

#2

They offered to erase my memories of you today. They said I am approaching unviability and that something must be done. I laughed at them and merely said: all humans are unviable. We live perpetually in the tension between survive and thrive...and apathy.

No one said anything. The four of us sat in their purposely sterile office in awkward silence.

One of my collective, one I've never met before, never been much interested in their work, threw themselves from a pedestrian bridge onto the motorway in peak hour two days ago. They became their final installation piece. And immediately everyone is talking about them and their art. And the currency exchange for their art climbs and climbs and climbs.

How is it that we only become interesting in death? When we can no longer create. Or converse. Love or hate. How are we only interesting in our absence? Maybe I understand more about that attraction than I really want to admit.

The investors are worried one of them said, breaking the silence and my train of thought.

One death is good for business. I said. Two is bad.

No one replied.

A live artist will replace the dead one and have their shot at fame and glory and a 20 foot drop off a concrete overpass.

The wheel turns.

And perhaps that's where I am no longer with the good orderly flow. My wheel cannot turn. I am stuck. My wheel wants to dismantle itself but has no idea what it might rebuild itself in the image of.

If they were to take away my memories of you, if I am – what did they call it 'restored' – as if humans come with some kind of factor reset – then I have no reference point for the person I have become. I will be untethered. I do not want to exist without part of my history – however difficult and despairing it is. There are stronger places in me because of that history. Clearer places because of those inner reference points. I am not the person I was when I met you, and despite what my investor's therapists would like to think, this is not a bad thing. I told you it was not a bad thing, even when you insisted it was a bad thing. That you were a bad thing.

You were not. Are not. I used to think I understood everything. I understood you. And me. And us. And all the things that sat between us and why they sat there and how it was okay that they sat there.

Now...

...I don't know.

But then I don't know much of anything anymore (unless I'm seated before my investor's therapists and then I am full of lip and sass and fuck you. I guess that's just a different kind of survival mode).

We make rapid evolutionary jumps when faced with survival. Is the me who sits here now, writing this, the survivor of the fittest selves. Am I the me who survived you?

I never thought I was surviving you. In the thick of it, in the naked moments, in the grand moments, in the moments when everything was breath perfect synchronisation of our entire beings... we were not surviving. We weren't even thriving. We had taken ourselves somewhere that transcended understanding. That took me up and beyond anything I had ever experienced. And I understand what goes up comes down, and we did. We went up and down. We went 'round and 'round. But we were together.

Now, I am here. And you are not.

If they take away my memories of you then my synapses will fire and run inward to find the connection, to find you, and there will be nothing. Just a void and I cannot live in two voids. I wander through the house and you're everywhere and nowhere. At least I can close my eyes and find my way back to you here.

You are two months behind on your deliverable, the coat with the blond hair said.

This is why we should never have allowed art to be commodified, I said, then, there will be more. When it comes, it will come in a torrent. The investors will be choking on it.

A torrent, the coat with the bald head said. Is that not a term for an illegal exchange of goods?

I smile.

Run a counter offensive against yourself, you said when I was producing more than the investors were happy with. Black market your art. Torrent yourself.

But I was never game. There are some things you just don't fuck with.

It's a artist's term, I say. It means shit loads. The investors will be rolling in art like a pig in shit. I stopped myself from saying anything else. Instead I neatly folded my hands in my lap and smiled every so contritely. Tell the investors they have nothing to worry about. Art comes in its own time.

We can always wire your exchange in its own good time, the one with the blond hair said, and I shrugged.

Wouldn't be the first time I've been starving, I said, knowing my home is paid for. My family are taken care of. No one will ever fuck me over a barrel for currency again.

I know I have to face you among the pixels. I know when I am brave enough I will create and create obsessively until you are finally out of my system or I die trying. So, I resist.

I ache for you. To be with you again. But I am not ready to go there to meet you.

If you take the memories there will be no art, I said and let them sit with that for a bit. Tell the investors they will make as much money off my torment and heart break as they made from my happiness.

It will be different art, the one with the red hair said – because ahh, fuck me, he gets it.

I say nothing.

The investors don't want different art. You were contracted –

– to make art, I said and left.

The wheel turns. And eventually I will turn with it. Or give in and let it crush me and be done with it.