

Decoupage Daydreams

Star LaBranche

sometimes I feel like human decoupage
I had no roadmap on how to be myself
so I found some glue in a dumpster
and walk through life adhering me
together

I create one version and I hate it,
too many Hello Kitty stickers and
crying quietly when someone
screams at me to stop taking up air
so I tear it down and start again
the thing about decoupage is
that it's so fragile when the surface
you're using isn't stable

some days I feel like a walking mess
with Spice Girls lyrics inked like
tattoos on my arms, gifs of dogs I
will never own tunneling through snow
my own writing etched into my sides
with razor sharp quills
and there's so much blood, I
shouldn't still be standing

but like a child who doesn't know
any better, I'm so proud of my mess
because it might not be beautiful,
it might not make sense, it might be
sad sometimes, but it's mine

and I made it myself
#DecoupageDaydreams

My Body is a Clock that Might Explode

nothing about me ever comes
in an appropriate size, so why
would my hunger?
#WonderingWhyIThoughtItWould

she tells me I shouldn't scoff at a man for calling me beautiful
because will one day wish for someone to just call me pretty

as if I hang my confidence on random men's opinions of me
as if the light that shines from me is a haunted reflection
or so many faces pushed up against the glass
as if I breathe compliments and would gasp for air should
I be left without them for a period of time
as if I need catcalls to create my self-esteem like pieces
of a quilt, stitched together with "wanna come sit on my
dick, baby?" as thread

maybe, if I'm no longer attractive to anyone, I can be heard
but I know better; as a woman, if I'm no longer attractive,

I'm nothing
#NotACompliment

it seems foolish for me to decide my own worth and my own beauty
because the rest of the world is much bigger than my thighs and exists
to remind me that I am nothing I think I am and everything they say
#OneVoiceSingingSongsNoOneHears

I hate my body because I know of no other way to live
my brain has become so familiar with the beautiful shapes
thin arms make against black backgrounds on sets in
perfume ads, it sees my rippling skin and hates it because
it is exactly not that

I followed a Twitter account that promised pretty dresses,
with its description surrounded <3 <3 by hearts <3 <3
I watched each beautiful dress on my feed as if it was
feeding me mana from heaven, each dress draped on
a thin, white woman with long flowing hair, and of course
the dresses were beautiful, and the women were beautiful,
and I sat knowing those beautiful dresses would never be
made in my size, so I guess I couldn't be beautiful, because
there have to be some standards on who can be bestowed
with stunning gowns, and I just don't make the cut

sometimes I think about what it was like to be thinner, how
I squandered my opportunity to be conventionally attractive.
but I didn't love my body then either. I hated it even more so,
because I felt it was still too human and flawed to be worthy
of the compliments people gave it. I never realized at that
time that the problem was the size or shape of my body, the
problem was that I hated it, no matter what it looked like
#DressesRetweet

being nice to fat girls is not the same as working in a soup kitchen
treating fat people like human beings doesn't qualify you for
Doctors Without Borders or any kind of medal
being nice to a fat woman, looking beyond her body, to see what
and who she is a person is something you should do, period.
not because you're a wonderful soul who needs special
recognition, but because you're a human being who can recognize
that you are not the only one on this planet.
#CommonSenseForACivilizedWorld

he'll tell you you're ugly
and you'll believe him
because you are

he'll tell you you're worthless
to him when you're ugly
because he's not attracted

he'll shout at you until
you cry in the car, because
you can't save yourself

from ugliness
#MotivationalSpeech

my feet are so big because they carry the weight of my ideas
and that requires a firm base
there's no way size 6s could tote me around when the images
in my head are so vivid and heavy
my feet are big because they make me immovable when
planted on the ground
#Size11Wide

little girls make me anxious
I look at them and think;
I was their age when it happened
is it happening to them, too?
to their innocent faces and
curly dark hair?

do they know monsters are real
and there are no beds to hide under
when your monster is someone you
know and someone you trust
and someone who would never be
a monster?

something so desperate inside of me
wants to warn them about monsters
and beds and tell them it's not their
fault
but they wouldn't understand what
I was talking about and if they did,
they wouldn't admit it to a stranger
#LockTheRestroomDoorTight

