

LA DIARIES

True stories of fun and unending failure in the city of fallen angels

Good morning, wherever you are. Welcome to stories of the embarrassing and awful, the uncomfortable and the thrilling, the drudgery, and the sex, lies, and straight-to-video panic of Los Angeles.

Call this a diary, from Latin *dies*, “day.” Or, probably from the Greek *diarrhea*, “to flow through.” That sounds more right. But what do I know — I get paid* to act, you crack that dictionary.

Want to know what it’s like to feel this town out from scratch? Here: a flow of unfiltered tales just for you. Don’t drink the tap water.

Let’s start with yesterday...

*This isn’t true.

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Call this a diary. In it are the thoughts that smack against the insides of the head when there is nothing soft to cushion them — and they make loud crashing noises that are distinctly unfun. Do they demand attention, or does the attention I give them only give them legs?

You’re not alone in this (but I am).

Diary, from Latin *dies*, day. Perhaps more apt: *diarrhea*, from Greek *diarrhein*, meaning “to flow through”. And on these days, I’ll let the thoughts flow through like a river of muck. If there is some hope for waste treatment, all the better — only by letting the toxic out can we neutralize, and iodize, and Febreeze. Or so they say.

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2/14

LA kids. A UCLA senior interning at WME. “Do you know what that is?”

My brain tripped. And came up with: “William Morris.” He congratulated me.

Our waitress.

“Do you act?” I act, sing, dance... she said. “Do you have representation?”

Something for acting, something for commercials, something for voiceovers — i’m really lucky. *Woww, that’s so amazing.* Yes I’m so lucky. She also said she was ho[ping] to get more shifts at the bar.

She turned away. And nearly as soon as I couldn’t see her fingertips — there was Ryan: those are terrible agencies.

There are two agencies that matter, WME and CAA.

I met with my friend who worked at UTA. Or so I thought. She quit in August, she told me. Ah.

— —

2/15

It’s a room you couldn’t quite call dim with three chairs that filled faster than they could empty, as a crowd built in the waiting chamber of Suite 22 on N.El Centro street in one of Hollywood’s hearts.

It’s quiet. There is that faint smell of danger that accompanies the threat of mounains of lost time, as if each one in this room was slowly killing himself, but ashamed to have others see them doing it.

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2/16

Getting audition for something... but I was about to go stay at my grandmothers. I’d been living on couches for 6 months since my girlfriend broke up with me while I was in Tajikistan and I returned home with nowhere to live. I wanted to get high with grandma more than I wanted to audition for something... unless it was really good.

I googled the casting company. CAZT. The BBB gave it an F. I drove to San Diego.

What’s a promo?

What’s a show about impressions?

—

Every day after an audition... is this how it's going to be... I'll have horchata.

It's a kind of perfect drink, that I drink faster than I ever want to... out of a kind of addiction. Acting too is an addiction. But this is one that satisfies me fully and completely when I have it, and creates the space of loss when I don't — where performing is something that follows my addict's constant desire, never fulfilled.

This is a city of permanent rejection, but not in the way you'd think. Rejection is delivered with a: "that was *exactly* what we were looking for" and no callback. Rejection is delivered with silence.

It is never so clear as the girl in the club, the girl who says, simply: no, and walks away. Except when it is the girl in the club who says no, and walks away.

It is hope battling silence — battling even the words that in any other city would seem positive, even radiant.

Every audition is not rejection — those are the successes. The casting submissions never returned — the dozens sent out daily for nothing, those are rejections. But an audition is a performance, for another human. And on a good day, they will even say those brilliant words — those words caked in truth and honesty, the words every actor should long to hear, in person, over and over. "No. Not today."

— —

2/17

Now I'm looking through casting "breakdowns" I've seen before.

I'm making an account on voices.com where the annual subscription costs 350 dollars a year. I'm trying a month at 40 bucks.

I don't know where I live.

The surfboard I left with a friend — the friend of my college professor/surf-buddy in New York — has a hole in the tail and took on water. The Duchess, as I knew her (she was an Ellington brand fish board), was no longer sea worthy without repairs.

So I took a smaller board I had hidden behind the (azalea) on my grandmother's balcony. The waves were overhead high...

Weed relieves the inhibitions that have built up, pounding me too far into my own head. The waves hit me hard enough that I can't sustain introversion — now the body goes into survival mode. There is something big, it can kill you always. Life is very simple if all you want to do is live it. Swim up.

Casting "Ticket to Hide." Synopsis: Two long time friends still a liquor store to pay a drug dealer in the process they get a winner lotto ticket but they can't cash it.

2/18

Harvard Law offers an interview. 1200 interviews for 850 spots, allegedly. A massive factory, thought the barrier for entry is phenomenally high. It's a numbers game... and today, I'm winning. But this feels like hedging all my bets. Like hedging my life. After three years in Reese Witherspoon's footsteps, if I survive, I'll have a number of pretty concrete options in front of me. Ones people kill for, die for, dream of and live with passion. Or live in misery in a cloud of "what if" and "if only". How disrespectful is it to value that choice less than the average man on the street? How horrible would it be to claim a spot in indecision from one who has had no doubts since birth?

In acting, there is no hedging. It is all on the line... always. The safety net is pulled away... and in so pulling, the sky opens up.

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I have a relatively easy writing gig for a TV show — just one episode, and maybe another to come. But I find myself doing it really slowly. because this is fixed work... and even though I'm not getting paid by the hour — and every hour I work means my rate is less — I'm afraid to lose that bit of stability. Once I'm done, I'll no longer be on the job at all — I'll just be seeking... seeking... seeking...

Feb 22

A bag of oranges from my mother — giant, split into two. Leaving Subway, I hear the man sitting outside ask for change. I have oranges, I say, and offer him all of them. “If you don’t need them?” he says. And I say something like, “Please,” and he says “thanks,” and I say — this I remember: “Cheers, dude.”

