

Some sort of yellow, sometimes

National Pickle Day

Angelfish –

I'm sitting on a bench in Camperdown Park, imagining you beside me. I pick the beetroot out of my kebab for you to eat. The juice drips on your jeans. It's a warm evening. We're overlooking the grassy slope where you reminded me why I hate frisbee. The council's planted purple flowers. Pigeons headbang to inaudible heavy metal at our feet.

I have seen two Buddhist monks in the last twenty-four hours. One in the library, one crossing the road. It's got me thinking about transcendence. Remember being ten, lying on the static skin of your trampoline? We were wearing damp tankinis. It was the first night of six-week summer holidays. You smelled like Aerogard and had soft brown hairs on your arms.

In your last letter, you said, 'I think I'm ok. Sometimes I get too tired to investigate my feelings.'

I'll grow a handlebar moustache and wear flares. I'll park my mustard-coloured car down the street of your mind and do a stake-out. Afterwards I'll eat pancakes in a diner, circling things on a notepad, no closer to knowing you.

Your feelings are worth investigating, even if they're unresolvable.

I never told you, but I saw the counsellor in our last year of high school. She was young, enthusiastic like a Wiggle, always eating out of a Tupperware container as I talked. It was her first counselling job. She thanked me for being easy to connect with; she couldn't get much out of her other clients. I imagined these students were actually in need and unable to pretend, so I committed myself to being the 'breakthrough' client who boosted her career confidence. I got better by the third and final session she'd scheduled with me. I am better. I am! My panic is almost comforting now. I wouldn't want to be different. I would miss feeling like a rice paper roll: translucent, insides exposed, liable to fall apart.

Last month was a bit of an eating-cereal-in-bed-with-the-blinds-closed month. Duncan, being the brother that he is, took me through the automatic carwash as a treat. Big woolly jazz hands assailed us from all sides. I hope happiness isn't the total absence of sadness or fear, because if it is, I've probably never felt it. But I am some sort of yellow, sometimes. I am with Duncan. I was with you.

World Braille Week

Every day, I have the same epiphany*: I know nothing! My political knowledge is infantile. You know what I googled the definition of the other day? 'Fascism'. I told myself it was just to make sure, like you do with those words you only ever read in novels and are scared to use in conversation, like 'nape' ... but I'm not sure I was just making sure. I do have occasional moments of feeling intelligent, like when the computer asks me to select every photo with a bus in it. It's bizarre being in the first batch of humans asked to verify their humanity.

The good thing about knowing nothing is that I am outrageously open. I am maximally absorbent (with wings). I shall spend at least five minutes examining every single thing, every fallen leaf and every face, like artworks in a gallery. I've been making a nest of new things to share with you. For example: in Japanese, saying, "The moon is beautiful, isn't it?" is an indirect way of telling someone you love them.

National Pothole Day

Evening: the moon on fifty percent charge, the sky a blue screen of death. Everywhere I go I feel like I've entered a room and forgotten what I was there for.

I spent all day searching for a song I don't know the name of. There are online forums filled with people doing the same, mulling over misheard lyrics and poorly described melodies. *It goes like da-da-dadada, anyone recognise it?* Nobody ever does.

Maybe someday the song will flutter on shuffle at a party, and I'll have another chance to cage it. Could be years from now. Could be never.

The first time I saw gore on the internet was with you. It was a beheading on YouTube. We had been watching Littlest Pet Shop stop-motions and it came up on the sidebar. You decided we should light a candle for the man in the video. The candle had a clean linen scent.

The only answers I have are the ones to your security questions: Newcastle, Mr. Nolan, Gough the beagle.

International Nathan Day

Last night I went to trivia with some fellow know-it-alls in remission. The usuals: Anushka, Norman. 'Dancing in the Moonlight' tinkled away as we slurped schooners in a sticky bar on campus. We merged teams with some philosophy majors. Young men are always eager to mention they've read Simone de Beauvoir. Probably in the same way I'm eager to mention I've read James Baldwin. The philosophy bros couldn't understand why the three of us were so passionate about the geometry question. Reflex angles were your favourite.

