

TO LIKE TRACY / TO LIKE / LIKE

my body made of indestructible magnets.
--Kathy Acker, *The Burning Bombing of America*

To TRACY:

I like gray.
Like clouds.
Like silver.
Like the personified blobs in Zoloft commercials.
Do those still air?
Do they still fill time like *please try this*
when you just want to laugh again.
Do they remind you that *smile* is around the corner?
Before I was old enough
to understand the purpose of commercials,
I wondered what was wrong with me—
I didn't use Head and Shoulders.
I gave up cable years ago.
I have enough of everything.

To ME:

Write about what I see
in a way that takes from my experience
but it's not about me.
Think about thoughts, jokes,
taking away birth control.
Question how to explain why periods are gross
to anyone that doesn't spend the day
vomiting while spilling eggs.
Acknowledge that messy and glittery
are two different things.
Do you *lament* or *mourn* a lack of change?
Synonyms are so strong, after all.

To TRACY:

Found some cute 90s patriarchy at J.C. Penny.
Pass judgement on that vocal fry.
She'll never get anywhere.
She's not the right kind of feminist.
Preferred pronoun: pay attention.

To ME:

I have been asked in earnest:
Is your poetry about live laugh love?
Love is going to my primary care provider,
not because of a government mandate or a sense of *staying alive*,
but to function for the people I care about.

I make them food after all.

To TRACY:

Watching porn and the food channel
are the same for me.
I don't care for either.
I can't have what is on the screen.
Check in with the gender traitor committee.
Circle back to expectations,
then commit to fear—
that you are the unicorn.
The voice on the line did say,
*We do have an opening
tonight for a party of three.*

To ME:

The most boring thing I've seen on YouTube
is Askmen's top 10 sex positions.
Examples: *All you really have to do
is try not to finish before she does* and
Having the girl on top is super intimate.
When Marc Steiner said,
We have to have a conversation about the obscene and the mundane.
I don't think this was the conversation.
Maybe this is the question:
Why are there sexual positions about punching a woman in the face?
Why aren't they about finding the clitoris?
Please *please please* explore more.
Don't be naïve and request vulnerability.

To TRACY:

If people are getting their news from Facebook
we should all be paid for generating content.
Instead of *What's on your mind?* how about:
Have you thought this through before posting to the public?
Or, what are you adding to the cultural conversation?
Someone asked me if I was a student,
Then yelled at me because I wasn't.
Buying a street is cheaper than a house.
Subsidize my obsessions with ground rent.

To ME:

When someone says *life is good*
I do not mean to sorrow my brow.
My brow is sorrow.
Look up fear of human potential.
Words vibrate through my nails
when people say *post-truth election*

and do not have a look on their face
like they want to pour gasoline on their head,
then light a match.

To TRACY:

For now, there is an art to the *resting and I'm fine* face.

For now, define *that* and *which*.

That is restrictive.

Which leaves everything open

to cable, to spells, to those voices saying
stop, you'll never be one to own anything.

Who subsidizes your healthcare?

Try to stay off the grid,

keep that medical history

sparse enough for BlueCross BlueShield

to take a chance with you.

I'm fine, I'm fine,

I've held this pose for years.

Follow overheard advice:

Lean in with private funding.

To ME:

I don't want to be fragile.

How can I be gentle?

To TRACY:

My interest in gentleness

ended with the evening news.

This boldness is not an act for you

to pronounce to others that you understand.

An apology that explains away is not an apology.

That is still a vulnerability.

Vulnerability and reconciliation are wearing thin.

Your comfort has consequences.

To TRACY:

How do you define your pain?

Check the correct box.

Your wound may be known,

but you are not vulnerable.

I have explained to my doctor what hurts.

Any sitting.

Especially the toilet, how cruel.

Neutral stance.

Down dog doesn't hurt.

This pain is unrelated to heartache.

To TRACY:

If you're arguing about reality
you must consider when others set their alarm.
Step into the philosophy games of men—
When you hug someone are they dust?
When you step on a cockroach, is it math?
You can tell me a rock isn't solid,
but what will you tell me when someone throws a rock through my window?
I check for shards daily.
They glitter like stardust.
Linda asked *what will you write about when you're old?*
I said *whatever, they better listen.*
They as in *everyone*.
Bodies are not quiet.
She looked like Madonna last night
in the *I will not apologize for being me* way.

To ME:

Please stop obsessing over choice.
How can anyone be so myopic
and think I'll write about the same thing?
Age changes, place in the world changes.
Never complains isn't a compliment.
Never complains is code for *never pushes back*.
What happens when there is a screen between your understanding?
Showing up is a political act.

To TRACY:

I would use my woman card,
but I lost it when I entered the professional world.
Laugh at harassment policies that create comfort for the aggressor.
Let the jokes be revealed for what they are.
Consider the moment you pull out your keys.

To ME:

Have you monetized your heart?
In company, realize cut corn on the cob
looks like snake skin.
Choose your visceral response.

To TRACY:

Time to start making salad with potatoes.
Hey what's your name / Hey what's your name / Hey what's your name
Other strangers are kind enough to say *be careful*.
I should make another potato reference.
There is grief in understanding.

To ME:

Machines keep me honest.

Example: MyFitness Pal.

Only 20 more steps until you reach your goal!
I'm going to step off this existence
unless you can tell me who establishes these goals.
Open the notice,
confirm subscription to arbitrary guidelines.

To TRACY:

Sometimes the only thing getting me through the week
is how many times I've been fed at work.
What you say follows like a ghost.

To ME:

I burned rice through my early twenties.
Now I do not.
I have no knowledge of what has changed.
I look for the perfect, full-body shampoo,
despite the news cycle.
We are trusting the cockroach-like resilience of humanity.
Look for heroic potatoes with flavor benefits.
A traumatic moment lingers in language.

To TRACY:

Wildflowers let us know we are momentary.
My interest in vulnerability is still low.
Stay hungry? No.
There is power in being fed.
There is power in bodily security.
As a pedestrian, I feel power crossing the street.

To ME:

Men expect something after an attempt to please you.
Pleasure can be unsuccessful.
The attempt can be proposing a threesome
with someone I have a crush on.
I can be unsuccessful.
Pleasure can be unsuccessful.

To TRACY:

Girls just want to have fun
even when they're obsessed with death.
I am a poet in that I love the changing foliage.
I am not a poet in that I do not equate nature in women's bodies.
A woman's body is her own thing
There is not punchline in this song.

To ME:

Consider transaction in predestination.

Watch the pigeon take its last steps
through puddles in the concrete parking lot.
Watch the pigeon with no toes
walking with conviction.
Watch the pigeon shit on your bag.
You and pigeons visit shopping malls.
Shopping malls are not mundane.
Shopping malls are horrifically calculated.
Remember the pigeon asked for life as much as you did.

To TRACY:

Your feedback is valued:
I can tell—you worship authority.
At the risk of being *brave*, believe the matter.
At the risk of being *honest*, bewitch voice.
But really: life and death are wearing me out.
What spaceship can take you to your love?
Maybe it's not solid on the land.
Hold your love in a portrait
Hold tightly to clothes, hair, images.
Know when and when not to use teeth.

To ME:

Did you stroke or pluck the flower?
I can do eight pullups.
But strength is no immunity.
I have no interest in being gentle.