Well, it certainly looks stupid set in type. But out loud it’s like an empty vessel for a young man’s feelings: said with a smile, it’s a smile; said with a back turned, it’s a dismissal. Because we say “cheers” in this country now. (Don’t we?) And everyone is a dude, at least in the eyes of a beardless man.

And in that moment where those who have forgotten the feeling of need hand the things they don’t really want to someone who does — in that constipated need to release guilt: a sadness. There is nothing so clearly the mark of excess than food wasted, so it must be given away — it must! But then, the act of giving far outweighs the value found in the identity of the receiver/receptacle, so long as it can be explained *for the best*. And so, in giving, we pretend we do it out of the benefit to another, when it is so much more for ourselves — we have sacrificed nothing but a weight on our own mind.

Because I said it with a smile, and then I turned and walked away — because that’s what made sense then. And he saw my eyes and heard me and saw the oranges and my back, and what was he thinking? Are there things he knows about me now? For somehow I feel his guesses would ring truer than mine ever could about him.

Reconnecting with an old humor newspaper buddy. Son of famous actor. I was really interested to see him again. And to chill — but was it to be closer to the Elite? Was there guilt here too?

I reached out to the college ex-friend who was once my roommate, before we split mid-year and I lived in a double over Broadway, perhaps the greatest apartment I'll ever have. We had found different groups of friends, and different ways of connecting with the world. And so that was it.

In the combination of isolation and gladhanding that is LA. Here in the West, old ties are quickly mended with Manhattans. Liquor is not always the strongest glue, though.

Depression. Deep. Deep.

Read about the people that made it to SNL, or the people experienced in Improv who made that work. Generally it seems to have been people who were driven to do that at all costs, or who were upset with their life as it was, or bored, or lost, or restless, and discovered Improv as if it had never existed. Love at first sight because it was really a first sighting.

I never admitted that that was what I wanted for myself. That that seemed to combine as many things as I could think to combine. I almost never spoke it outloud, just like I never mentioned getting an interview for something that wasn't a job. I should say — I never wanted to talk about having a bird in the hand until it was really there, even if it had flown from the bush, or it was preparing to alight on my arm... I wanted to be sure. Not to jinx it.

And I never told anyone, and I lied to myself that it was still possible.
And I did nothing comparable, and I sought solace in the moments
where I could tell myself everything I was doing in the moment was fine.
And then I found love — and that made it so much easier, so much of
the time, to tell myself I was on an okay track forever.

Feb 24

Video auditions — disconnecting you from ever actually performing for anyone. The thrill of instant rejection — even that, withdrawn.

not to mention the scillions more people competing for those invisible spots.

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My cousin had come in from Huntington Beach to the rainbow-crosswalked streets of We(st)Ho(llywood). In a fit of panic months earlier, when the Dear John letter from the love of my (of three years) found me in Tajikistan, and the apartment that waited for me when I returned from the backwaters of Central Asia vanished, and just when the uncertainty of the writer/journalist's life had reached its boiling and freezing points all at once, I applied to doctoral programs and law schools.

In the morning after this night at Fiesta Cantina, I'd have my final interview with one of those places* that, if I had the chance, I'd be insane not to go. And I'd go insane if I did.

By this point, the odds were about two-to-one in favor of the interviewees. But, as if this were a horse race where worse odds mean greater potential, I pledged to tip the scales against me. The plan: I'd show up on Skype more hungover than any bright-eyed student who'd ever aspired to pass the bar.

"I heard snoring in the bathroom," my roommate said to me in the morning. Somewhere in the small hours, he peed outside

while I hugged the toilet. He heard me later, vomiting daintily on myself, on his \$3000 California King.

I remembered feeling comforted as this tall ex-model whose perfectly feng gayed apartment was half-mine for the night for a small Airbnb fortune towed my chest off while I half-slept, too far gone to feel the slightest bit ill.

And I remembered that deliberate choice to get as drunk as possible: Jack and ginger, and a goblet-full of strawberry margarita that appeared in my hand. A shot of patron and another Jack and ginger. Another, and another. A very dirty martini. The memory of an olive as if it were a meal. Downing cold leftover mac-and-cheese in the fridge. The stunning triple-layered chocolate cupcakes left on the top shelf by my host (an ex-chef, too).

Normally, a hangover hits an hour after I wake up, just long enough to construct a feeling of complete invincibility — and smash it. My phone dead, it could have been easy to miss my appointment at twenty-past-eleven. But I woke up, under the thinnest layer of once-eaten macaroni, at 10:20 sharp.

It went fine. And then began one of the weirdest days ever...

*Hint: Starts with “H-A-R-V-A-R-D.” Rhymes with “Harvard.”

*Hint: starts with H-A-R. Rhymes with Harvard.

Cousin comes in. Deliberate choice to get as drunk as possible — jack and ginger, strawberry margarita handed to me, shot of patron, another jaxk and ginger. another. another. a very dirty martini. olives aren't food.

mac and cheese cold in the fridge.

“i heard snoring in the bathroom.”

he peed outside, but heard me later, vomiting daintily on myself, on his \$3000 california king.

he toweled my chest off as I half-slept, too far gone to feel sick.

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my phone dead, it would have been easy to miss the 11:20 harvard law interview, even on skype.

but i woke up, at 10:20.

sabotage?

A guy's trivia:

Did You Know?

Trivia: He is the son of the late Laurie Gilbert Cole of Beverly Hills, California and Ross S. Gilbert and his wife Mary K. Gilbert.

—

I don't know what happened to the hours between noon and three, when I had an audition at 5930 Franklin Street.

This tends to happen here. Too many competing dreams clog the pipes, and I end up absolutely still, like the knot between a horde of very evenly matched tug-of-war teams. Only those fixed appointments that promise near-instant rejection can get me to put shoes on.

