



DEAR Z,
Madeline Lane-McKinley



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I. A MATERNAL SHAPED SEA

Dear Z,

Perhaps now that you're older, I can tell you what the tragedy is: You were born an alien to this world. You were from another planet. I was that planet. You came and then day by day, little by little, I have had to teach you how to live here, in this place, instead of where you'd like to live.

Since you were born, the safer I made you feel, the more I felt like I was lying to you. I'm trying to prepare you for a revolution that might not happen & feeling like a liar for that too.

I cannot fix the world. I hate myself for that, even if you don't. I have only insufficient answers. I'm scared to grow comfortable with this possibility — that you could, maybe sooner than I thought when you were born, find yourself not just hating me. While I fret over this I imagine you instead, facing a history I couldn't have prepared you for...

I'm not sure what you'll have learned, experienced, or witnessed by the time you read this.

Love,

Dear Z,

Ordeal by water: the innocent sink
for the prospect of a floating witch

Be careful

Love,

Dear Z,

I wake up hearing the sea lions,
Grasping air, the salt and cold shock of waves
Crisp sounds and the idea of an ocean nearby, still feeling new

Chicago is where I was born, and I remember
I think
the night before we left
the way that my tears made the stars out the window glow
we packed the Volvo with blankets
& a terrarium for our turtle

there were probably other moments that came first or maybe this is not
how it really went
I remember looking out the window from the back seat at Central Ave
(Route 66)

Now everyone asks me about the Albuquerque of *Breaking Bad*
and I remember violence being everywhere but nowhere, just like any-
where else

The desert formed me, the blank forever-ness that prepared me for an
ocean & you

Someday I'll take you there
the sky can be so many colors

Hot air balloons and tourists slow everything down
For weeks, interruptions of everyday life
What you could imagine as life on some remote elsewhere
The watercolor sky, cradled by mountains and extinct volcanoes

The post 60s in the desert

Children of weather underground turned community college adjuncts
Sitting in circle time
Singing with kids from the reservation
Navigating the shame & nostalgias of boomers
Finding their dad's weed
Peyote in the garden
I wonder how you'll laugh

The sea lions recall this post 60s on the beach
where vampires lurk
feeding off children
born from counterculture
by adolescence, lost to the slow burn out

I wonder into your future like those stars out the window

Love,

Dear Z,

Things I won't teach you:

The gender binary
That fascists can be reasoned with

That misogynists will ever believe you
That anyone can “not see race”
Santa
Barbies
Jesus
That there are any exceptions to ACAB
That property destruction = violence
That biology is fate
That any commodity can be “ethical”
That jobs are about anything but survival
That voting can be revolutionary
That you have to choose between liking cats or dogs
How to calorie count
How to use an iron
How to use a chainsaw
How to drive stick
How to be likeable
#NotAllMen
That Woody Allen movies are good even though...
That Bob Dylan was any better than Joan Baez
That Joan Baez was any better than Nina Simone
That there was ever a golden age of anything to go back to
That there’s anything wrong with being a witch
Long division (unless no one else will)
To think that love & hate are opposites
To silence on behalf of a hypothetical peace, unity, solidarity
To “lean in”
To internalize shit that’s not your fault
That you have to hug people you don’t like
That you have to hug anyone
That there is No Alternative
How to apply eyeliner
How to pluck facial hair
That capitalism can be ‘green,’ ‘conscious,’ or ‘responsible’
That different patterns clash
That any movie can be “just a movie”

How to knit anything but a scarf
That it's the end of the world

Love,

Dear Z,

When you were an infant, I had it in my head that you needed to swim
That it was a re-learning (unlike learning to walk or talk)
That swimming would bring you back to a feeling we had together at
another time

When I took you to the pool you were six months old
The swim teacher told us to dunk our babies under the water
To ignore the crying this would go away
"Instincts will kick in..."

