

JULIE

SHORT STORY: TAKE THIS PHOTOGRAPH FOR ME BY BILLY BOWDEN

Congratulations!

Summary: This story is actually the story of my recent engagement. The proposal took place in Ogunquit, Maine. My fiancée's parents had chosen this place as their destination for Memorial Day Weekend getaway for several years. The first time that I went to Ogunquit with my now fiancée our relationship was taking a sharp turn because of the requirements of Graduate School that she was struggling with. She was having a tough time balancing a relationship and finding herself and our vacation to Maine together at this point of our relationship was really what brought us together for life. This story comes days after the proposal when things are starting to finally quiet down a bit and I have had the time to write.

STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

WRONG MEDIUM?

THIS SOUNDS MORE LIKE A POEM OR SONG LYRICS THAN A SHORT STORY.

Take this photograph for me, Ogunquit by the sea the place where my heart melts and the sun sings. Every time I hear its name I think, and every time I think something moves inward towards me.

I got down on one knee, sweating, this moment of life. Nothing but pure love, love spent over weeks and adoring love, love that never wanted to go away. Our family drank in the sunsets, for some of them it was the first time. How long did we talk about it? We thought, then we just smiled—pushing those negative tensions away. Projecting our visions in the future I remembered our past, a lifetime was already created here, the first time you asked me. You had me at hello of course, but then I wasn't sure. Wasn't sure if love was dispersed. We grappled with something like tension for a while, and of course that tension was shared. It wasn't the cool darkness of apathy, it wasn't the dark shade of neglect, it was the misunderstood depression. The empty chasm, but of course, we shared it—but how could we share the same?

cliché

negative

?
?!
?!

We didn't and so we grew apart. Through aimless nights I spent back tossing endless drinks, thinking that chasm would simply remove itself. It didn't. I sought atonement, for what I

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Then, why did you seek it?

?

wasn't sure. That first night harkened on me. With your parents, and I a foreigner. The language was different, the feel was different, and it was a difference I needed that I admired. When those nights alone in the shower, empties water dumped on top of my contemplated head in shame, those trickles made me think.

of what?

Why done?

Who was I that I was alone? Was independence better than nothing, was something more creative? Come and meet my parents, you said. And I said, that I would love to before I could control those words, they just escaped. Even though I reached out for them, they could never come back. How could they ever?

run-on

The thoughts passed through me like ink in my veins, or fluidly, like ink on the page.

not fluid, sedentary

Then I remembered your voice. Passing, a passing sound. Back then it was only passing, because truly our time together was brief. I only had a vignette to remember, but that word "yet" seems terrible to describe something so terrific. Three years I spent already walking up and down that monstrous terrain. Jumping in friends cars to attend parties down the line, thinking that we were invisible. That invisible cloak was ephemeral, such was the problem. Couches called me to dance on. That backward and forward motion wasn't enough, either dancing or moving the bottle. Pouring poison into my receiving mouth waiting on the world to change.

Why "yet"?

?

How to decipher this? That the peaking hours of that night after spending hours in contemplation about composition, we spoke to each other as though we knew each other since our lives began. Could we have? I knew your Mother before you told me of her physically fit appearance past fifty years old. I knew that she had to be a teacher and that our dreams were interlocked. I heard the voices of her students, with little money but dreams alike anyone else. I saw them too, when I worked in tandem with people I barely knew. When these groups had the

It's quite possible

unlike?

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capability of rearranging my whole life. There it was, the movie, scene one act one. Twenty-one years in, and yet a beginning.

Where? When?
Who is "us"?

You pulled us over. "Would you like a ride to your car?" Just one passage? You took me over then. Well I was with my roommate over ^{of?} course. I felt my skin creeping up on my forearms. ^{passenger?} Before then I had been the quiet boy. I was in the class to pass and to move on. Could I do anything else? To my own, I was average. I would most likely get an A if I tried hard, so I heard. ^{goose bumps?} But would I meet the love of my life? Staring at the room across from me. Just as puzzled as I was. She didn't even speak. Her friends spoke for her and my anxiety woke me up.

^{run-on} The dream turned inward, there was something there had to be something. My hope was quickly spiraling down the empty stream where I had been before. I misplaced it over and over, and I saw it go. Why do you keep leaving the room? I can no longer reach for you, grope for you, or control you.

Then there came the pilfering, the suggestions. Why do you read? Where will those lines of poetry take you? My privileged body sat in contemplation watching oceanic nights. There it was, the world—and beyond that?

^{Why?} My feet run without my walking. I couldn't feel my face as we sat in the back of your tight car. There were water bottles everywhere while my heart was in my throat. The water bottles said drink me; the car said hold on. Everything I knew, structure, disappeared down the least painful gap where everything just floated, where everything just made sense.

