

MAD LIBS FOR THE MIND

To have two _____
(body parts)

Would bestow _____ upon _____,
(emotion) (abstract noun)

A refuge for those who _____ their _____
(verb) (plural noun)

in the _____ of forgotten _____.
(adjective) (plural noun) (plural noun)

But you _____
(verb, past tense)

a _____ to _____ alone,
(body part) (verb)

its rhythm echoing _____ into _____.
(emotion) (adjective) (noun)

To have _____
(number) (plural noun)

Is to share the weight of _____
(abstract noun)

_____ and _____ balanced,
(abstract noun) (abstract noun)

the _____ lightened,
(noun)

like _____ retreating from a _____.
(plural noun) (adjective) (noun)

If I could be _____,
(adjective)

That I would leave this _____,
(adjective) (place)

With no _____ of me left adrift,
(noun)

I would _____, unwilling to _____ from a _____ searching,
(verb) (verb) (noun)

their _____ rising in _____, to _____ that was
(body part) (emotion) (verb)

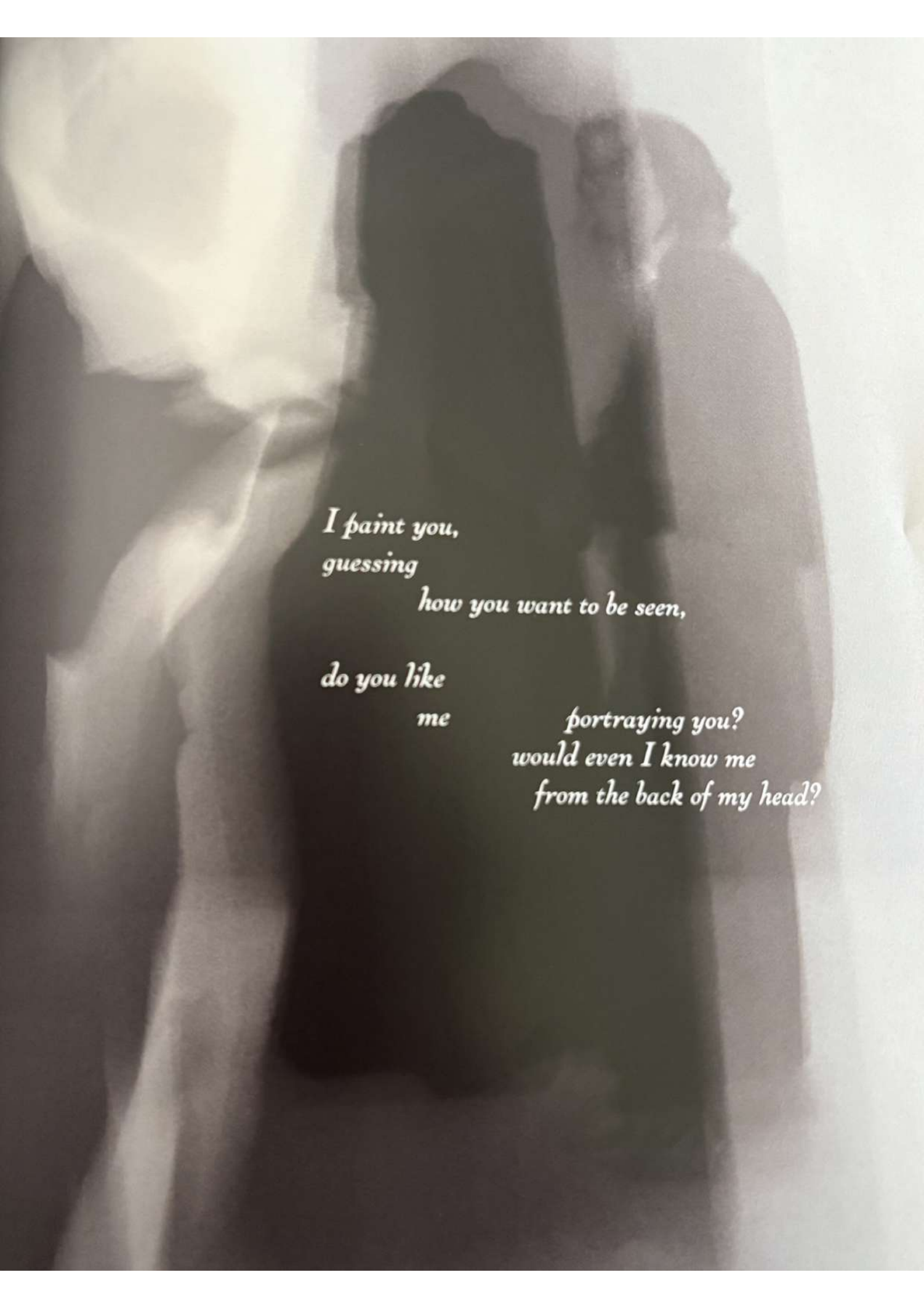
_____ by their past _____.
(verb, past tense) (noun)