This image of mothers dunking their babies under water, over and
over again,
Smiling through the screams, clenching their jaws
Really stuck with me

Love,

Dear Z,

That time you got teargassed
Sorry
You were young enough to forget
But I kept reminding you

Love,

Dear Z,

perhaps it is love where it is not work
J reminds me where capital sets apart work from labor
but I remind myself how it can't as well

or perhaps it is the overlap
between work and love
or the blurring
between work and labor, labor and love, love and work
everyone seems eager to get a finger on the thresholds

“we’ve never seen a general strike”

please learn this, then remember

Love,

Dear Z,

It’s hard at times not to feel surrounded by other people’s hatred of their mothers...

And I don’t want to be against mothering, just motherhood:

The “motherhood” monopolized by TERFS and the “feminism” of those chasing the “equality” of better paychecks but nothing else.

I don’t know any goddesses but I’m surrounded by witches.

And I wonder how to abolish the family not without you but with you.

Stuck sometimes thinking about all the ways that Shulamith Firestone got it right while being so wrong.

I want to prepare you for the painful, rather than let the pain take you by surprise.

Love,

II. WITCHCRAFT

... I looked around and noticed my poor mother, who had followed me to the Butte of Montmartre, believing that I was going to die.

—Louise Michel

Dear Z,

I read an interview with Toni Morrison at some point during my time breastfeeding you, which I recall every day in my own established habits.

“Writing before dawn began as a necessity — I had small children when I first began to write and I needed to use the time before they said, Mama — and that was always around five in the morning... Work and the children had driven all of my habits.”

Morrison developed this habit and stuck to it. Motherhood made an imprint on her practice as a writer.

I sit down to write and I'm alone. Writing is so often unimaginable as anything but isolative. Even my most reviving collaborations were spent, in some way, in isolation. For this reason mothering always seems, in some way, at odds with writing. But writing is also a practice of mothering: waiting, presentness, working through and with failure, revisiting, consistency.

As I sit I try to feel not alone as well — to feel with me this history of writing and care, setting aside the time from care and finding the space to write. And I imagine those who cannot do this, too, and those who have died trying...

I don't remember ever being so impacted by a text as when I first read Morrison's *Beloved*. Your aunt was born the year before and I remember

I could feel in my arms what it would feel like to kill a small child out of love.

She come back to me of her own free will and I don't have to explain a thing. I didn't have time to explain before because it had to be done quick. Quick. She had to be safe and I put her where she would be... I'll explain to her, even though I don't have to. Why I did it. How if I hadn't killed her she would have died and that is something I could not bear to happen to her... I'll tend her as no mother ever tended a child, a daughter. Nobody will ever get my milk no more except my own children. I never had to give it to nobody else — and the one time I did it was took from me — they held me down and took it. Milk that belonged to my baby... I know what it is to be without the milk that belongs to you; to have to fight and holler for it, and to have so little left. I'll tell Beloved about that; she'll understand.

That understanding — its love, its impossibility, its intangibility — has no way of leaving me now, it is where I learned that there is no 'motherhood' to speak of.

Love,

Dear Z,

Like any mother, Virginia Woolf makes me furious. I met her at 18, in a set of dreams after *A Room of One's Own* stormed my brain & I spent time with these thoughts in parks, on walks. How I had lost time to the thought that to write meant something about masculinity... And I wish I could stretch the text like clay toward all that it misses, everything it can't overcome.

...[I]t is that it is fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex. It is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple.

This struck me about writing — this possibility to exceed this thing,

womanhood, which I'd already grown to hate, wearing so uncomfortably on my body like a pair of elastic waist pants, but that in exceeding this 'womanhood,' writing was not about masculinity either.

Here is an antidote from Ursula K Le Guin, who taught me more about what to do with writing, beyond insisting to do it:

Beneath memory and experience, beneath imagination and invention, beneath words, there are rhythms to which memory and imagination and words all move.