You wanted to be a teacher? You cared about what you learned here, the knowledge that you gained? You paid for a reason. Tell me more! I could have held your sweet delicate hand

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where our sweat mixed together, but I didn't know that then. I could have told you I loved you but I didn't feel that then.

What mirror where?

word choice

Careful with the placement of "only"

From the purview of the mirror I only saw light, my opportunity. Our opportunity. But

did I see getting old, a porch somewhere where coffee rises and novels were set. We could read

peace

in piece over the fire at night, look at the stars above our colonial home. Pointed tops; beautiful

stars? home?

interior. We can finally drink this in.

ambiguous

Just wait. Your eyes told me everything, that mix of blue and green: who are you? Who is perfect like this? I knew you but really I didn't. I knew you in my dreams where I prayed to a God that I half believed in that one day he would send me the person who would be my equal. Not in every way, just a balance, the fulcrum in the middle the medium that provides. I couldn't provide and my relationships only looked like fire meeting ice until that moment. In the car, we could have turned the whole word around but we simply drove on.

Three years time in the brunt of all New England offered us. Cold weather and warm, tired nights and lively nights. Binaries we couldn't resist, they seem to be part of us. Sweet friends that brought us here—and time. Of course, time. That sweet boy you knew who sat in the front of the class with his hat tilted looking at the apprehending world as if they would never accept his real self became a real self when you said those words.

What words?

Consuming a lifetime in three years. Not impossible and in fact, it became possible every time I picked up the phone. Including the first time. With a whole history of trauma a whole history of rejections: I'll text you and you text me. That ended quick. I only said few words. The only thing I could think of was not, "Hey" but an anecdote about our elderly neighbor. There she is. She walks and we walk. Yet she walks the road up and down, up and down, up and down. The

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?
movement her feet, crumbling as she walked, I thought would be a nice topic. Later we would rave about her, she was a movie. Our superstar.

But then I had only few words. I wouldn't tell you much. Then I couldn't write because how could I breathe enough for one sentence when on the other end of that digital equipment was a beautiful soul waiting to be discovered. But discovery... That doesn't hit the right note. It hits it hard but you would have to take the world's largest sledge hammer and have it collide with a material solid to just begin to understand.

Lack? Language doesn't do justice. We spend a lifetime because of lack. I pour words into lack and lack doesn't reciprocate. Instead, lack torments. Lack wakes me up at 1 am and it doesn't relent. How could I sleep? The world awaits words and letters. They told me they gave up on letters so long ago so why would they want those letters now?

My letters, her letters, our letters.

Is this the end?
Is this the short story in its entirety?
If this is a short story about your engagement, then focus on that! Give us more dialogue and plot. Very introspective.

They?
letters?

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[so far, this is not a story. It is a collection of free associations. To someone not part of the situation, it's either incomprehensible or cliché (boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy wins girl).

If you want this to be a story, you need to make us 1) understand and 2) care.]

[I am giving you the award for "Most Dangling References"]

[please put this in chronological order. Possibly with an overall framing device.]

[please don't use metaphors without introducing what they refer to.]

[please use simple words and not fancy words. Avoid words with multiple meanings.]

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poetic

Take this photograph for me, Ogunquit by the sea[is he addressing the town of Ogunquit, asking it to take the photograph? Or is he asking someone else to take a picture OF Ogunquit? I can't tell if it's direct address or direct object], the place where my heart melts and the sun sings. Every time I hear its name, I think, and every time I think, something moves inward towards me.[framing story]

I got down on one knee, sweating, this moment of life.[definite incident] Nothing but pure love, love spent over weeks and adoring love, love that never wanted to go away.[feeling about incident] [switching to something else: not the incident, not the feeling, bigger picture] Our

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family drank in the sunsets, for some of them, it [traveling to Ogunquit? Proposal?] was the first time. How long did we talk about it [no idea what this "it" refers to?] We [he and his fiancée? He and his family? Everyone?] thought, then we just smiled—pushing [those negative tensions] [first mention that there were negative tensions: what are they?] away. Projecting our [whose?] visions in the future, I remembered our past, a lifetime was already created here, the first time you [so this is addressed to one person, presumably not the reader] asked me [asked me what?]. You had me at hello [this phrase is now a cliché], of course, but then I wasn't sure. [Wasn't sure if love was dispersed.] [no idea what this means] We grappled with something like tension for a while, and, of course, that tension was shared. It wasn't the cool darkness of apathy, it wasn't the dark shade of neglect, it was the misunderstood depression. The empty chasm, but of course, we shared it—but how could we share the same [what?] [this is one paragraph!?!]

