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Printed in Kalamazoo, MI

First Printing, 2013

ISBN lol

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## Wow

Well I just saw my life flash before my eyes  
and it was the worst powerpoint presentation  
I've ever seen. The transitions were especially boring,  
each slide fading in and out between gasps of black.

There was one slide entitled "Love Life"  
and all it had was an animated .gif of a skeleton  
rising from the grave and then dying again  
repeatedly, over and over.

There was a section entitled "Mistakes"  
and it was a bulleted list of every time I've lied  
to my mother  
and every math problem I've ever done incorrectly.  
It went on for forty-five slides, and the background

alternated between pictures of Jesus being crucified and  
what I now believe is the quadratic formula.

The presentation ended with an inspirational picture  
of a beach, the orange sun melting into the horizon,  
a coconut tree bending in the breeze, my dead body  
photoshopped on the shore  
by the words "the end" written in the wet sand.

## Let's Blame the Heron

Come, find me by a lever  
that I entreat you to pull,  
which opens the trap door,  
out of which falls a candle,  
whose flame licks a rope,  
loosening a pulley and  
dropping a dainty puzzle piece  
onto a large red button that  
activates a poised bow and arrow,  
which fires a golden key  
into a locked cage  
inside a nearby helicopter,  
liberating an angry tiger,  
who devours  
a wakeful heron

the cries of which are heard  
by an ill-fated passerby  
(traipsing sad-eyed  
through the slick streets)  
who is now forced against  
his or her will to think about  
the delicacy of life, or  
the frailty of flesh, possibly

muttering under their breath:  
“why do bad things happen  
to good people” or “you only  
live once, then death”  
as they shuffle their coats  
and shroud their faces  
against helicopter-driven winds.

## Pastel

1.

I never messaged back that one girl on okcupid  
and now she is here  
at fourth coast  
two tables away  
in my direct line of sight  
I feel like I am being run over by an ice cream truck in a  
graveyard

2.

jesus christ  
two chairs behind me sits a girl that I have known for three  
years  
three months ago she asked me to coffee, and I said yes  
but then ignored her because I didn't actually want to get  
coffee with her  
I am drowning in an ocean with a dead golden retriever  
chained to my waist emotionally

3.

I am taking adderall tonight with a girl from my class  
she just told me she is Mexican  
her laptop has a Sub Pop sticker  
there is rain in all directions  
I have pitched myself down the grand staircase  
of modernity  
and have found the floor to be soft and noncommittal

4.

The last time I held flowers, it was an accident.  
A child with clenched fists  
dropped shreds of petals into my hand.  
Somewhere a man writes a letter in a gas station while the  
sun sets  
and he feels and hears his teeth chatter but it's not even a  
little melodramatic

## I Listen to Weird Music to Fill an Emotional and Psychological Hole in My Life

Sometimes I have my headphones on when I'm not listening to music

Sometimes I go out into public to be isolated

Yesterday, I was walking in the rain

A car pulled up next to me and rolled down their window

I took off my headphones and said "uhhh hello hi?" while quickly approaching the car, thinking they needed directions

I'm pretty sure I frightened the passengers, who drove away quickly

Behind me, I noticed a large yellow sign that I think they were trying to read

I feel exactly like how a cigarette-butt-filled PBR can feel when it finally gets thrown away

## Demons Party Alone So Get the Hell Out of my Room

I am the god of hellfire and bad jokes.

I can shift huge passages of light across expansive meadows without thinking about math.

I know everything there is to know about aurora borealis and faygo cola because that is what runs through my veins.

I am a betrayed fountain of horrible lust.

I am an unknowable devil in a rusted dog sled.

I have ski-jumped through eternity;

I drink God's budweiser through a silly straw.

My fifteen convertibles are lined across your lawn, crushing your raspberry bushes.

My flame decals are on fire perpetually.

My firstborn has won every NASCAR race.

My ex-wife is a storm cloud with a twitter following.

My drug of choice is getting paid and

my drink of choice the blood of ancient mountains.

Please let me hold your hand and open doors for you.

## You Implied I Lacked Self-Confidence and I Said "...Okay?"

I think you're confusing self-confidence with personal restraint, or general social mindfulness

Also, I think you were pretty drunk

But still, you said it while ironically avoiding my eye contact

At that moment

Colorado was just blandly existing, miles away

Someone's future wife cartwheeled across a rope bridge in Brazil

In Alaska, a boy experienced his first handjob

Further South, a woman left a note on her husband's tombstone, which read "be back in 10."

