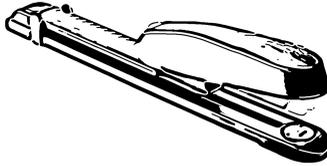


# Sad Discoveries



India LaPlace

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## THEY'LL SAY IT WAS POST-PARTUM DEPRESSION

She isn't 2 yet.  
She's in her stroller  
And we are on the sidewalk  
In the humid air  
In a country where I am all alone,  
Except for her.

Her fat little fingers are in my hair  
And it's only because she's a baby,  
But I am so good at pretending  
And so I imagine she's feeling my pain,  
My turmoil,  
My heartache.

I am so fucking selfish  
That I project my adult conflict  
On my child.  
But I've never felt so weak  
And I need someone to comfort me,  
And for someone to understand  
So, so desperately.

I'm not 20 yet.  
I'm kneeling in front of her stroller  
On the sidewalk  
In the humid air  
Of a country I shouldn't have followed him to.  
My head is in her lap  
And it's all I can do not to sob  
While I choke out the same words to her  
Again and again and again,  
Busy city sounds in the background.

"I'm sorry."  
"I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry."

## EMOTIONS

I am not the kind of girl  
Who will lie about my feelings  
To spare yours.

It's a lesson my parent tried to teach me,  
But I picked up on so few of those.

My thoughts, my feelings, my emotions  
Are kind of like projectile vomit;  
That is to say,  
They are out of my mouth before I can close my lips.

My thoughts, my feelings, my emotions  
Are also kind of like swords;  
That is to say,  
I don't always think before I speak.

If I did, I might have learned  
To edit my words  
To spare your feelings.  
And if I'd learned that,  
My marriage might have survived.  
Or, at least,  
Maybe my dad wouldn't tell me  
That I'm the kind of girl  
That's difficult to love.

## THAT LITTLE VOICE

I think,  
“I will surround myself  
With positive people  
So that I can learn how to exist  
Like  
They  
Do.”  
But I’m missing something  
In my genetic makeup  
That allows me to exist that way.

So I think,  
“I will surround myself  
With people who are more sick than I am  
So I will be inspired  
To be the most positive part  
Of  
Their  
Lives.”  
But that only works  
Until their struggle  
Begins to pull mine into focus  
And soon,  
I can’t face myself in the mirror  
Once again.

And either way,  
I find myself left  
Lying on the carpet  
Of a dark room I can’t seem to leave  
With half my heart whispering how strong I am,  
And the other half drilling into my head  
That this is the only way I can ever be.  
And I don’t think that dark little voice is right,  
But so far,  
It has never been wrong.

## DEPRESSION

“I think I need to quit my job,”  
I tell my father.

He doesn't look up from the too-loud TV  
blaring Fox News to ask,  
“Why?”

I sigh  
and it comes out shaky,  
the way it always does when  
I'm trying not to  
cry.

“I'm so depressed,”  
I whisper.  
“I've never felt like this before, Dad.”

He glances at me.  
“When did you get so sad?”  
he asks.  
“You used to be a happy child.”

“You must be thinking of my sister,”  
I respond.  
He knows which sister I mean  
because there's only one of us  
that didn't appear to battle her mind as a child.  
And even that is a lie.  
She battled demons too,  
just different demons than I did.  
Do.

“I'm not sad,”  
I hear myself say.  
I've heard myself say these words too many times.  
“I have depression.  
It's different.  
You taught me that.”

He took me to get on pills when I was  
11-years-old,  
And I think he thought those would fix me.  
I think he thought  
he'd be done dealing with this  
and I'd be married off  
with 3 kids  
and a testimony by now.

I never could have been a house wife.  
I always knew that,  
so of course I had to try and fail.  
That's my pattern;  
I come to a fork in the road with two signs.  
Left points to "the hard way"  
Right points to "good, easy decisions."

I've only ever known how to go left,  
If only for the sake of being different.  
I've only ever known how to make things hard on myself,  
If only for the sake of art and comedy.

"Back in my day," my dad says,  
"If you could do a job well,  
you do it.  
You work your way up.  
You work hard.  
And then you retire.  
You don't jump from job  
to job  
to job  
the way you do."

I purse my lips.  
"Dad, I can't do any job well,"  
I say.  
"I'm depressed."

“Then quit,”  
he shrugs and turns back  
to the television channel  
that probably pushed me into being more liberal than I ought to be.  
Teenage rebellion and all that.  
“I hope you get this figured out one day,”  
he mumbles as I leave the room.

As if I like feeling this way.

As if I like worrying how I’m going to get by.  
As if I like my daughter seeing me struggle  
to get out of bed for days at a time  
or feeling compelled to take my hand  
while I sob  
and she whispers,  
“It’s going to be okay, Mama.  
Life isn’t so bad.”

## FIRST DATE

He has a way with words  
And I have no sense of delayed gratification,  
Which means that for the last half of our time at the bar,  
I fantasized to the sound of his voice  
And forgot that I had decided not to sleep with him on the first date.  
And I remember nothing  
But the way he looks when he smiles  
And the thought of cumming to that laugh.