I told "Jean" I'd noodle something for her on ukelele, which I played poorly, for myself, at airport gates and moments of distraction. She was casting musicians for something, and I figured any exposure was good exposure, and no one in this town knew I couldn't sing yet.

I saw the Upright Citizen's Brigade theater, 5919 Franklin, and crossed the street. 5926... 5928... Wait...

The numbers 5930 were written in bronze on a black plaque on an iron fence that guarded an imposing white supermansion with a sign that made it all very clear: this was the Celebrity Center for the Church of Scientology.

"Do you like our castle?" said the sound guy, as he whisked me to the basement, past the converted stables.

And I played f
I've heard they offer a half-decent brunch.

auditoir, turns out its in scientology building
stay for tour
the famous E-meter, with two dials on the left, and a jumpy little speedometer on the right. One of the dials calibrates bullshit, the other calibrates total bullshit.

"Think about someone."
The needle flew to the right.
"Who's that?"
"I haven't started thinking yet."
"Oh."
Calibrate. Calibrate Calibrate.
"Now who's that? That's really strong."
"My grandma."
"Wow. And you were raised by your grandma?"
"No."
"Did she die?"

"No."

"Oh."

"Yeah."

Look, I could have said. Therapy is great. Especially if you're not in the habit of digging through the attic of your own thoughts. But I live in that attic. Baby girl, you gonna have to go a lot deeper than that.

In the video, a man is cured from gangrene and avoids amputation because it's

This is like an asthmatic refusing to go to the doctor because in the 1940s doctors were allowed to smoke indoors. This is like my uncle Saul trying to rope off the Pyramids of Giza for him and his family only because, well, "we built them, didn't we?"

find out stuff
ex calls

but girl sees me, goes — i had no idea. says her band needs a ukelele player.

stopped for parking
i promise im getting milk
come back out and lift the milk to her triumphantly
she gives a big thumbs up
we bond
i think

driving back past my brothers place
post-audition horchata

nearly car accident

drinks

more jack and ginger
just like feb 26th started

bigfoot bar — drinking "sasquatches" with mr actor's son. our
breakups were identical.
the man wants to sort his heart out, and can't before he moves on.

the girl can't any path purely if her heart is occupied. And so — in this time of finding ourselves, the boy needs love, and the girl can't carry it. Two sides of the same fault: a weakness of self, one too easily pushed over, another too weak to stand up.

—

hair cut in the apartment —
had sex with anderson cooper, knew his secret "so to speak" long
before it "came out"

feb 27:

email from parents:

"We are still exhausted and shopped for 5 boxes of groceries yesterday. -- left one in store- had to go back today 1hr trip each way back to town!

It's ok-- neither dad nor I too bright. Sorry for the genes!"

moved into apartment, wired 3 months advanced rent. no contract.
whoops.

found levantine center.

long talks about other people he's had problems with.

as soon as i told him the wire went through, he mentioned the things I'd been doing that were bothersome. the noises I'd made the night before. As soon as the chickens went away to roost, the Roomates Eggshells were thrown upon the floor.

Did 15 shitty voiceover auditions for things.

FEB 28/EARLIER INTRO

The Unforgotten

I entered the city without knowing where bed would be, over the 410 and through Saturday morning traffic from grandmother's house to an audition for an unpaid short film that tempted legitimacy. (The director's last short was listed on IMDB.)

In the casting abattoir, we signed up on iPads on the walls outside dead silent studios — 40 names in front of mine, sign-up times reaching back an hour. Of course, and even us novices knew this, the appointment time we were given was about as useful as a lobster trap at a bar mitzvah.

A block of twenty folding chairs held most of us silently. Others milled about with fluid movements that seemed to say: "I'm spending my time exactly as I want to." I wondered if they could possibly mean it.

A child actress, peppy and bubbling, flew into a seat nearby. "I'm sorry, did I hit you?" she said to a blond woman at her side. "I thought you were my mother."

If we did it right, we would lose ourselves completely. But as long as I remembered who I was, I was lost.

In Studio 8, they casted for "Why Aren't You Watching the Children?"

There was a sense of support like a group of methadone addicts. Meth addicts steeped in vicious competition. Like only one of us could get clean. Or: only one could get his fix.

Tara, the Casting Director, emerged from my studio, Studio 2.

"Next is... was that Bradley?"

"Yes," said one of the chairs quickly, in a voice that had been waiting for an attentive hour, somewhere in that swampy ground between politeness and impatience.

"Oh, Josh! You're up." Josh is friends with Tara. Most of us should go home now.

But we don't. Because we're here. Because here is where we wanted to come and because afterwards doesn't exist.

I do this because in every moment of an audition, I really can live as if it's my last. Or — and maybe this is it — as if it's at the end of something. *Lastness* has so

much baggage of its own, so much pressure and finality, but ends are just nice little boundaries that keep this whole mess in check.

The audition is for the audition only, lived and forgotten. And all in the same breath, it looks forward with suspended hope: a hope with no fear of failure, because the failure is already accepted as the absolute law of this unholy ecosystem.

I know if I could apply that logic elsewhere, I'd really be on to something. The doing is for the doing. Living in the moment, or something...

But then the world presses in again, and I live where? And that drink costs what? And why did I turn down law school?

I felt a familiar chill: I was on deck, and all the lines felt fuzzy in my head. God, these bastards next to me were good looking.

And when I caught my reflection, I didn't see someone who needed this. I saw someone developing an addiction, and I could hear the others pleading: *Get out! While you still can!* I was old enough to know better than to cultivate new dependencies. I was that 25 year-old working on a smoking habit to impress French girls. And yet, my feet pulled me steadily, silently, into studio 2.

"He doesn't have headshots," Tara said to the Writer-Director.

I slated. That is, I said my name directly to the camera like I was narrating a mugshot. Then everything disappeared.

