

Night Talks

I was sitting outside on the porch steps, breathing in 2 AM night air, and listening to the muffled sounds of the party inside. I heard the front door open and a few footsteps later, Brian sat beside me. We were friends in the way that fades after college when location drifts you apart. But at the time, our friendship was essential and ablaze. We talked about the play we were working on and sipped our beers, pausing to look at people stumbling home in newly formed pairs and to look at the stars.

After a few quiet moments, Brian turned to me, eyes glistening, and asked, “Why do you think that I should live?”

“Why do I think you should live?” I looked at Brian. And then I looked down into my red cup, and divined nothing from the PBR. I knew the answer was somewhere inside of me, but suddenly all of these reasons to the contrary kept popping up. Because terrible things, big and small, happen all the time.

You miss the 66 bus trying to get to a job you don't even like.
Your first dog dies.
Your student loans are never ending.
Your favorite band breaks up.
You sleep with someone you barely know, and after, they play acoustic banjo covers of Nickelback and Linkin Park. Their favorite bands.
Your hair starts falling out and you don't know why.

Sometimes the terrible thing is just a Thursday.
And a stranger on the internet tells you to kill yourself.

You turn on the news to see devastation around the world and in your hometown.
And you think about how the dinosaurs had no idea the meteor was coming
And how the floors we stand on and the beds we lie in will eventually become dust after we do
And how literally no one knows for sure what happens after we die.

Someone you love can turn out to be just as flawed as you are.
Someone you love can decide to not love you back.
Someone you love can pass away and you spend the rest of your life trying to live without them

And you're afraid to walk out the door because you think no one loves you as you are,
Because you think no one will love you as you want to be,
Because you think you'll die

And people can be really, really mean.

Maybe the terrible thing is that you grow up.

But sometimes it's nothing you did or anything that happened to you at all. Just the wiring in your brain gets glitchy.

And all of these terrible, little things can weave into one giant net that traps you and hangs you upside down in the shadows with no escape. So why, against all the sadness and darkness in the world, do I think you should live?

I know Love is the right answer. Love from someone else or yourself even for a minute is worth it. And so are trees, books, breakfast, and sitting outside breathing in 2 AM night air. Sometimes that's all you've got to go on and it has to be enough.

My friend Brian did eventually shed her Brian skin to reveal the radiant Elizabeth that was always inside.

It's perfectly okay to feel both infinite and incomplete

But it's hard to remember what love feels like if you are shrouded in sadness and if you feel you've never known it.

So I promise you: I will sit and talk with you until the choice to live isn't ours anymore. And then our souls will trampoline into the sky and discover all the secrets of the stars that scientists spend their lives searching for.