•

Later in her life, Virginia Woolf struggled to keep writing. She had almost completely stopped writing by 1941, but on March 28, 1941, she was able to put the following letter to her husband on paper:

Dearest,

I feel certain that I am going mad again. I feel we can't go through another of those terrible times. And I shan't recover this time. I begin to hear voices, and I can't concentrate. So I am doing what seems the best thing to do. You have given me the greatest possible happiness. You have been in every way all that anyone could be. I don't think two people could have been happier till this terrible disease came. I can't fight it any longer. I know that I am spoiling your life, that without me you could work. And you will I know. You see I can't even write this properly. I can't read. What I want to say is I owe all the happiness of my life to you. You have been entirely patient with me and incredibly good. I want to say that—everybody knows it. If anybody could have saved me it would have been you. Everything has gone from me but the certainty of your goodness. I can't go on spoiling your life any longer. I don't think two people could have been happier than we have been. V.

Then she filled her pockets with stones, and walked into Ouse, a river in Sussex. Her body was not discovered for another three weeks. She had known this future, just as she could not know its history.

In 1928, she dreamed that in a hundred years, someone like her “will put on the body which she has so often laid down. Drawing her life from the lives of the unknown,” she writes, “she will be born.”

Born out of how many deaths?

In 2028, you will be seventeen.

To Woolf, the woman writer was something like a science fiction. The history of women’s writing, an act of speculation. The woman, a monster.

•

Since her first book, she’d managed to complete one more work opaque, muddled, saddened. In 2013 she was discovered in her studio apartment. She was sixty seven and living alone. It had been days since she died. Her landlord started to wonder about the smell.

It was the kind of death that was not quite a suicide, but not quite not a suicide. There was no food in her kitchen. No autopsy was conducted.

Her first book was in 1970. She was 25. She’d written it over and over again. Held it hostage. Then it was in the world, and she hated it. She hated it as much or more than she hated herself. She hated what she could not anticipate, what she could not defend against. She would never forgive herself for any of it.

In the years to follow she was in and out of psychiatric hospitals. She and a number of other women, who’d oddly inhabited ‘feminism’ at the crest of the sixties, were diagnosed with various things. In her case, it was first schizophrenia, then bipolar, with some things in between.

There wasn’t space for mistakes or revision. The permanence of words came to haunt her exquisitely at every moment, nearby.

If she could be different there was no language for this.

•

I had forgotten this with everything else:

She was almost felled to the ground by the extraordinary sight which now met her eyes. There was the garden and some birds. The world was going on as usual. All the time she was writing the world had continued. "And if I were dead, it would be just the same!" she explained.

Love,

Dear Z,

The "motherhoods" that brought me to you
not a list of motherhoods I love.

The mothers of Dumbo, Bambi, Snow White, Cinderella, The Little Mermaid were all dead.

There are motherhoods that cannot be known — destroyed and sold off,
criminalized
re-conceived, shirked, fled
denounced

I grew to learn that mothering can be dangerous,
That to be here with you is a dangerous thought
That what I may need to do for you could mean suffering
That what I may need to do for you could mean murder

To not be heard or seen should be the least of my worries

"Neuroses, suicides, desexualization: occupational diseases..."

Motherhoods that brought me to you:
Brought me to fear you, dread you,
worry for you in every way,
The possibilities of motherhood that scare you at times,
scare myself more,

If I'm to be a mother in all of this,
Please promise me
you'll come to understand me also as a witch.

Love,

Dear Z,

I had a notebook.
That's how I kept going.

Love,

III. FEARING & HATING THE COPS

Dear Z,

A couple years ago we went to meet a friend at the tacqueria and halfway through our lunch a few cops came in and sat at a table across the room. You started getting nervous about being so close to cops, and got under the table. I asked you to come back up so you could keep eating, but you refused.

I remember I told a friend of mine about this and he was shocked. “Maybe you should tone down how you talk about cops around her,” he snarked. This person — a single white man, mid 40s, not a parent, distinct among my friends for having secure employment — was not alone, I am sure.

I remember being disgusted by his compulsion to speak this way — to tell me how to do something, in a way I can’t imagine him ever enduring if it were about his job.

