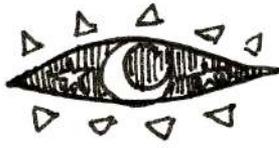




where'd the moon go
jess rizkallah

“it takes a strong person to love.
write that down. keep writing that down.”

Afif Moussa



The Loving Memory of
Aïf Camille Moussa

March 26, 2015

*O glorious St. Anthony,
safe refuge of the afflicted
and distressed. Willa by*



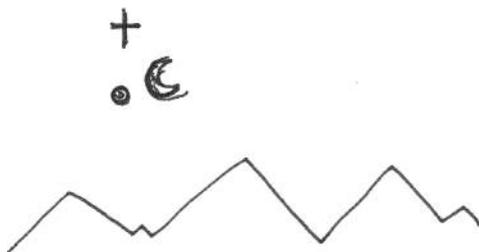
*mercifulous consolation has directed all those who
seek aid to Thy altar with the promise
that whosoever visit it for true consolation
Tuesdays and there fervently invokes Thee, will
feel the power of Thy intercession. O, a poor
sinner, encouraged by this promise, come to
Thee. O powerful Saint, and with a firm hope
I implore Thy aid. Thy protection, Thy
counsel and Thy blessing. Obtain for me, O
blessed Thee, my request in this necessity. But
if it should be opposed to the will of God and
the welfare of my soul, obtain for me such other
graces as shall be conducive of my salvation.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*



2/1/15



there's something wrong with the lungs in our family. they keep trying to be the ocean. keep trying to absorb the wind but can never take the shock. keep becoming broken chimes. they wait for us to activate them. to send in flares. they wait for us to be helpless buoys in the storm of them. we forget that our roots began by the sea. took their first steps there, from the foam. borrowed salt from the earth to cake over the brine. built our parts there and ran before the birth of any wars. the mediterranean does not forget, only lets us call the mountains our home until it feels like snatching our bodies back. lets us think ourselves vessels defying the current, climbing to claim higher ground. safe haven. climbing mountains with monasteries named for the moon like the moon isn't the one who whispers every secret to the tides. like we are not filled with tides waiting to rise. jido told me this on a car ride. took the long way. pointed out the window "There. That's The Beginning."



THINGS and STUFF

- He is talking about his organ failure and already being nostalgic for life and I feel like I want to leave the room but I know I should not. I can't
- I ask him his favorite color and he says that you can't always have a favorite color. It depends on when you are. You can't always have the same favorite colors.
- I wish on every eyelash. And at 11:11. And when I look at the moon. I know it's trite. I do it anyway. I don't know if this is my attempt at looking for new ways to pray. I think prayer precedes god. I think prayer is actually god. I think we pretend it's something else so we don't have to accept our hands as strong. Isn't that crazy
- I should stop using the word "crazy" so carelessly
- Do you ever feel prehistoric in the ocean
- There is a such thing as eating your feelings. My love handles are named after people. My gut is a postcard from 2004 and I still haven't found a stamp. The cavity in my bottom jaw is an escape hatch I started digging when my bones knew before I did that I needed someone to disappear after the love did first.
- My dad says I love you by pouring orange juice. By making eggs. Buying hats. Remembering that I started eating tomatoes, even though it means we have one less thing in common.
- He is having trouble with his lungs so my dad leaves 10 minutes after being here. He comes back with a box of pears for him.
- Jido is sad and scared about life. He is talking about his fears. A minute later he is laughing. His eyes crinkling and mouth opening like a chestnut.



Today: I woke up

Terry Pratchett died.

I drank coffee

I went to WORK (that's where I drank it)

I listened to a song that was hard to hear one year ago. It made me sad in a different way. I am so tired.

I am worrying about things that will happen in due time. What does due time mean anyway. When is the due date. Who decides when I'm due anything if it can't be me. Probably some old white dude in an office somewhere. #CAPITALISM

But matters of the guts have little to do with that don't they? Wait actually sometimes it does. I'd be cool to be a whale but also to be in space at the same time.