We didn't [what?] and so we grew apart. Through aimless nights, I spent back-tossing back endless drinks, thinking that chasm would simply remove itself. It didn't. I sought atonement, for what I wasn't sure. That first night [what first night] harkened [this is backwards: someone harkens to something] on me. With your parents, and I a foreigner [? Do you mean outsider?]. The language [when?] was different, the feel was different, and it was a difference I needed that I admired. [When those nights alone in the shower, empties water dumped on top of my contemplated head in shame, those trickles made me think.] [no idea what this means]

Who was I that I was alone? Was independence better than nothing, was something more creative? Come and meet my parents, you said. And I said, that I would love to, before I could control those words, they just escaped. Even though I reached out for them, they could never come back. How could they ever? [why is this a big deal?]

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WR I!

The thoughts[what thoughts?] passed through me like ink in my veins, or fluidly, like ink on the page. Then[when?] I remembered your voice. Passing, a passing sound. Back then it was only passing, because truly our time together was brief. I only had a vignette to remember, but that word “yet” seems terrible to describe something so terrific. Three years I spent already walking up and down [that monstrous terrain][meaning what?]. Jumping in friends cars to attend parties down the line, thinking that we were invisible. That invisible cloak[I don't think the cloak is invisible: it wouldn't be much good if it was] was ephemeral, such was the problem. Couches called me to dance on. That backward and forward motion wasn't enough, either dancing or moving the bottle. Pouring poison into my receiving mouth, waiting on the world to change.

How to decipher this? That the peaking hours of that night after spending hours in contemplation about composition, we spoke to each other as though ^{we'd known} we knew each other since our lives began. Could we have? I knew your Mother before you told me of her physically fit appearance past fifty years old. I knew that she had to be a teacher and that our dreams were interlocked. I heard the voices of her students, with little money but dreams alike anyone else. I saw them[who?] too, when I worked in tandem with people I barely knew. When these groups had the capability of rearranging my whole life. There it was, the movie, scene one act one[other way around]. Twenty-one years in, and yet a beginning.

You pulled us over. “Would you like a ride to your car?” Just one passage[?]? You took me over then. Well, I was with my roommate over[of?] course. I felt my skin creeping up on my forearms.

Before then, I had been the quiet boy. I was in the class to pass and to move on, could I do anything else? To my own[?], I was average. I would most likely get an A if I tried hard, so I

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heard. But would I meet the love of my life? Staring at the room across from me. Just as puzzled[who or what is?] as I was. She[is "she" the same as "you"?] didn't even speak. Her friends spoke for her and my anxiety[about what?] woke me up[from what?].

The dream[what dream?] turned inward, there was something, there had to be something. My hope was quickly spiraling down the empty stream where I had been before. I misplaced it over and over, and I saw it go. Why do you keep leaving the room? I can no longer reach for you, grope for you, or control you.

Then there came the pilfering[?], the suggestions. [who is asking these questions? Of whom?] Why do you read? Where will those lines of poetry take you? My privileged body sat in contemplation watching oceanic nights. There it was, the world—and beyond that?

My feet run without my walking. I couldn't feel my face as we sat in the back of your tight car.[now in a car. I guess.] There were water bottles everywhere while my heart was in my throat. The water bottles said drink me; the car said hold on. Everything I knew, structure, disappeared down the least painful gap where everything just floated, where everything just made sense.

You wanted to be a teacher? You cared about what you learned here, the knowledge that you gained? You paid for a reason. Tell me more! I could have held your sweet delicate hand where our sweat mixed together but I didn't know that then. I could have told you I loved you but I didn't feel that then.

From the purview[?] of the mirror I only saw light, my opportunity. Our opportunity. But did I see getting old, a porch somewhere where coffee rises and novels were set. We could read

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in piece[peace?] over the fire at night, look at the stars above our colonial home. Pointed tops; beautiful interior. We can finally drink this in.

Just wait. Your eyes told me everything, that mix of blue and green: who are you? Who is perfect like this? I knew you but really I didn't. I knew you in my dreams where I prayed to a God that I half believed in that one day he would send me the person who would be my equal.

Not in every way, just a balance, the fulcrum in the middle, the medium that provides. I couldn't provide and my relationships only looked like fire meeting ice until that moment. In the car, we could have turned the whole word[world] around but we simply drove on.

[Three years time in the brunt of all New England offered us.][huh?] Cold weather and warm, tired nights and lively nights. Binaries we couldn't resist, they seem to be part of us. Sweet friends that brought us here—and time. Of course, time. That sweet boy you knew who sat in the front of the class with his hat tilted looking at the apprehending world as if they would never accept his real self became a real self when you said those words.