And that night, the moon acted like a terrible friend, showing up and not leaving until morning

I cherish the cloudiest nights of my life like I cherish you

## Apple Orchard

I am in my room, thinking about how I wish I had a mini-van to take you to an apple orchard. The trees threaten autumn and the apples swell like grenades, and if you fall and break your neck while reaching for the best one, I will lay you among the leaves and pockmark soil. We could later go to an apple store and wait for a product release that won't happen- a curing app for this broken neck.

I've murdered my need for personal strength; I think I mean that I've found huge, altering solace in something as lonesome as a typo on a website somewhere, a ghost of a letter on a dead friend's facebook wall, well-meaning but insidious, like the way a bad winter makes your locks a bitch to turn.

I am now thinking about Christmas and seeing you, the approaching peaks, finding myself extremely sensitive to my white box fan, belting the one-chord melody of the saddest song I've ever heard, played only at 4 in the morning.

I record that song on my phone and put it on my computer; it's a one to two minute sound clip, only about three megabytes large.



Waking Up Every Day is like Constantly Finding  
Large Amounts of Money in your Pocket that  
you Can't Spend Because it's Foreign

One day, I woke up, did things, and went to sleep.

I dreamt of a heron using its beak to spear  
a cherry coke can floating in a river.

The next day I woke up, did things, and went to sleep.

The next day I woke up, did things, and went to sleep.

I had another dream fueled by existential dread  
from feeling like I wasn't doing anything, even though  
I was doing things every day.

The next day I woke up, did things, and went to sleep.

The next day I woke up, did things, and went to sleep.

The next day I woke up, did things, and went to sleep.

The next day I woke up, did things, and went to sleep.

The next day I woke up, did things, and went to sleep.

The next day I woke up, did things, and went to sleep.

The next day I woke up, did things, and went to sleep.

The next day I woke up, did things, and went to sleep.

The next day I woke up, did things, and went to sleep.

The next day I woke up, but felt sick, so instead of doing  
things

I watched TV and threw up all day, and it felt like  
a more productive day than usual, even though I techni-  
cally

only did two things: throw up and watch TV.

The next day I woke up, I did some things, and then after-  
wards I went to sleep.

The next day I woke up, did things, and went to sleep.

The next day I woke up, did things, and went to sleep.

The next day I woke up, did things, and went to sleep.

The next day I woke up, did things, and went to sleep.

The next day I woke up. Later, I was standing outside the  
library and I heard someone say

“my mother did a kick-flip  
and broke her arm.” I considered it the highlight  
of my week almost immediately.

The next day I woke up, did things, and went to sleep.

The next day I woke up, did things, and went to sleep.

The next day I woke up, did things, and went to sleep.

The next day I woke up, did things, and went to sleep.

The next day I woke up, did things, and went to sleep.

The next day I woke up, did things, and went to sleep.

I dreamt that I told my father that I was a solipsist.

He said, “so you think I don't exist?”

But then I woke up,

and did things,

and went to sleep.

The next day I woke up, and my mother called and told  
me to





## Congratulations!!!!!!!!!!!!

YOU are the one millionth reader of this poem!!!!!!  
Click Here and claim your free iPad®, your free wife,  
your free second chance at life,  
your free heart and your free bread,  
your free raising of the dead,  
your free memories suspended by lines and  
your own freedom from your memory's crimes,  
but !!!!!MOST IMPORTANTLY!!!!!  
your ~100% free~ guaranteed-abstract emotions,  
rare and collectable ones!, evoked  
by these clumsily hobbled letters—

I know! your scam-weary heart, it doubts,  
your darting eyes avoid this ugly stanza  
like it's a spam email with less humanity,  
but Click Here, reader, guilt-free,  
and claim what's yours.  
The voice, the tongue, the face obscures.

## Vultures

A tray of cold drinks orbits the room  
dicing lines through uneasy eye contact.

And uneasy eye contact makes me think of movie love,  
of how even the most convincing eye contact between  
two characters has a third pair, a listless cameraman.

And our eye contact has a third element, but it's more like  
a vulture, a camera-less looming, some horrible bird  
hunched like a beggar  
in a corner, beak pecking at an icy memory.

