



MY SIDE OF

OUR  
Story

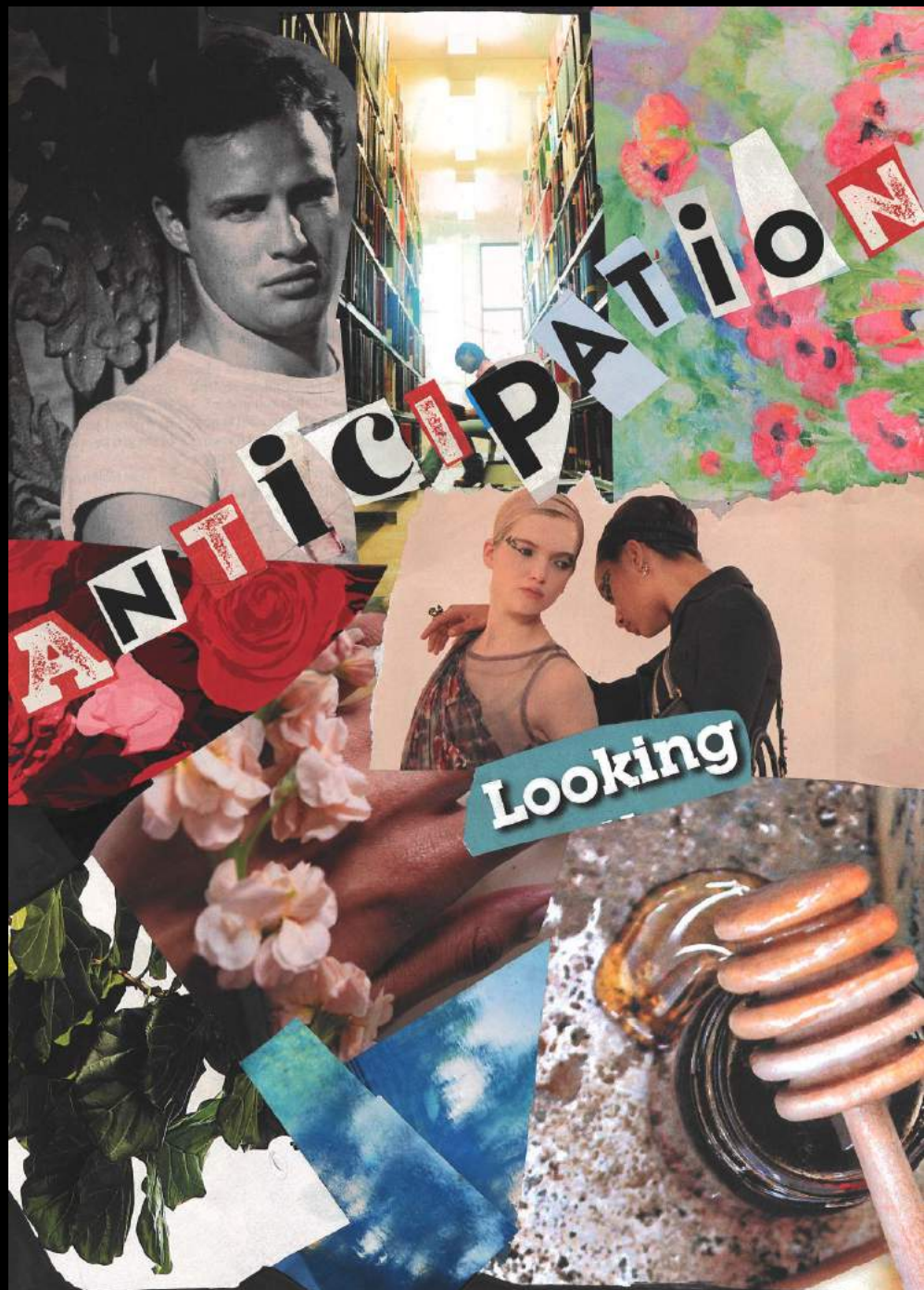
BY

LAUREN

PARKER



'I'LL TELL YOU EVERYTHING'



Anticipation

Looking



**I Hope I Don't Fall In Love With You**  
- Tom Waits

We met in a storm. I think. It's fuzzy now; it feels so close in time but so distant in my mind. I've always said I loved you then but how could I?

Beginnings are always made up.  
This weird string of gasps.