I remember peeling away dress sizes
as if they were flower petals protecting
the pistil
but once there's no protection, you start
to question why you worked so hard to
get rid of it
#ThickLayerOfProtectiveBlubber

there is nothing I can do to make you see me
as I think I am supposed to be

and maybe that's fair
because I don't know what that looks like either
#MirrorsHateMeToo

my body has been made of iron
it was forged from the strongest metals
to withstand every battle it saw

my body ran without food,
with nutrients, without calories,
and never stopped moving

my body took everything
my sick brain could make it
swallow and rejected it for me

my body has challenged death
and never stopped fighting
until I was won

my body is a warrior
who fights for the one
who wages war against it
#IShouldBeDeadButI'mNot

I don't find myself beautiful,
but I find I don't need to be
there is something other
than 'beautiful' to be written
on my grave stone
#Epitaph

in my daydreams,
when things are going right,
and I'm accepting an award,
or speaking to a crowd,
or meeting the most pure
man I've ever seen
I'm always thin
I'm always thinner than
I've ever been in my
adult life and I should
look like a stranger
but in my daydreams,
there is nothing more
natural than accepting
my award while wearing
my newly
slender frame
#WhyIsSuccessfulMeAlwaysThin

my lines are branches I hang my hat on after a long day
my lines are the smiles I gave to men who didn't deserve them
my lines are the laughter I exploded into, entirely too loudly
my lines are worry, hewn into stone, that nothing is okay
my lines are ravines where my tears run rivers down my face
my lines are my thoughts, when ideas run wild across my expression
my lines are older than their first criticism and lasted far longer
#Crow'sFeet

my body was a thing
it was crumbled paper
that needed to be thrown away

his hands had ripped pages
dirted the rest, there was no saving
this fragile pulp

my body was a thing
it was haunted skin
that didn't belong to me

he owned it with his touch,
I was a ghost in my own form
with no voice left

my body was a thing
a casual inconvenience
I had said no, but he didn't feel like it

he told with his hands
that my body wasn't a compromise
he was willing to make

my body was a thing
and I became a thing
and then there was nothing left

of this thing
#ISurvived

Racing Thoughts and Other Musings

I sometimes want to live as a nun
cloistered, chores, routine, free time
in gardens we grew ourselves
sisterhood formed from the inequality
that always keeps us out of church
power

I imagine I'll spend my days writing,
and reading, and editing, and annoying
other sisters with my requests for feedback
and my constant desire to explore

but then I realize I would have to believe in
god, and they probably would make me read
scripture and write about Jesus, and the
entire plan

falls

apart

#HeavenlyCareerPlans

love poems stump me for days
while ballads of lost and pain
flow from my fingertips like the
sweetest honey
#SomeoneCheckTheBees

there doesn't seem to be an ending in sight
even when I reach milestones, light at the end of tunnels,
goal posts that I moved twice, there doesn't seem to be
a final time when I sit back and just exist without
the weight of the world crushing me like the tiny
nuisance animal I am
#SkunksAreImportantToTheEcosystem

um, excuse me
can I speak to a manager?
you see, I was promised certain things
a lot of things, actually
by very important people
I'm looking around and none of them are here
there was an ad in your flyer that said I deserved
a husband, and a house, and children, and a whole
slew of things by the time I was 32
I'm looking around and well, none of them are here
and it's not like I haven't done my part
I've been trying for so long to lead this life I was born into
I've watched all the movies, I've read all the books,
I know how this turns out
and it's not turning out

I can understand that some people don't get everything
they ever wanted but then why did you raise me on
fairy stories as soon as I could understand what a story was
and tell me that marriage is self-esteem, beauty is
goodness, and nothing tastes as good as thin feels

so is the manager around?
because I never signed up for this much loneliness
#IWasToldThereWouldBeCake

you'll look back on this and wonder why you stayed
you'll torture yourself with signs you missed or willfully
ignored in order to convince yourself that remaining
was the right thing to do

you'll hate me for saying what I said and being right
about the entire situation
you'll curse the day you met them, the day you first kissed
them, the day you decided your life was theirs and
nothing you did could jar it loose

you'll look back and know you waited too long
you'll look back in relief when you finally escape
#WhatAbusiveRelationshipsHaveInCommon