You, me, and the vulture, the worst love triangle  
since whiskey, glass, and I figured each other out  
five minutes ago by the fridge.  
Things are going well, but I'm feeling jealous of the way  
the glass holds the whiskey.

I leave the room for the star-bright porch  
(leaving for the porch, a favorite defense mechanism).  
My tongue feels like a house fire and my hands are  
dazed like choking victims; I am laughing too much  
and too quickly as I step down the porch steps and  
trip elbow first into

snow, falling again into the reflection  
of my favorite question:

if I forget everything important,  
why not you?

The answer makes my lungs contract  
and I don't know who spoke up;  
you, the glass, the vulture, or  
the whiskey:

*You asshole, you're drunk, please leave,  
go home and feel sorry for yourself in peace.*

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## Waka Flocka Flame and I

#1.

Waka Flocka Flame and I go for a brisk walk in the park. We throw a Frisbee around and jump into the piles of dead leaves. "Thank goodness you wore your scarf," he says to me. "It's awfully cold out."

#2.

Waka Flocka Flame and I are driving downtown on our way to get sushi. He turns to me and says, "*Drivin' with my bricksquad, Fuckin' with this kush*". That's a line from my new album." And I say, "wow thank you for the lyrical sneak peak."

#3.

Waka Flocka Flame and I are hanging out playing Wii Sports and drinking root beer on a Friday night. "Let's order pizza," he suggests. "But I don't have any money," I reply. "Don't worry, I have a coupon for free pizza,"

he says. And I say, "You really are an amazing friend."

#4.

It is Halloween and Waka Flocka Flame and I are going trick or treating. Waka Flocka Flame is dressed up as a pirate. I am dressed up as a pirate Waka Flocka Flame. I give him all my kit kats because those are his favorite candy.

#5.

Waka Flocka Flame and I are having our morning coffee together in the kitchen. The fluorescent rays of morning light glide in through the window. I change the radio from a classic rock station to the BBC, but Waka Flocka Flame glares at me until I change the station. I then remember that BBC Music gave his most recent album an unfavorable review. "I'm sorry, I forgot," I say. Silence. A small red bird twitters outside the window.

#6.

Waka Flocka Flame and I are at a party in the Vine Neighborhood. Sometimes he makes my friends uncomfortable by yelling "bricksquad" - or sometimes just "squad" - in their

faces, and he always plays his own music  
when he gets the chance.  
We leave the party early so we can smoke weed  
and watch Frasier.

#7.

Waka Flocka Flame and I are building a fort,  
no girls allowed. There are blue Christmas lights  
threaded around the fort, and stacks of comic books  
hold down the corners. Drinking hot cocoa and wielding a  
flashlight, he tells me that his two greatest fears are  
1. getting haircuts and 2. metal music.  
“Metal is from hell,” he tells me,  
and I reply, “That’s what makes it so irresistible.”  
And he says, “Wow, it was nice of hell to share their  
local music with us.”

#8.

Waka Flocka Flame has had a massive heart attack,  
and I am sitting with Bricksquad in the waiting room,  
wringing my hands. The doctor comes in to tell us  
that it doesn’t look good. A man on the television  
says something about soap scum. A woman nearby  
is brandishing a hair brush and yelling at her child who is

crying,  
and I feel like crying,  
but I don’t because no fucking way am I about to cry in  
front of Bricksquad.

#9.

I am at Waka Flocka Flame’s funeral.  
Mr. and Mrs. Flame are there.  
I tell them I’m sorry for their loss,  
but they don’t say it back.  
After the ceremony, I go for a walk in the cemetery to  
smoke a cigarette.

The leaves are still a beautiful shade of orange but this  
time it annoys me. A squirrel runs past and I kick a stone  
at it and yell “*bricksquad*”.

