

good evening. or bad evening, depending on how things are going in your life. that was weird. sorry. hello. *hello*? oh, shit. hey. i can hear you. hey. yeah, it has been a while. how's your mom? does she still remember the timid way i'd creep into her house, as if i didn't really believe i belonged there? good, good. how's your granny n' em? still good? okay, because i thought something might have been wrong, you know- i ain't seen y'all in a while, and we just live so close...

anyway, i'm getting my brain rewired. crossing synapses and shit. electroshock therapy isn't for the week, ha! ha... do you remember when we went to death valley? the sky swallowed us in darkness and spat us out somewhere empty. it was the devil's breath and i still felt cold. there were enough stars to power the world for the next ten thousand millennia. if every star was a death of us, we still wouldn't be able to count them all.

i heard your sister got accepted to Brown. God bless her brilliant mind. we'll need young black girls—sorry, black women—like her. do you feel jealous? not to threaten your manhood, sorry. but do you? i mean, she's a little girl. and you... you're not. ay nigga, watch your mouth! i'm just saying. the gap between you two spreads two divergent wood, or whatever Robert Frost said. you ain't getting any younger and that mind isn't getting any sharper.

my pops got sick. sorry, that was a bomb to drop. let's go back to talking about how stupid you're getting. no, really, it's fine. mom took out a loan. we're making it. not to be a bitch, but i'd rather strip myself of all womanhood than accept a dime from you. i don't need to be dangled over in debt like a rag doll to a man who can't keep it in his pants. why did i call? let me tell you why i called.

i came across some old parchment and i wrote your name down ten times. i buried it in my backyard and had my dog piss on it. i was checking to see if you were still alive. and if you are alive, that must mean that your manhood has been ripped from you, figuratively or otherwise. i'm praying for the latter.

i'm calling so you know that i'm thriving. and no, this isn't a desperate ex-girlfriend rant where i throw myself at you with my 60 pound weight loss and newfound glory, but wouldn't that be a story for the Friday night news? "local woman humiliates self over the phone, more at eight". ha. and it's not so you know that i'm thriving, that way you feel regret from what you lost. i want you to have lost me. like i said, your mind isn't getting sharper.

i've been writing love poetry like the sea. salty, bipolar, receding and approaching. i've been chewing on roses and ivy and bathing in holy water. i've cleaned out my wounds and scarred over, is it obvious? not to you? maybe it will be, one day. did you hear that you got replaced by a white boy? yes! sorry, that was mean. but he treats me like i am a god that favored humanity, like one that hasn't left. he bleeds and his veins spell out my name. i would cut deep into my stomach for you to stretch dinner and you'd throw away our leftovers.

that electroshock therapy has taught me something you always wanted to. it's taught me what love is. you remember- course you remember- all the times you asked me what love was. nothing was

ever quite right for you. it was always the wrong answer. but i know now. i know now that love is a dying star. it is the perceived miseducation of black america. it is a baby crying because the air is too cold and hurts her skin. it's our precious time. it is the make believe world my niece lives in when we promote her independent play. it is the sound of rain falling and crashing into the sides of the house late at night. it's trying on a dress at home that you didn't try on in the dressing room and having it fit. so **FUCK YOU**, i know love. it is everything around me. it is the pulsating beat of my heart. it is the feeling of my boyfriend grabbing my hand in the middle of the night as we sleep back to back. it is the bite into fried, juicy pork chops when you know my ass didn't eat pork with you. it's unpacking bags and standing in your new apartment and saying "praise God, praise God, I made it!"

sorry. are you still there? right. anyway. i hope your mama is doing alright. she is a proud woman, and she ought to be. she raised some well-mannered girls. pity as to what happened with you. i'll never forget your face. they say when you see a ghost, a part of them lives with you forever. i've seen a million ghosts and none of them have haunted me quite like you. when i end this phone call, it'll be my exorcism. i hope you survive without my lifeline pumping into you. i'm managing just fine.

goodbye.