I recently read that your brain is great at dealing with trauma
but the trauma has to be large enough to get coping mechanisms
going

so while living through yet another sexual assault might seem
pedestrian, your favorite pen running out of ink might just be
the end of the world

so the next time you sob over that perfect pen with the sharp tip,
gel ink, and the little diamond on top, remember, your brain is conserving
its power, for more important shit
#I'llNeverStopMissingThatPen

I brought a dog into my home
and all I could give him was anxiety
I made a mess of his needs and
the only thing I couldn't do was
calm down enough to love him
for three weeks there was a
Tuesday breakdown where I sobbed
on the phone to the people who
raised me without a quarter
of this panic and when three
weeks were up, exactly three
weeks, the dog was gone,
my anxiety subsided and I went
back to just being lonely
the dog was adopted immediately
by someone else and didn't
seem to mind his 3-week vacation
at my apartment
#Blackberry'sVacation

I joined a writing community
I was going to be in charge of
writing articles, editing others
articles, and helping them get
published on a massively popular
website
i was going to be paid, I was told
and I didn't care how much

I met my team, I looked over their
work for two weeks, I edited their
misguided opinions and youthfully
ignorant mistakes and then I noticed
something

no one had mentioned anything
about how I was being paid,
what I was being paid, or how
the money was going to be transferred
so I asked about the promise made when
I signed up

it was then I learned that no one was
paid in this venture, but if I did extra work
on top of what I was already doing
I might earn a bonus of \$20 or \$50
I was told this was a resume builder
for young writers everywhere

I was pretty sure they knew I was 30
and experienced enough in the writing
game to know that unpaid work is
unpaid work and resume builders
don't pay your bills
I quit, immediately

it's sad when your version of "too good to be true"
is simply being paid for work you did
#IWorkedForFreeForADecade

when Charles Dickens wrote
“it was the best of times,
it was the worst of times”
I can only assume that he was
describing living with

bipolar
#JustBipolarThings

I once knew a man so correct
he spent all of his time correcting others
so they could be as right as him
but in the end, one person's opinions
are not gospel and whether he was wrong
or right, he ended up

alone

#WokeAndSleeping

sometimes I feel like I'm being pressed
like Giles Corey
the only difference is that it's me who
keeps putting on more weight, thinking
the thing I add will be not only light as a
feather, but it will eliminate some of the
other pressure on me as well

it's not working
#Maschocist

Kylo Ren gave a poetry workshop
his jawline did most of the talking
he told us about love, the ever present
force in the universe that binds us together
and his ex-girlfriend, Lindsay,
which sounds like “lagoon” if you write it
as many times as he did on innocent
pieces of paper who never asked for this

I tried to keep up with his narrative instruction
but somewhere between being a being of love
in the universe and becoming the universe
made of love, I got a bit lost
I waited, fingers poised over the keyboard, for
some kind of writing assignment, but he gave
none, there was too much love in his heart to
stop talking

the only thing I could agree on was that listening
to him, definitely made me sympathize with those
who blow up planets
#KyloRenInCargoShorts

I never wanted to write
I remember sitting on the school bus
in high school thinking about what I
wanted to do with my life and the answer
was writer by default because I wasn't
good at anything else

I created worlds out of pen scratches because
nothing felt more like home than being with
people who couldn't hurt me
#MyOwnLittleWorld

it worries me when a man hears about a rape accusation
and immediately identifies and sympathizes with the accused
why do men see their reflections in rapist's eyes so easily?
#NowIKnowYouWon'tBelieveMe

what doesn't kill other people,
made them stronger
what didn't kill me,
gave me post-traumatic stress disorder
#JustPTSDThings

I've had so many panic attacks that I now
have them when I'm happy
it seems my body has stopped being able to
tell the cause of the overwhelming emotion
and just panics whether I'm actually in
danger or just excited about a new opportunity

the tears, the shortness of breath, the flashing
sirens in my head that there's no oxygen
left in this world and I'm going to drown in
carbon monoxide because I never learned
how to breathe toxins

sometimes I can picture myself getting great
news without warning and my body starts shaking
in anticipation of all the tears it will spill should
that actually come to pass, my eyes get wet,
my mouth screws up in a horrible moue

most of the time I wonder what evolutionary
purpose panic attacks were ever supposed
to serve