I remember I asked him, what if she weren’t a white girl? Would he tell me to “tone down” if I had a black son? This idea that because you don’t have to know that cops are racist yet, that I shouldn’t teach you that they’re racist yet, is its own form of racism.

I don’t know what to do with you, scared in the tacqueria.

When we sat at the park, we talked about how you were frightened that the cops were going to hurt you. You had heard about or observed by then so many times the police hurting homeless people, and protests about people of color, sometimes children, being killed by police. You had been to protests, since you were 3 weeks old, where police presence always felt threatening. I always kept you safe, but I know that even the sight of police is scary. This is true for most of us, but to varying degrees, for different reasons, some abstract and others quite material and life threatening.

This is how I think you came to start understanding what it means to be white. For you, race was first a category defined in relation to the police.

Cops aren't dragons.

What you know is that people have died for no good reason at all.

I refuse to tell you that there's an acceptable reason for these deaths to have occurred.

I won't tell you that cops have "difficult jobs" or that they're victims, too. But I don't know what to tell you about a world where this happens all the time

Where some people aren't outraged

Where other people offer easy answers

Why some people say this is the way it is and there is no thinking differently.

I don't know what to tell you.

I tell you it's fucked up.

Don't ignore the problems.

Please don't run away from it

Always remember why you felt scared that day.

Love,

Dear Z,

Your first cop is sometimes not a cop.

I remember convulsing with tears. One of the only films I ran out on, in my own living room. We were watching *Bush Mama*. I can only begin to describe the somber and everyday horror of that film, the story of Dorothy, a black woman in Watts, whose husband returns from Vietnam, only to be arrested and imprisoned soon after. He didn't commit the crime, but this surprises no one. Dorothy is stretched so thin, she can't protect her children. Her young daughter — the sweetest eyes — is raped

by some white cops in the end of the film, as she screams “mama!” but can’t be heard.

It felt like it took days to stop hearing her screaming.
I can still hear it, whenever the thought comes to mind.

Drugs will keep you quiet. I hope you’ll never know them for this effect.
I think he knew, someday, the quiet would turn to screaming, but he was dead by then.

My first cop was a psychiatrist. I remember stories of patrolling the halls of a ward, thinking the patients were inmates. I’d lock my room to feel safe.

Even ibuprofen is hard to swallow.
I avoid it until I can’t.
I hope you’ll never know.

Heard from a friend yesterday. Not a close one. Not sure why she wrote me. Glad she wrote me. She found her father trying to molest her son. I’m not sure the details. She knew it had happened, in the family, before. I’m not sure how she knew. She thought it had ended. She thought it could end.

I heard of a close call — someone at a daycare, who’d been fired but after so much damage.

I hope you’ll not have to know.

In large rooms of people, sometimes, thoughts occur to me:

How many have been molested?
How many were raped or beaten?
When did they know, after being molested, that that’s what it was?

Who taught them to keep quiet?

It’s hard to be quiet now. Almost physically impossible at times. How do you understand this predicament: to realize that one’s likeability is so inte-

grally related to one's ability to be silent, to muzzle inconveniences, to learn that this has something to do with everyone getting along.

Screams within earshot are not heard. Screams are unheard.
What if the screams did not eventually turn to silence.

What if the quiet could be fire.

What if the internal routes were blockaded —if the thing itself could be inabsorbable, if it lingered instead as residue on the surfaces we could just wipe away.

What if the sidewalks began to crack beneath feet, if walls crumbled, if bridges fell to the sea.

