries  
Disguised his strength, made possible  
Your friendship. But here  
And now, stretched to his true height  
You fell back with the realization

That what you'd chased  
Was what you should have been afraid of  
And that his prey—or even his prey's prey  
Could eat you whole.

But I cannot tell if it was mercy or a vow

When his snout touched your outstretched hand,  
Flinched when you balled it up to a fist  
And approached when you loosened it;

When, with one stride, he thrust himself  
Into the forest, into darkness—in you

When his claws that tore up other beasts  
Now glided so gently on skin

A sharp pain before a gradual thaw  
On that wintry night approaching spring

Your bodies confusing each other  
Like mine that balances you both.

You both bent down over the snow-prints  
Until you turned and faced the full moon  
And him above the warm breaths of milk

Of apples, kettles, burnt crusts of bread  
As he gave back the home in his heart

That beat upon yours with a rhythm  
Twice as slow, twice as deep. Yes,  
That same big heart he lent to me

When, from far, his seed jumped the gap  
And collided, giving me decades in an instant  
Through a love that did not care about me.

22.

To you, I wasn't there! *You did not even see me.*  
Why didn't you see me that night? He saw me  
And ran, but you had no idea! Who was at my birth  
But you?

They all ran from me, and the only one who didn't  
Didn't even know I was there. But do you know  
Why he ran when he saw me? Because he knew  
That I'd be able to love you *on his behalf.*

He left for less than a year. Then, he came back  
When I was born!

Mom, you discovered his childhood in mine,  
Relived his things in me—some good, and some  
Like now...but this day will pass, I'm sure.

I hope you've gone to bed by now. And maybe  
I'll sneak back for a bit to see how you're—no  
I can't. I hope this day will pass  
For both of us. And I really hope

Those aren't your footsteps I hear...  
They have your rhythm, and though  
They're soft in snow, they still remind me of

Autumn, when you searched for me! I had a fish, remember?  
Your steps crinkled, and you still felt comfortable then  
Holding my hand. I don't remember how we looked  
But your voice! It sounds more hoarse now,  
But strangely has more ebbs when you call

My name—  
But you shouldn't use that in the woods...! as if  
The rocks, trees had names—wait, don't trip  
On that rock!! oh you just missed it. I almost started

but I'm surprised you still remember this place  
the path you took that night. Did you try to forget it?

oh you're scratched a bit. If I come out  
To lick your wounds, will you hit me?

...I miss your touch. Your outstretched hand  
grasping for something. Please, let me place  
My head under it--oh

Our eyes just met! You glanced at me. I'll go, but

Before I leave, I'd like to guide you back.  
It's dark for you, I know. But on a full moon,

The day never really ends for me!  
You can't even see that spider on your arm.

I swear, if a beast comes for you  
Thinking you alone, I'd shriek  
And tear its heart out. Maybe then,  
You'd miss me less. Right, mother

mom please don't get close  
If you do, I might hug you to death and cry.

I want to run away, but if you chase me  
And fall I know that I'd be weak.

There's no way he saw you fall like that  
Right? He never turned back.

But his pointed ears...to think the thud you made  
Made no impression on him.

He stared with his ears—and what  
Did I learn, between that night and this?

You loved me, loved me and I left you.

23.

I am so sorry! I promise I'll be good,  
I never wanted you to find what I wrote...  
You cried, I know, because all of it  
Was smut, lies—all of it! Remember when, as a child  
You fooled me and I cried? You apologized,  
Kissed me all over, and I accepted them...

So please accept mine!

You never brought him up, unless I did first, and  
I have yelled—growled, what a horrible sound—at you  
Because of my own confusion! These last entries were  
All a joke, mistake—fumbling, bad claws!!  
You'd believe a beast...really?!—I'm sorry, I'm sorry.  
I am your child and no one else's...and a mother like you

Raised no beasts.



24.

No, they weren't all just lies.  
Some of what I said was true, some false.  
Your tears don't come from a single source...

I'll never run from school again.  
I'm fast enough to elude them all  
But slow in catching you again...

We can go back to the pawn-shop—  
They close really late!! I know that my dresses  
Were once yours—I've seen them in the photos!