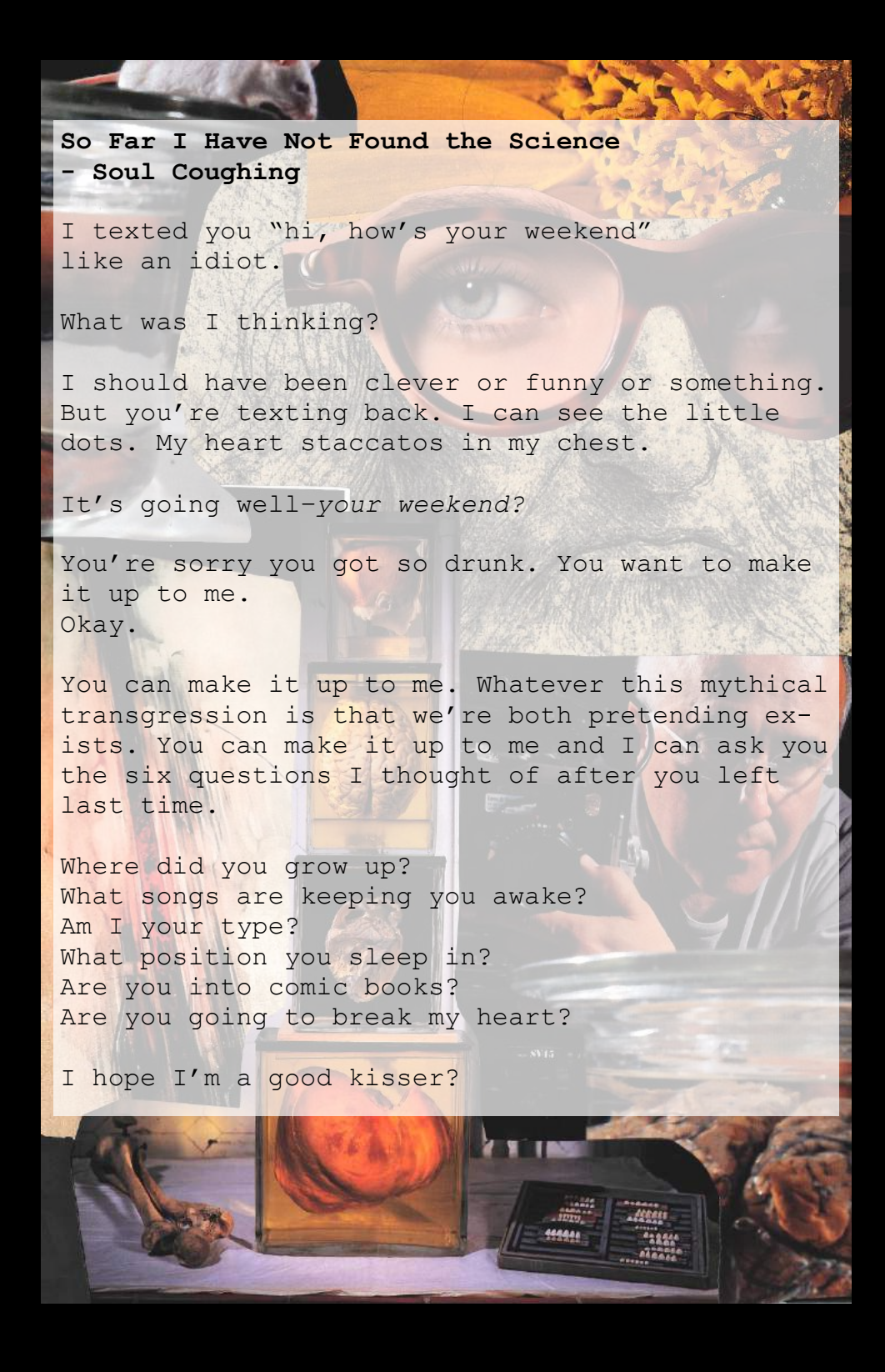
We met in a storm, hiding under the awning of a Chinese restaurant, the cuffs of your jacket dripping on the sidewalk.

I said I knew a bar.

I always knew bars back then. It's different now, I promise. But then I knew bars. I can't remember anything about it, but I remember you and how the neon sign created an orange halo around your face.

I don't remember how many drinks we had. More than enough. That was what I was drinking at the time. More than enough. You said I could text you and you stumbled a bit in the rain and from the gin. You were drinking gin back then. You said you hated the taste but once someone had told you it was sophisticated.

I couldn't have possibly loved you already, but I did.



**So Far I Have Not Found the Science  
- Soul Coughing**

I texted you "hi, how's your weekend"  
like an idiot.

What was I thinking?

I should have been clever or funny or something.  
But you're texting back. I can see the little  
dots. My heart staccatos in my chest.

It's going well-*your weekend?*

You're sorry you got so drunk. You want to make  
it up to me.  
Okay.

You can make it up to me. Whatever this mythical  
transgression is that we're both pretending ex-  
ists. You can make it up to me and I can ask you  
the six questions I thought of after you left  
last time.

Where did you grow up?  
What songs are keeping you awake?  
Am I your type?  
What position you sleep in?  
Are you into comic books?  
Are you going to break my heart?

I hope I'm a good kisser?

Craving

## R U Mine? - Arctic Monkeys

I have such a fucking crush on you and have no idea if you like me at all. Or if you like me enough to want to be with me. No one has ever just looked me in the eyes and said they wanted me - will you?

I wish I wasn't a coward and could tell you that how your face and chest flush when we fuck haunts my dreams. That my bed smells of you and I bury my face in it while I jerk off.