#PanicButtonMedley

when things have been going wrong for so long
it's hard to know how to react when things are
actually okay
maybe not perfect
but certainly not the dumpster fire you're used to
#2017

Klara doesn't get enough credit
a talented, athletic princess
who saves her prince,
with only a pair of slippers
#NutcrackerRealness

take the decimal point and move it
to the left
that's 10%
now double it
now add on some more because
servers make \$2.13 an hour
add on some more because they
have to tip out bartenders, bus staff,
and hosts
add on some more because it's
the holidays and everyone needs
a little more money during the holidays
add on a bit more because they did
a really good job and did you see
how fast they got your drinks?
now round up because you like
to add easy numbers and it's just
so much simpler
#HowToTip

sometimes I associate adulthood
with the resounding silence of my
apartment
it took a great deal of time
to grow my way into the kind
of quiet that no one can disturb
#TimeToPutOnMusic

I framed the recommendation letter you wrote for me for graduate school
I never got acceptance letters, but somehow hearing strangers reject me
was white noise over the symphony of your approval
when you died I played every last poetry reading in my head that I didn't
go to and regretted every second I sat at home while you were out in the
world, believing in the people who turn their experiences in words

I miss you
and I'm not alone
#ProfessorPruitt

it's too late to stop me now
I have so much to do, I have so many places to go,
but none of it matters because I have a page
and it's empty and it needs words written on it

words I can't spell,
words I don't put together correctly
words I delete and rearrange and make unrecognizable

sometimes I can fight my obsessive nature, but other times,
there is no arguing with it and I can't even hope to wage
an equal battle with the need to write raging through my veins

I might never win when it comes to this need
but I have notebooks to spare
and google docs wherever I go
#DangerousWithAPen

Love and Other Things I've Mishandled

My love is an overflowing cup with no one interested in the brew
I am my own worst salesperson, trying to convince everyone my
love is worth the venture and truly delicious and able to satisfy
your every need and sometimes I wonder who I'm really trying
to convince

since most of the time I can look at myself and see no reason
why anyone would want to stop and try or even look up from their
daily lives to notice this elixir exists at all

and there has to be a time when this beverage simply goes
bad, doesn't there? everything has an expiration date of some
kind, I am not timeless like the mountains stone, so when is it
too late for me to convince someone I am worth a taste?

#DrunkOnLove

I packed up the world,
wrapped it in a bow
and put it in a box
for your birthday
but when the day arrived
you had been given
socks and underwear
from everyone else
and my gift just looked
insane
#OverTheGoddamnTop

sometimes I feel as though my radical vulnerability is the only option
the world conspires to make you vulnerable, but if you were like that already
on your own terms, in your own way, then who really got whom?

other times I think I can't keep something inside of me long enough to
actually be guarded and really, that's the most efficient way to do it
once you prove you have no secrets, you can have all of them after that

you make me feel safe, safe in a way I've never felt before and maybe
that's why I chose to be so open about my feelings towards you
even if I have to do it in google docs and poetry
#TheHardRealityOfBeingVulnerable

cards on the table time

here's what I bring to a relationship

- the best party planning you've ever seen
- gifts just because
- emotional support for big things
- emotional support for little things
- a big, round, spankable ass
- my shit, mostly together
- some shit, a little scattered
- communication skills sharp as papercuts
- watching weird movies together
- don't mind laundry and keeping things tidy
- an eagle eye for Hello Kitty accessories
- can order takeout over the phone like a professional
- open minded to just about anything
- will write you poems, lots and lots and lots of them

maybe this could work

I'll await your reply

if you want to come visit

to discuss matters further

the train station is very close

to my apartment

#Doin'MyBestTryingTooHard

the last time I felt like this,
I think we all remember the dazzling flames
the situation exploded into
I think we all remember how I burned as if
I was made of tinder
I think we all remember how he walked away
without a scorch mark

the last time I felt like this,
I clearly didn't burn hot enough
because I obviously have learned
nothing
#UnrequitedObsession

sometimes I think the reason why I become
obsessive in my love for others is because
all of that love has to go somewhere,
and I have no idea how to share it with myself
#BuyingYouPresentsYouDon'tNeed