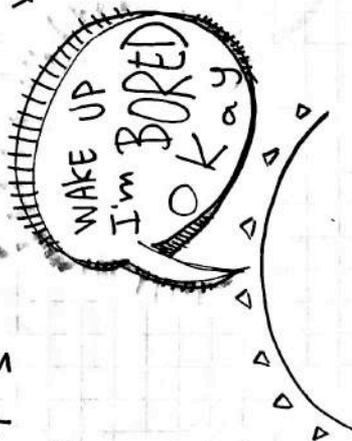


my eyes don't look like that. (except for the tired part)

my face is not that skinny

I'm OK

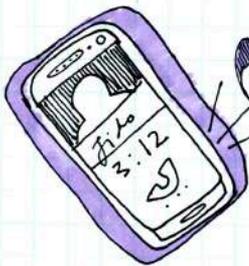
I need a haircut. I haven't gotten one since October. I wanna be that hair perm from The Addams Family movie



BIRDS



Jido loves birds. The singing kind. He also used to shoot birds. But not the singing kind. This is flawed. But I still love him and I love this about him and love often is very flawed. Jido once told me my heart was a bird. Or he told me I had a bird's heart. Jido writes poems about birds. Wrote poems about birds. I used to wonder if I was the poem bird or the falling bird. The falling into the valley bird. The bird with a bullet heart, bird. I know I am the poem bird but when I see him suffer I feel like I am the bullet hearted bird.



You have heart of
BIRD. You have a
BIRD'S HEART.
IF MORE PEOPLE
WERE LIKE YOU
MAYBE I WOULD
WANT TO STAY

~~• but he already wants
to stay I am scared
for the day he does not
the day his body overgrows
him.~~



I love you I love you
I love you I love you
love you I love you I love
you I love you I love you
I love you I love
you I love you

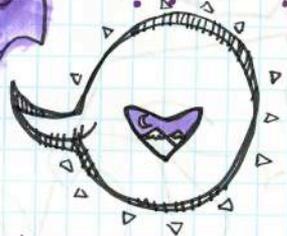
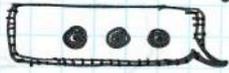
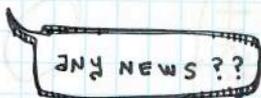


= Assisted BREATH



= Controlled Breath

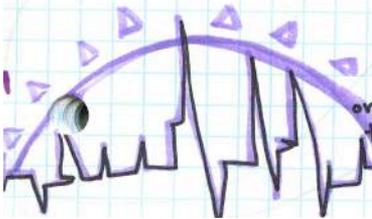
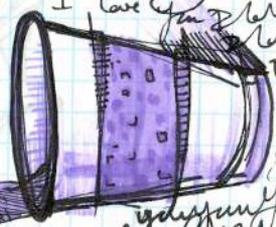
we're
Right HERE
RIGHT HERE
RIGHT HERE
RIGHT HERE
RIGHT HERE



I love you I love you I love you
I love you I love you I love you
I love you I love you I love you

Hospital coffee
has no grounds,
doesn't know the
FUTURE.

or doesn't want
to tell you.



I love you I love you
I love you I love you
I love you I love you
I love you I love you

Jido was the type of person you only ever read about in storybooks - his eyes did that twinkling thing, and he was kind to everyone - even the people the world decided weren't worth it.

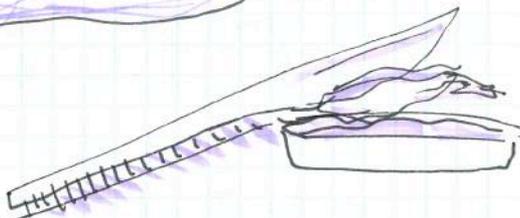
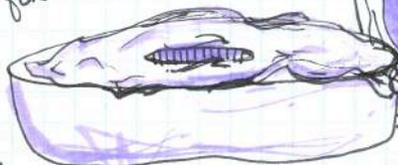
When I was little I liked to imagine ~~there were~~ that where his heart was, were two giant arms in his chest. ~~so like, a hug instead~~ So his heart was a hug, ~~and~~ because everyone fit in there and there was always room for more. He once told me it takes a strong person to LOVE, but it was ~~worth~~ worth it because life became beautiful. Just listen, he'd say.