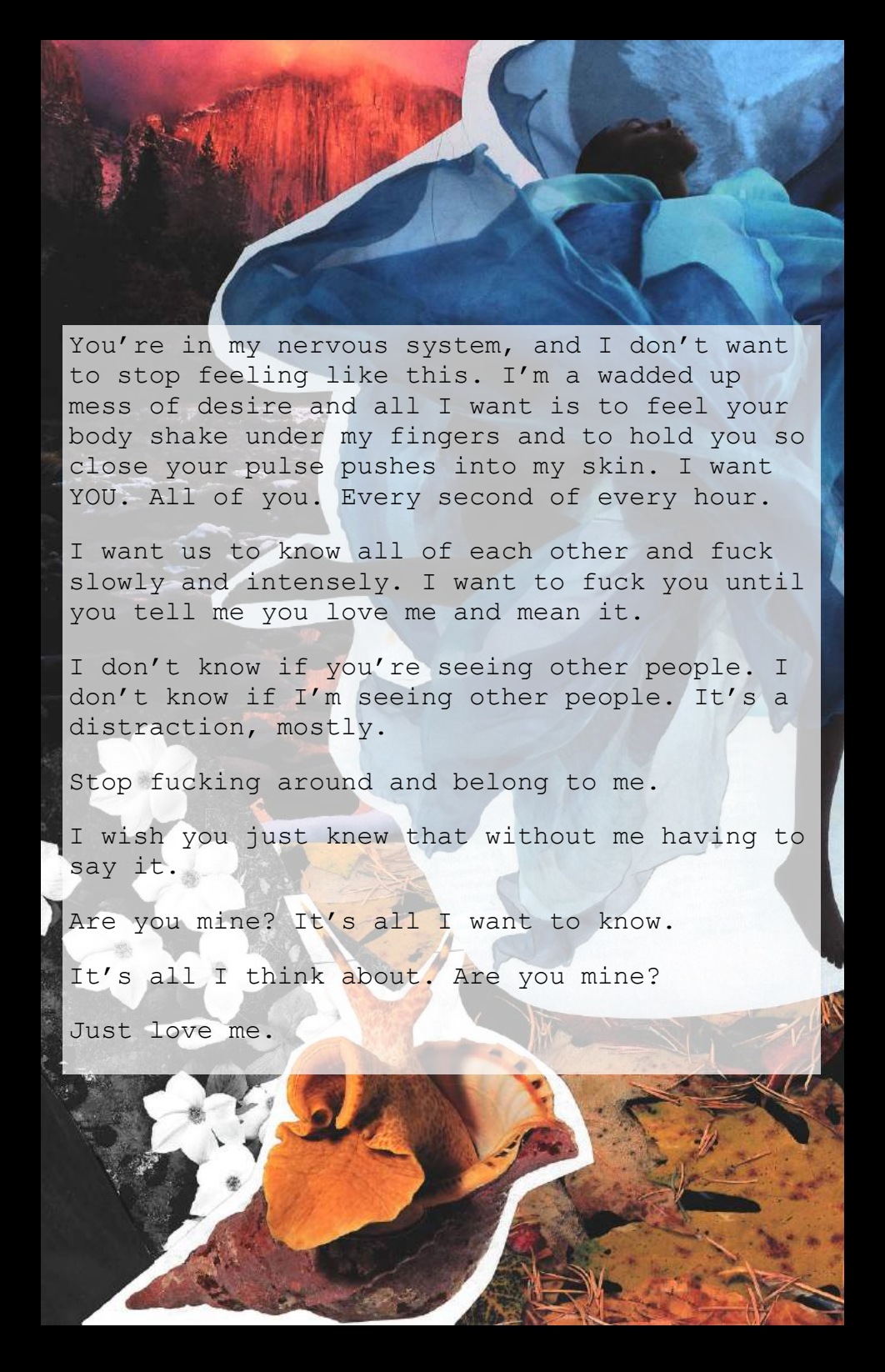
I don't even jerk off to the dirty stuff. I jerk off to the connection. Intimacy causes shame.

I can't tell the difference between needandwant ; it all feels too fucking urgent. I want more of you.

*Wantwantwantwant.*

I'm too fucking old to be like this. You make my hands shake and my fists clench.

Gimme Some Skin



You're in my nervous system, and I don't want to stop feeling like this. I'm a wadded up mess of desire and all I want is to feel your body shake under my fingers and to hold you so close your pulse pushes into my skin. I want YOU. All of you. Every second of every hour.

I want us to know all of each other and fuck slowly and intensely. I want to fuck you until you tell me you love me and mean it.

I don't know if you're seeing other people. I don't know if I'm seeing other people. It's a distraction, mostly.

Stop fucking around and belong to me.

I wish you just knew that without me having to say it.

Are you mine? It's all I want to know.

It's all I think about. Are you mine?

Just love me.



SATISFACTION

Love is here  
to stay and  
that's enough





# When light slices through the

Only Human - Grace Askew

I remember this part being the shortest.

It was nice believing there was a chance you'd always be there. We spent so much time wrapped up in each other - not talking. You would run your fingers over the palms of my hands, and I would try to hold them but you'd always pull away. Your body would settle into mine, but your hands, your hands remained free.

Now I wonder why you didn't trust me. Why you wouldn't take my hands.

I remember you said you thought loving you was hard. You thought that you were difficult. You apologized for everything all the time. You picked fights with me, all the while leaning in, begging me to love you "anyway."

I told you to start believing I would always love you.

Anyway,

sea, life sparkles like  
a city at night.