Anyway,  
I went home with him.

## MAKING FEMINISM GREAT AGAIN

Today a man spit in my face.  
Then, while he held my head in place  
Until my throat relaxed around his cock,  
And moved me into a position  
Where he could force a toy up my ass,  
I thought about how he had voted for Trump.  
I wondered if I was a disgrace to feminism.

And then I came.

## GOING HOME

I know you didn't hate me.  
Hate.  
You have to really give a shit  
    To hate someone.  
That was the real truth –  
You didn't really give a shit  
    About me  
    At all.

Not in a mean way.  
Just in the way that we were kids  
And we didn't really know how to care  
    About anyone,  
    Except ourselves.

    Me.  
With all of the issues  
I believed I'd already grown through.  
    And you.  
With all of the issues  
You hadn't even begun to address.

I wanted to make up stories  
    And do drugs  
    And feel art spill into every crack and corner  
    Of myself.  
You just wanted to lose yourself in a new life,  
    Forget that your father spent your entire childhood  
    Making you believe that nothing you did  
    Would ever be good enough.

We could have been any two kids,  
    I guess.  
Making stupid mistakes  
When we felt our most invincible.  
You could have been any guy.  
I could have been any girl,

But we weren't.  
It was me and it was my life  
And that was all I cared about.

And that was fine.  
We both needed more,

We just needed different.  
What I probably needed was a therapist.  
But I didn't know anything that I needed,  
Other than to take my baby  
    (And my books)  
And spend the next 5½ hours in the air  
Trying to figure out what the fuck I was going to do,  
    How I was going to exist,  
    Where I fit  
    In this life that I barely recognized.

## SOMETHING LIKE LOVE

I read somewhere that  
Hunter S. Thompson said,  
“Love is the feeling you get when you like something as much as your  
motorcycle.”  
Well, I don't have a motorcycle,  
But I'll assume he means that  
Love  
Is when you like something as much as you like your favorite thing.  
And while I can't say I like you  
More than I like to write,  
I do like to write about you  
More than anything else.

## HER

*I don't deserve her,*

Is the thought that I can't get out of my head;  
Is the thought that's been playing in my head  
since the day she was born.

Nothing makes me feel  
like the lowest of the low  
more than losing my temper  
with the human that I made.

She doesn't lose her temper with me.  
She watches me with those  
big blue eyes  
filled with worry,  
filled with love.

She worries about me more than  
an 8-year-old ought to.  
She loves me more  
than I would ever expect her to.

Endlessly impressed  
by her tenderness and patience,  
I feel more guilty than ever.

Because when words like daggers  
escape my lips  
only to land in her chest,  
she never exclaims,  
“Why? Why are you doing this to me?”  
She only ever says,  
in her gentle voice,  
“Why? Why are you doing this to yourself?”

I am the most beautiful person that she can imagine,  
she tells me.  
She spins my emotional spiral  
into a positive thing  
when she thanks me

for being honest about how I feel

and then asks if I can do it  
more gently next time.

She knows how to tell me,  
“I love you,  
your words are hurting my heart,  
but I love you.”

Which makes all of my anger collapse in on itself  
because how can she forgive the things  
I hate the most about myself?

My fingertips are not just self-destructive,  
they seem to ruin everything around me too.  
But thank the gods  
she seems resistant  
to the land mine that is me.

## ILLINOIS

We drove through Illinois once.  
Actually, we were driving home to Utah,  
From Huntsville, Alabama.  
You were leaving me.  
Not leaving me, really.  
That wasn't fair.  
You were being deployed to South Korea.  
I had to wait it out until the army said that I could come too.  
I told everybody how sad I was,  
How much I would miss you.  
My heart was aching,  
It had never felt so heavy  
And I wanted to tear it out of my chest.  
But it was aching because I knew I wasn't in love  
And I didn't know how to leave.

This was real.  
Legal.  
And I had made a mistake when I signed those papers.

I was nearly four in the morning when we finally stopped.  
The hotel was shitty,  
But we were exhausted.  
You always talked about how you could drive for hours on a road trip  
without getting tired.  
You were a liar.  
You are a liar, still.  
I think about all of this while I change the baby  
And wrap her up tightly.  
She's asleep before she can complain.  
She's perfect and I don't deserve her.

You drove for a couple of hours,  
While I drove for nearly eight.  
It's symbolic to me of how much I think  
I've sacrificed  
Compared to you.

Which is also not fair.  
But it's like all those times you asked me to rub your back  
And I push myself til my fingers are cramped and aching.  
But when it's my turn,  
I get a minute, if I'm lucky,  
Before you roll over in bed.  
You don't even say a word to me.  
You just decide you're done and roll over.  
I wish I could be done that easily,  
But when it's reversed, you whine,  
Coax,  
And I relent.

You won't even play with my hair anymore.

