

please love me  
at my worst



michaela angemeeer

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at my worst



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PUBLISHING®

*for oma and nana*

i know that  
*i am deserving of love*

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please love my

inner child

inner child



['inər CHɪld]

*noun*

1. a person's childlike aspect characterized by playfulness and creativity

1. often thought of as one's first self, especially when damaged or buried by childhood trauma

give me space  
for a second  
stop blowing dandelion seeds in my face  
i need a field of sunflowers  
showing me which way to look  
your weeds aren't welcome anymore  
i am done facing down  
give me something greater than the earth  
give me wide-open water  
i'm tired of this stream  
please let me have the ocean  
i need to swim for a while  
i need to let the waves carry me  
i need salt  
i need healing  
please just give me this space

i just want to be loved

i just want to be loved

i just want to be loved

i just want to be loved

*without condition*

the mother i want to be listens  
she asks how your day was  
but doesn't accept *good* as an answer  
she wants to know the ins and outs  
she asks about the feelings  
she knows you are a wave  
that you swell and crash  
the mother i want to be listens  
without judgment  
she validates you  
gives advice only when asked  
teaches you to trust your instincts  
celebrates your life  
the mother i want to be tells you

*you are enough*

when they say they're not trying  
to make you feel guilty  
it's for their sake, not yours



i am learning that this is not about me

this is about you

i am healed, i am whole

i am enough

you are in pieces

you are broken

you need healing on your own

*stop trying to break me too*

they told me love is patient  
love is kind  
but you showed me that  
love is harsh  
love is negativity  
pointing out the bad  
love is a sharp tongue  
love is bladelike teeth  
always cutting  
never saying i'm sorry  
how does this love  
feel like poison in my blood  
like i've never known iron  
like i've never known oxygen  
why did you show this hurt  
to such a little girl  
her small hands couldn't handle your blade  
it ripped her heart open  
while you poured the acid  
you can keep your attempt at love

*i am learning to love on my own*



i am

learning

to love

ON MY OWN

i took beatrice to your gravestone  
but she didn't know why we stopped there  
because you can't explain burial to a dog  
so i dug up my missing you  
with tears and no shovel  
and you gave me a little more  
understanding of my mother  
when i heard you whisper  
*she's just tired*

i wish you were here  
to remind us to love a little more  
and judge a little less  
cause our brand of love is still *i told you so*  
when we could use a little more  
*i love you no matter what*  
and i miss stirring gravy  
barefoot in the kitchen  
and i miss *a little more salt*

but for you i will try  
to be a little more sweet  
and a little more resistant  
when she reinforces my doubts  
or pokes holes in my achievements  
i just really wish you could meet beatrice

*dear nana*

if you keep trying to fix other people  
it's you that's broken

you don't set boundaries to end a relationship  
you set boundaries to continue it

oh gumdrops where have you gone  
ice cream eyes i thought you saw more for me  
i miss twizzler tongues  
and lollipop lips  
sweet songs of cinnamon rolls  
and cupcake kisses goodnight  
jumping jacks on jujubes  
and hopscotch topped with butterscotch  
glucose, sucrose, fructose, galactose  
i'll call you whatever name you'd like  
you used to be a friend to me

*but candyland is gone*

i have always been a little bit weird  
a little too fat  
a target for bullies  
and *you can't play with us*  
have you ever overheard  
your best friend call you *just a school friend*  
or been told you can't play a game  
cause you're too big  
so instead of talking to friends  
you talk to yourself  
and your stuffed animals  
write on whatever you can find  
dance in your room  
sing karaoke  
make magic by yourself  
poor sweet baby you  
that little girl just wanted  
to be included  
to feel loved  
to be a part of something

*she may not have belonged, but she belongs to me*



to my inner child—

i am sorry you never learned

how the words

i love you

were supposed to feel

i am sorry

you were ignored

i am sorry

you were never told

*you are enough*

today i opened the box of your jewelry  
somehow the inside still smells like  
chanel number five  
it is more than a scent  
it is a memory of hugs and kisses on cheeks  
endless laughter and spanish that danced in my ears  
made me yearn for paella and  
the warmth of your backyard swimming pool  
i never did ask  
why you loved elephants so much  
but a long gray trunk still brings a smile  
now sometimes a tear  
i never did ask  
how you loved our family so much  
with all of its twisted branches  
occasional thorns  
you were always the reddest rose  
it was the heaviest thing to watch your petals fall  
as i write this my tears can't help but pour  
because the holidays are so much harder  
when you're not here

*dear nana II*

i didn't say *happy birthday*  
for the first time  
in twenty-seven years  
i cried for three days instead  
how do you draw boundaries  
when your inner child just wants closeness  
how do you cut off someone who hurts you  
when you just want to love her

i really do miss you  
i wish you understood me  
i hope you take some time  
to learn about healing  
i hope you take some time  
to learn how to love yourself

meet me in the backyard  
with a kiddie pool  
i just want to splash around  
like i'm seven  
call up the neighbors  
let's make new friends  
run through sprinklers  
throw water balloons  
(i'll miss)  
let's laugh real loud  
scream for fun  
eat watermelon and orange slices  
remind each other to reapply sunscreen  
forget what we were supposed to do today  
forget what we were supposed to do this week  
call in sick for work  
no—quit our jobs  
break our leases  
move to the forest  
bathe in the river  
fall asleep on the grass

*let's quit adulthood*

please love me

at my worst

worst



[wərst]