## It's 2013 and You're Not Allowed to Compare Life to a Flower Anymore

The last poet to successfully compare life to a flower probably died in the 1800s

That's not because life is no longer like a flower

It's because one poet did it, then a bunch of other poets went "Whoah. Nice." and then they did it for a while, and then greeting card companies swallowed the metaphor whole, turning it into a soft-edged cliché

Which is a shame because life is almost exactly like a flower

Example: life is like a lily of the valley

Poisonous, driven by the desire to reproduce, and only mattering when you compare it to something else

## If Something Dangerous Happened Right Now I Would Be a Wreck

Sitting cross-legged in my bed, I thought the phrase "life is melodrama" over and over until it felt a little profound or at least bearable

My phone rang, causing me to regret giving my number to the aggressive Mormons who cornered me on campus

I thought, "Are they going to try to sell me something?" (and also, "life is melodrama")

The woman on the phone asked how I was doing

I thought about how if a tidal wave destroyed the East Coast right now, it would at least be a couple minutes before either of us knew anything about it

I said I was doing good

Then I wondered, "Would a tidal wave be melodrama or just regular drama?"

I came to the conclusion that a regular tidal wave would be drama but a tidal wave made of blood, melodrama



I asked the woman on the phone where she was calling  
from

She was calling from the East Coast

## Ecco

Ecco the dolphin, I have found you again,  
swimming through the cultural miasma  
twenty years fast in the dawn-stuck morning, so  
I shout your name into a cave and all I hear is an echo,  
the skeleton of the word that propels you forward  
from my childhood now bouncing off the rocky walls  
into my twenties, your finning in the farthest  
watercolor depths of a flickering wasteland,  
curated by the kraken of bottom-feeding youth;  
Ecco the dolphin, you are a punk without moonlight,  
or moonlight without romance,  
or romance without the sea,  
that is to say, you are possible but meaningless;  
I see this now in retrospect,  
these memories intruding dagger-fast and ocean-deep  
on the silent buzz of my bright screen surface,  
haunted by the gridlocked traffic of nostalgic haze,  
the tragic vhs in the living-room sunlight,  
the bone-white plastic of an '85 Xerox aging on a beach,  
Lisa Frank coffins and their cacophony of colors,  
diner desire under red lampshades and shame,  
wingless flies in the windowsill,  
polaroid prom date ideals  
that we pursued

until we rotted, or rather, were left to rot  
on the forgotten interstates of twenty years ago.  
Ecco the dolphin, your body belongs there  
on the road by mine,  
but instead you are sprightly, spared by those who  
are younger than you, now circling the drain but thank  
god you can swim because you are a dolphin and  
that is what you are best at.  
Ecco, at the climax of your first game, you time travel  
thousands of years to stop an alien race from harvesting  
the ocean, and I don't even think Jesus did that, and if he  
did nobody told Sega.  
Ecco the dolphin, your dance with relevance  
is like watching a rose rhythmically burn to  
a bass-heavy slow jam until game over.  
Ecco, you are the digital messiah,  
riding a resurrection wave and spilling white light  
across the faces of the innocent.

### 3 Deads

I am dead on the surface of the moon  
and I miss you like the sun. Space is less  
romantic than I thought it would be.  
Instead, it's cold and all I hear is static  
and I am dead face-down on the darker side of the moon  
and you are still like the sun.

I am dead in a hotel room in Kentucky,  
missing you like the West Coast.  
It's high noon and the Oregon Trail is between us  
with its sun-bleached oxen picked vulture clean,  
and you are sunbathing, getting drunk,  
but I am still a body in  
Kentucky, nobody has found me yet  
and nobody will find me for twelve more hours  
until a maid named maybe Rhonda goes to investigate  
and she opens the door  
and yup, sure enough, there I am, dead as hell,  
and still no closer  
to the West Coast.

Ultimately I am dead in a Radioshack somewhere,  
closed for the weekend, snowing outside,  
and I miss you like libraries, which are never built  
next to Radioshacks. I am dead on the blue carpet,  
somewhere by the USB cords,  
and the light from the moon,  
where I am still dead, reflects off the snow banks,  
reflected in the laptop monitors.

## Poem I Can't Read at Poetry Readings

Oh my god

Someone get help

Someone call 911

This is not part of the poem

This is a goddamn emergency

We're all dying

Very slowly

Oh the humanity

## About

August Smith is a 21 year-old poet living in Kalamazoo, MI.

These poems were written between September 2012 and March 2013.

“3 Deads” was published in Banango Street #3.

“Waka Flocka Flame and I” was published in Now That’s What I Call Alternative Literature vol. 2.

No one wants to publish “Pastel”.

The ascii skull on page 19 is from [www.asciworld.com](http://www.asciworld.com).

(Thank you to everyone who has seen me read, enjoyed my work, & supported me. Thank you to Minor Manor.)

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