When Hurricane Irene knocked down his favorite tree in the world, it clung to the earth by only a few roots. He sat in front of it all day, quietly. I thought he was mourning. The next day, when I came back, it was standing again. To this day, I still don't know how he pushed it back into the ground. Probably with the arms in his chest. So his heart. That heart

Two summers ago, I sat with him on his balcony in Lebanon, in the mountains. He looked down at the valley the same way he looked at his ganarek, he said "you know, every tree has a story" and he kept looking. I waited for him to tell me ~~that story~~ what those stories were, but he never did. I didn't realize then that his silence was his way of telling me to listen. ~~I~~ I see now that he was always listening. That he wanted the trees to tell me themselves. Put your hand over your ~~heart~~ chest. Feel him there. That's where he is. He's in heaven but he's also still here. And he's in the trees, and he has so many stories and he wants you to listen, ~~to be strong, so to love~~ open your heart to every story. Be strong. Love each other. "Be the balsam to a serpent's poison - be as sweet as another's bitterness and expect no reward for this." Jido once said that too. Thank you, Jido. ~~We're still listening.~~ We'll always be listening. - Jessi ♡



It has been 5 DAYS since he died.
 Is this intelligible for April fools? Can tomorrow be a day I can call him on my break and discuss the moon?



WAXING GIBBONS

is what it is. Josh told me ~~sex~~. I either never see Josh OR I always see him. I am glad he was there to name the moon for me.

Today I finally got a haircut. My ~~last~~ last haircut was Oct 12. When they found the CANCER. My hair was the length of his cancer. EVERYONE is saying "sorry for your loss" and I keep saying THANK YOU and it's OKAY

Because I do appreciate it

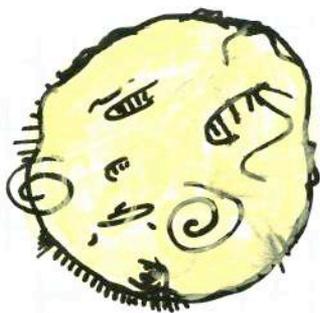
Because he's not in pain anymore

BUT I DON'T FEEL OKAY

I ate my bagel far too late into the DAY. So THE NIGHT. I ATE it at 9pm. FUCK TIME, EAT BAGELS.

Also Coffee. I am always with the coffee.





ambivalent space booger

a big cheese

space rock n' roll

cosmic tonsil

my literal heart



wake up

elegy for a house filling with elegies

she wears his glasses but doesn't call his office His Office anymore
tells me the pillows and blankets are in The Room Down The Hall
the chair is how he left it but the oxygen tanks line the wall behind the
door they're like an army. i used to check to make sure
his chest rose up and down while he napped and now
i'll check to make sure the lungs he left behind don't
go terracotta with wait

i found an empty orange bottle from when the cancer lived inside him,
and then the obituary and then the pills sucked into the vacuum of space

the vacuum of space hides in the wastebasket.
it burps backwards it takes debris with it.
a day can be debris too if you fold along the wrinkles

and today i got emotional at a sticky note that fell out of my pocket
because i wrote it when he was still alive, so before i found it again
it was existing in a world where he was still alive and once i found
it, that world in which a piece of him still blinked or coughed
or checked the mail ceased to exist and he still isn't alive anymore
but i'll probably still step over the wire snaking through the
house even though it's not snaking anymore

it's probably a ghost snake now. slithering through
the carpet and all the skin cells still embedded there.

the air is soft in all the chairs he used to sit in.
i bet it's all the ghosts of all the things that ever grew
out of his hands. the vines of tomatoes
and the flesh of rose petals and so many apples
and figs so ripe right before ripe went bad.
fruits don't become the ghosts of their rot.
they become the ghost of what they were just before their pits
gave out. just before the cyanide made its slow escape.

i imagine him walking the house with a body like 2003
hands rough with garden, no cannula under his nose
his lungs not leashed to a noose, knees still okay for bouncing
against earth and bouncing laughing babies to the moon
i imagine him inside the moon and inside this house all at once

i hear him in the silence. it's so quiet. the house flipped
inside out like a sock but we're still clinging to the fibers.
i crawl in next to her, the spot he used to sleep. the bed
sinks a little. the air is soft. i watch her chest go up and down.

APRIL
7

My skin is really dry
as always as usual of course.