Love,

Dear Z,

Another school shooting, another message from the superintendent,
Sensationalism meets desensitization in the news
That 'gun control' is code for other forms of control
The tears of white mothers on school campuses
The corpses of black children, gunned down by cops

I read a mother describe the safety plan for school shootings discussed
at a PTA meeting
The cops were there
It's called ALICE: Alert Lockdown Inform Counter Evacuate
A form of active shooter response training
Part of the plan is for kids to run around the room and throw books and
chairs and tables rather than hide
The reason why kids are told to do this is because it takes longer to
kill them

In a situation in which they can't be saved
And the longer it takes to kill them
The more of a chance other kids have to get away

If only we could swim in this rage
Like an ocean, connecting it all where unseen
Breaking away the particles of thought
Fantasies of control
Deteriorating the thing
Until it's something else

Love,

Dear Z,

M taught her classes with security guards
Death threats from a student's ex-boyfriend
The dangers of teaching feminism
You'll know this somehow

Love,

IV. THOUGHTS ABOUT EXTINCTION

Dear Z,

More often than anyone I know, you find yourself in the position of making up a world anew.

You do this under your breath,
in the company of cats,
in the yard for hours a day in the summer.

As I sat in a shack with stacks of books, overlooking the garden, writing of the threat of “anti-utopia” for what felt like too long, you ask yourself questions like — would there be money? How do we share food?

No prisons.
No cops.
Everyone gets to eat and sleep.

Your descriptives for the world sometimes overlook what I can't bear to show you

Why should I want to tell you any differently

To see what is not there can be as necessary as this struggle to find a language to keep up with this abundant mutation of desires

How will I learn to tell you
We find ourselves bound up in this web never to know the spider

We sat at the river for a few hours this afternoon and I watched you paint wet sand and sing, a bit of snot dripped from your nose and you wiped it with a handkerchief tied around your neck, not minding the congestion.

I look at you in moments like this wondering about you — how much you have to set aside to paint the sand.

Love,

Dear Z,

1,500 children were described as “missing” and I haven’t the words but I read violence in the passivity they’ve “disappeared”

Immigration court has been described as a DMV handing out death sentences. ICE raids, deportations and removals — kidnappings.

There are border patrol agent serial killers & every day is panic and fury.

Syria is the unimaginable.

I look at you sleeping at night not without thinking of the cold, bare feet of a 5 year old orphaned refugee I read about that day.

It is impossible, this separation, this distance between horrors.

Love,

Dear Z,

The world’s oldest known person died yesterday. She was the last person alive who was born in the 19th century, a Japanese woman named Nabi Tajima. She died on the island where she was born, Kikai. She had nine children, and by the time of her death, over 160 descendants. One of her grandsons, 65, told the local news, “as she had been a hard worker, I want to tell her ‘rest well.’”

We sometimes discuss animals with longer life spans than ours. There is a 183 year old tortoise named Jonathan, living on the island of St. Helena in the South Atlantic Ocean. He was brought to the island at the age of 50, in 1882.

The oldest recorded tortoise died 12 years before today — I'm not sure how many years before you are reading this. His name was Adwaita — in Sanskrit, “one and only” — and he lived from 1750 to 2006 in India.

The oldest parrot recently died at the Brookfield Zoo in Chicago, near Hyde Park, where I was born. The parrot was 83 years old and his name was Cookie.

Koi fish live over 200 years, as do tube worms and some whales.

The Antarctic sponge lives up to 1,500 years, miles below the surface of the ocean.

I read an article today about the Antarctic sponge being “lucky” for their long life span.

Love,

Dear Z,

It should be no one's dream that the crisis management of capitalism rests on unwaged hours and good intentions.

I'm unsure of the language we'll share, or the problems we'll think about.

This is my only way of knowing how to prepare you.

Love,

Dear Z,

There isn't a place we can move to
There is no place that is far away
Nothing is further or closer in the way that that thought wants to work

There isn't a place where we could go to get out
But we keep imagining this
& I wonder if only for the pain of it

My friends moved to southern Oregon
Where most things are cheaper
Except for all the driving
And now instead of the rent they tell us about the confederate flags &
swastikas
And they didn't escape the fighting or the fear
And they're ready for it all the time in ways that I could learn from

Some people chase the weather, the politics, the jobs
But a beach town can be dystopia
Just like everywhere else

Love,

V. MISSING

Dear Z,

Impossibly, every day has become about escaping the day.

