

Anatomy of a Breakdown

by DJ Young

The first thing you notice is: there are no days or nights. Moon, sun, sky, stars — they're just the moving wallpaper of an endless rinse cycle.

Everything moves: everything is still. You tell yourself you have things to do. Having something to do gets you through it.

You make lists: Really Rare Words Nobody Cares About, 50 Things To Do Before You Diet, Pros and Cons of Time Travel.

You watch the windows. Their stare is blank. Outside, something is always happening - and no longer interests you.

You take notes for the psuedo-philosophical symposium in your head. All the speakers look suspiciously alike. They are wearing your clothes. Everything fits. Everything fits somewhere. In your hand, the pen moves like a figure skater over the ice. Circling the cracks, the cracks circling.

Sleep is one of the early casualties. Beds are meant to be unmade, unkempt, to be laid in all day. Sleep is superstitious, strictly for cats. Closing your eyes might conjure too many unmentionables. Blue eyes. Smiling sharks. Naked wrists. Bluer than blue is you. Her.

The windows are lined with the hardbacks of Charles, Gertrude, Jeanette, and James and yes, even Virginia, holding back an invisible flood - the waves of cravings and ravings and pencil shavings. The floor is stuffed with pages. This is strictly for protection. You've filled the shelves with precious cracked porcelain. You read by the light of a water glass reflection.

The idea of her comes and goes like pointless prose.

Clothing is always optional.

You lose your appetite staring at food. There is always Later. You'll eat then. Not Before. Food and sleep go hand in hand. One feeds the other - you wish they fed you. The taste of things, like toast and caramel and skin, is fading. Something is erasing it, those tiny buds on your tongue. Your lips are like crumbled clay.

If you pick up the phone, it's no one you know. If it is, it isn't for you.

The scribbles on your tablecloth look like mermaids, wriggling in the sand.

They want you in the office.
They need something you no longer have.
They only want to use you.

You want to shave their throats.

You tell them the drains are stopped up. There's a skeleton in the garden. So much to do around here, it's *sickening* and besides, They smell bad, like breath mints and fertilizer, like Juniper bushes, spider's nests and you never liked Their hair cuts, all that grooming just to fit in those cat-tongue clothes, folded in the box built to rot in. You smell the decay in their coffee cups. You're not going back, you tell them. You don't even have a decent pair of slippers.

The idea of her wants to know if this is all about her.

Everyone needs a good talking to.

You could go on about Gould, the lamp won't mind — talk about his self-involved tics, the way he sat on his balls for a decade, Bach sounds like this, not that, no you don't understand. That isn't what you meant.

The keys are weighed to the frequency. Just tap lightly. You will see the shape of it, the crystal-form of it, crystallizing.

In the crystal ball of it you expect her reflection. All you see is snow. The static of the erratic fanatic romantic manic-depressive: upside down, impulsive, regressive.

You're all I wanted.

Sky-colored eyes go very well with sky. Her eyes were bluer than blue is bluer than you. Her face was like a shadow on the moon. You keep seeing things in it.

The torn envelope wants you to call this number in case of emergency. Send an email to someone named Jo. Everybody understands. You just need to follow the instructions on the side of the can. Try not to cut yourself. Try not to.

Picture boxes of postcards with foreign stamps, creased, careless, bruises and ink: her day after day after day. You have a collection of her days and ways. Posterity of useless ephemera: Highlands and

islands, cups and saucers, Victorian gas lamps, naked goddesses in naked fountains. You have proof of her existence, proof of past connection, a mutual interest.

How boring is your life, anyway? Nobody died, no one left you, there is, never has been anyone, no tragedy, no Sally Seton strolling a terrace in the moonlight, nothing to mourn, nothing to hide from, just that little hole in your head, the one you've filled with someone else's things.

It's like trying to decipher a candy wrapper, implying something greater, something genius, robust, something about toilet paper. This is what we wipe our bums with, the advert hums: we're pliable, cheeky.

You might be an observation too far.

Someone, somewhere, is calculating how long it will take a murdered flock to reach the bottom of a starving ocean.

On good days, on days without water, she tasted like olives. You open a jar and wiggle your fingers in, hooking and crooking. These are the good kind. They taste like her. Hold them between your lips, up to your teeth, a pudding of meat, slip off the skin and suck on the stone. Spit. Sweet. Repeat.

She knows this bit. She's heard it all before.

Can't seem to put your clothes on today. You're wandering in the little closet of your mind again, picking at socks that won't stay up, shirts that are always too big, maybe you're shrinking, growing smaller and smaller, like your great-grandmother, the red-haired Scot with a bad temper who rode horses and smoked like an

Icelandic volcano. She blew ash everywhere. You can still touch it,
in the clinging film of the air.

If you go out, the upside down of everything falls in. You would
reach for it, pluck it and nourish it, the most precious, indefinite,
undeniable, incandescent, inescapable, unrelenting, impossible fact.
The act of the actor in action: the luminous spotlight illumines. See
it, for what it is. Turn your face to it. Be quick.

No, it's just the idea
And the idea
Is sitting in that branch out there,
Beak buzzing a wing
Blue birds are blue as anything
Parrish could have painted this one black
Blue behind it,
Remember, the idea wants you to find it
But you're looking everywhere
But where it is

And there it is.

You're all I wanted.