Especially my hands. I have such a fascination with hands because I think that despite the plans we have for them, they never forget what they want to be when they grow up. Like manna wanted to make dresses. And then war, so roughness had its way with them. OVENS in bakeries and kitchens in restaurants. And then maybe they thought they'd settle on being garden hands. Like his hands. ~~He wanted his hands to be poets. And gardeners. So making poems act of earth. But then war. So ovens and hot plates in kitchens, knuckles against cement against~~ ~~loaves~~ delivering family dinner to other families.

They were still garden hands. They wanted to be something else like hers wanted to try something else, but here we are. Here she is - rough hands comforting the skin, working with what others want their bodies to be.

A pot of mint by the door ~~to~~ to run under her fingers at the end of the day. Before the key clicks the lock open. "You and your hands will go in opposite directions but they always meet back up at ~~to~~ what you really are. At what the earth calls for you to be despite all the ways we destroy it to find ourselves, to hurt each other, to hide our dead. I want my hands to look like hers. I want my hands to look like his. I want them to be as strong, but they're just dry. They make coffee, they make poems, they're still learning how to be of the earth. ~~They~~ They don't know what

they want to be because they've never had to choose at gunpoint. ~~They~~ Rough around the edges, but soft in the center. Always wanting to be her hands but not knowing how. I don't know how to be that strong.



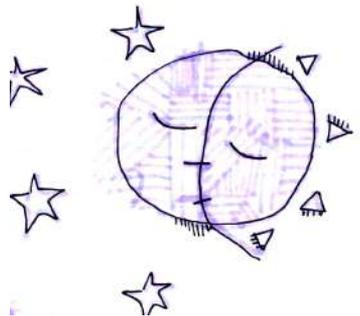
STATUS REPORT, interrupted

after sherman alexie

sometimes i am
okay and other days
i remember that he is
in the ground

(sometimes he's a stanza that makes me feel ancient when i read it or when i write it and sometimes i write things that aren't mine because they're his i just know it and i almost want to call his voicemail and leave them there like he'll check them and chuckle at my broken tongue & all the places it licks the jagged of the pottery into something not quite ancient but at least preserved, you know he told me once that i was a philosopher, not a poet. he told me he didn't know where i got all of it but he'd follow me to the end of the earth while i looked for it, he said he'd bring his dictionary and his favorite hat)

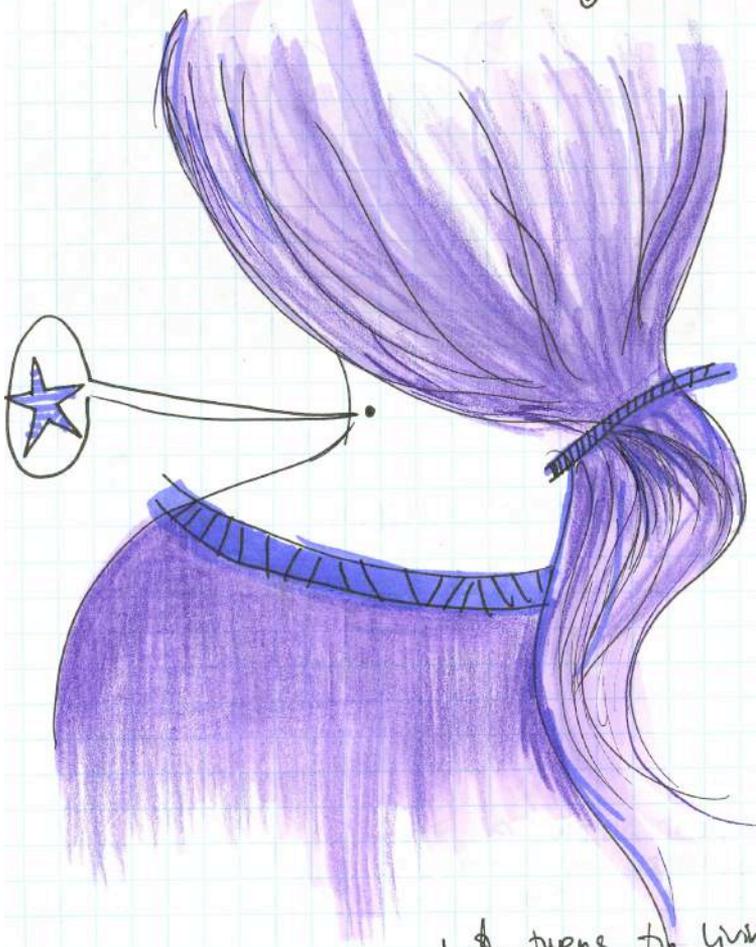
sometimes i am not okay
and other days
i remember he is, still
he still is