DON'T HIDE

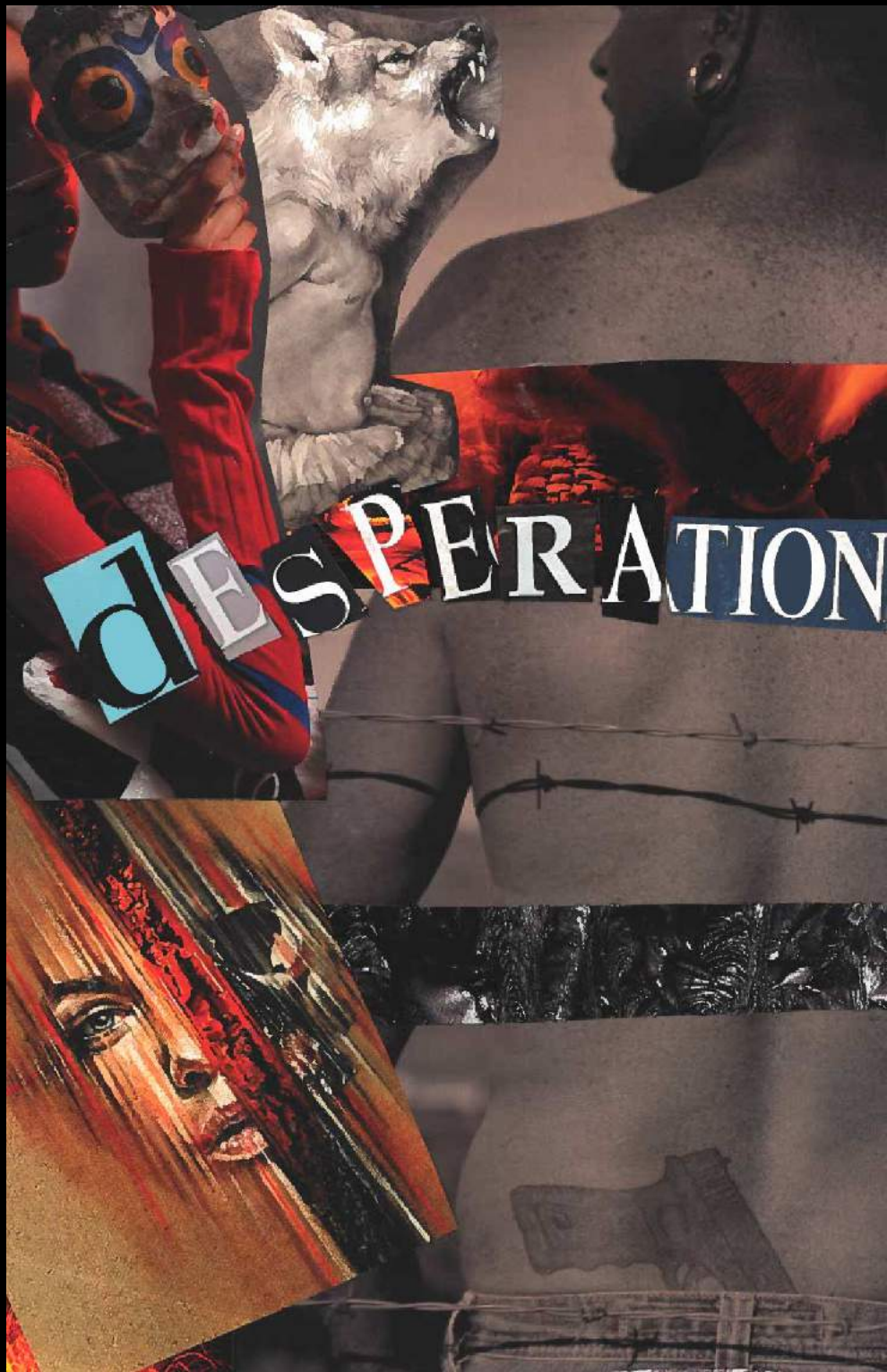
Anyone who failed to love you is a fucking idiot.

You picked at yourself so much when you thought I wasn't looking. I wanted to see these supposed terrible parts of you that drove everyone away.

I wanted you to show me everything. I wanted to see all of you.

Don't hide from me. Don't lie to me.

I felt so fucking lucky.



# DESPERATION

## When the Party's Over - Billie Eilish

I know something is different. Wrong. Like a sprain. Our limbs aren't holding us up or together.

I try to forget this part. I try to forget the whole thing, but especially this part.

It starts with a party. The party ends with sobbing in the car on the ride home. You start taking more walks by yourself. I start staying later than I should at just about everything.

I get even better at drinking.

I see you move through the world and it looks so much easier when you're shining alone than when I'm by your side.

Parts of me are dragging parts of you down. I'm underfoot.

If you love me as I am  
you don't see me

Not all of me

You're just skimming the surface and  
it feels like betrayal

We've been together long enough  
that you should know me better  
than this



## 2 Atoms in a Molecule - Noah and The Whale

There is Love the noun and love the verb. Love is brittle fragile pious. Loving is the muscle. Loving always hurts and on your best days makes you feel alive, but only because you're hovering so close to destruction. Loving is destroying yourself for someone else.

I don't know if I am loving you anymore or throwing Love at you. The floor is covered in broken glass and I'm trying to remember how I used to love you. I feel so full of bad things and so hollow of good things.

I don't know what I did or what I'm doing and I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry,

sorrysorrysorrysorrysorry.