With one severe look from the dark-eyed boss, I forgot the exact shape of her words and began to speak mine.

As my whole reason for being there collapsed, I felt a hit of the fickle drug. It could be like a flood of morphine or a jolt of adrenaline, a chill or a flash of heat. I was gone, and then I came back.

"We've got your business card," the Writer-Director said.

"Thanks for being patient," said Tara, as she brushed me out the door.

And this is what I came up the coast for. Three hours drive to be one business card poorer without a home. But it's completely over. It got to end like nothing else does. And tomorrow is still a fantasy.

—

There is wonderful freedom in the acceptance of certain failure. But since absolute failure is a concept that we are not capable of digesting, we automatically reframe this ridiculous tradition into something governed by a kind of logic: When we Take that logic -- all for its own sake -- and apply to other things, it can be really healthy.

Next is... Was that Bradley?

"Yes," says a waiting Dan, in that swampy ground between politeness and obvious impatience.

"Oh, Josh!"

Josh is friends with Tara, the casting director. Most of us should go home now.

But we don't. Because we're here. Because here is where we wanted to come and because afterwards doesn't exist.

We do this because every day there is an audition you actually Do live as if its your last. Freedom. The freedom in the acceptance of certain failure. But since certain failure is a concept that we are not capable of digesting, we automatically reframe this ridiculous I practice into something governed by a kind of logic.

When we Take that logic -- all for its own sake -- and apply to other things, it can be really healthy.

But then the world presses in again, and we live where? And that drink costs what? And why did I turn down law school?

Feeling of being. Next and not knowing the lines.

And with one severe look from the dark-eyes director, I forgot what they were. A train wreck.

"He doesnt have headshots."

"We've got your business card."

"Thanks for being. Patient."

And this is what I came up the coast for. 3 hours drive to be without a home and five minutes of regret. But it's over. Tomorrow is a fantasy.

march 1

There's a difference in personality. Two types: people that moved here from nowhere that anyone heard of to follow dreams and people that came out of expensive schools learning expensive things that don't pay for themselves and as a way of making that money worsteds make jokes about how useless it was so that It isn't quite useless. The reason we make those jokes the reason we have to is because we haven't actually got over anything

At times I find myself using that same trick just to see if it works so I can go to Waze, but when you're asked if you've actually been thinking about the character my assumption is that directors actually would like to think that you out. And so sometimes I go over the top, I say things like well I really enjoy that we get to explore a world of the complete metaphor in this case.

March 2

Going to the addition of the rain for some reason had trouble learning four sets of lines out of one scene for the two characters instead of the other scene but going to the trouble of printing the side of the Kinko's though I haven't really looked at them and when I took them out I was holding four of only five pages.

When we got to the part of the scene I didn't know what to say

Should cancel the director on the way out and he said the first time ever heard of this "ive sen your stuff online"

I asked him where he was from. And he said India. And I said where? And he said hyderabad. And then he said "and you're from Nepal?" And I said well no I've just acted apart playing a role from Nepal.

I'm from Philadelphia. it's... The Nepal of the East Coast

If you answer to the demands of a 20 ur old, does that make you 19?

>

> Nonstop barrage of cSting "breakdowns"

> Called that because they have the potential to bring them about with every word

>

>>

>> The slow lane finds you in line with Rolls-Royce is in the fast lane all the Kia's racing to get somewhere, people still do things to prove, people still with dreams unmet

pulled over by cops 14 yards after leaving frine din santa barbara.

That's comittable!

March 5:

What the fuck is the point.

Stepping out of the arbitrary by doing something that calls attention to the arbitrariness — I could do anything, be anyone, so I'll do a job that trades on that alone: the idea that I am being anyone, and interacting not at all with the world on its level.

But why? If we could accept just doing something for its own reasons — anything — we'd escape from the arbitrary. Because we'd be the arbiter. And for fuck's sake: let's just make a ruling.

VIPs at Film screening. "Wow, a producer's assistant's wife!" Look Morty, we're one of dee elite now!

March 3:

Me: "Busy, man."

Roomie: "That's a good thing."

That's how it is in LA — business is thought to be great, because business means energy, and energy is how it gets done. Having energy is considered to correlate with success, which it does, maybe, but how much is affected by so many other variables. All the busyness is performed on spec. All the busyness turns into forgotten afternoons, datebooks filled and filed into nothing.

As someone distinctly horrible at multitasking: I've thought of hiring an intern with the zero money I'm earning. I bought a whiteboard instead.

There's a tiny influx from a freelance writing gig for a production company for whom I made my one TV appearance. Without them, I'd have no experience to speak of in the industry — and here I am, pretending to absolutely everyone I meet that I have tons. That is — unless I want to develop an honest relationship with them, and I don't want it all to be predicated on bullshit. And in a new city, in the isolation of the metropolis, that's a big *unless*.

On the phone with a producer for whom I'm writing a dumbed down show about "superhumans". It's going to be translated — so...

He mentioned the word: "facilitates". "Take it easy," he said.

March 4:

Wake up after 4 hours sleep — it's 9. Snooze til 10. Wait — I need the sides for the audition.

Yesterday I marked them on the computer, it was a confusing scene — multiple characters and tons of blocking, and during a game of ping pong, too (which I played decently, so I felt responsible, as if my pride were on the line).

I had 63 minutes. I checked the address: it was 19 minutes away. Shit, I thought it was closer. I needed to find a printer. I googled print shops, hoping one was closer than the Kinko's that wasn't quite on the way. I called one, but, for the life of me — I couldn't convey to them that I needed to only print 3 pages of a script, just text on regular paper, preferably in color. "So copies?" *Well no, I have them on a flash disk.* "So photos, then?" No no, just three pages of a script. "So how many pages?" *Just three.* "It's a dollar per unit." *A dollar per page?* "You only have one script yes?" *Umm...*

Somehow we spiraled into rather contentious nonsense. I kept saying things like "normal printing" "should-be-able-to-do-this-at-home printing" "regular printing". "Scripts aren't in color," the man said. *Well, I added some markings that would be much clearer in color,* I said. Asking myself, why on earth do I have to explain this. Angrily, he said, "can you hold on?"