Consuming a lifetime in three years. Not impossible and in fact, it became possible every time I picked up the phone. Including the first time. With a whole history of trauma a whole history of rejections: I'll text you and you text me. That ended quick. I only said few words. The only thing I could think of was not, "Hey" but an anecdote about our elderly neighbor. There she is. She walks and we walk. Yet she walks the road up and down, up and down, up and down. The movement [of?] her feet, crumbling as she walked, I thought would be a nice topic. Later we would rave about her, she was a movie. Our superstar.

But then I had only few words. I wouldn't tell you much. Then I couldn't write because how could I breathe enough for one sentence when on the other end of that digital equipment was a beautiful soul waiting to be discovered. But discovery... That doesn't hit the right note. It

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hits it hard but you would have to take the world's largest sledge hammer and have it collide with a material solid to just begin to understand.

Language doesn't do justice. We spend a lifetime because of lack. I pour words into lack and lack doesn't reciprocate. Instead, lack torments. Lack wakes me up at 1 am and it doesn't relent. How could I sleep? The world awaits words and letters. They told me they gave up on letters so long ago so why would they want those letters now?

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[um ...]

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Summary: This story is actually the story of my recent engagement. The proposal took place in Ogunquit, Maine. My fiancée's parents had chosen this place as their destination for Memorial Day Weekend getaways for several years. The first time that I went to Ogunquit with my now fiancée our relationship was taking a sharp turn because of the requirements of Graduate School that she was struggling with. She was having a tough time balancing a relationship and finding herself, and our vacation to Maine together at this point of our relationship was really what brought us together for life. This story comes days after the proposal when things are starting to finally quiet down a bit, and I have had the time to write.

Jenni's Comments

Take this photograph for me, Ogunquit by the sea, the place where my heart melts and the sun sings. Every time I hear its name I think, and every time I think something moves inward towards me.

I got down on one knee, sweating, this moment of life. Nothing but pure love, love spent over weeks, and adoring love, love that never wanted to go away.

Our family drank in the sunsets, for some of them it was the first time. How long did we talk about it? We thought, then we just smiled—pushing those negative tensions away.

Projecting our visions in the future, I remembered our past, a lifetime was already created here, the first time you asked me. You had me at hello of course, but then I wasn't sure. Wasn't sure if love was dispersed. We grappled with something like tension for a while, and of course that tension was shared. It wasn't the cool darkness of apathy, it wasn't the dark shade of neglect, it was the misunderstood depression. The empty chasm, but of course, we shared it—but how could we share the same?

Comment [PHS IS1]: Think of what?

Comment [PHS IS2]: Be more specific about what that "something" is.

Comment [PHS IS3]: Have they only known each other for weeks?

Comment [PHS IS4]: Was the family there for the proposal? Was it during sunset?

Comment [PHS IS5]: Talk about what? Getting married? Or taking the vacation to Maine?

Comment [PHS IS6]: Asked what?

Comment [PHS IS7]: These seem like conflicting statements. They share but they don't share.

Beautiful language
Strong voice.

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We didn't and so we grew apart. Through aimless nights I spent ~~back~~ tossing ~~back~~ endless drinks, thinking that chasm would simply remove itself. It didn't. I sought atonement, for what I wasn't sure. That first night harkened ~~toen~~ me. With your parents, and I a foreigner. The language was different, the feel was different, ~~and-i~~ it was a difference I needed—that I admired. ~~When-t~~ those nights alone in the shower, ~~empties~~ water dumped on ~~top-of~~ my contemplatived head in shame, those trickles made me think.

Comment [PHS IS8]: Think about rewording this to clarify your meaning.

Who was I that I was alone? Was independence better than nothing, was something more creative? ~~CoimeCome~~ and meet my parents, you said. And I said, that I would love to before I could control those words, they just escaped. Even though I reached out for them, they could never come back. How could they ever?

Why did he want to take them back?

The thoughts passed through me like ink in my veins, or fluidly, like ink on the page. Then I remembered your voice. Passing, a passing sound. Back then it was only passing, because truly our time together was brief. I only had a vignette to remember, but that word "yet" seems terrible to describe something so terrific. Three years I spent already walking up and down that monstrous terrain. Jumping in friends cars to attend parties down the line, thinking that we were invisible. That invisible cloak was ephemeral, such was the problem. Couches called me to dance on. That backward and forward motion wasn't enough, either dancing or moving the bottle. Pouring poison into my receiving mouth waiting on the world to change.