LOVE is

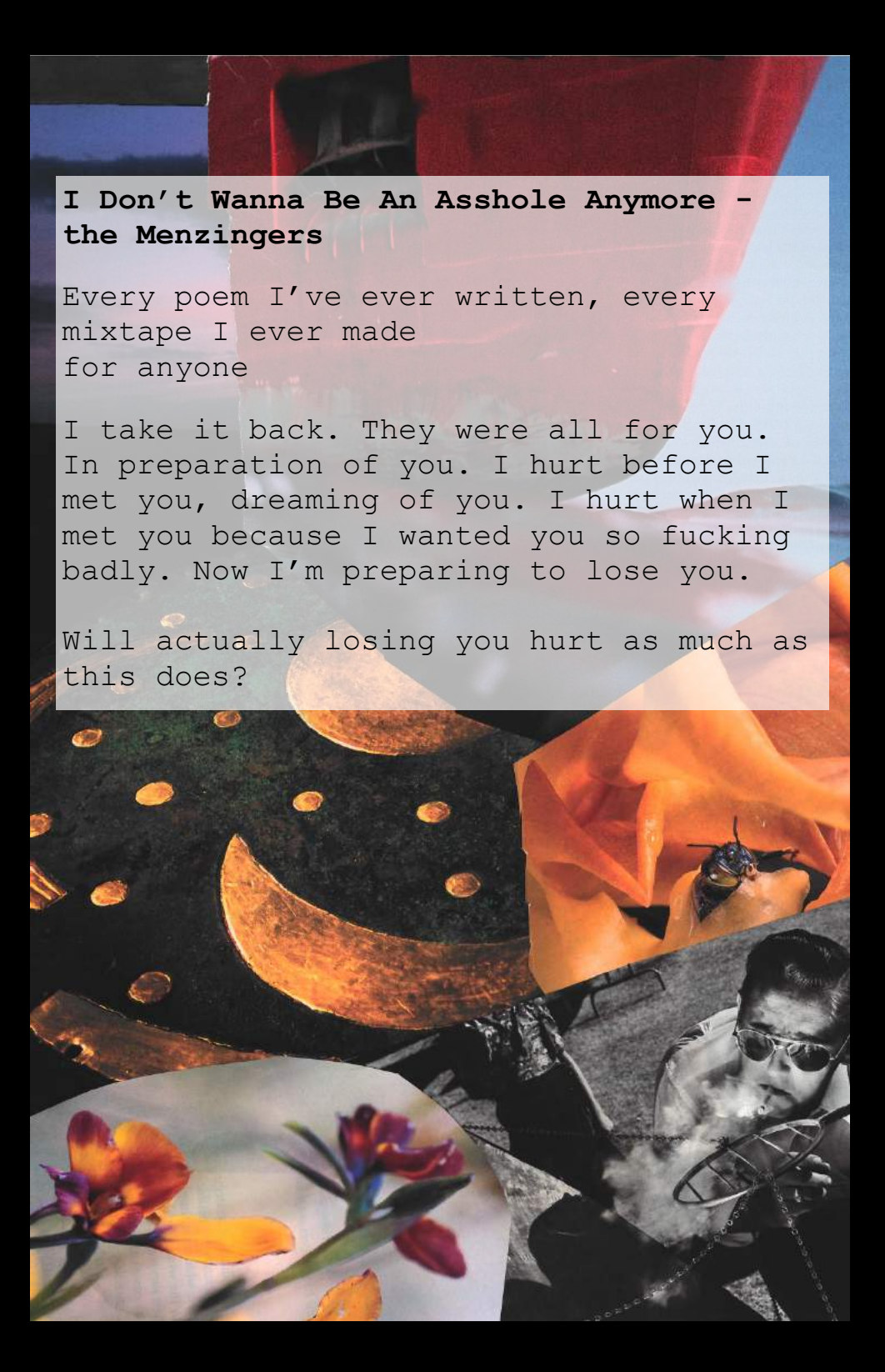
## Hopeless Romantic - the Bouncing Souls

We're fighting again. We're always fighting. I say the fights make me feel better but they don't. They don't solve anything. I thought love was supposed to be easier than this and I think of how hard it's been all the way along. Is this just what love is? This agony of waiting to see if they'll fall in love with you and this agony of waiting to see if they'll stay.

I never know what you're thinking anymore. Your face changes so much. So many parts of you that I used to see are hiding from me.

I want to grow old with you but there's so much time between now and then.

HARD FALL



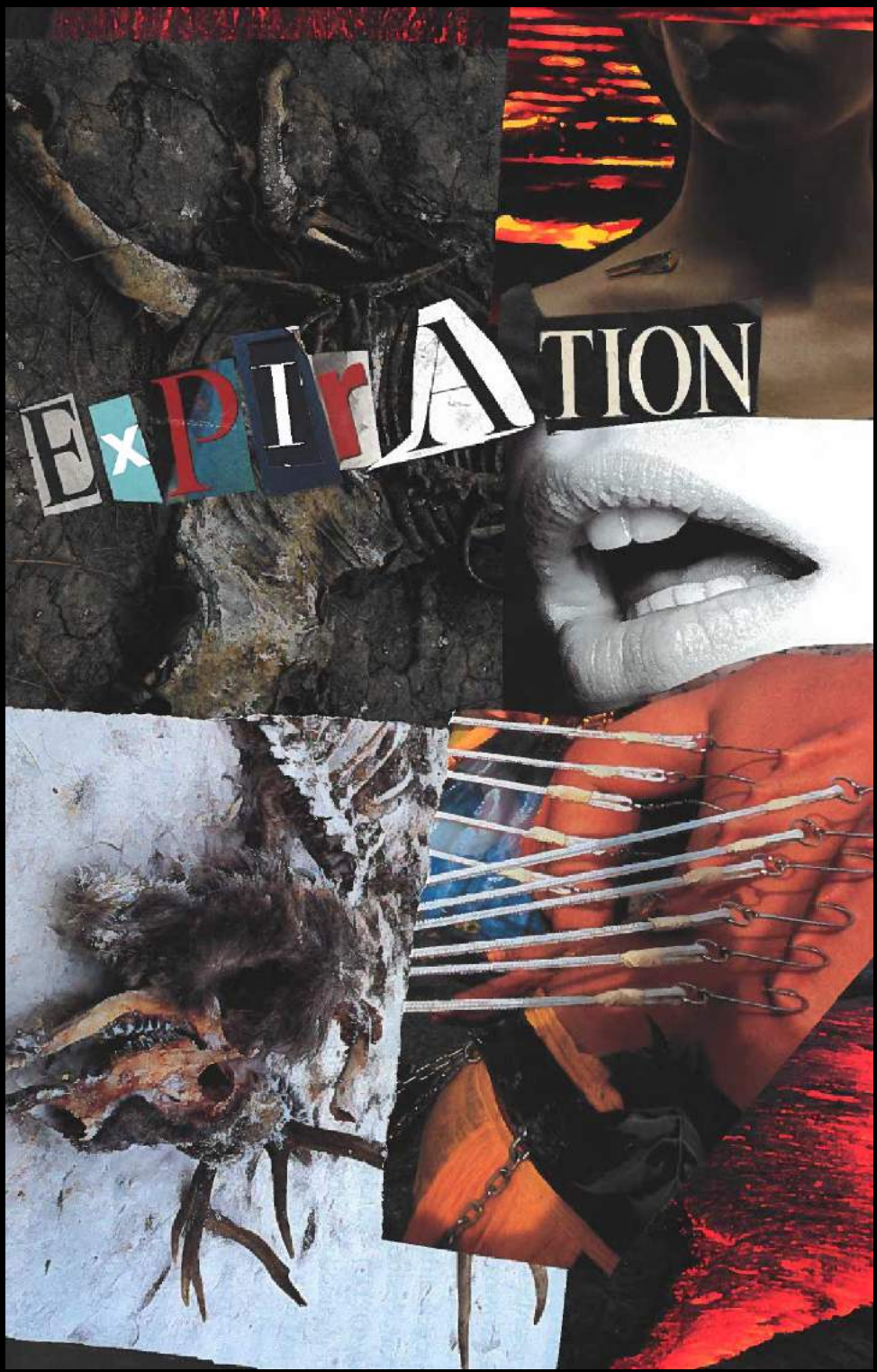
**I Don't Wanna Be An Asshole Anymore -  
the Menzingers**

