

when i'm with you, i unleash my dragon breath
by Melis Gordem

i feel like shit.
absolute bottom line shit.
just putting it out there—plain and simple
for you all to know
as to why i am about to sound
like a complete and utter asshole.

let's start with this:
why am i so fucking angry?
my heart is overheating;
i'm caught in a delicate inferno—
feelings soft enough to empathize with you,
but dangerous enough to retaliate
when i just want to be alone.

which brings me to my next question:
why are you still with me?
right by my side,
sitting beside my malignant wings.
just leave me alone.
i can't handle being with you sometimes,
you know.
my mind clouds with smoke i've inhaled
due to resistance,
begging for redemption.

you see that too...
you see how hard i'm trying,
yet you still remain with me even if you get burned.
you're sweet, you know that?
but you're too sanguine for me at times;
you give me a bad headache
after indulging too much of you.

did you know that you are kind too?
you always ask
before receiving what my fiery spirit
can give you.
you make sure you don't extinguish the flames in me,
but i don't care what happens;
i don't care because it's you.
i do this
because i want to give you a chance
too after everything you've gone through.
i do this
because i know you don't like mean people,
those without morals
and manners.

besides making such an obvious observation,
i am bountiful with knowledge of you,
for i have explored all of you
through the storms inside your castle
and the eerie calm that follows it.
i know all the small details about you,
even your favorite food joint.
because, just like that,
it's been engrained in my brain.
for i have listened to you go on
complaint
after complaint,
after complaint.
it just feels like my golden blood
rushes to my head after a while
because of being with you
and i'm sorry for feeling that way.

i truly am apologizing to you
because you're incredibly close to me,
my naïve warrior,
but sometimes
i need my own space too,
you know,
that doesn't mean i love you less,
but if i don't step back,
it just feels like i'm drowning in you
and i can't breathe,
God i can't breathe.

i feel like shit,
but this is all i can handle;
please,
i don't mean to limit you as a caring individual,
but please go.
leave me alone for a while.
just a little while,
saying that statement made me feel like shit too,
but God just for a little while,
so i can finally feel like i'm flying once again.



When I call you my banana nut muffin and you call me your chicken noodle soup, I don't know how else to describe the way I love you, except to say I'm glad I can keep you warm. I'm crazy about you – bananas, if you will. Crumbling under your gaze; you look at me, smile, and your eyes widen even further, as though you have just watched a firework explode for the first time. Your kiss face looks like a fish, and all I can think is damn, for the love of God, take me underwater and serve me on a platter.

You always smell like Old Spice deodorant when we cuddle, so now anytime I pass someone wearing Old Spice, I have to remind myself it would definitely be inappropriate to curl up like steam under their chins. My atoms stir the nearer I get to you, and I can feel my body

craving the warmth of yours, in all my anemic, cold-fingered glory. There is nothing safer than being your little spoon.

Food used to be a nuisance – to be ingested but not necessarily enjoyed. I never apologize to myself for letting me go hungry. But every time you call me a food, I learn how to be more okay feeding myself. I relearn craving. I buy the cookies. I've never loved eating more than when I am with you.

I don't write about love often because I don't know how to explain it, and I know it's cheesy but you make it easier to describe, so that when someone asks, "What does love feel like?" I can say, "Comfort food."

Comfort Food
by Sarosh Nandwani



Talking to Myself
by Keana Aguila Labra

Why did you leave? Why didn't you ask me for help? How can I stop swirling these words in my notebook, how can I halt the black that seeks to seep from closed off corridors? I made a promise never to share the truth that lay dead at the bottom of untouched trenches; I swore I would not know love nor love in the same way again. I swear I can't do this anymore; I try to hold my chest; it pushes and pushes and pushes; I refuse to let it free, but I wish I could reach toward you and place a finger to your cheek. Why did you tie thread to neck; I always knew that your feet yearned to be free, but why, why did you leave?

But, he is gone.
He is not of this world.

But, the things worth
remembering, observing,

holding

are usually not.

Bottles
by Richaundra Thursday



It started with one, a Marinara jar, dishwasher clean, the paper crimped from stuffing. Then a Coke bottle, the classic shape, green stationary tube rolled almost to the neck. Then there were six, clear glass displaying old parchment hexes, Xeroxed spells, torn out spiral recipes. They lined planter boxes, hung from knotted twine, pyramid stacks leaning against windows on the roof of an innocuous apartment building.

At night, headlights from the street below sometimes caught in one of the reflections and fractal danced through, jumping from wood carved words to penciled diagrams, each sparkle its own kind of magic. Soon there were winding paths between sections as every other inch of the sky facing floor was covered. You had to know it was there, a whisper, a passed word, a GPS tracker texted in the night, but once arrived, it was all yours. Someone had even taken the time to arrange the diverse shapes into vague amalgams of categories. Closest to the stairway (there was no elevator so the wheelchair witches enchanted the rails to levitate chairs like hovercraft until the city got around to enforcing accessibility laws) were all food related spells. As simple as ensuring bread always rose and proofed correctly (popular with the GBBO crowd) to whispered prayers for successful herb growing, those seasonings being so necessary for so many other concoctions. Spells for revitalizing sections of forest floor sat along rhymes to sic strangling vines on enemies. The smudge shaded spice bottles bled organically into reincarnated Olive Oil jars with songs to soothe wildlife, lure and converse with all manner of creatures and even to send out a hitchhiking consciousness, though someone had slipped a consent clause around that one which stayed firmly in place. The summons for fairies and unicorns remained untouched; having access didn't make the users stupid.

Eventually, someone put a laundry line up, fear of discovery defeated by hope for continued offerings. Many of these votive jars and former pesto containers held folded affirmations, the mundane magic of encouragement, recognition and support.

There were darker notes, of course, those with singed edges, bleeding inks, the ones with canning lids that stuck a bit extra, as if to say 'Are you sure?' But the sharing space was based on trust and hope and if the visitors that came breathed a sigh of relief noticing each cloudy glass still undisturbed, it was with reaffirmed faith in the better parts of themselves. Besides, there was so much else to see. Spells to catch songs in wine, infuse feelings into bakes, to quicken the blood, to scry a hidden corner, to weave shadows into shields, to leave messages under the earth and embed emoticons into clouds. Words to produce thorns if someone tried to steal a body's sacred roses, to nudge karma, to build a world of mirrors the most privileged of evils could not escape from. Chants to grow and and protect, change and learn, recipes for tinkering, avenging, building, and burning. For anyone. For free.

You could still find it, there's an elevator now, too and vertical gardens of multicolored glass. There is always more than should fit and never enough to be considered complete. Feel free to bring your own offering, no cantrip too small. There's a place for it.