self portrait of my shadow

*to share your paint with a cheek,
you're grey and velvet,
standing, smiling, or so I'd assume,
shaped by how you want to be seen
solar eyes reflecting a piece
of me,
an arm reaching for lying wrinkles,*

pool of monograms

*cut
that's where the teeth lie
that's where my voice—
flinging back, whiplash
tender wind that hugs like my father would,
loss of years made it harder to pick me up like that,
raw, though the eyes whisper more than the jaw,
sure its sore,
lack of substance and flesh,
eyelashes,
how you love,
on the street,
I paint with no brush, no paints, no canvas,*



*I paint you,
guessing*

how you want to be seen,

do you like

me

*portraying you?
would even I know me
from the back of my head?*

To have _____
(number) (plural noun)

Is to share the weight of _____
(abstract noun)

_____ and _____ bound,
(abstract noun) (abstract noun)

the _____ lightened,
(noun)

like _____ retreating from a _____
(plural noun) (adjective) (noun)

If I could be _____,
(adjective)

That I would leave this _____,
(adjective) (place)

With no _____ of me left adrift,
(noun)

I would _____, unwilling to _____ from a _____ that
(verb) (verb) (noun)

bound me to my _____
(adjective) (noun)

But still, I am _____
(adjective)

my _____'s twin _____ the _____, their
(body part) (verb, present tense) (place)

_____ searching,
(noun)

their _____ rising in _____, to _____ what was
(body part) (emotion) (verb)

_____ by their past _____
(verb, past tense) (noun)

Reminiscenced Lana Elsehemi

*Painted by candlelight,
music in a basement thickened with cigarette smoke,
spinning in the warehouses before turned into
dust.*

Florence, do you remember me?

*my lyrics once carved onto the bathroom stalls,
art dripping neon onto ancient stone,
scrubbed into the cracks of the silent clubs once alive with bassline,
static overtaking the radio,
my humming once lost to the blast in Tenax,
they knew me,
Florence knew me.*

*new ones go, replace who we were,
others try and return as often as they'd like, but none of us are here
anymore.*

For the hell of it



For the hell of it, Mrs. Great, you should have stayed. On the sun-drenched porch you spent your summers on, rocking back and forth as a threat to the neighborhood kids to keep it down once the lights dimmed. We could feel you watching our shadows stretch across the street, waiting for one of us to fall off a bike that was carrying six, and silencing the tears with one of your warm pools of sugar and chocolate chips.