Amid the din of a packed room, I felt loved in loneliness. All those people, good at so many things: Microsoft Excel, tying their shoes tightly enough, being kind to their parents, kissing. I wondered what flavour each person was. Curry? Cough syrup? McDonald's soft serve? Muesli bar?

Without you here, I've forgotten where I fit. I badly want to connect but can't. When I meet someone new I feel myself becoming high-pitched and excessively complimentary, like I'm talking to a pet budgie, but I can't stop it. I think I am overcompensating for being the worst person in the world.

You took ages to do errands because you'd get stuck talking. Except you wouldn't view it as getting 'stuck'; you 'bumped into' everyone. Sometimes people made you pallid and you needed a sit-down and a snack to recover, but you never complained. A conversation with you was like a blood transfusion for the rest of us.

Life feels horrifically long sometimes. I often fantasise about sacrificing myself for others in a hostage situation, but I know I'll probably die of some weird cell mutation in my elbow.

Burn Awareness Week

Despite churning out an essay a week, I'm still so lost for words. I hide behind metaphor. How else can you process something that would destroy you faced directly? Some experiences are solar eclipses.

I'm ready to be out of this institution, even though I'll probably just go right into another. When I'm walking across campus I almost feel like skipping – I am here, learning! But what about all the people who are not here? And the reasons for their absence? There is no soul in sandstone. There is a brick for every window.

You said it was important for optimism and cynicism to co-exist. I love picturing them in the same frame. Optimism would do bunny ears behind Cynicism's head.

I'm still tricking myself into writing. Funny how diligently we avoid what we love. On the 370 home, glowing with grease in my Chicken Wonderland uniform, I scribble undercooked poems. You only need one person to smile at in a city: mine is a Samoan woman wearing a flower in her dark hair, more silver every time I see her. I overhear a child listing all the Heaths he is friends with. "That's a lot of Heaths," his dad says. I think the people who check Opal Cards exist to make you feel warned, to remind you that everything catches up with you eventually.

I kill time in Newtown, delaying the moment I'm alone with my thoughts again. I look extra hard at things so you might see them too. Rain-freckled footpaths, Door Dashers defying death.

People slurping ramen, buying artisan soap, shoplifting eyeliner. Cars with shitbox engines and sensational speakers. Higgledy-piggledy buildings, sun-bleached and candy-coloured. Evil eyes, halal snack packs, fresh tattoos in clingwrap. An old lesbian couple in knitwear admiring a hunk of moonstone in a shop window. White dudes sitting in a bubble tea shop like cowboys in a saloon. Trains sliding by like filmstrips. In an op shop changing room, I shrug on the kind of shirt old men wear on cruises. My body doesn't transform clothes; I look very much like an old man on a cruise.

I buy the gastro shirt just to feel something. In an oddly sociable mood, I ask the woman at the counter if she's ever been on a cruise. Yes, around the Mediterranean – she especially loved a Greek city called Pathos.

“Is that where the word ‘pathos’ comes from?”

“No, Paphos,” she corrects me. The city is called Paphos.

National Clean Out Your Fridge Day

My last dream took place on the soccer field near our houses. The first time I ever saw your face, you were dressed like a magpie with muddy knees and an orange slice in your mouth. You were the fastest runner I had ever seen. It was nighttime in the dream and the field was empty. Two clowns pulled up in a roomy family SUV, breaking the world record for the least number of clowns in a car. They hopped out, glowing white. Wind filled their pantaloons. They shivered.

Life makes strange shapes of people. I've found you can be ruined and continue. March will always make me sad, and I can't bear the sound of a phone ringing, but I am here.

I learnt your home phone number before mine, so I could call Eleni to ask if you wanted to come over for a play. We don't even have a landline anymore.

As we planned our futures in games of M.A.S.H, I always wanted to write your name down in the 'husband' column (we only talked of husbands then). Already my heart was yours, small and warm like a baked potato. I would've liked a life where we had seventy million adopted children, a treehouse, and an ice cream van as our vehicle.

About six months after we're born, our eyes take on their real colour. The cloudiness clears with exposure to light. Will that happen to my soul, Angelfish? If I have one? I don't feel anything stirring inside except indigestion.