Every poem I've ever written, every  
mixtape I ever made  
for anyone

I take it back. They were all for you.  
In preparation of you. I hurt before I  
met you, dreaming of you. I hurt when I  
met you because I wanted you so fucking  
badly. Now I'm preparing to lose you.

Will actually losing you hurt as much as  
this does?

# EXPIRATION





Is it  
Gravity  
or  
Attraction  
that keeps me  
here

**I Was an Island - Allison Weiss**

It hurts more. It hurts so much more. How am I even alive?

I remember that movie we saw where a man sat alone on a train, his eyes clutching tears, as the music swelled. He looked beautiful. The lighting blue and rich purple, like Irises at the end of the season, and his suit fades into the frame and the countryside churns past his window like a tempest.

I hope I look as beautiful as that man, strangling his grief on the train. If I am beautiful, and people can marvel at me, maybe that will make this better when I remember it.

It looks better in the movies.





## If I Could Write - Sam Phillips

I'm fighting texting you. Everyone else who ever loved me just loved how they looked reflected in my eyes. But I believe you truly loved me and love wasn't enough. Everyone talks about "growing apart" or "wanting different things" and shrug as if that answer is simple. I wanted you as much as I wanted those other things. I just wanted those other things as much as I wanted you.

I'm typing.

No, I'm not sending that. I'm not sending that I can't stop thinking about every fight we've ever had and have so much more to fight with you about because I don't want this to end. If I'm screaming at you then there is still something unbroken between us. There is still something to fight over. I will pick over the bones of this relationship forever, I know it. Breakups are emotional carrion birds. Sharp beaks tearing and devouring everything valuable until all that's left are the stains on the side of the highway.

I'm not typing anymore.

I hope you aren't looking at your phone. That you don't see the dots.

...

But I hope you do. Because I fucking miss you. I can't believe I have to live without you. When so much of me was so good at loving you.



## Girls like You - the Naked and the Famous


I hit the x next to your name on my social media searches. Knowing that you'll be back in the queue in a few days. I still look at you like you're mine. My mind still calls you *baby* and my fingers brush over your digital face like life...but less.

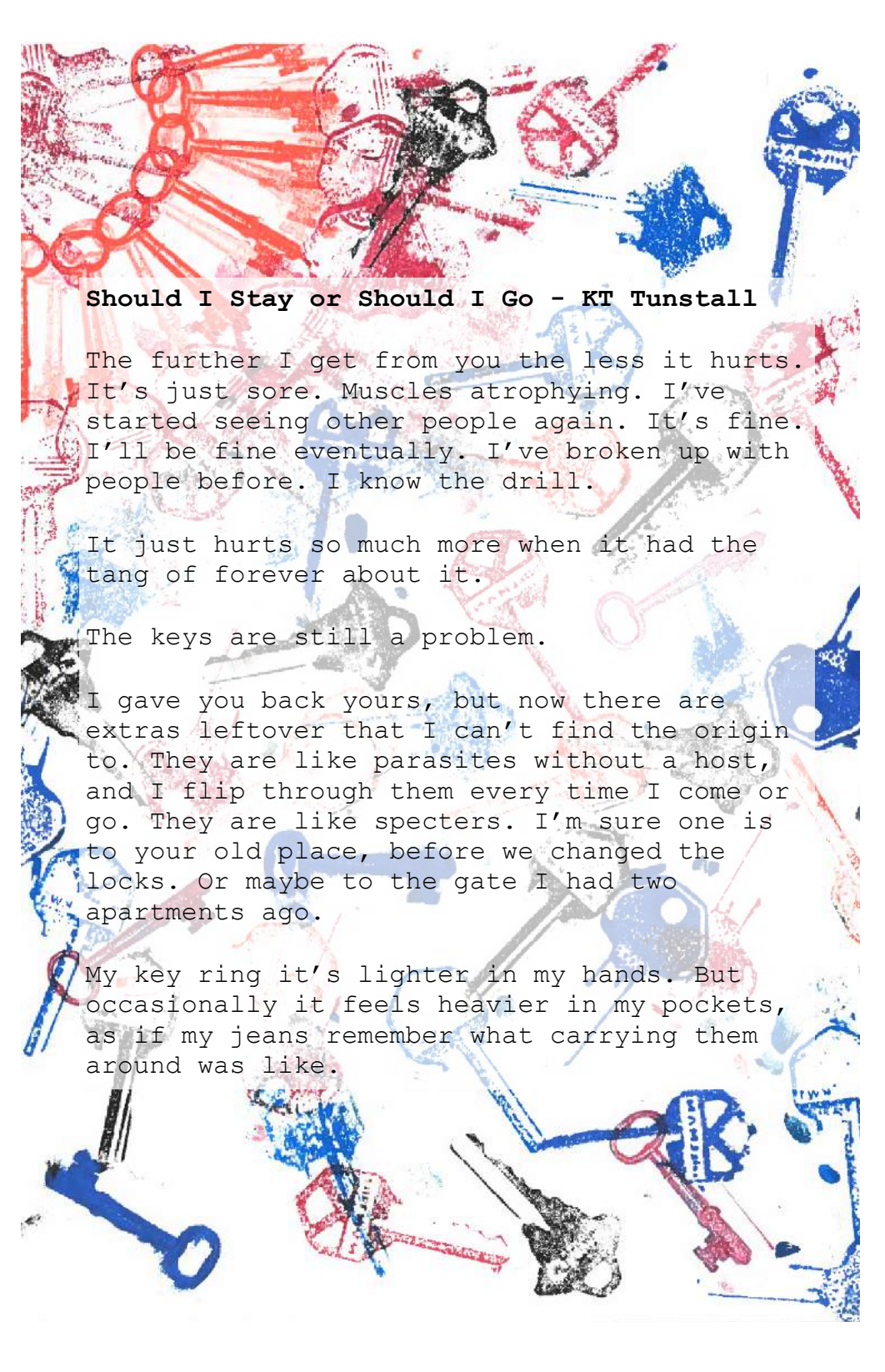
Tonight I'm not going to jerk off to you. And when I don't jerk off to you it won't be that time we fucked in that cabin and you looked me in the eyes until you came. I won't think about your breath or your moans. No. I won't jerk off to that time you told me I was funny. I won't jerk off to your head on my chest as you fall asleep.

