

POSTER BOY

This is the knock on your door
because I just moved into the neighborhood
and I am required by law
to tell you
not to fall for me.

I am the poster boy for killing the mood;
the most wanted to leave the premises.

My room for improvement
is being remodeled.
My laundry list of resolutions
got faded in the dryer.

You don't understand.

These leaden feet ensure me I will never,
ever,
jump the gun.

If we were cave people,
I would have asked permission to club you.

No, really.

When I say I am driven,
it just means that I take the bus.

Treating myself usually involves tending to scrapes and bruises.

I have the momentum of an actor-turned-singer.
These clown shoes are made for tripping.
When I say "Pardon me,"
I couldn't be more hopeful that you will.

This is not a pity party.
I could not afford the streamers and confetti.
This is a yellow light,
a crossing guard, all orange vest and arms akimbo,
warning you that my lights are on
but no one's gonna be home,
and there is no forwarding address.

That gleam above my head is no halo.
It's a silver-lined storm cloud
and the smile that was my umbrella ripped in the wind.

I have black cats lying horizontally across my sneakers.
My hat is a ladder.
My coin purse is filled with fragments of shattered mirror.

I am a ruined vacation;
the roadblock to your final destination.

If you recognize me from my overflowing mug shot,
turn me in.
Turn me into anything.

MY SLOW HELL

My slow hell looks like Sherman Oaks, California.
It sounds like Coldplay.
It is dressed in sweatpants with “Juicy” or “Lucky”
emblazoned across its ass.

I am a t-shirt and jeans guy trapped in a fashion mall.
Privilege drips down the sides of the escalators.
This place is so lifeless that I expect to see George Romero
and a film crew around every corner.

A sign in the store across the hall reads
“Turn off news. Turn on music.”
This makes me crave the smell of burning denim.

The home office has declared a “War on Browsing.”
I have become a conscientious objector.

I pull a string on my coworker’s back
and she mumbles out the same catchphrases, five to seven
times a day.

It’s SO slow, she says.
This mall is SO dead.
I’m SO bored.

Yes, coworker; I, too, am bored.
I am so bored that I want to throw stale pretzel dogs
through the windows of tween fashion shops.

This mall is so dead that I want to jump on the puke-
orange food court tables
and shout poems at the top of my lungs while artificially
darkened white people
lazily eat their faux-kabobs and mexi-chicken wraps.
It is so slow I can see the dreams of young men and
women ooze out the gateway, replaced with worries of
upsell percentages.

If I have to hear that goddamned recording from a decade
ago telling me that *Everybody's Free to Feel Good* one
more time, I'm gonna shove an Apple Store down
someone's gullet and send them to Teavana.

Until the circus comes to town and hires me as The
Amazing Gilded Assistant Manager,
I am digging my way out of this Shawshank consumer
combat zone.
I am laughing off death threats from over-toned dads who
don't have receipts.
I am inches away from setting tripwires for snooty
octogenarian mallwalkers.

In the meantime, I break my day into tolerable segments.
Ten-minute break. Lunch break. Break the skull of
the next Botoxed bitch who whines "excuse me" in my
direction while on her iPhone. Ten-minute break.

Sherman Oaks, California, you are my Ghost of Christmas
Future. You make me want to apply myself to my art
more than ever. Most of all, even more so than the fact

that people in your presence use the word “economy” the way they used to say “herpes,” you have become my Panda Express.

As I gag on your sickly sweet dough-stuff, I read your wisdom:

It's hard to sell banana-shaped vibrating massagers to people who are already fucked.

HARD

She is all neck and bones flanking her velvet.
I take a gargoyle pill and hang over the church of her.
What a joke,
these useless marble wings, this casket shell.
I am a thousand pounds,
threatening to fashion her into rose petal pulp
if I spiral down. Stone trumps bone. My gravity
is poison to us both.

This is a sentence I can never end.
Every night while I repose and collapse
into a simian drool stupor, she picks out my liver,
blood and bile glossing her beak like lipstick instinct.
It is pain that fills me with honey and aria orgasm.
Now when I am awake, I comprehend the thrill of needles.
How the right level of sting and swell
can make you grab the bedsheets with both claws.
It is blameless.
It is a language that I have shattered the Rosetta Stone to.
I am learning it by context and error.
I speak it like an infant.

I could just end her, I think; I could just land on her stupid thorns.

It is easier to swallow that capsule,
to be still, mute, and hard.