Elmo's Birthday

I love the reckless enthusiasm of snails after rain, when the pleasure of slimy concrete outweighs the fear of getting crushed. Fig trees doubled over in laughter, sweet fruit rotting at their roots. The obscene green of everything.

It takes me by surprise that I like being alive. I am shedding selves like cicada shells.

Maybe everything is meaningless; but what about the day-to-day importance of meaningless things and people?

Have you seen the world's smallest cow, recently born in Bangladesh? She is violently cute.

On wet days like this, you'd often propose a movie marathon. Once we only got through *School of Rock* and *Fantastic Mr. Fox* before the sun bullied its way through the clouds. Feeling gross in the dark of indoors, square-eyed and furry-mouthed from too many biscuits, we decided to take Gough for a walk. We were both a little fractious, trying to shake the feeling of squandering life as we were out enjoying it. I accidentally let your yellow kite go. You found it funny. There was a softening.

Where did that kite come down? On another continent, or the next street over?

Nuclear Disarmament Day

Some mistake me for an old soul (it's the gastro shirt), but I feel deeply nineteen. Still tender. Homesick for my warm blue father and my light green mother. His mending of shattered things with hobby glue, her cool hand reaching back to hold mine from the front seat. When I call, they tell me about the passionfruit vine they're growing. They've taken to befriending magpies since Duncan and I moved out. *We've got a whole parliament in the backyard now! Parliament or murder?*

Mum's trying to wean me off your hand-me-downs, but when I'm cold all I want is to pull on an old piece of you. I feel impatient with everyone and everything except for people missing you too, and even them sometimes.

Pluto Appreciation Day

Remember the last time we hung out? It was an unremarkable afternoon with no assassinations or album releases. We went to the beach. Most people seemed to be missing from the world. There were a few dogwalkers like glitches. No lifesavers in sight.

A glum Ferris wheel in neon lights. Black tarp rippling around empty construction sites. It only smelt vaguely like the sea, like an old scratch and sniff sticker barely managing banana. We were buffeted by cigarette smoke as we ambled along the concrete promenade. A shy rainbow, a tinfoil ocean. You had clips in your hair.

Did it feel like a date to you too?

A drop of feeling like food colouring; a little is always too much.

We ate syrupy sundaes and felt sick. You had chocolate around your mouth. Your wonky teeth made me glad teeth decompose last.

We're back in Camperdown Park. Look, the streetlights just winked on. A quiet sunset, dissolving like a pill. I've got pins and needles. A car passes, blaring 'Message in a Bottle' by The Police. *I hope that someone gets my – I hope that someone gets my –*

Sorry, Angelfish. All this glib gibberish like plastic in the belly of a seabird. I wanted to write you something nice. You said once that my whole world was an artist's impression. I'm not sure I'm as interesting as you thought. I know you were far more interesting than you found yourself.

It's your birthday. Mum, Dad, Duncan and I are going to your parent's place and we are going to have cake.

The moon is beautiful, isn't it?

– Axolotl

*Can you have the same epiphany every day?

The Entire Gregorian Calendar

A –

My little gremlin. Eater of green snakes so I could have the red ones. Blessor of all sneezes. Understander of all things. Nobody would object to your canonisation but you.

What does it feel like? It feels like crawling back into an unmade bed still holding your shape from morning.

I am no longer touched. I am the touch. And I know what babies are thinking (not much). Turns out omniscience is incomplete, but here are two things I've learnt: the universe began with hokey pokey, and there is no need to rush. When you get redlights all the way home, something is asking for patience – not conspiring against you, but keeping you safe.

The first time I was a soundwave it made me seasick, but I don't mind it now. I am a synonym for every word. I am colours unimaginable before. I sweep sunlight across the world, collecting darkness in a dustpan. I try to comfort my parents through dreams.

I miss stumbling into spider webs. I miss drinking from water bottles passed around mosh pits. I miss falling asleep on your shoulder. I always knew it was an unleaveable world. I just needed some rest.

Look for me as a ladybug, as lint, as late afternoon light on your bedroom wall. Look for me as a postcard, as a pulse, as people in the background of a press release.

I am finally thoughtless, but I think of you infinitely. You'll find the song you don't know the name of.

– A