I won't jerk off at all.

I'll just cry.

Cry to you looking me in the eyes until you came, when you called me funny, to your head on my chest as you fall asleep.





## Should I Stay or Should I Go - KT Tunstall

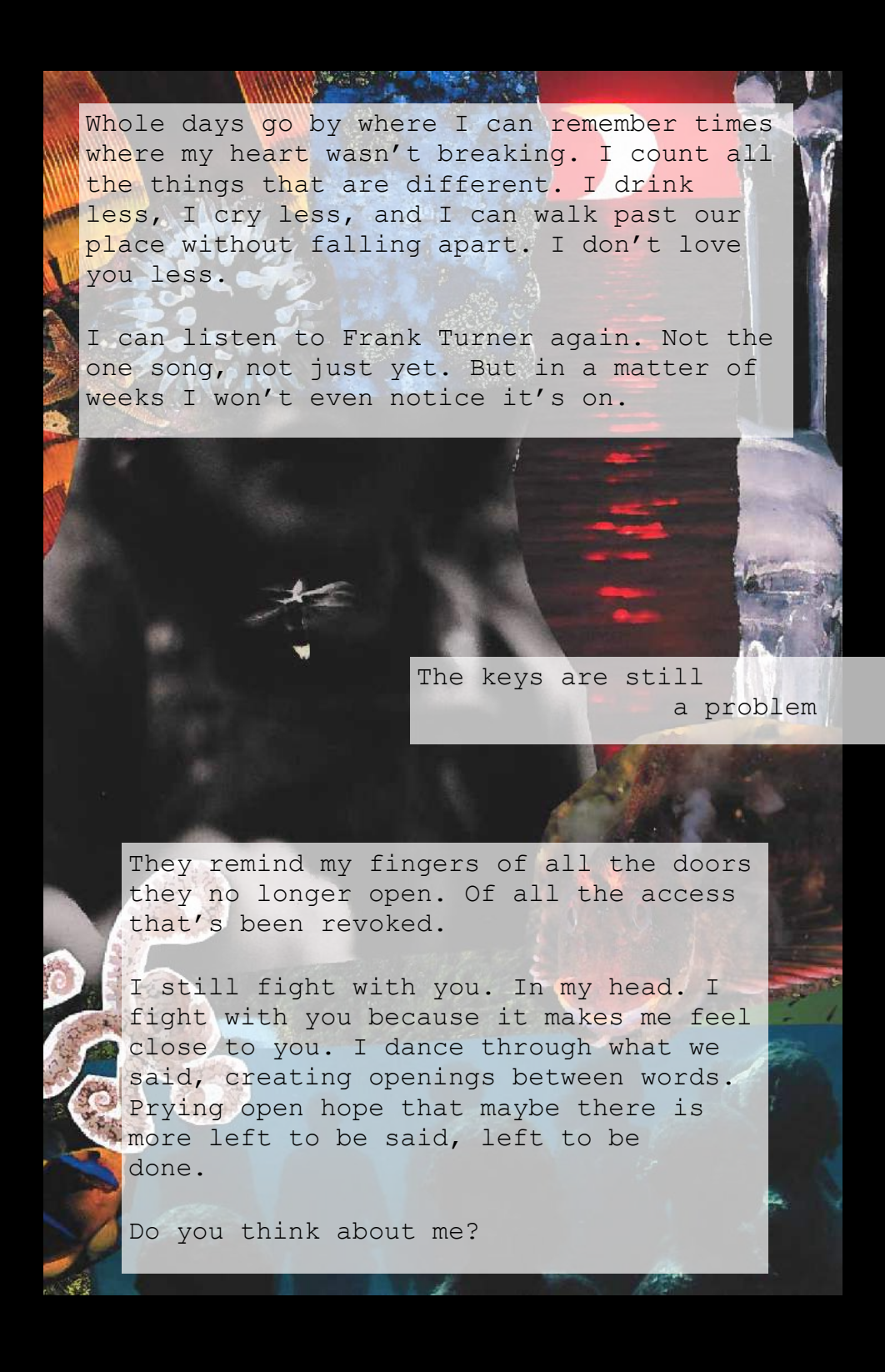
The further I get from you the less it hurts. It's just sore. Muscles atrophying. I've started seeing other people again. It's fine. I'll be fine eventually. I've broken up with people before. I know the drill.