"Yes," I said.

I didn't.

I loaded the files onto a flash disk as per Kinko's do-everything-your-damn-self policy. I converted the files to jpegs as they demanded, their machines unable to read files of any kind.

I went. Twenty-five minutes left, and I was eleven minutes away — not including parking in whatever neighborhood it was. The file was readable. It printed. One page.

I saw that the jpeg file was only one page of the three. I ran to the computer in the car, brought it into the store and plugged in the drive, waiting for its lugubrious cogs to turn and to save the individual files as jpegs, just as I had done with my one success page. Eighteen minutes til my audition slot. The copier screen registered the drive. The pages... could not be read.

There was nothing for it. No time to ask the Kinko's staff for assistance, which, in my four LA trips to Kinko's this week has resulted in nothing, or bitterness, or a dull melancholy.

I took pictures of my computer screen on my phone, complete with my markings, determined to read them in tiny print for the audition.

I raced to the address, found parking nearby, and hustled into the office. I signed in, wrote my name, the name of my morning character, my slot; 11:10, and the time now — 11:10.

A copy of the sides, highlighted clearly, sat on the table.

Josh emerged instantly from Studio 1: "Adam?"

—

In something like six minutes, I was back on the street.

Huge frowns from the people that honk when you don't move when they pull alongside you at the next traffic light. They make that face that's like: *that's just what I thought you'd look like.*

—

A front-ended car sat snub-nosed in the center of the intersection with tow-trucks flashing around. For a moment, I ignored the noises my phone was making.

—

Got into Columbia Law

MARCH 6:

Tell you the truth:

Modeling stories:

“you’re too good looking”

“you distract from the clothes — they’ll be looking at you”

—

I was blown away.

But im such a dude, I could give a fuck about flowers.

One thing led to another. As attractive as this person is, I’m just not interested.

Gave it up too quick.

LA is defined by groucher marx place.

—————

Have moroccan tea at a cafe... tastes like the memories of my girlfriend, in a time when we were only ourselves — a relation to each other and free of the entire world.

I tasted the mint and I nearly burst into tears. My heart sank and my eyes swelled before I knew that taste... before the sugar, in its sweetness, mocked me with all the sweetness lost.

MARCH 7

Feel that familiar feeling of weight resting on me in the morning. If a night was crazy enough, maybe in my sleep i[d hve forgotten theree was someone else here, someone to drape her leg over me and hold me down to earth.

i look back over my shoulder. It was my laptop, resting on my hip. cold, smooth.

—

Type anything into gmail: gmail suggests my ex. Any letter: did you mean her?

—

Why did I not just let all the dreams (those dreams I know are caked in idealism — that aren't real) die when they should hvae. Before I lost her? Is it on her for bailing — or on me: is it really *that insane* that I wanted to gamble more with my life, to not take the simple route laid outu for me?

—

Get into Penn Law. My hometown. I wonder if she can hear the heaviness over the phone.

MARCH 8

Total wasting of days. Time disappearing — can't stop it. Can't do anything.

Go to audition. People sitting in the hall. I know I didn't do my best.

A kiss — do I kiss her? fake it? what do I...

she's supposed to let it linger...in the script. before she pushes me back.

She pushes me back instantly... with force. Is this acting? Is it something else?

Good thing the scene is almost over...

And I go back to acting my way through real life. With no one to act against, though, it feels like a total; waste.

—

Arabic cafe.

Indian vegetarian place.

MARCH 10

And when my arms were too tired I drifted out beyond where the waves would break to float on my back and look up at the moon.

Finally, I'd turn away from the light on the horizon, and ride the black waves in.

MARCH 14

Waiting out, the last in the water.

Just a pale orange left, the waves mere silhouettes against a freckled sky — those clouds hanging there like kindly spaceships.

Real fear: my heart was racing. The sky holds the light still over the horizon, but back towards the rocks on shore, it was nearly black. When I began to paddle, I saw the waves gather up the water below me like covers on a dirty bed, and it left black, black, too dark to see.

But the moon picked out floating gobs of kelp that might have been rocks, and I shouted to the last one left. “Gonna be fun getting back, huh?”

“It’ll be a lot of feeling,” he said. “At least there’s the moon.”

And then he caught one in, and left me alone in the darkening sea.

So: fear and delight. I was alone, invincible, and so, so fragile. This was not a place where others’ thoughts were relevant — there were no others. But at any moment — now even the waves toward the light were nearly invisible — I could see myself shattered against the reef.

I crumpled when she left because I saw this: [[the fantasy glue with which I guarded my ego was undone.]] I always wanted to believe that if someone knew me truly, then they could love me as much as I could love them — if I was in love, and I was known... if I did my best, that is... it would work.

And it did — until it didn’t.

And not only is the last lock on the safe that guards my ego shattered, but the insides are messed with too.

She left something I shouldn’t have been, something that was truly me in that moment. She knew me in that small moment, but she did not know what I would be.

The waves began to crash farther out, a big set, lumbering forth with a white froth on the black glass. I duck dove under a few. And when I looked back I could hardly see the shore, I felt my feet cold without booties. A wave came breaking too fast, but it had shape. It wasn’t perfect, but it had potential — I turned, it bucked until I was through to its face. I couldn’t see the wave much beyond my feet, but somehow it continued to carry me — my legs in black, just white feet and the board against black glass, all the way in.

MARCH 12/13

The sun rose over the (____) hills and what might have been the San Diego State surf team.

The smell of eggs cooked on a greasy griddle at low heat... strong. A dolphin.

