

you stupid slut

excerpt of hybrid poetry collection
by nat raum

Material Safety Data Sheet MSDS No. 0003 Rev. 5	Jose Cuervo Silver Tequila 750 mL bottle
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Section 1 - Physical Description	
the canopy over the hess on east lafayette is still the perfect place to light the first of the pack of spirit light blues you just bought, especially out here in the late summer rain that spawns haze from the pavement between you and the cement wall of acrylic mountains. ¹ there is a lagoon of sour mix and silver tequila churning in your stomach like the rainbursts scattered in the night, leaping down from slate-grey stormclouds during your last-call walk home just as you've reached the phase of listless roaming through a canopy of trees—the fastest way home is still through the park at night.	
Section 2 - Hazardous Ingredients	
the sugars that slosh inside of you until you screech like a siren in heat when things aren't going the way you planned; the smoke you suck down after you've blacked out and don't care what your throat or temples feel like tomorrow morning; the agave that tangles your tongue, then your limbs and your mass in a land of otherwise pleasant living.	
Section 3 - Hazards Identification	
EMERGENCY OVERVIEW	clear, sweet-sharp liquid that, when mixed with a variety of bottled citrus, vaguely resembles the tailgate margarita you tried last fall. easily adaptable as your spirit of choice once you have a fake id and stop getting kicked out of the bars you go to after work for washing X's off your hands.
EFFECTS OF OVEREXPOSURE	<u>excessive ingestion</u> : your vision may blur until you slouch onto the shoulders of whomever you're sitting next to in the booth that night and before you know it, your siren song worked and he snatches you from the night for himself. for his bed. for his own tangled mass come morning. <u>failure to ensnare</u> : consumption without completed acquisition of desired target may cause a maudlin panic that churns like butter.
Section 4 - First Aid Measures	
INGESTION	when you wake up over and over in his bed and wish you could leave, roll over and instruct yourself how to breathe until you lull yourself back to sleep. you don't need to be thinking about this before sunrise.
FAILURE TO ENSNARE	when the anxiety pushes your stomach to its breaking point, don't resist. you'll feel much better when you wake up, with only your ego hurting.

¹ the phrase "acrylic mountains" is inspired by a Gaia mural on the north-facing wall of 1727 N Charles St.

i, medusa

after Ada Limón

what lurks behind
my irises, beyond the seablue
whose likeness i haven't seen
since the beaches of barbados?
even then, going on eleven,
i ignored red-ringed warnings
on trees and picked *manzanillas*
*de la muerte*² to launch into the sea
like softballs. believing it to be
sunburn, i was unfettered at first
by scaly swaths of peeling rashy skin
until they still nipped at my face well
after nightfall, slathered with thick
green aloe.

and i still don't learn from my
mistakes; my instinct is still to throw
stones for practice, for the day
i need to kiss someone back harder
than my lips would let me. i cultivate
a steely stare, practice tossing pebbles,
then slabs of mica—about the size
of those that once left welts on my shins
as i swung out over my parents' backyard
stream and my best friend skipped rocks
underneath me. i grew so at home
with stones thrown i've leaned into
chips in bone and a body numbed
limb by limb. that chill helps me harden,
after all, when i'm in nineteen in a stranger's bed
with only a gaze that slices and the bite of my
wit. with no snakes but the one i've trained
in my beast-belly, the lone asp that waits
until they can't take it anymore to unleash
a venom not unlike a milkwhite sap, stinging
and seeping into cheeks cracked and pink
as a lesser antilles sunset.

² Spanish colloquialism for manchineel fruit, a poisonous fruit from the tropical flowering plant of the same name.

stop signs

Material Safety Data Sheet	Fireball Cinnamon Whiskey 375 mL bottle
MSDS No. 0001	

Section 1 - Physical Description

when you were four or five, you were obsessed with stop signs and the number nineteen, convinced you'd have it together enough by your last teenage year that you'd have seen as many different stop signs in that time. at some point, you also started counting the fence placards that bore their maker's names, long and pyle. despite obsessing over stops and walls, despite your cautious existence that told you not to drink until college, you forgot about boundaries or control the second you realized how good cinnamon whiskey tasted with dr. pepper.

Section 2 - Hazardous Ingredients

the full contents of the bottle you kept in the drawer under your bed and only pulled out once everyone who could hold the franzia bag for you went to their rooms to hook up on halloween and you called your best friend; the twelve or so drinks you took out of a handle earlier at the party and marked on your arm with a green sharpie; the bag of pinot grigio unboxed, passed around once uninvited guests arrived, settling in your stomach as you slide upright down the surface of the front door you're leaning on, avalanche of your weak black-nyloned legs splayed on concrete dorm floor.