And I know that you tailored, poked holes in them  
Just for me...but we can always make more! ow  
I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'll get them back, I promise.

Then, can you teach me how to sew?

I'll always be smaller than you  
in your eyes...

Forgive me?

MR

25.

Mom, I promise to outlive you.

So you don't need to be so overbearing OK?

You'll have me your whole life.

I can tell you many things he hid from you

If I rifle through the half he gave to me

I can tell you what each of his calls meant.

Sometimes, I speak to you like a sister

Than a mother. And by the way you hug me

Maybe people'd think you came out of me!

MR

26.

If I could write the silences in life,  
Make still the shadows in the afternoon  
And bring to you the taste of an apple  
I would not be so focused on my birth.

Here! I could tell you of my friends  
Who don't speak about the ways we differ  
Unless I bring it up. Or, I could tell you of  
The times when I'm alone: in my room

The kettle's dulled piping and the sound  
Of her rocking chair. And as I lay down  
With all my weird dolls, I think of myself  
As myself—

No, I don't even think it.

MR

27.

One day, I asked my heart to beat more quietly  
And it told me to shut up. So I thought  
clutching my chest  
That it could never love.

I asked my teeth to stop jutting from my mouth,  
And they made me bite my tongue. So I thought  
blood running down my lips  
I'd be unkissable.

I begged my hands, crossed them both  
And cut myself in prayer—and knew  
That god would never hear.  
And then

I asked you of the joy that I  
a beast, could ever have. And your  
Objection to my power  
made me never wish to think again.

MR

28.

Spring already! It's been so long since my last entry.  
More like early spring. No—it's just February.

February should be its own season!  
With its soft blossoms on black bark,  
Cloudy days that look like they *want* to snow  
And chunks of sleet flowing on the river—wait  
Thawing snow? oh, but winter was just...!

Poems for winter always come too late,  
Always half-done from bad memories.

What's there to winter? Snow, cold, ice  
and some other things, too. You see,

I always think that when I'm done suffering, then  
I'll get it done. But after it's gone

So is winter.

Spring, please speak with winter.  
Tell him not to leave so soon  
Because I'm still not done with him.  
I thought him scary as a child,  
but he's a coward behind the cold.

Mom always thought me hardy as a child  
But recently, she's been offering me her tissues  
And telling me to dress warmer. Strange,

My hair has only gotten thicker. And yet  
I feel the winter—now, more than ever.

MR

29.

You brought a student home today.

I couldn't understand what you two were saying  
But it sounded like he had a better knowledge  
Of myself than me! And he talked that way

Until I appeared. His surprise was a relief to me:  
That you spoke of me as nothing but your child

Though I suppose you had to tell him then  
Why I leaned so far while sitting—and still  
Surpassed his height.

But still, he shouldn't be this shy!  
He sounded louder from my room  
Than when I sat beside you both

When, with a low voice, he apologized  
for his initial gasp, turned to his food  
And avoided looking at me as I ate.

But I knew what you'd told me before  
He was a student--who, above all else  
Wished for something more alive  
Beyond his dusty book of beasts.

He was nervous when he came into my room.  
I thought he'd gotten over it—after all,  
my room could be scarier than a pastel pink!

He apologized so many times  
As I reassured him there were others  
more curious, more pressing  
Than himself. At that, he finally

Felt comfortable enough to ask  
What I ate—and after he told me  
What an apple tastes like  
Even asked to examine my teeth!

And although I couldn't speak  
After that, I wanted to ask him  
If he pet our neighbor's cat  
(she *always* runs from me!!)

He grabbed my hands and felt my claws  
And didn't notice my slight squeeze on his  
Didn't notice while examining my face  
That I was staring back. He didn't notice

And I never apologized! And at the end of it



I thought he used up all his questions  
And apologies. But he got up to leave  
And stepped on a ball of yarn—that cry

Was a new way of apology!  
And when he asked me how I sewed,  
Where I went after school—different questions

That begged for such different answers  
That at the end of it, even you were listening!  
(though you were too shy to open the door.)

I think he'll visit again. Mom, have you seen him eat  
At lunch—do you know his favorite meals? Wait, no  
I'll make what I like most—he asked me, after all!