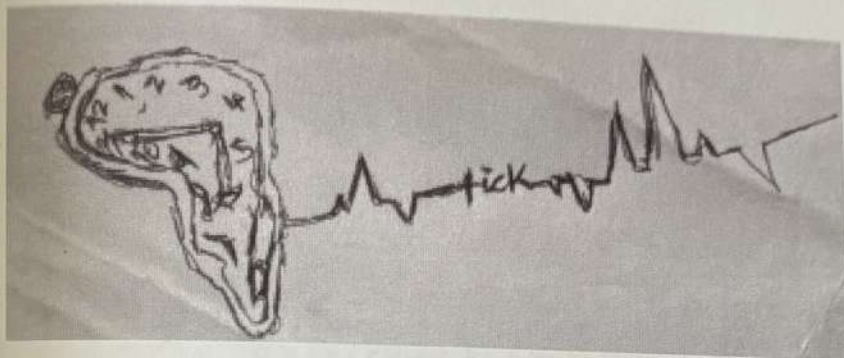
What was the rush, Mrs. Great, to leave us with the clocks ticking louder. Each second a reminder of your choices to leave. Couldn't you have just stayed, if only for a cup of tea, a moment of hearing to breathe in the quiet, to savor the mundane. To bask in the beauty of you just being.

The last time I shook your hand, I felt life pulse beneath your fingertips, as if a reminder that you were still there. We had come over for brunch, my parents and I, and in warning the light refused to enter the corners of your house. You asked me to stay behind and help you clean up; my parents gave me a look meaning I should've. But I whined about how Jack and the others were already waiting up the hill, you smiled and told me to run. To enjoy my youth, my life. The last time I saw you, the dust had yet to settle. The neighborhood gathered in your memory, and your house was defined by the empty corners. Couldn't you have just stayed to stop the crying, the soulless stares, or even the fake grievers. Shielding us from the philosophical thoughts of what life really is. Stopping the inevitable passage of time, of forgetting.

For the hell of it, couldn't you have just stayed?



Time with a Pulse



Silent for a mere hour, I watch from a shelf where dust clings to my casing. My ticking, steady yet futile, is the one thing I cannot betray. Time is my master, my sustenance, my tormentor—one I cannot escape. I envy those whose faces glance at me in fear, as though I hold the power to steal their moments. Do they hear the ticking? Is it just me? A relentless rhythm that neither rest nor neglect can halt. I panic in the corner, marking an end I cannot predict. My arm raises every hour like a warning, signaling to the empty room that the day is nearing its close. The tick is uncontrollable—a pulse of its own, mechanical and unfeeling. Still, I wonder: does the quiet they seem to enjoy mean freedom, or are they too, bound by a rhythm they cannot name?

Enough people come in that they call themselves “regulars,” those I’ve come to know so well without ever seeing their faces. I get to listen, declarations of love and angry whispers; their words collecting dust. I listen to the whispers of the shop workers, their plans, their betrayals. I envy their tongues, though they use them poorly. If only I had some way to show them what I’ve thought, what I’ve heard, what I’ve kept hidden in my gears.

I try and speak, words replaced with a clang. Once again, I am the reason they scramble, rush, and panic. Do their lives revolve around my hands as cruelly as mine does? But I only mark what they give me—seconds, hours, lives. They leave, and the room grows darker, their voices fade, but my pulse remains. For as long as they live, so must I.

Now, left with the ghost of my comrades who hung before me. Their shattered faces and rusted gears whisper warnings I cannot decipher, reminders that my own end is inevitable. But so be it. I do not live, yet I mark life. I do not feel, yet I count every heartbeat, every sigh, every tear. What is it to mark what one cannot know? Is this why they ignore me—because I cannot truly understand them?

Traffic Jam

my brakes screamed as my heel grazed against its ridges,
the beams claiming to be working but not a thing seen past my nose.

are they even working? I ask, squinting and wondering.

I gasp as the hands of fate strangling my neck,
pinky twirling around my mother's locket,
resting on my collar bone.

The locks on my door communicating through chimes,
acting as armed forces, threatening my words from seeping out of the
cracks
. it moved

I step out and wander through the traffic of my mind,
peeping through the windows, watching myself make that face,
every time,
in different moments of my life,
every instant stuck at this light,
never getting my car to turn the way it should.