APRIL

27

Today I am afraid of my own body
yesterday I was afraid of my body
and the day before. yesterday was a month
since Jido died and the first time since
nine hours before his last breath that I
let my mouth be the puncture wound ~~and~~
shriek it's been wanting to be.



death turns the living left
behind into a shriek turned
inwards,

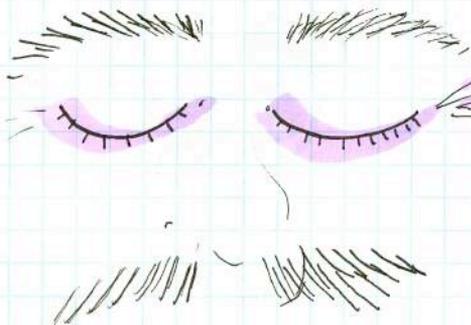
BLOOD HONEY.

a something. a whirring in the flesh. multiplication of the mass under my collarbone. so instead of web md i go to bed & i dream of growths & arsonists living in my organs, setting fire to the kicking out of tune. even as i sleep, they try protruding through my skin. by my bedside and inside the night all at once, i find him here. he points to the pain. tells me "it's okay / it's because / you've got honey instead of blood." & i spend the rest of the day unsure of who said it first in the daylight months before he died. me or him. me & him. there was a coffeetable. cold clove tea. sun everywhere. i like that i can't remember. i don't want to remember. i want to be made of the molasses that held his body together until it couldn't. when my blood makes my heart squirm in its bracket i tell myself that bees are relocating to my chest. they think me ideal conditions. less harsh than the outside. less decay & apocalypse. a sweetness grief mistakes for a cavity





Last night I had a dream that I kissed the top of his head and told him I loved him and he smiled up at me ~~and~~ and it was like he was a small child. I think when he died his sickness took his body and then his body fell away and that glow that loved life became him. I don't know if my dream is happy or sad. Well ~~it~~ actually, I know it was happy. I am always happy to see him. I ~~it~~ just don't know if it's happy he gets to be the light now, gets to travel easier. Or is it sad that his love of life made him near ready to go, makes it worse that even though his body was giving up, he was not ever going to. Like, every narrative tells you everyone is ready at the end. That's a lie. Where are the narratives that tell this particular truth? I just want him to be happy wherever he is. That's a narrative I want to believe, but it's also ~~the only one they tell you about After~~. The only one they tell you about After. What if there's another one? But I remember his smile. I think it wants me to believe. I think he does.



THERE'S A SWEETNESS
IN US THAT LIVES LONG
PAST THE DUST
ON OUR EYES WHEN
OUR EYES FINALLY
CLOSE

(LADY LAMB & THE BEE KEEPER)

a tiny frog baby carried by a family of ants
and also puppies with strings around their nipples
like they're balloons chaperoning the overhead

& then the ocean elegantly crashing
atop yr best friend's scalp, but in a punk rock way
you know

& now imagine the word scalp.
now imagine it past tense.
imagine the scalped
and your feet knowing the dead
better than you ever did
when they were living.

the daylight is equal parts
funeral procession
& parade

& now imagine your mother's feet
and all they have seen,
the bone fibers like static,
and secrets stored in the sudden separation
when the bombs came back

in the levant, there's a thing about feet,
and the bottom of shoes

never show anyone the bottom of your shoes
it's another way to say Fuck You.

it's another way to say I Don't Respect The Dead
That Died To Keep You Here.

don't kick them off they could land upside down
and then you're saying Fuck You
to jesus. or to god.
or to that bird over there
flying under that cloud and also to that cloud.
To that tree branch like a cowlick aiming for the ozone.

what if the ozone was the portal to heaven? is a question
i would have asked if i didn't know we stabbed it open.
and if i still believed heaven was a place
you couldn't choose when it came time
to choose for the last time. or maybe
it would be the first time.

does the roulette spin back when you die? is a question
i would have asked before i knew anyone dead.
before i heard the sounds that could come out of my body
like all my organs running their nails down every crack
in me to follow him there

my body is a prison for my organs.
my body keeps them in tune until it can't.

