

Dear Elizabeth

I dreamed about you again last night. I could tell you this over orange juice, but the thing is we both know that's not it. And you were a metaphor and Peter is always there; phantom Peter who gets made up but always gets a reference. See, this is what I'm trying to tell you, but I know you understand. It's not easy, indeterminacy, but it's worth it. Indeterminacy is dusk, the buildings on my block are pink, but the point is the moment, not the color. It is some dawns, during spring, remembering by mistake the solitude of city early mornings. The politics of indeterminacy are so muddy when you're queer. But it's even worse when everyone else is queer.

It's all in the way you engage and appreciate. See, I appreciate. Just because someone is smart and beautiful doesn't mean you have to fuck them.

Girls break my heart often. They don't know the difference between love and holding. I want a girl who beholds me. And most of them can't. It's as if embracing the term dyke means women are simply the other side of men; no one is safe anymore and all terrain is dangerous.

Girls break my heart often. My first memory of being queer. I'm four, playing on the handrail at preschool. My heart wrings and twists at the sight of a little girl, younger than me, in a pink dress. I want to squeeze her so hard it hurts.

I dream about Jana. The stain from her sweaty dress ruined my couch and it's what's left. That night we left Litterbox and stumbled, shrieking into Ringold Alley where the leather boys trick in the quiet dark. Jana shoved me up against the cyclone fence, pushed her hips against mine. I laughed and turned my head. She slept in my bed that night. I wouldn't fuck her. I wanted to be friends forever. With Jana, I'd finally met my match. She'd gone out with Don DeLillo, simply by writing him a letter. Gorgeous and brilliant and funny, she would call me and we'd talk for hours on the phone, analyzing books, girls, culture. We passed puns back and forth like Japanese ping pong pros. I was in heaven.

February 24, 1997. Yesterday I tried to set some lame-ass boundary and told Jana not to call 'til late afternoon because I had to take a nap and in my dream she calls anyway and in my dream she kisses me, sticking her tongue in my mouth & I push her away and then grab her & we kiss really deeply and it felt so real & then my mom catches us.

Girls get in so deep. That's why I'm queer. It's not that they're any sexier than men, it's that they break my heart better.

Jana lies to me, by omission, and Jana tells me the truth. We went to Josie's to eat two days ago and for the first time we couldn't connect. I kept wondering what I said wrong. Then I remembered she'd done heroin the night before. Then I started thinking about all those times on the phone we'd be talking and she'd drop the phone and start puking uncontrollably and I never knew why and I was so sympathetic and I just thought she got sick a lot. Her friend Liz's nose is collapsing from the inside, collapsing on itself. Jana's therapist fires her because she does

drugs and I listen to her sob for two hours and I cry because she's hurting and I love her. And the next day she calls me from jail, bailing out the girl she did the H with, the girl with the girl-friend, whose girlfriend put the TRO out on her, and I'm going thru all this with her, wishing I didn't feel anything cause somehow now that I know all these life's ups and downs are about drugs, I feel duped. Like they are going to happen over and over again, like it's not some life process but rather a repetition, endless, til she breaks out of it and I don't want to hurt for her every time something else crappy happens.

Went to dinner with Jana tonight. When she sees people she knows she tells them she's having a hard time and she's feeling better. She still hurts, her whole body hurts, and she's jumpy and pale, red-eyed, breaking out in boils and I realize as I write this that it breaks my heart. She hasn't been able to smell or taste anything lately. I had to stop myself from asking her if she could smell the night-blooming jasmine because she wouldn't be able to.

Jana tells me I don't need someone like Manya who always has a monkey on her back and she says, "You gotta feel sorry for her. It's so tough. I know how it is to have that monkey" and I wonder if she knows what she has just said.

After dinner, Jana and I buy this leather jacket and pants from a junky who's selling off her stuff. She says she's leaving town, but you can tell she needs a fix. I buy the jacket. Jana really wants it after she sees it on me. She says she'll trade me anything of hers I want. I keep it. Until I get it home and reach in the pocket and pull out a used syringe. I give Jana the jacket.

I go out to bars and come home close to tears, feeling drunk with easy emotion. Most times, I go over the evening in my head and realize I didn't even drink. Girls go to the same place as alcohol. I throw them up at the end of the night so I can drink more. Sometimes, I do Patrón shots, tequila cutting the blade of girls who look away. It's what they do. Sadly. Look away. Gay men pass and then look back. Girls pass and look away and never look back. I haven't learned yet not to smile.

Melinda says she can't be my friend anymore because when we get close, she likes me as more than a friend. And even though she is dating someone else, she still has feelings for me. She wants distance. I want to kill her for stealing yet one more best friend. Friends. How hard. Some. Some like berries and some like fruit trees, grafting, careful, years of barrenness. And some. So hard. Hard like pointing to my own organs and saying that's why and this is how.

The moment of beholding isn't. Isn't linear. Isn't going anywhere. Beholding hovers, invisible to the naked eye, circling like a halo, flying away, drawn in, everywhere impossible to locate: a valence. the electron's unrequited passion for the atom: again and always.

Sincerely.