Section 3 - Hazards Identification

EMERGENCY OVERVIEW	liquid somewhere between tawny and amber. low-proof but surprisingly sharp to taste, unless diluted with a chaser, in which case exercise extreme caution to limit exposure and consumption. corrosive to liver and sense of self-worth, as you may realize you're not getting enough attention and invite a stranger to cuddle in your bed.
EFFECTS OF OVEREXPOSURE	<u>ingestion of any amount with other alcohol:</u> it's likely you'll feel the exact shift in the way you're blacked out, the icy jolt from blur to static in your head when all of a sudden your stockinged legs don't feel nearly as nice between the sheets of your own bed, once you realize you're stuck here and not wasted anymore but you're not here either. you're elsewhere in the dark while your eyes bore into the polaroids taped to your wall and you try not to cry or even make a sound when he reaches under your bodysuit.

Section 4 - First Aid Measures

INGESTION	remember your childhood lust for barriers and seize the moment of silence after you hear the bathroom door close. throw his khakis and belt into the hallway and lock the door behind you. bite your lip and try not to breathe when he jiggles the handle and knocks again and again.
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and wander midst fog

is it that i look out the window and fall in love with the fog because i want to become it /
descending at will to wrap myself between bare swamp-tree branches on the kind of afternoon
that can only be a sunday in january / between the concrete overpasses of the highway that
cleaves through midtown to the harbor and sits silent in the wee hours of a december saturday
morning /

is it that i long to separate into droplets and drift upward into rust and bronze and
marigold cones of light to soften their edges / or to blanket forests in cool grey mists thirteen
miles from city lights /

is it that i need to live somewhere between liquid and gas / to fill
the volume / take the shape of anything that might contain me /

is it like the way i sleep curled
inward just to make myself smaller / like the way it's pushed me not to know a spine that doesn't
crackle / a body no one leered at /

is it the impulse to flee the weight of both sorrow and soft
tissue sutured to my chest / to evaporate as i please / to choose where i lay myself next / valley
or lake or thicket / or stretch of north avenue just before daybreak /

is it that i fervently wish
to dissolve into nameless specks of brume dotting pastoral paintings / to dwell where the
stillness doesn't ask why i am not moving at the speed of sound

in the interest of transparency

i'm not a good person. before i knew my body kept a calendar of its own, i made a habit of smoking a cigarette or two inside my apartment if i was really drunk, usually only if the february midnight wept ice outside my open window and i was feeling lonely because the guy i was sexting every night brought his girlfriend to my after-party. in the photos, i look just like my reflection in a vacant storefront, our shared emptiness far from all that a dusty pane of glass and i have in common.

am i opaque as plate-glass when i affix my eyes to the flowered curlicues across the rug and count back one year in my memory to stealing away in someone else's car to catonsville, two years to blacking out, and three to the same as the second but much more reckless and much less lazy? is now my chance to purge before my contact list is full of ghosts i mistake for gods and my body is full of tequila or cheap beer or pink moscato and infectious diseases? i don't believe in prayer, but is it all right to wonder if i need it anyway?

at the bewitching hour

let it be known: i am not grateful
for tragedy. i hold no love

for the years that have worn me
thin as lived-in cotton, down to my

memory who chose to keep only
silence. the spaces within me

that can still well with joy
are reserved for the hours between

midnight and four in the morning
while the world stirs in their beds and i

am aching i'm so alive. faint pulse
rallies my muscles after i trudge home

past two, but only for the glory
of japanese whiskey, neat, sipped

in the kitchen alone. only
for the teal glow of rainfall on tv

mimicking the way your bedroom bathed
in blue when i'd tiptoe around dead bees

and crawl over you, slumbering before
a timed-out screen with your mouth agape.

i lived on for only the promise of moonrise
muffling ringing ears and gnashing teeth,

if only for a few hours.

ready for your next entry

*in which you feed me
and tell me i'm pretty
on every inch of this block*

039 pm bar

tbl 51/3

chk: NAT/BAR 51
2/14/17 8:56 PM

Gst 1

1 valentine's day i picked up a host shift

ADD the hollow growing inside of me since your brother
dumped me over text in october

3 hours into the night

ADD the fourth or fifth time i brought the water pitcher back
to expo and felt your eyes pull mine in like melting
magnets