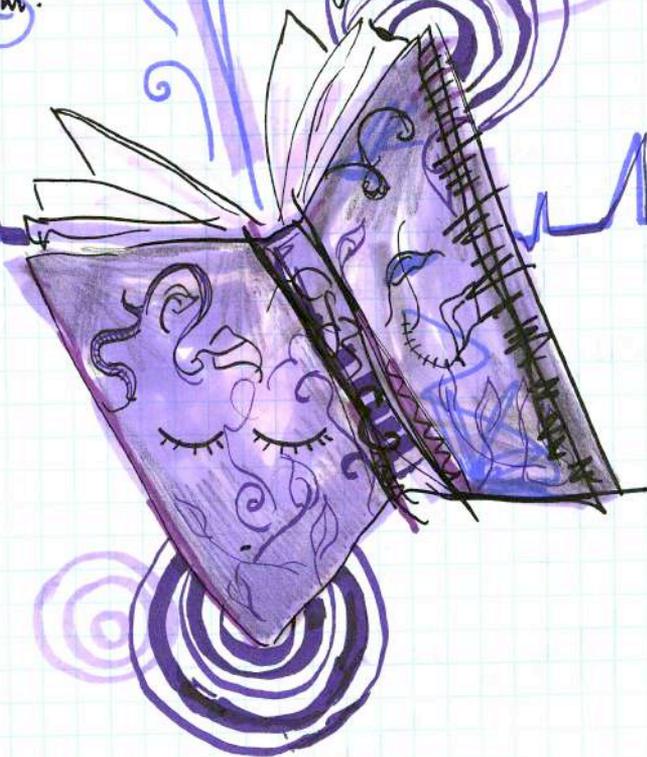
people you love are organs living outside your body.
love keeps them in tune until it can't.

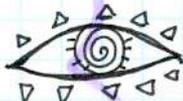
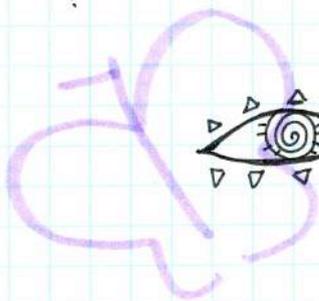
heaven is a prison for the sound organs make
when they die. the soul is the sound organs make
as they die.

we are all dying we are all here
we are all singing as we watch the gaping hole
In our ozone as it swirls parallel
to the ones that those we love leave behind
for us to fill

MAY
29

In my dream last night he told me to read Sartre, but the name on the cover was something like Cylm. or Cyre? And the pages were pressed with the seed vanilla of time. And the pattern was a subtle gold leaf, he said he was leaving that for me. His face was the page, his head was a book. The ICU ~~room~~ was empty. Mama was here with me, on his other side. There were three other faces, blurred. My heart knows who they were, my memory does not. Everything was quiet. Serene. I told him I'd stay next to him. ~~He~~ (That's the part where his face was a ~~book~~ page, he shook his head & the cover flapped. The spine cracked. He said, "No. You must go. It's time for me to go naked into the light.")





I'm not done writing about this. Or drawing about it OR talking about it or not talking about it or crying on the train about it. I will never be done, but isn't that what life is, anyway? Just a really long bruise more tender in some places where the impact reached deeper. I see him in birds because he loved birds and I do, too. I see him in moths because he used to tell me not to be afraid of moths. And what a shame to kill them, they are good blessings. Harmless. Good company. I see him in the moon and a specific star that wasn't there before he died but is now always there. I think that 40 DAYS ON EARTH BEFORE ASCENSION thing is Catholic repression bullshit. Closure that doesn't exist. No, he's still here. In the bird that tried to get into my arabic class last week (he was so happy I signed up for it) he is the moth that walks me down Chester and then back again at night. I don't sweat at moths anymore. I talk to every bird. I never knew how to whistle but suddenly I can whistle. Suddenly I can speak bird. Suddenly the one in my heart hatched. Lives in my throat. Sings to him everywhere around me. He sings back. He is always singing to me. I am always listening. This will always hurt, but I'll be okay. He won't let me be anything less.



Pizza π Press