—

as I paddled out west, The sun rose just over the hill, from that low angle acting as if it was trying to peek up my skirt.

MARCH 16

RYAN — beach cop

No alcohol, then law enforcement threat, then “stay out of the water”.
Feet in the water, not quite up to my ankles when the waves came in. My soles
damp and my soul broken.
Would I drown in this wet-footed hellscape?

MARCH 18

Before I fell asleep, I tried to plan my coup against the law school. Not many overprivileged fuckfaces take the time, after the offer of an interview, to accept without any intention of ever matriculating. But I would — and I'd use that chance to do something silly.

I didn't know what.

I'd talk in an Indian accent the whole time. And if they asked where I was from, I'd just say "Philadelphia."

I'd do the whole thing from bed, and tell them I'd just broken a leg.

I'd scream when a snake appeared in my Los Angeles apartment, and panic as it slithered up the covers.

I'd tell nothing but lies, as an exercise — responding to every question with sentences built of no true pieces.

And then I saw in the email: this interview may not be audio or video recorded.

So what was the point? This pure art for myself only? This creation for no one?

I silenced the alarm at 7:30 two hours before I needed to answer the skype call. I waited for the next alarm. I woke before it ever came: frantically I looked for my phone. It was 9:50, the minute the interview would have ended.

I wrote an email: **"My sincerest apologies for failing to receive the Skype call at my scheduled appointment time. The honest truth: in my travel-addled brain, I acted on the unflinching assumption that Central time was an hour different from Pacific, and marked my calendar with the self assurance of a lawyer and the research skills of a small goat. "**

And that was all.

I went to the cafe to drink Moroccan tea and struggle with a project that had already pushed my heart out of it — listening to Armenian oud in heavy headphones while the day asked for nothing from me.

Why am I writing this to you? (It's me, isn't it.) Who are you anyway?

I waited in the casting anteroom before I met the girl is fuxked in china while my friends dad's rode horses epically on the tv in the corner.

All of the nuances that came out that hit some nerve in the car. None of that,

"And scene" he said, surprised.
But it wasn't enough to ask me to so it again.

Cool cool! And thT was it,

Another ticket at night
20 yr old kept out of the bar

MARCH 19

It's funny: this girl seems to see the best in me. I'm older, powerful, experienced, my fingers sticky with so many pies. And she has faith — in me. These things I am close to, I could be in, she thinks. She thinks I will succeed.

And I see my whole last lost love like this, though I didn't see it then. She believed I would be something I would not become, and she could not bear the dissonance when the present, not braking, crashed into the future. It's so hard to see that someone does not see you as you see yourself, that they don't know the doubts you hold — for good reasons and bad, real and fabricated — about the successes they feel will come.

Every day more and more I think about relaxing. What is the price we pay in future happiness for letting ourselves be happy right now?

Will I survive if I move to a foreign land, where life is cheap and friendship is free — where I can sit and type things like this until some thoughts are clear, or until others need never be thought again?

Can I take an intermission, I'd never given myself? Or do I only feel I want the pauses when I am in motion?

MARCH 24

I want to act because an actor gets to live a multiple lives, or a life as more than one thing. And yet, zooming back — in our world, an actor *is* one thing.

The thing about a break-up: the sense of progress of one thing moving forward into some kind of understanding: it's shattered. I'm starting over. And I'm starting over while my team moves forward. It's being traded from the roster the season before your side goes to the world series. And even if they don't go, you know you might have gone... together.

And so you start over: a child. But you're not a child anymore. She *let* you be one because you knew you were still moving forward. There was something linear, tilted up. And you're not a child now: but you have none of the excuses you once did.

"The next station is New York, New York. New York, New York City everybody."

The place New York, New York has become an entity all its own.

MARCH 25

Harlem rising just before dawn. A store with gray windows looking out onto the street, looking past its expiration date: LAZARUS, in rainbow block letters that might once have lit in neon. Perhaps they do still.

Girls.

I'm thinking about girls.

My hands are freezing. So much so that when I put them under hot water later, they swell as if they might burst.

The ex. I think I'm actually going to see her this week. The first time in I don't know how many months. August is an interval that doesn't click into some number of months in my head immediately. I like it that way. I know it has been more than half a year, though.

Same city, she walked out of the door — and was gone forever. Whoever I see this week, it won't be us.

The girl from last night — the undecided academic, visiting this grad school now. I wanted her so badly last night. I want her this morning too, but it's different. More flirting than is couth for the ivy league — eye fucking so hard we might have knocked the plates off the banquet tables in the Italian restaurant. She's from Germany.

And the girl in France — who I would have seen with different eyes had it been three months later and I'd been single. Moroccan and French and beautiful and lovely and sweet by email.

And the girl from China. From Idaho, that is — but who found me in Shanghai, heartbroken and reckless, buying mopeds and crashing them and having them stolen or confiscated by the police. That is: two of them. And she's in California now, where I am mostly, somewhere between old friend and new, trustworthy only because I know not to trust her — not to give her any of myself that it is not worth the effort simply to give.

And the girl from New York. From Seattle, I think — but we met in college in the pretend-high-society she radiated with and I felt uncomfortable in. Once we slobbered over each other half naked on the floor of her room in this Riverside mansion — or it once was — until we stopped, and I learned she had something

like a boyfriend. She sent a message by Facebook last week, following something that followed that night: “embarrassing,” she said. I didn’t think so.

Five women. It seems my mind has room for five. I’m in love with them all, in such different ways. I hate one, too, and I can imagine dating one — only one. I have plans to see four of them, and I can’t wait to see three. They say the loneliest number is two.

I feel like I’m in elementary school, gleaning some kind of delight just from the fantasy of a perfect girl I hardly know. But then I’d imagine the wonders of the things I’d never experienced. What is left now? It’s just this: until the knots are de-knotted and are rid of each other

MARCH 27

Wow. A lot has happened since what just happened.