ADD my lack of plans

ADD your well-placed question and subsequent suggestions

1 double MRT tequila soda (mine)

NO fucks left to give

1 pitcher of natty boh each

ADD a menthol between both our lips, lit with the same
lighter flick behind your other hand

ADD a whispered dig about how your brother said he wasn't
ever serious about me

ADD your knees touching mine one too many times

2 glances both ways to make sure no one sees us

ADD parking your silver camry under a tree around the
corner from my house

SPEC PREP climb in the backseat with my tights around my
ankles

5 strands of ruby hair glinting on cloth seats in the morning

1 OPEN LIQUOR

A POUR OF SCOTCH I CAN'T AFFORD FOR YOU

NO self-control

NO explanation for read receipts every night

ADD two or three dozen lies by omission

NO reason to hold on until next artscape over a year later

when the mahou keg kicked and i sobbed into my shift
beer

EXTRA foam

NO flavor

white sangria

i learned the rules of fermentation in the summertime
while paddle-stirring the honeydew cantaloupe pineapple
greenapple dissolving into buckets of white wine and peach
schnapps. we deemed it sludge fit only for dish-pit sink
drains after five or six days dragged in and out of heat.

one august night i snapped the neck of a flower-vase pitcher
pouring sangria into glasses tableside. come memorial day,
requests trickled then flooded for this light gold peachmelon
nectar and as baltimore july drifted in with the horseflies,
i poured bucket after bucket into grates once everyone

remembered this was the wrong kind of sweet. this was
the cloying venom that stowed away under tongues to be drawn
out of crevices later, when the sun goes down and the neons
peppering the orange-cast streets shine lights paint age
on my face. the night i snapped the pitcher neck, i didn't bleed

just then, but later and from elsewhere besides my hands. tucked
into a dim red corner bathroom stall pressed to a stranger's body,
i became the aqua vitae. i became the sweating vase of chablis
and fruit, satin on palates and sugar sticking to hands. after ten
minutes, i am sink drain sludge. i am the wrong kind of sweet.

in which you are no longer begging him to keep on haunting you

List of locations your specters still frequent

from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

the city of baltimore has plenty of buildings that don't remind you of things you wish you could forget, but those aren't the ones you remember like you're still standing at the threshold.

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residential areas

roland park

you don't think about what you'd say to your 14-year-old self anymore. most of the time, you forget she exists, but sometimes you drive down northern parkway on your way to something else or you see something on facebook and sit stewing in it. a noonwraith roams the vicinity in the north, but favors lake avenue between roland and falls.

bolton hill

you can't get enough of city living and you're so drunk and excited to be in college that you forget the story of leda and the swan you told last spring in photography class. you forget the bloody feathered nest, the expression your model conjured for you, and how you told her to get there. it's much later before you realize you were both leda and your lovers were both zeusian swans. it's not until after you find out swans are fairly vicious.

station north

when you get your first fake id, the liquor well of any dark dive is your oyster. you observe your older friends a few times before ordering your own drink becomes so much a habit that you can justify always going out by saying you never drink at home.

mount vernon

your memory is spotty; this has never been a place for sobriety or anything resembling it.

eastern baltimore county

when you got a car after college, you learned you couldn't drive high and everyone told you it was because you didn't smoke in high school. you're still not sure that would have been any better than plodding your way through mist and squalls to parkville in the middle of the night, but at least now you know that no sexual favor is worth that much paranoia.

western baltimore county

hope is not the only thing with feathers; many men you mistook for divinities wore them too. they're all for show, but the smart ones see a swan's graceful neck and quiet glamour and realize how much further they can go when they look approachable from far away, and they learn all of the ways they can reel you in and still keep you from coming close enough to see their teeth.

commercial properties

1714 north charles street

you're almost proud of some of the things you've done until your friends and roommates raise their eyebrows when you tell the stories. you are still finding bits of old feather and bone embedded in the ways you lust and fused to your sense of self-worth.

jong kak restaurant

you came here so you could prove your first love wrong about you. you keep convincing yourself that's both possible and necessary, but you never question it because everyone still tells you you're a great fuck and comes crawling back around eventually.

aloha liquor

it's years before you break the haze of beer goggles that have you seeing deference in yet another man in whom you've placed far too much of your fragile trust. and it's no wonder that

the first time you have sober sex since in probably six years, you still vacate your body in favor of being fucked in absentia. he doesn't *need* for it to be you here, after all; you might as well check out here and now so at least he can enjoy himself.