

Zach Da Costa

She forgave me with a smile

for throwing out five dollars worth of crack cocaine  
wrapped in a little ball of aluminum foil and tucked away in a leopardprint box  
with passports and health cards and guitar picks and hidden lust.  
"You actually went into my thing and took it and threw it out?" she said.  
Yes. You're the one who said it tastes like shit and smells like burning piss and plastic...  
"Yeah, I don't even like the high", she admitted. "It's just something to do..."  
I thought about the nature of boredom and addiction  
and their relationships to intelligence and stupidity,  
while she twisted her face up with one eye scrunched tight  
and her lips all sideways like she was having a stroke,  
and then she let out the cutest little fart...  
and I looked at her across the bed and I forgave her with a smile.  
She giggled and squealed and shook her head at me  
and backed her bare ass up into me,  
and ten minutes later we lay naked and entwined in a mess of blankets and bodily fluids  
and cat hair and dog hair and spilled beer and bad dreams,  
and she stared at her phone while I stared at the ceiling,  
before getting up to empty my bladder and refill my glass.  
And when I came back she looked up at me from her pillow and her phone  
and she saw my eyes, saw my judgments, my valuations,  
my doubts and fears and secret dark places that even I pretend don't exist...

And she forgave me with a smile,  
for all the wrongs I would ever commit.  
And there would be many.

## Sometimes I forget

Sometimes, I forget that I have a brother  
because it's just easier that way.

I forget with sex and drink and absence and violence and other cheap tricks to silence the mind and make it  
forget what it really wants to turn over and excavate.

How many times have I drowned him in dark beer and cheap scotch?

How many times have I trampled him on long concrete walks to nowhere?

Sometimes, I forget that I have a brother...

Until I hear some poor soul muttering Freudian death threats to their alternate egos on the subway,  
Until I see a child, fat, innocent, and helpless, beaten and berated for having the ill fortune of living with  
monsters.

Until I hear my mom talk about him with someone else,  
someone who cares, or maybe doesn't care enough,  
someone who talks without really saying anything,  
someone who prays, damned if I know what for.

Someone who lives in the centre of existence itself, while I slowly wither away on the periphery, feeling  
sorry for myself as I shit in the privacy of my own home,

as I lace up my boots and buckle my belt,

as I eat with a knife and fork,

as I sleep on a bed with sheets,

as I tire of human contact,

as I roam city streets, tempting them to lock me away,

as I think, without questioning whose thoughts they are,

as I fuck something other than my own hand,

as I remember my father with his skull intact...

Sometimes, I remember that I have a brother who does none of these things  
because of what he's already done.

And I think about him thinking about me,

And I wonder which of us should forgive the other...

## My Independent Boner

It's 9:26 on a Tuesday morning and I'm sitting here on the Sheppard subway line with a hard-on that could blind a cyclops.

I have no idea why this is happening since I'm half asleep and there's not a decent-looking woman in sight and all I'm thinking about is the 8 hours of paint and dust and cranky bosses and asshole clients and the wops fighting the porkchops and me sitting on a dirty floor against a wall still wet with paint, not caring, eating cold leftovers with a drywall knife because I forgot to bring a fork this morning.

I have this hard-on that could silence a screaming woman, or make her scream louder, and I'm trying to will it away but the more I think about it and the more I try to free my left leg from this fleshy splint, the harder I get!

And by now the head is poking up on the denim and is trying to escape that way, trying to live its own life irrespective of the tired old sap with sleep-matted hair and crooked beard and fresh-from-the-dirty-laundry-bin clothes that it's attached to.

And you know...

My mysterious, lonely, independent and emancipated boner would probably do pretty well without me. It basically does all the decision-making for the both of us as it is...

At least if we went our separate ways I could think more clearly and come home to an empty apartment instead of a lying junkie stripper and the Jesus freaks upstairs.

Maybe I'd write better poems too..?

About what, though?

The moon and the sky and a rushing river, or a nice, clean house on a hill with a cockadoodle and some sort of macrame-ing librarian type with a fuckin' PhD telling me she loves me and everything will be all right?

No.

Those poems don't work.

There are entire shelves and libraries and centuries to prove that those poems don't work.

So I go back to my basement cave in Etobicoke with no lights in the bathroom, with a river rushing through the hallway when it rains too much and the tile grout gives way, with a hundred pound dog sleeping on my bed and a hundred pound woman sitting on the floor eating all my food.

So I just try to drain that ruthless bastard in my pants until its will to live is brought down to my level.

And the cycle presses on and on,  
and I never come home to an empty apartment.