Love,

Dear Z,

A few years ago, a little girl went missing. She was about the same age that you are now, as I write this. This happened in a small community of artists which may not still be around when you read this. I can't remember how many days they searched before they found her body in the dumpster, right there. A neighbor boy, an adolescent, strangled her after raping her, and I'm not sure what else.

I remember the days between her disappearance and this horrific discovery. It seemed like the whole town was holding its breath. It was in the summer and I can remember thinking about this girl as I sat in the yard one night hearing the screams from the rollercoaster. A few people I knew helped with the search party. Lots of people were looking.

This residency always seemed idyllic to me, and for a while we considered applying to live there. I loved how many kids I would see playing and living together.

A few days after the girl's body was found, when the story began to form of what had happened to her, you got up after bedtime to check on the chickens because you were worried about raccoons. I remember how quickly I began to panic when I came back into your room with a glass of water, and your bedroom door was open and you weren't in your bed. It

was only a matter of minutes before I found you. Everyone at the house was running around terrified, just like me. I often think about those minutes, and how it would feel for those minutes to turn to hours, then days, even weeks.

The single mother of that little girl will never “move on,” she’ll be left behind.

I hope she is not surrounded by people urging her to hurry up, keep going, not to look back.
But perhaps she is.

I want to prepare you for the painful, rather than let pain take you by surprise.

Love,

Dear Z,

The scales and magnitudes of death can horrify.

24 years ago — and who knows how long that will be to you — the Rwandan genocide claimed something like 800,000 lives
about 70% of the Tutsi people died
2 million or so Rwandans became refugees
Yesterday four mass graves were discovered there
Thousands of bodies
80 feet below

they’re still digging

Love,

Dear Z,

Read about a commune that burned down in the fires
Most of the communes that were recorded didn't last more than a year
It's hard to know how many communes there were fifty years ago since
so many weren't recorded or disappeared too quickly and maybe we
wouldn't want to define them as communes in so many cases since they
were more like the suburbs in too many ways

When I think about 'commune' this isn't what I imagine
But instead something like the anti-family
Whose space is more like a virus, an invisible everywhere

The sixties communes were disappearing in the seventies before the fires
would burn more down
But a lot of them that kept going became bed & breakfasts by the Rea-
gan years
Or artist retreats in the nineties
And then there were all the ones people would decide were cults instead

When I was younger I thought a lot about the architecture of some of the
communes and how some of the hippies didn't like right angles and how
they were so into circular patterns that some communes tried to center
the kitchens and bathrooms in ways that were making reproductive labor
really visible but also making people really sick

I went to a former commune once when I was a kid somewhere outside
of Santa Fe and my friend's aunt spent an afternoon with us making
watercolor paintings of the sky

Love,

Dear Z,

3AM thoughts about where to hide people
how to feed them
clothing, blankets, socks and shoes
clean water
what to do in an earthquake

... all the planning I haven't done for this day that was yesterday

all the spaces that cannot contain the numbers

Love,

Dear Z,

I had a comrade once

At a meeting to plan a direct action
— one of those actions more important than much else,
which evaporates in hindsight,
which drops ¼ sheet leaflets in the corners
and beneath the couch cushions of most houses
he began to roll his eyes at
an older woman
who we'd all known had become suicidal in the weeks before

I wondered about his capacities if she had been the 23 year old who
flirted with him, against her better judgment, whether he could be a
“comrade” for her then.

Instead he shamed and embarrassed her
He told everyone else not to work with her
He became energized to push her out

She took up too much space
She was a liability
To the direct action
That no one showed up for anyway

I had a comrade once

One day I saw his face
As he looked at mine
And it was the same face
I saw at that meeting...