I wanted to propose in a Torrid dressing room
I know this sounds like more than my usual amount
of crazy, but let me explain

I was trying on the dress for my dad's retirement
party and I had always said I wanted my wedding dress
to be blue, well, it was blue
he was with me and I needed help getting zipped
up because the zipper ran down the back and I'm
not that dexterous anymore
he ran the zipper up my back like it was like
the missing piece snapped into place
I looked at my reflection in the dress
and saw how beautiful it looked and felt his hands
helping me smooth out the layers,
perfect the silhouette,
and I realized he was perfect to
I wanted to grab him and scream,
this is it, this is now, this can be us
me and him in the dressing room at Torrid,
me in a wedding dress I felt amazing in,
him completely oblivious to what was going
on in my brain, and wouldn't that make a
wonderful marriage?

no, no, you're right, that doesn't sound any less
crazy at all
I'm glad I told you before I said anything to him
#OnlyCrazyForTorrid

I've never met someone who can make me feel so
comforted by the very fact that they exist in the world
because if they exist, the world can't be all the bad,
and if it's not all that bad, then maybe I can cope
#ILoveYouXTheUniverse

I've had varying degrees of sleep apnea for over a year
I've fallen asleep for weekends, during movies, at operas,
and now that the problem is going to be fixed, I can only
hope you'll give me another chance to watch movies with
you late into the night where I won't fall asleep in your arms
and think I've come home
#CPAPMagic

sometimes I feel as if I'm sitting in a train station
waiting on someone who never arrives
I wait and wait and wait and wait until...
it's time to close up the lobby and the janitor
feels so bad for me, they let me stay
because they won't want to be the one
who breaks the spell of hopefulness that
the person I'm waiting for might actually show up
hours later, sitting in a train station lobby
illuminated by the moonlight coming
through small rectangular windows,
I realize just how long it's been since
I started waiting, and all of the things I could
have done in the time it took me to
admit it was a

collassal

waste

of

my

time

#PrinceCharmingRidesHorsesAnyway

somedays I wear my lace panties
because they remind me of you
and the feel of your hands when
you took them off of me last month

putting them on this morning
I accidentally pierced the lace
with my thumb and ripped a
hole that couldn't be mended

this is why I can't have
nice things
#INeverDeservedYourBrushstrokes

Falling Far From the Tree

I needed to make my hostility
to their ideals of feminine beauty
as evident as I could
my hair became a weapon and I
was determined it would be razor sharp
my curls fell in light, airy waves
on to the floor
it rippled against the wood grain
each time I told my stylist,
keep going, 8, 6, 4
I had too much hair on my head
to be anything other than
ordinary and I was not their kind
of ordinary
whatever I needed
to do to remind them of that was
well worth the effort
#GoingIntoBattle

your love was conditional
that I never become my own person
that I never stray from the ties that bind that
your sons managed to live with so successfully
your love was conditional
on my silence, on my complicity, on the echoing
nothingness I would issue when oppression was
invited into the room, given the place of honor, and
extended a ring for me to kiss

you might think I refused in the most vicious of
rejection, but my placid words were nothing but
gentle lapping waves that stroke beaches before
tsunamis hit
what you saw from me was not the extension of my
thoughts or my compassion or my radical vulnerability
you think I am a flicker of light, but I am the stars
I was named after and I will light galaxies for millennia
to come

your love was conditional and no Hallmark card could have
prepared me for this discovery
but my love, my love is a force of nature and your rejection of me
of the person I have fought to become, of the person who
delights their environmental biology teacher, is too insignificant
to dull the shine that lights up planets
#Thanksgiving

it will never make sense to me
how someone can be both
a world traveler and
a racist xenophobe
#Paradox

I inherited my grandmother's fat fingers
I forever thought that my fingers were just like my feet;
inexplicably large and inconvenient
but when my sister and I inherited rings after her death
mine fit perfectly and my sister's fell off her finger
it didn't occur to me at the time, that this was the only
thing my grandmother and I had in common
#ISoldYourRingForFiftyDollars