How to decipher this? That the peaking hours of ~~that night~~ after spending hours in contemplation about composition, we spoke to each other as though we knew each other since our lives began. Could we have? I knew your ~~Mm~~ mother before you told me of her physically fit appearance past fifty years old. I knew that she had to be a teacher, and that our dreams were

Comment [PHS IS9]: Which night? When they got engaged, or when he was partying?

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interlocked. I heard the voices of her students, with little money but dreams like anyone else. I saw them too, when I worked in tandem with people I barely knew. When these groups had the capability of rearranging my whole life. There it was, the movie, scene one act one. Twenty-one years in, and yet a beginning.

You pulled ~~us~~ over. "Would you like a ride to your car?" Just one passage? You took me over then. Well I was with my roommate ~~ofover~~ course. I felt my skin creeping up on my forearms. Before then I had been the quiet boy. I was in the class to pass and to move on, ~~could~~ I do anything else? To my own, I was average. I would most likely get an A if I tried hard, so I heard. But would I meet the love of my life? Staring at the room across from me. Just as puzzled as I was. ~~She~~ didn't even speak. Her friends spoke for her and my anxiety woke me up.

The dream turned inward, there was something, there had to be something. My hope was quickly spiraling down the empty stream where I had been before. I misplaced it over and over, and I saw it go. ~~Why do you keep leaving the room?~~ I can no longer reach for you, grope for you, or control you.

Then there came the pilfering, the suggestions. Why do you read? Where will those lines of poetry take you? My privileged body sat in contemplation watching oceanic nights. There it was, the world—and beyond that?

My feet run without my walking. I couldn't feel my face as we sat in the back of your tight car. There were water bottles everywhere while my heart was in my throat. The water bottles said ~~drink me~~; the car said ~~hold on~~. Everything I knew, structure, disappeared down the least painful gap where everything just floated, where everything just made sense.

Comment [PHS IS10]: What room?

Comment [PHS IS11]: Who? His fiancée?

Comment [PHS IS12]: Are you speaking of hope?

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You wanted to be a teacher? You cared about what you learned here, the knowledge that you gained? You paid for a reason. Tell me more! I could have held your sweet delicate hand where our sweat mixed together but I didn't know that then. I could have told you I loved you but I didn't feel that then.

From the purview of the mirror I only saw light, my opportunity. Our opportunity. But did I see getting old, a porch somewhere where coffee rises and novels were set. We could read in peacepieee over the fire at night, look at the stars above our colonial home. Pointed tops; beautiful interior. We can finally drink this in.

Just wait. Your eyes told me everything, that mix of blue and green: who are you? Who is perfect like this? I knew you but really I didn't. I knew you in my dreams where I prayed to a God that I half believed in, that one day he would send me the person who would be my equal. Not in every way, just a balance, the fulcrum in the middle, the medium that provides. I couldn't provide and my relationships only looked like fire meeting ice until that moment. In the car, we could have turned the whole world around but we simply drove on.

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Consuming a lifetime in three years. Not impossible and in fact, it became possible every time I picked up the phone. Including the first time. With a whole history of trauma a whole history of rejections: I'll text you and you text me. That ended quick. I only said few words. The

Comment [PHS IS13]: What words?

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only thing I could think of was not, “Hey” but an anecdote about our elderly neighbor. There she is. She walks and we walk. Yet she walks the road up and down, up and down, up and down. The movement of her feet, crumbling as she walked, I thought would be a nice topic. Later we would rave about her, she was a movie. Our superstar.

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My letters, her letters, our letters.

Comment [PHS 1S14]: Who is "they"?

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Billy-

Let me begin with, I totally understood the summary. I was looking forward to a tender love story.

Let me also say that I had an extremely difficult time trying to give some order to your five-page monologue about love. Describing an emotion is set aside for the masters and even they bungled it more often than not.

Halfway through this I stopped trying to decipher your meanings. There are no suggestions after the mid-way of the manuscript because I was saying the same thing over and over. You need to stop and comb through the snarls to give the reader some help with your story. It's evident that you have an idea of what you're trying to say. Unfortunately, it got lost in the jumble of emotion.

Establish a point of your story. Give some life to it by introducing us to the characters. I assume you're quite familiar with them as you say this is a real situation. Then, try to follow some kind of action through to the conclusion. I'd guess it's the reality of the engagement and subsequent marriage.

You've bit off quite a mouthful. Sometimes the meanings in a non-fictional story are so important the story becomes too close and it becomes, what you have here, a surge of emotions without direction. Stand back, take a deep breath, and begin again with an understanding of your goal. As I said earlier, trying to nail down emotions with words can be quite a chore.

The only analogy I can think of is in music. Think of a symphony orchestra before the concert. What you hear is a caterwauling of tuning and practice. Individually, the instruments sound fine. But, all jumbled together, there is a confusion of noise and not music. This is what you have here - a jumble of ideas with no real organization. Take a look at individual sentences and make them the topic sentences of expressive paragraphs. And go from there.