We should have more visitors—  
They bring in scents like stories.

MR

30.

It's getting more infrequent. So many things  
Happy things—have been getting in my way.

Yet everything I've done...! I can't believe  
They still come to me like seasons.

MR

31.

I can see the distant caps of snow  
And my breath, up-close. I think it's cloudier

than yours, because I'm a little bit too warm.  
We visited the museum of races, classes and beasts

And no one stared at us—  
Are we really that familiar?

You sang near the village square.  
No one wanted to dance—until I did first!

We circled around the fire  
And the trees cut my big shadows.

The children were all curious about me,  
First asking me if they could ride me  
And last, wondering about the northern star  
As they sat on my shoulders for a clear view.

We turned the arrows of the clock  
So late...you leaned on my side

And looked up: the homeward path  
Was lit by the Great Bear.

We didn't bother with the lights, and  
I received between your kisses, some feeling

That you'd never look past it all...  
With that, I loved you all the more.

I shut the door to the bathroom  
And made your snore a whisper.

The mirror turned to me  
And I saw this shape without form,

felt the beating and the breathing  
That once scared you—most of all

Myself. But in this mirror  
And in this new, new year, I resolved

To possess myself *in one body and soul.*

*Maira Riner*

32.

Say, you didn't pet the cat this time!

hm,

odd. The last time it was so friendly, but  
I don't know, this time she didn't come  
Even when I called—

Ha!

should've spent less time with me,  
you know—less time examining my hair  
Ruffling through it!

Oh. is that it?

m! and if she didn't approach you today  
She'll hiss at you this time—the way back!  
You can only choose one of us, you know

wait, really? are you

no, I

was thinking of getting

what? I can't believe, how could you

just

Kidding! But please, take a shower.

You study way too much, I'm sure.

h. Not enough, really—

God, just take some time off and wash yourself!  
I know it's raining, but  
You can't depend on nature for everything.

Hm, my friends never notice.

You think they don't.

Fine.                But say, about the rain  
I was wondering if, on days like this  
Everything smells different to you?  
Because if I can smell the earthiness  
I'm thinking that for you  
It must smell like another world

It does!

a bit. Maybe it's like  
the rainy window? when you look through  
And everything blurs—and you see new things  
But know that nothing's new. And that's  
Sort of what I smell on rainy days. Abstract  
I know, but hopefully that helps!

m, I think. I wonder

If we opened the window  
and let the cold wind  
Mix with this strong scent of butter  
What you'd smell. If you could separate

The two, or—

Oh

I'm almost finished with that! Just sit here  
And wait! Sit sit the oven's almost wait

33.

The bandages are over there  
just place it on ow ow  
Not so tight!! do you even  
understand the pain I'm in  
Right now

I told you,  
You should have used a mitten!

And where

Would I get that—with hands  
Like these?

I'm sorry, I

No, don't. Instead

Maybe you should get me some  
The next time we meet. Or  
You could give me your pants.

W

What?

No, forget it. They'd only guard  
Two of my fingers—and not even  
To their claw-tips!

And all this  
just to cook a lunch—



You liked it, right? Say so!

I mean, I didn't dislike  
Everything was done well—all fried  
poached, scrambled—really well!  
It was just strange, having all those  
You eat a lot of eggs, don't you?

Didn't I tell you last time?  
Mom will get mad if I eat the hen  
And I'll get sick if I eat fruit. An egg  
Makes us both happy! Besides  
If you had to hunt your food, then i'm sure  
You'd appreciate eggs a lot more  
Or maybe I'm just lazy. But anyways  
You came back! Although I'm not sure  
If you need my mom's help again.  
Otherwise, you wouldn't have studied  
And showered instead!

I did have  
Some questions about your  
No, wait. Right now, I actually  
Wanted to talk about  
What you talked about last time

When we last met. Sorry, that was

oh

You mean—that? but that was just  
You really think that's more important  
Than what you came for? you sure  
You're not just wasting your time?

Maybe I am

but there's something telling me  
That I should ask this first. I guess I  
Wanted to talk about  
What you told me never left the room  
about

about?

about loneliness.

34.