I thumb through the rolodex in my mind
looking for a stored kind word
a moment where you glanced at me and
I knew... something
that you cared, that you appreciated me,
that you wanted me around, that I had value
in your eyes, that I was a person who was
worth something other than my ability to
produce, that there was compassion in
your words or thoughts or actions
I flip through the rolodex again
because it has to be in there somewhere
some small card in my mind where I
scribbled something in my illegible
handwriting about how you made me
feel special, uplifted me, accepted my
enthusiasm for any topic with anything
other than doubt and criticism
I flip through the Rolodex again
but it's still blank cards with corners
well worn
#404FondMemoriesNotFound

when I was recovered enough from
the abusive relationship I left
to move out of my parents' house in August,
one of my aunts joked that I would be back
before Christmas

because what is family if not a collection of people
with a front row seat to see you fail?
#INeverMovedBackIn

you tried to kill me
you conspired to end my life
through a series of actions that would have
left me with nothing but dead ends and
danger
health insurance to you might be something
convenient when you have a cold
but health insurance is my father, son, and
holy ghost
without treatment I can't function well enough
to hold a job, without a job I can't afford rent,
without rent, I can't afford a place to live, I can't
sell enough about my belongings to make ends meet
because I own cheap jewelry and cashed in my
savings bonds a decade ago

you tried to kill me
when you said my parents should stop paying
my medical bills because those credit card swipes
were my salvation and without them, I don't know
where I'd be except lying in a coffin with stitches
in my arms because I couldn't afford the pills to
overdose on this time

for someone as suicidal as I usually am, the idea
of dying not because of my mental illness, but because
I can't afford my mental illness terrifies me more
I did not chose this path, but I am on it, and I need help
and the heroes are my parents who supported me
despite your "advice" because you don't have a mentally
ill child and you don't know what it's like to hold the
hand of your unconscious daughter in a hospital room
after being told she ingested so much toxin she should
be dead

you tried to kill me
and in this world, there are enough factors making attempts
on my life
#MeetMyAunt

when everyone believes they're
the hero of their own story
I sometimes wonder why they
insist on vanquishing the
disabled person who wants
people to be nicer to each other
#FancyTerribleWithRaisins

what disappoints me most is your inability
to look at me as a person
not as a generation you dislike because
talking heads told you we were lazy
#MillennialJazz

Growing Up With an Ever Changing Face

self harm is like a trip to the candy store
you shouldn't partake at all, but so many flavors and colors
and every sign is telling you there's a sale, there's a new
sweet, there's something you have to try or you'll miss out

you get to the table of razor blades and mirrors and it's as
if it's been waiting for you this entire time; you've finally come
home

and when you feel the release of blood dripping on the floor
there is nothing in the world as sweet because somewhere
in your brain you know it

you know you deserve this, you know you earned this, you know
if you just cut the bad parts of you out you might stop being bad
and then you could be something else that doesn't make you
want to carve your skin in chunks

self harm is like a trip to the candy store
and the hardest part is, there is a candy store
on every block
#RazorBladesAndMirrors

I named myself and I will take full credit for it
I named myself after the heavenly bodies that
created me, I named myself after the largest
source of light in our galaxy, I named myself
and my name doesn't belong inside your contempt
#MyNameIsStar

it's amazing how comfortable you can become with your own
low self esteem that flicks like a switch in certain situations,
around certain people
on one hand, you need no one and nothing,
but turn the lights off and suddenly the only taste in your
mouth is darkness and solitude
pondering, because you can't decide if no one is worthy or
if no one is interested
you can weaponize your individuality, but the only mass
destruction you're causing is to yourself

it's easy, somehow, to accept that you will forever, love yourself
and hate yourself in equal measure, because you've struck a
balance with paradox and the two thoughts have fused
there's no prying them apart, no matter how hard you try, as you
cry in restaurants to someone who loves you, but doesn't
want to be with you
completeness was never your end game
because none of your needs or thoughts or feelings are so simple
that they can be resolved without nonsense
#SushiKingBreakdown