The ex can't handle the tension between her desires and my actions. That tore me apart for the better part of a year (the very very worst part) as i tried to recalibrate my brain and the logic of love I thought I knew to what I was seeing and feeling and what I had to plan around now.

And now she writes "do you think you'll come back to new york?" and "you're acting weird towards me" — as if the boyfriend dumped by email 9,000 miles away, after months of rejected emails and no responses, after that pitiful fuck who made his bed of misery and lay in it for 200 days — as if he would not act differently?

It's like the arsonist who sets his house alight and then wonders why it's burning.

—

Sex with the German girl was both amazing and terrible — she looked incredible naked, and she moved with lithe ambition. and the condom broke, and she said something about a "stupid monogamous relationship" (she was tight with guilt and anxiety, she suggested, and... but that doesn't account for anything.)

and she said she had to run away, and i pulled her back into bed. and she kept coming back, and staying, and moving. and in the small hours of the morning, after a few minutes of sleeping fully clothed in my arms, she got up and left, and kissed me as I watched her, chuckling and shaking my head.

and now: the girl from school. funny — i was supposed to see her tonight, and she too confessed to having a boyfriend while laying naked under me. am i the perfect level of dangerous for sheltered racists? that exotic rogue — a dark Jew? Like punishing Daddy with the black boyfriend — something reckless and scary and exciting and weird and... no, just too different. Something you just needed to try, like the weekly flavour of frozen yoghurt.

Well that makes me feel like nothing.

Especially when even that seems too hard. I'll decide where to get drinks in this city i've left for four years. I'll juggle your ambiguity while you juggle mine. Maybe we'll see each other, and maybe then we'll know where we stand. Probably not.

MARCH 28

Liquor before beer, you're in the clear. Liquor before chicken and rice, you rollin' dem dice.

Now: I feel mys tomach has been ripped apart by the red sauce.

I realize of the girls i've thought about this week, i think of ivo

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namds begin with K
middle of the alphabet but stands out still
three of the girls i've been thinking about;
then one L, and one M.

Later in the day — texts with the girl in LA, the girl in NY, the ex. // the girl in LA wonders if I can fly back earlier; but when I get there, she'll be gone. in New York, she says if I'm sick still tomorrow, she'll bring me things. Sweet. The ex says she's been crying inexplicably at work — it's the first honest, truthful, raw and real thing she's said to me in nearly a year. And it's not inexplicable at all. She offers to bring me something, too, as she's leaving work.

And here I sit, tired, sick, alone. The way she left me three seasons ago, on this very couch, in this very city.

MARCH 29

We've never believed that anyone who's as young as we see our selves could be into us. And yet, when we are 20, though we still feel an imposter's 16, to the 18 year olds, we look exactly what we are. How long does it take us to recognize our appearance>?

go to greek girl's birthday
she sits with us for a while, is touchy, meets the table: a new friend we met in line, a girl i've hooked up with but know not incredibly well; a guy (who I know) trying to hookup with aforementioned girl

douchebag from school comes, drunk from a concert

confesses love for the girl who came to hang with me, but who invited him turns rapey.
she texts me; *help* - from across the table.

she sends him home.

the birthday girl sits: tells me, this doesn't count as being at her party. next time i'm in town don't call. it was nice knowing me, she says. i look at her, half grinning but knowing what the answer will be: are you... really saying these as words right now?

she flutters away.

later she comes back, tries to grab me by the hand to dance. my hand slips from hers, and i jerk like a marionnette with broken strings.

i apologize for being melodramatic, she says in one breath.

i don't think we should be friends, she says in the next.

i feel nothing. but a faint melancholy breeze in that hatred directed at me — and the explorer's delight in witnessing someone attempt to disguise something vaguely rude, if not normal, if not trivial, as justification for the end of a seven-year friendship. how bizarre. how wonderful that there are still things so bizarre. how wonderful to know that i still haven't seen it all.

A text from my ex comes in: "Are you in love with someone else?" I didn't invite her to drinks tonight. She feels that's why.

the Line Friend and I talk. he buys shots. he leaves. the girl and i wander to the photo booth where we kiss until a line of people shout us angrily and pulls back the curtain. it makes sense that they are angry — but as if we were petulant

children, their anger freezes us in place. how could so many people want to use a photo booth?

she says: “you’re smart, and good looking, and interesting...” I start to say thank you. “All the makings of a douchebag.”
I swallow.

I say something like, well you just can’t win these days.
And she continues — and makes it sound as if I’ve done something terribly wrong by not yet doing something terribly wrong. She leaves.
“You’re wonderful,” she texts me from the street not far away.

I go home to an email from my girlfriend: She loves me, she says. She knows what she wants now. Now that her job is hard and the boys from school are gone from fawning over her, and the real chill of the concrete jungle weighs heavy on rainy march afternoons. Or some shit. She speaks with anger in her voice when she calls the next day. But for me:

For me, the next day is full of promise: of adventures planned. Plans laid. Plans to lay laid, and long talks with old friends. I feel bound to the spot where her heart and mine once lay in the wide open — and I feel free, too, as if there is nothing that could ever hurt mine again.

MARCH 30

The plane (so much happened today, too, but we'll have to get back there. remind me later):

Actually, while I'm thinking aboutu her: do you think it's ever possible to recover the passion of the first love? Can we just ... inject some new relationship between older people with that fiery passion that came with idealistic kid-ness, and the sense that nothing else was important (because it wasn't yet)? (Or wasn't it yet... or is it ever?)

If it can be fixed — are we always best in the space of that first love... where we are known. Where it can be as it always was. Where... where...

Anyway:

I'm on the plane, and the overhead begins leaking on me. It's dripping not a lot, but it doesn't stop, and before long my pants are soaked in a large spot on my upper left thigh.