Huh, to talk

About loneliness

behind her back? we don't need to

Yet! Let's wait until she's here

I'm serious!

I want to hear about what you said last time

About not knowing what you are to others

Even to your mom. Sorry, I

No apologies!

Look, I'm also serious. I think the more we talk  
about these things

the sooner they'll come true. Did you forget

What you came to ask? Here,

take a seat.

I'm waiting!

See—comfortable, right? But just

Don't sit on the bed OK?

Ha, that was

Sorry. I asked all those things last time

And forgot that this wasn't my room. I guess

I wasn't expecting you to look like

Your mother only told me that I might be a bit

Surprised. So when I first saw you

I got carried away with my curiosity and

Sorry. It was childish—

Go ahead and ask!

I'm just happy that you're curious enough  
To ask me who I am. But  
If you keep apologizing  
and asking all these other things  
It almost makes it seem as if you're  
Scared of me

No!

That's not it at all. I'm just sorry  
That I have to ask these things  
As a mere student.

What do you mean

Mere?

I mean, haven't you ever wished  
that people would ask things like  
What your favorite season, color was  
Or what a song meant to you  
Instead of how you live your life  
As a half-breed? I just think  
That's too simple  
Too flat of an existence.

You know

If I forget to ask that last question

It's my dumb heart that reminds me.

I remember

You told me last time. Does it happen often?

Only when I forget myself!

No, but

But for those first questions, isn't it enough  
for me to ask myself? I don't need anyone  
to remind me that I'm someone, you know.

People will look at me—let them look! though

I suppose I feel better—if

If you're apologizing for it

And making all these pauses

Hesitations.

But still,

You're a student! You came for something

Right? I won't tell you that I'm used to it

Though I am. But please, just be honest

With me—and with yourself.

35.

I

I realized that there was something  
Something I wished to know  
Wished to hear from you.

What?

It's

a call that I've heard  
Spoken about by others  
And read in my book  
But never really heard.  
I don't know how to tell you what it is and  
Just read it for yourself. Not so close!

Sorry, I need to.

But your eyesight

My eyes are great for everything  
Except words. For those, I need to *focus*.  
Now, be patient—

Wait, you're smudging the pages  
with your drool—

Oh, this again!  
I can't believe this book—stupid, stupid!!  
You came for that?

What, what?

I know exactly what they're talking about. It's  
Just a call for lonely beasts. That's all!

If you could understand it  
Then it wasn't so stupid?

It *is* stupid. Here  
Try reading it out loud!

Awaw—

Yes, and you're stupid for thinking that  
Something like that could make someone  
No, no! Do you know how pitiful it is  
The feelings that need to be contained  
To exhaust them out in a cry like that?

No, but that's why I  
Of course I knew I could never do it  
Or the book. But I thought maybe you  
But I never knew how much it  
Maybe I don't know what I asked and

I'm sorry.

No, no. Look, you  
You were brave enough to ask me  
And apologies don't hide that. So if you  
Really want to, then maybe  
Just maybe  
Have you gone into these woods before?

Maybe as a child? I don't remember.

You should go more often—especially  
In the afternoon! If you did  
You might not be asking me for this.

So, you'll let me hear—

As I let everyone  
without inviting them! When I might be seen  
Or even heard.

Might?

m,  
Not knowing if my cries are loud enough  
And if they are, not knowing if they're good enough



to bring someone to me. I want you  
to wander in the woods, not knowing  
what I sound like beyond this room  
and I want you to seek out any voice  
in the vast, remote woods  
that begs for your attention.

was this your  
shift into what I said earlier, about

About?

Don't pretend!

Sorry,

Sorry! But now you've got me feeling it.  
I only pick things up that others drop  
You know.

And what have you found?

The answers to your questions! Please  
Open your hands. I'll give to you  
The winter—right on your hand  
And on the other, the room's soft pink.  
You'll keep them for me, right? And  
I almost forgot! I'll tell you what I think  
Of any song you choose. You do

Have one for me, right?

You seem to know it  
Better than I do, judging by your smile!  
I must've dropped it from my ear. Which one  
Do you have in mind?

The one you hummed on our doorstep.



a story, a diary, and  
a series of a letter to my mother  
35 entries