

I count my pills and know they won't last until my appointment next week.
 I haven't been seeing him long enough to request an early refill, and I don't want to turn into
 that patient— not yet, anyway. I have to make myself mean more to Dr. M
 patients mean to him before I can become the kind of patient who causes trouble,



CALL
OF
DUTY

whom lesser doctors doubt and then dump. Dr. M
 upped my oxycodone dose last month; if I ask for an early refill now, he might suspect he was wrong to believe me

when I described my chronic headaches to him. He might quit seeing me. I've been seeing a small-time heroin dealer

for three weeks, though; I can ask him for anything because he means nothing to me. Because

I don't care what I mean to him, I can be that girl—the girl who asks for too much, who's maybe more into his drugs than she is into him. If this guy doesn't want to keep seeing me,

I don't lose what I lose. I'll lose if Dr. M no longer wants to see me in his office.

I don't lose everything. I don't lose anything.

My therapist suggests I try online dating. After I broke up with
I put a moratorium on dating until I made better decisions. Ryan,
But I'm tired of one-night stands. I'm lonely. And how can I evaluate my decisions
if I don't make any?

Online dating sounds so forced and inorganic,
like the worst way to meet someone,
I create an OK Cupid profile anyway.

of guys I Most the choose to meet in person
bore me, so when Kevin tells me he's a former
heroin addict

who makes his living selling
"illicit commodities,"
I decide that maybe this time it's okay.

Maybe this time it's not
a bad decision.

I pay fifty dollars *for* half a gram. Kevin brings it over
around ten a.m. on a Friday (I've called in *sick* to work).

He sits on my bed and shows me how to open the folded and taped
glassine packet

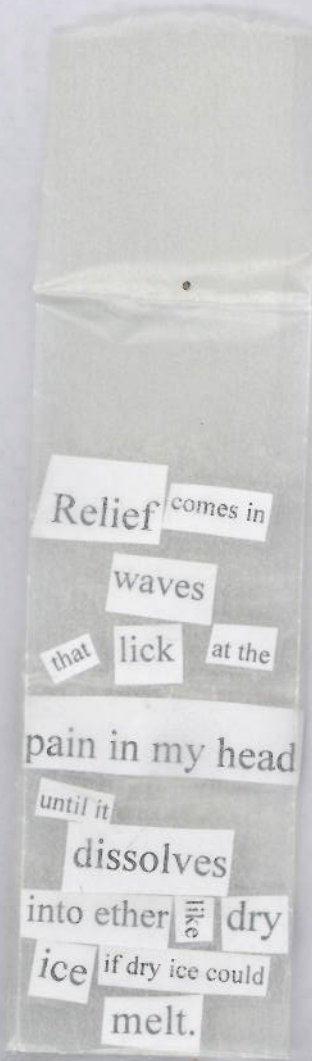
that holds five heroin-stuffed envelopes. He separates
one envelope from the stack and pours about a third of its contents onto my
hardback copy of Joan Didion's *The White Album*.

He cuts me a line. I snort it, and he instructs me to hold my head high
and wait twenty minutes before I drink water or smoke a cigarette or even swallow.

The drip tastes like stale Cheerios
on the back of my throat.

heroin.

I ask Kevin to
get me pills.
I'm looking for what I'd
take anyway. But
he can only find
ten-milligram
oxys at fifteen
dollars a piece. It's
more economical,
he says,
just to buy a few bags of

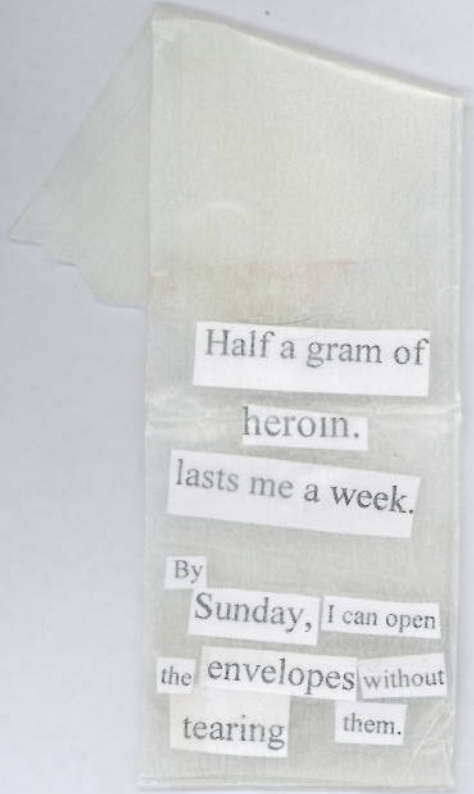


Usually, when I touch my scalp, I feel
 clumps of pain beneath my skin, and it's
 strange that they're not there
 now.

I light a cigarette and lie back on my mattress.
 My junkie ex-boyfriend used to say that doing heroin felt like
 making out with Jesus ("It's like making out with Jesus" was all he'd said;
 he didn't tell me how exactly it felt to make out with Jesus), but to me
 doing
 heroin

mostly feels like
 taking a little extra oxycodone. The heroin high
 is a little more euphoric than an oxy high: warm, fuzzy, vaguely
 dreamlike.
 But I care less about heroin's high than I do about its efficacy. Heroin is the best pain reliever I've ever taken.
 Heroin takes away my whole headache; it leaves no trace that I ever had a headache.

I don't need another line until it's dark outside.



I take one to work with me on Monday and Tuesday; in the

office bathroom I do bumps off my fattest key and spend

the rest of each day

paranoid,

sweating and itching

and sure that someone will look into

my eyes and just know. But no one notices.

Not even Dr. M

I've still got a bag and a half left

when I see him on Wednesday. I tell him I had to

ration my pills near the end of the month but not that I

supplemented his prescription with heroin I snorted off book jackets and keys, through

When he tells me that

I should have called him, I'm dollar bills and McDonald's straws.

even though only I heard me say it, who called me addict and

I called Kevin instead of Todd and told I decide I shouldn't give myself such easy access to heroin.

the only person who completely believes in my pain trust him, no more than I don't want to feel this guilty again.

I've betrayed the one person who really trusts me; all those doctor who didn't believe me,

When I tell Kevin I don't think we should see each other anymore,

he tells me he shot up in my bathroom every time he used it. Kevin snaps at me when I ask him whether he was careful when he shot up next to my poor deformed cat, who just likes to sit beside the radiator pole and doesn't deserve to see such debauchery.

I deactivate my OK Cupid profile and snort the rest of my heroin. Apparently, I still make bad decisions.