The plane has only just taken off, so I know when I stand I'm going to be scolderd. And I'm embarassed that I'm being peed on by someone's suitcase. I don't want to be noticed.

I see the flight attendants are buckled into their seats facing the opposite way. I stand up and surf the turbulence as I feel under my wet backback, a camera about to face the flood, dripping. I knew just before I opened the overhead: it was my fault. I had a waterbottle from one of these schools clipped to my bag, and it still had an ounce of water in it. I took the bottle out and stashed it under my chair. I asked the flight attendants for napkins —

"My overhead is just leaking on me... any napkins?" I said.

"What's in there?"

"I dunno."

I couldn't tell them. Only my stuff had gotten wet anyway. I just stood back while they pointed the flashlight into the compartment, looked at the pool I had mostly dreid up with napkins.

"Doesn't seem like anythign else is wet in there," the guy said, stumped.

"Hmm," I said.

"People sometimes leave open sodas in there," the other attendant said.

"No kidding," I said.

"Drinks are on us," said the other guy.

And he brought me a glass of whiskey. Or rather, a plastic cup. And a G&T for my seatmate who I didn't want to feel left out*. And when the snacks for purchase came on the cart of free-only-for-some-limited-number-of-years-to-come drinks, I became the owner of a very free cheese plate.

I didn't answer honestly when they inspected the leak because deep down I was conniving. And more shallowly, I was embarrassed. Or the other way around.

*Left Out: so, why would I write this in a diary, that *I didn't want him to feel left out*? He wasn't dampened by the leaky overhead, but I figured when free drinks came for 22 C, they might as well go for 22 B and A, too. I didn't want to be the only kid in the park with roller blades. Am I writing this down because I want credit? Am I guilty I didn't get him a plate of decent, if bland, cheeses and half decent grapes? Am I defending my choices for posterity? And to whom?

April 14

I guess the thing is that I'd rather believe someones words if they suggest something better than their actions, and their actions if they connote something better than their words. Im a pessimistic optimist — I find the best things that could ever happen, and I want them too, and I don't believe they will. But if they might, then I try and argue myself to hold out hope in the unlikely. And I win that argument for most of my life — to the point where most of the time I'm acting in a way that suggests I believe the very unlikely is possible (sitting at home to become a writer, doing impractical things). The trouble is — any moment you lose that argument (that you *don't* believe the best things aren't going to happen, and you've been acting otherwise this *whole time*) — you are crushed.

I'm crushed. I knew again that she was full of it. And I told her so. And I saw it. And the words told me yes yes yes (or I should say — the tone they were delivered in; the words as words themselves hinted of all that was wrong, too). And her actions in the context of our lives together and the timing of everything else — this told me no. No it's not real, it's not.

But I believe. I want to have faith in people, that they'll do what I would want myself to do. And I put myself fully out there again, act in ways that are 100% honest so that I can encourage her to be. Ok, maybe not 100%, but without deliberately hiding something, or faking my emotional state.

And anyways, then I get fucked.

—

It's like I'm a flasher. I run around trying to show people my soul — as if that will protect me. As if that's what I need to do.

APRIL 30

Monia wearing the same shirt (soft purple, a breast pocket that couldn't and wouldn't hold anything) my ex used to wear.

Jordan the Moroccan Jew in the Levantine Cultural Center cafe that was hardly a cafe anymore, brings arak on ice when I come in. He's relaxing with his intern alums who have come back to say hi, and I'm benefitting from it all. 95 degrees outside and it's 30 in the cup — tastes of mediterranean and the middle east, and music that drifts from South Africa to Morocco, and... where are — oh! there are cars outside still. We're still in a city.

MAY 1

Call with potential agent postponed (on account of food poisoning.) Instead, in the morning, I got a call (from my area code, creepily enough) from a self-publishing service I'd made an inquiry to for information years ago. Jhea was very clearly reading from a script. "Why have you decided to give up on your endeavors?" she said, apropos of nothing.

I told her I had her email and couldn't talk now. "Please respond," she said. In some way, threatening in her sweetly confused tone that she would call me back otherwise, over and over, as colleagues of hers had been doing every few months since I committed the sin of disheartened curiosity. (I was half giving up, and half looking forward.)

—

Talk with roommate about relationships for gay men (over 25). Trust. Same issues.

MAY 2

I know I tripped on the fine line between growing up and giving up. When settling down felt like settling and feeling the G-forces of growing slow, shrink, felt like I was dying. But it's not so bad: if I need those forces, I can have them while growing up and outwards. As long as I know I need them, I can make sure... of something...

not sure yet.

—

For whatever reason, I'm remembering the names of cars now.

The HMS Matsuflex (named for Tool Academy star Ryan "Matsuflex" Matsu-something), which I crashed in the middle of the UAE desert highway. Dakar (a Senegal-born English pun?) which burst into flame in Ann Arbor, itself a sister city of Dakar (by total coincidence). My grandfather's car... whose name I can't remember now — I think it might have been a guy's name — who my brother crashed in California.

I know why I'm remembering: my wardrobe stylist on my first TV show (and only, to date), seems to have connections to DC-based NatGeo and Travel and Discovery. I wrote a ukelele ditty about her overstuffed minivan, which is now her ringtone. I emailed, and she emailed back.

JUNE 1

"I turned the TV up as loud as I could," my roommate said when I squinted out of my bedroom on the resilient side of 11 a.m.

"I can't tell if I'm being scolded or congratulated," I said.

It seemed like he had to think about it for a second. "Congratulated," he grinned.

She hadn't watched the hockey game last night because she used to date one of the players. She just didn't give a fuck anymore, she said. She gave her fucks to me for the night. A couple of months or years ago — we didn't ask each other many details — she would have gone home with one of the guys I was just screaming for on TV. And that's how a 25 year old guy and a 30 year old girl might end up most comfortably in bed together — giving fucks in the right places, and not giving them most anywhere else.