I saw the woman a year later
Living out of a van
Parked on a nice street
She was smiling
I was glad for her
Because I imagined worse

I'm not sure why the comrade struggles
If not for her
But I pity him, because there's little else to do

I can't tell you how to anticipate this
Nor can you be prepared
For how it will feel
To be so disoriented by someone else's assertions and absolute certainty
About "how politics work" ...
And how comrades sometimes aren't friends & they aren't even comrades

Love,

Dear Z,

I had been reading Audre Lorde's response to racism: *I have lived with that anger, ignoring it, feeding upon it, learning to use it before it laid my visions to waste, for most of my life. Once I did it in silence, afraid of the weight.*

I had been thinking of years unable to get mad about the ways my best friend was treated when we were teenagers

How the pills made me quiet about her too

The other day we talked on the phone & she was telling me how she was starting to see a lot more about her life & what it was like to be a black girl who liked punk music living in Albuquerque in the late nineties

Like how that white mom just started stroking her hair at that sleepover
And how her cousins made fun of her for listening to David Bowie with me
And when she talked to me about this I felt so angry for her last night,
like I couldn't before

We were both too scared all the time

My fear of anger taught me nothing. Your fear of that anger will teach you nothing, also.

Love,

VI. NOTES ABOUT THE FUTURE

Dear Z,

Beware of “allies” when no one’s looking
Don’t forget to protect yourself from their impossibility

Love,

Dear Z,

I won’t say that I’m sorry, as if it could undo things, while I wonder
whether to teach you
that bitter distrust can be a form of protection
that the benefit of the doubt helped nobody
in a moment when cowards are cowardly

I’m not sure myself how to learn
to expect that people will betray themselves when they are afraid

There’s a conspiracy, I read

And I have read that conspiracies, unlike history, presuppose an aerial view
But there is a map of people to fuck with
To keep up the clouds
When the naming of ‘conspiracy’ is the conspiracy itself

To know history as something that hides things
That traces veins of power
That evacuates from itself the possibility to deviate

I was prepared for this critique
If only there was a map
That could show to us how power is constructed
And how even the historians conspire when they cannot bear history

Love,

“We can twist the morbid ending into a feminist plot.”

—Sara Ahmed

Dear Z,

I wouldn't want you to not get angry.

There are things that should make you angry as you get older.

There are things that should make you angry right now too.

Others will need you to get angry with them in the years to come.

You will need to step up with your anger.

People will find lots of ways to tell you not to be angry.

There will be moments in your life when to be angry will be absolutely crucial.

And there are other moments when you will need to know what else there is.

But I won't pretend any differently.

Love,

Dear Z,

I hope you know that your fear matters less
Than your ability to describe it
(Whether I believe that,
in my stomach,
all the time,
or not)

I hope you know
That your fear matters less
When friends are with you

That your fear matters to me
That my fears could someday matter to you

That fears can be banished
Mutilated
Re-purposed

That fear is not about fear, but about power,
and power destroys what it wants to
but that power can be destroyed too

That you will need me as much as I need you
to re-negotiate the terms of this thing
little by little

There are things that I'd rather you take my word for, but which you
won't

you'll have to find out.

And I wonder how love prepares you for hate
And I can't take it on myself to convey that to you.

“Be careful.

With what relief do we fall back on
the tale, so often told in revolutions
That now we must
Organize, obey the rules, so that later
We can be free.”

Remember me for how I tried

This is a note about the future

Love,

VII. THE BEACH

Dear Z,

'Utopia' as a space is outside, elsewhere
as a form a blueprint, a program, a party
OR a process in thought, critique, questions
a method of the imagination

but also, in betweenness, imprecision,
ambiguity, contradiction,
liminality
mothering
seeing what is present
dealing with what can be seen
& messiness

NO BORDERS: not even the sea

Lovingly,

Dear Z,

When will these moments come to you
I wonder all the time
You will be my age in 2043
But what will that matter then

At the beach there are no shells & starfish may go extinct

I think of the sandcastles you built with C
Will you remember?

For five years, I sang to you mostly one of two songs
So many things I would have done / But clouds got in my way.

The somber nights with a cassette at my bedside, years before you, folding into these years beside you.

In a tent at Big Sur, I will think of this & you.
At the beach I am here wondering about you & the rest of it...

with love,