The sentences in blue might make good topic sentences. Try to stick to the topic so the reader doesn't become confused.

Good luck and give this time in your life some air. It deserves to be documented with tenderness.

Dave

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Take this photograph for me, Ogunquit by the sea the place where my heart melts and the sun sings. Every time I hear its name I think, and every time I think something moves inward towards me. (Interesting opening paragraph. If you proceeded to tell a story from there, you would have done fine. What did the place look like? Who was around? What led up to the event? What was the outcome? Can you see how different this would be if you made a story about the event, rather than trying to describe emotions for five pages. Even the masters give up after about three sentences.)

I got down on one knee, sweating, this moment of life. *(Keep going with this proposal. Don't go flying away with emotions. Tell a story.)* **Nothing but pure love, love spent over weeks and adoring love, love that never wanted to go away. Our family drank in the sunsets, for some of them it was the first time. How long did we talk about it?** *(Talk about what? The proposal? The vacation? The place? What did they talk about?)* **We thought, then we just smiled—pushing those negative tensions away.** *(What negative tensions? Why were there negative tensions?)* **Projecting our visions in the future I remembered our past, a lifetime was already created here, the first time you asked me.** *(Huh? Four things happened in this sentence. 1. Visions of the future. 2. Remembered the past. 3. Lifetime created here. 4. First time you asked me. None of this is explained.)* **You had me at hello of course, but then I wasn't sure. Wasn't sure if love was dispersed.** *(Dispersed? Where? Why?)* **We grappled with something like tension for a while** *How grappled?), and of course that tension was shared* *(Shared tension? Where? When? Tension over what?).* **It wasn't the cool darkness of apathy, it wasn't the dark shade of neglect, it was the misunderstood depression** *(Now it's depression. Where did that come from?).* **The empty**

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chasm, but of course, we shared it—but *how could we share the same? (How could we share the same what?)*

We didn't *(Didn't what?)* and so we grew ^{MSR} apart *(How?)*. Through aimless nights I spent back tossing endless drinks, thinking that chasm would simply remove itself. *(Trying to solve whatever problem you're talking about by drinking to excess?)* It didn't. I sought atonement, for what I wasn't sure. *(I you're not sure, then who is? Confusing.)* That first night harkened on me. *(What first night?)* With your parents, and I a foreigner. *The language was different, the feel was different, and it was a difference I needed that I admired. When those nights alone in the shower, empties water dumped on top of my contemplated head in shame, those trickles made me think. (Totally confusing.)*

Who was I that I was alone? Was independence better than nothing, was something more creative? **Come and meet my parents, you said. And I said, that I would love to before I could control those words, they just escaped. Even though I reached out for them, they could never come back.** *(This has to do with your story. Why not continue with this strand?)* How could they ever? *(Finish the thought)*

The thoughts (Vague. What thoughts?) passed through me like ink in my veins, or fluidly, like ink on the page. Then I remembered your voice. Passing, a passing sound. Back then it was only passing, because truly our time together was brief. I only had a vignette to remember, but that word “yet” seems terrible to describe something so terrific. *(You're trying to express something here. The sound of her voice is pleasurable. When? Where? Under what circumstances?)* Three years I spent already walking up and down that monstrous terrain. Jumping in friends cars to attend parties down the line, thinking that we were invisible. That

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invisible cloak was ephemeral, such was the problem. Couches called me to dance on. That backward and forward motion wasn't enough, either dancing or moving the bottle. Pouring poison into my receiving mouth waiting on the world to change.

(Billy, I'm getting tired of saying the same thing. Make a story with people, situations, conflicts, and resolutions. This is really a jumble of conflicted emotions and I'm tripping over the unclear thoughts. Try to re-read this and start at the beginning and tell a story.)

How to decipher this? That the peaking hours of that night after spending hours in contemplation about composition, we spoke to each other as though we knew each other since our lives began. Could we have? I knew your Mother before you told me of her physically fit appearance past fifty years old. I knew that she had to be a teacher and that our dreams were interlocked. I heard the voices of her students, with little money but dreams alike anyone else. I saw them too, when I worked in tandem with people I barely knew. When these groups had the capability of rearranging my whole life. There it was, the movie, scene one act one. Twenty-one years in, and yet a beginning.

You pulled us over. "Would you like a ride to your car?" Just one passage? You took me over then. Well I was with my roommate over course. I felt my skin creeping up on my forearms. Before then I had been the quiet boy. I was in the class to pass and to move on, could I do anything else? To my own, I was average. I would most likely get an A if I tried hard, so I

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heard. But would I meet the love of my life? Staring at the room across from me. Just as puzzled as I was. She didn't even speak. Her friends spoke for her and my anxiety woke me up.