When you come to the room,  
Pulling a crib from the hotel behind you,  
I clutch her closer to me.  
This way I don't have to hug you  
And you can't hug me either.  
Not without waking the baby.  
When you lean over to kiss me,  
I move so you can only kiss my forehead.  
I shush you,  
Even though you haven't said anything yet.  
I tell you to go to bed.  
I offer to make the crib comfortable for her.  
I take my time, waiting until I am sure that you're asleep.  
Then I slip my body that I barely recognize  
Out of my clothes and between strange sheets.  
You turned on the heater  
Even though I feel like you should know  
That I can't sleep if the room is too hot.

The sun starts to rise and you roll over to face me.  
"Baby," you whisper, because you never say my name,  
"Let's make love while the sun rises."  
My skin crawls.

There are several silent minutes  
And I know I can pretend to be asleep.  
But I won't.  
“Don't ever fucking say the words ‘make love’ to me again,”  
My whisper comes out like a hiss.  
You don't respond.  
You roll back over.  
But I saw your heart break a little in your eyes  
And I wonder why I am like this.

## LEAVING JEREMY

When I was 21,  
I left my husband  
And I came home  
With no money in my bank account –  
With no bank account of my own, actually –  
And a 3-year-old on my hip.

“We’re so glad to see you back in Utah.”

“Will we see you in church on Sunday?”

“Everyone knew it wouldn’t last.”

“He’s cool, but she’s...

crazy,  
mean,  
a bitch.”

(Insert whatever you called me.)

I left up the pictures of the two of us,  
I stayed Facebook friends with his family,  
I posted uplifting quotes and statuses  
So that I would seem unfazed.  
I had to end it.

I had to be strong.

I had to keep smiling.

Or else I failed.

“It’s only a failure if you don’t learn from it,”

Someone told me,

“If you don’t grow from this trial.”

“God knows you can handle this.”

But it was a failure and I don’t believe in God.  
It was a war that I fought  
Like my life depended on it.  
I sunk in my nails,  
I bared my teeth,  
And my voice scared me when I spoke.

“Don’t be like your parents.”

“Things will get better.”

“You’re happy.”

“She deserves more than a broken home,”

And now I don’t know if I’m talking to my daughter

Or myself,

I just know that it’s hard not to choke

On all the lies I keep whispering.

## SUNSHINE CHILD

We fell into calling ourselves  
“Sunshine people.”  
I don’t know where it came from,  
or when it started, exactly.  
People always said we had this certain light about us,  
Which was ironic,  
because the 5 of us were  
fucking  
falling  
apart inside.  
Between mental illness,  
Religion,  
Neglect,  
and drugs, I’m surprised we held on to  
our sense of ourselves at all.  
My brother was the first to lose it,  
But my sister was the first one I had the sense to be worried about.  
My parents didn’t notice either happening  
because I was the one writing creepy stories  
and having panic attacks  
and not sleeping at night.  
Maybe if I’d been quieter when I fell apart,  
my siblings could have gotten what they needed.

And then there was the child I had never wanted,  
Or dreamed about,  
Or tried for,  
And I finally got it.  
It finally clicked.  
Maybe I didn’t understand how dimly my world was lit before?  
Because she breezed into my world  
and everything,  
everything,  
changed.  
She lit everything up,  
Which sounds like cheesy, flowery bull shit if it hasn’t happened to you.  
I wasn’t better by any means.  
But for the first time in my life,  
I wanted to be.

## THE QUESTION GAME

“What’s your favorite color?”

“Green, probably. How many kids are in your family?”

“I’m the second of four.”

There is a pause before he sends the next question.

“What kind of porn do you look at?”

There it is.

If you read the title right,

‘The Question Game’ is just code for:

“I want to ask you about sex.”

I guess it just seems better to ease into it?

Maybe?

We’re all curious.

And horny.

And some of us

(Me)

Are a little insatiable.

“What makes you think I look at porn?” I ask.

“Don’t you?”

By myself, in my room,

I can’t help but laugh a little at that.

“Of course.”

“Well, there you go,” he says.

“So what kind of porn do you look at?”

I think about how to answer the question.

I think about how honest I want to be.

I think about the fantasies I’m ashamed of;

The ones that contradict my personality.

Ropes, whips, clamps, plug, gags.  
Being forced onto my knees,  
Told to crawl on all fours  
And beg for what I could easily get anyway.

I think about female faces twisted in pain,  
The red welts left on their skin,  
While their pussies get wetter and wetter.  
I think about my jaw being sore  
From being forced open,

Be it by gag or cock or my own panties.

I think about fingers weaved through my hair,  
A hand ever so threateningly on my throat..

I think about the degrading words that I love.

“Filthy fucking slut.”

“You nasty little whore.”

“You just can’t help yourself, can you?”

“I know you only came here for one thing.”

I think about the, “Yes, Sir,” that I hate..  
That turns me on so much.

“When I cum,” I type out,  
“My first thought afterwards is:  
*What the fuck is wrong with me?*  
That’s the kind of porn I watch.”

He responds, “Lol.”

India LaPlace is a poet from the USA and is co-editor of the sensational *Horror Sleaze Trash*: This is her debut collection: Hold on tight.

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