It just hurts so much more when it had the tang of forever about it.

The keys are still a problem.

I gave you back yours, but now there are extras leftover that I can't find the origin to. They are like parasites without a host, and I flip through them every time I come or go. They are like specters. I'm sure one is to your old place, before we changed the locks. Or maybe to the gate I had two apartments ago.

My key ring it's lighter in my hands. But occasionally it feels heavier in my pockets, as if my jeans remember what carrying them around was like.



Whole days go by where I can remember times where my heart wasn't breaking. I count all the things that are different. I drink less, I cry less, and I can walk past our place without falling apart. I don't love you less.

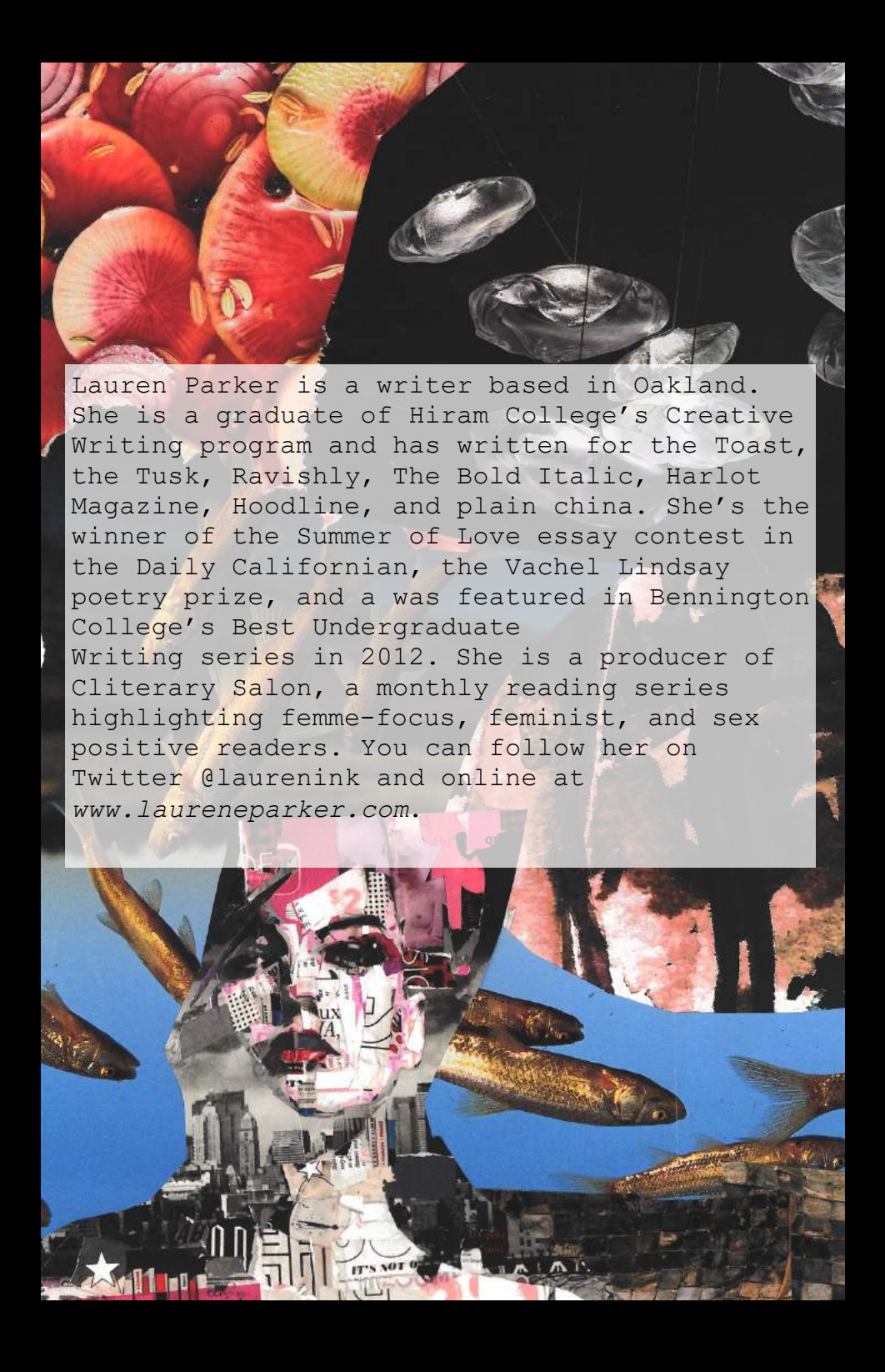
I can listen to Frank Turner again. Not the one song, not just yet. But in a matter of weeks I won't even notice it's on.

The keys are still  
a problem

They remind my fingers of all the doors they no longer open. Of all the access that's been revoked.

I still fight with you. In my head. I fight with you because it makes me feel close to you. I dance through what we said, creating openings between words. Prying open hope that maybe there is more left to be said, left to be done.

Do you think about me?



Lauren Parker is a writer based in Oakland. She is a graduate of Hiram College's Creative Writing program and has written for the *Toast*, the *Tusk*, *Ravishly*, *The Bold Italic*, *Harlot Magazine*, *Hoodline*, and *plain china*. She's the winner of the Summer of Love essay contest in the *Daily Californian*, the Vachel Lindsay poetry prize, and was featured in Bennington College's Best Undergraduate Writing series in 2012. She is a producer of *Cliterary Salon*, a monthly reading series highlighting femme-focus, feminist, and sex positive readers. You can follow her on Twitter @laurenink and online at [www.laureneparker.com](http://www.laureneparker.com).