The dream turned inward, there was something there had to be something. My hope was quickly spiraling down the empty stream where I had been before. I misplaced it over and over, and I saw it go. Why do you keep leaving the room? I can no longer reach for you, grope for you, or control you.

Then there came the pilfering, the suggestions. Why do you read? Where will those lines of poetry take you? My privileged body sat in contemplation watching oceanic nights. There it was, the world—and beyond that?

My feet run without my walking. I couldn't feel my face as we sat in the back of your tight car. There were water bottles everywhere while my heart was in my throat. The water bottles said drink me; the car said hold on. Everything I knew, structure, disappeared down the least painful gap where everything just floated, where everything just made sense. *(Nothing in this sentence makes sense.)*

You wanted to be a teacher? *(Good topic sentence. Stick to the topic.)* You cared about what you learned here, the knowledge that you gained? You paid for a reason. Tell me more! I could have held your sweet delicate hand where our sweat mixed together but I didn't know that then. I could have told you I loved you but I didn't feel that then.

From the purview of the mirror I only saw light, my opportunity. Our opportunity. But did I see getting old, a porch somewhere where coffee rises and novels were set. **We could read in piece over the fire at night, look at the stars above our colonial home.** Pointed tops; beautiful interior. We can finally drink this in.

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Just wait. Your eyes told me everything, that mix of blue and green: who are you? Who is perfect like this? I knew you but really I didn't. I knew you in my dreams where I prayed to a God that I half believed in that one day he would send me the person who would be my equal. Not in every way, just a balance, the fulcrum in the middle the medium that provides. I couldn't provide and my relationships only looked like fire meeting ice until that moment. In the car, we could have turned the whole world around but we simply drove on.

Three years time in the brunt of all New England offered us. Cold weather and warm, tired nights and lively nights. Binaries we couldn't resist, they seem to be part of us. Sweet friends that brought us here—and time. Of course, time. That sweet boy you knew who sat in the front of the class with his hat tilted looking at the apprehending world as if they would never accept his real self became a real self when you said those words.

Consuming a lifetime in three years. Not impossible and in fact, it became possible every time I picked up the phone. Including the first time. With a whole history of trauma a whole history of rejections: I'll text you and you text me. That ended quick. I only said few words. The only thing I could think of was not, "Hey" but an anecdote about our elderly neighbor. There she is. She walks and we walk. Yet she walks the road up and down, up and down, up and down. The movement her feet, crumbling as she walked, I thought would be a nice topic. Later we would rave about her, she was a movie. Our superstar.

But then I had only few words. I wouldn't tell you much. Then I couldn't write because how could I breathe enough for one sentence when on the other end of that digital equipment was a beautiful soul waiting to be discovered. But discovery... That doesn't hit the right note. It hits it hard but you would have to take the world's largest sledge hammer and have it collide with a material solid to just begin to understand.

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My letters, her letters, our letters.

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Summary: This story is actually the story of my recent engagement. The proposal took place in Ogunquit, Maine. My fiancée's parents had chosen this place as their destination for Memorial Day Weekend getaway for several years. The first time that I went to Ogunquit with my now fiancée our relationship was taking a sharp turn because of the requirements of Graduate School that she was struggling with. She was having a tough time balancing a relationship and finding herself and our vacation to Maine together at this point of our relationship was really what brought us together for life. This story comes days after the proposal when things are starting to finally quiet down a bit and I have had the time to write.

THIS IS NOT A STORY. IT MIGHT BE A LOVE LETTER, OR POSSIBLY SOME SORT OF VERY LONG POEM.

I COULD NOT UNDERSTAND MANY OF THE PHRASES. MUCH OF THIS READ LIKE A TRANSLATION FROM ANOTHER LANGUAGE.

Take this photograph for me, Ogunquit by the sea the place where my heart melts and the sun sings. Every time I hear its name I think, and every time I think something moves inward towards me. ?

I got down on one knee, sweating, this moment of life. Nothing but pure love, love spent over weeks and adoring love, love that never wanted to go away. Our family drank in the sunsets, for some of them it was the first time. How long did we talk about it? We thought, then we just smiled—pushing those negative tensions away. Projecting our visions in the future I remembered our past, a lifetime was already created here, the first time you asked me. You had me at hello of course, but then I wasn't sure. Wasn't sure if love was dispersed. We grappled with something like tension for a while, and of course that tension was shared. It wasn't the cool darkness of apathy, it wasn't the dark shade of neglect, it was the misunderstood depression. The empty chasm, but of course, we shared it—but how could we share the same? ? THE SAME WHAT?

We didn't and so we grew apart. Through aimless nights I spent back tossing endless drinks, thinking that chasm would simply remove itself. It didn't. I sought atonement, for what I

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Who was I that I was alone? Was independence better than nothing, was something more creative? Come and meet my parents, you said. And I said, that I would love to before I could control those words, they just escaped. Even though I reached out for them, they could never come back. How could they ever?

The thoughts passed through me like ink in my veins, or fluidly, like ink on the page. Then I remembered your voice. Passing, a passing sound. Back then it was only passing, because truly our time together was brief. I only had a vignette to remember, but that word "yet" seems terrible to describe something so terrific. Three years I spent already walking up and down that monstrous terrain. Jumping in friends cars to attend parties down the line, thinking that we were invisible. That invisible cloak was ephemeral, such was the problem. Couches called me to dance on. That backward and forward motion wasn't enough, either dancing or moving the bottle. Pouring poison into my receiving mouth waiting on the world to change.

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You pulled us over. “Would you like a ride to your car?” Just one passage? You took me over then. Well I was with my roommate over course. I felt my skin creeping up on my forearms. Before then I had been the quiet boy. I was in the class to pass and to move on, could I do anything else? To my own, I was average. I would most likely get an A if I tried hard, so I heard. But would I meet the love of my life? Staring at the room across from me. Just as puzzled as I was. She didn’t even speak. Her friends spoke for her and my anxiety woke me up.

The dream turned inward, there was something there had to be something. My hope was quickly spiraling down the empty stream where I had been before. I misplaced it over and over, and I saw it go. Why do you keep leaving the room? I can no longer reach for you, grope for you, or control you.

Then there came the pilfering, the suggestions. Why do you read? Where will those lines of poetry take you? My privileged body sat in contemplation watching oceanic nights. There it was, the world—and beyond that?

My feet run without my walking. I couldn’t feel my face as we sat in the back of your tight car. There were water bottles everywhere while my heart was in my throat. The water bottles said drink me; the car said hold on. Everything I knew, structure, disappeared down the least painful gap where everything just floated, where everything just made sense.

You wanted to be a teacher? You cared about what you learned here, the knowledge that you gained? You paid for a reason. Tell me more! I could have held your sweet delicate hand

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where our sweat mixed together but I didn't know that then. I could have told you I loved you but I didn't feel that then.

From the purview of the mirror I only saw light, my opportunity. Our opportunity. But did I see getting old, a porch somewhere where coffee rises and novels were set. We could read in piece over the fire at night, look at the stars above our colonial home. Pointed tops; beautiful interior. We can finally drink this in.

Just wait. Your eyes told me everything, that mix of blue and green: who are you? Who is perfect like this? I knew you but really I didn't. I knew you in my dreams where I prayed to a God that I half believed in that one day he would send me the person who would be my equal. Not in every way, just a balance, the fulcrum in the middle the medium that provides. I couldn't provide and my relationships only looked like fire meeting ice until that moment. In the car, we could have turned the whole world around but we simply drove on.

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Susan

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Comment [s1]: Story, or memoir?

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Comment [s2]: Ogunquit?

Comment [s3]: Think of what?

I got down on one knee, sweating, this moment of life. Nothing but pure love, love spent over weeks and adoring love, love that never wanted to go away. Our family drank in the sunsets—, for some of them, it was the first time. How long did we talk about it? We thought, then we just smiled—pushing those negative tensions away. Projecting our visions into the future, I remembered our past, a lifetime was already created here, the first time you asked me.

from what?

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Comment [s4]: Cliché

abstract- would like details on what caused the rift

We didn't and so we grew apart. ~~Through aimless nights~~ I spent back tossing tossed back endless drinks through aimless nights, thinking that chasm would simply remove itself. It didn't.

Comment [s5]: Passive-moved to later in sentence

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Comment [s6]: Why?

Who was I that I was alone? Was independence better than nothing, was something more creative? Come and meet my parents, you said. And I said, that I would love to before I could control those words, they just escaped. Even though I reached out for them, they could never come back. How could they ever?

Comment [s7]: Why isn't it okay to say that?

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✓ found
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This piece reminds me of a poem. It's quite abstract, and I don't have a good sense for who these people are, what they want out of life. It depends on what you want to get out of it. If it's more of a free-flow piece that you want, then it's fine. If you want to write a memoir or a short story, then I think you need to present this piece by piece. Include dialogue. Show us who your characters are, what they look like, where they live, how they interact, what causes them to drift apart and what brings them back together? Concrete scenes.

free flow thinking