*noun*

1. the most serious or unpleasant thing that could happen

1. bad: of the lowest quality, most unsuitable, faulty,  
or unattractive

1. at your worst: the least likeable side of someone's character

i am still in love with  
everyone i've ever been in love with

i just wanna wax your eyebrows  
talk about shrek the musical  
make out on a picnic blanket  
just first base shit  
i'll get grass in my hair  
you'll pick it out

i just wanna make you a cake  
cause it's monday  
paint your nails black  
tell you secrets  
that i don't need to keep anymore

i just wanna do fun shit  
roll down a hill  
cry laughing  
you'll get grass in your hair  
i'll pick it out

i just wanna kiss you  
or anybody  
but mainly you  
trace your lip lines with my finger  
use lots of tongue  
but not too sloppy  
ok, kinda sloppy

would you hold my hand  
even if it's sweaty  
would you say you missed me  
even if you didn't



can you miss someone you never really knew

i'm just trying to mind my business  
why you gotta smell so good

i'm just trying to mind my business  
why you gotta stretch like that

i'm just trying to mind my business  
why you gotta smile at me

i'm just trying to mind my business  
why are your teeth so nice

i'm just trying to mind my business  
why are your lips so nice

i'm just trying to mind my business  
*why you gotta make me fall in love with you again*

when will  
i stop falling in love  
with the idea of a person

when you ask  
what i'm looking for

*i know you're not looking for anything serious*

i am done with dating  
i am too intense for  
just drinks or a coffee  
i fall in love either immediately or never  
i am a stay-up-till-three-am girl  
talk-all-night girl  
tell-me-all-your-secrets girl  
i know we just met  
but we might as well get married

it was less i was in love with you  
and more you made me feel like  
i was standing on stable ground for once

i love the smell of  
parking garages  
home depot  
bleached white sheets  
powder laundry detergent  
cucumber deodorant  
and melrose place

i love the smell of  
roasted coffee beans  
the top of bea's head  
does hollandaise have a smell  
if it does i love it too

i love the smell of  
barbecued sausages  
lake air  
spruce trees  
oatmeal chocolate chip cookies  
or maybe i just love eating them

i love the smell of  
october  
rain before  
the worms crawl out  
you before  
you were with her

someone, anyone

please tell me

why can't i kick the feeling

*that we were supposed to be together*



who would  
i be if  
i had never  
been loved  
by you

sometimes i wonder  
what life would be like  
if we had never met  
if we never collided in this lifetime  
or learned what the curve  
of each other's faces felt like  
who would i be if i had never held your hand

*who would i be if i had never been loved by you*

i miss the feeling of trust  
with eyes closed  
no fear of falling  
i miss floating with you  
weightlessness  
no doubt in forever

*no doubt in us*

i know you loved me  
but i wasn't what you wanted  
i know you loved me  
but you chose her instead

loving you is like drinking diet coke  
on an empty stomach  
i can feel you burning up inside of me

*but i'm just happy to feel something*

baby, i fall so easily  
you don't even have  
to try with me  
i trip over words  
like beautiful and amazing  
any kind of kindness  
makes my knees weak  
for at least a week  
i could slip over  
prolonged eye contact  
or a nice smile  
baby, you've got to know  
you have me but  
i am yours to lose

all we're doing is exchanging words  
so how have you already

*put my heart in my throat*

you make me feel like  
you can see my insides  
but you are not a mind reader

*and neither am i*



i know it sounds ridiculous  
but your hair flops different now  
and i can tell she bought you  
new bodywash

i know it sounds ridiculous  
but sometimes i think about the  
alternate universe  
where we ended up together  
and i still can't get you to go to therapy

i didn't know at first  
but then in a full room  
you looked at me to see  
if i was laughing

i didn't know at first  
but then my cheeks  
kept hurting  
from smiling at you

i didn't know at first  
but then your eyes  
seeped past my eyelid  
made their way into my soul

i didn't know at first  
but then i knew  
that this was me  
falling in love with you

how was i supposed to know  
that we wouldn't end up together  
how was i supposed to know  
that i would end up alone

i tried to teach you  
how to love me  
but the love i needed  
would have come naturally

you were the last time i was in love with anyone

i had a good trajectory  
arms open wide  
heart open even wider  
but you broke off my limbs  
severed my aorta  
all that was left was  
spilled blood  
and all i could do to  
stay alive  
was burn my heart closed  
until it cauterized

saying i have trust issues  
would imply i have any trust left

*i just have issues*

i don't know why i keep  
giving people  
pieces of myself  
it's like i have a resistance to wholeness  
more comfort in being broken



all i did was love you as much  
as a damaged heart could  
all you did was make it worse

what do you do when  
you choose someone and  
they do not choose you back

be gentle  
i am what's left of a glass house  
too many stones have been thrown in  
my shards are sharp  
but if you move slow  
i promise they will dull  
be patient  
there is a door for you to open  
it's just a little hidden  
but if you make it through  
i will gladly hand over the key  
be kind  
even though my words are harsh  
i rarely mean it  
my teeth are serrated  
but if you don't bite back  
my tongue will learn to love you

*instructions on loving me*

i love you more  
than anything i've ever felt

*i love you more than all of me*

let's take a walk in the cemetery  
i just wanna know if you would die for me

quarantine heart  
why won't you leave me alone  
stop beating  
for the ones you used to beat for  
they are not here

*all there is to love is me*

if you wanted to be with me  
you would be here already

get out of my car

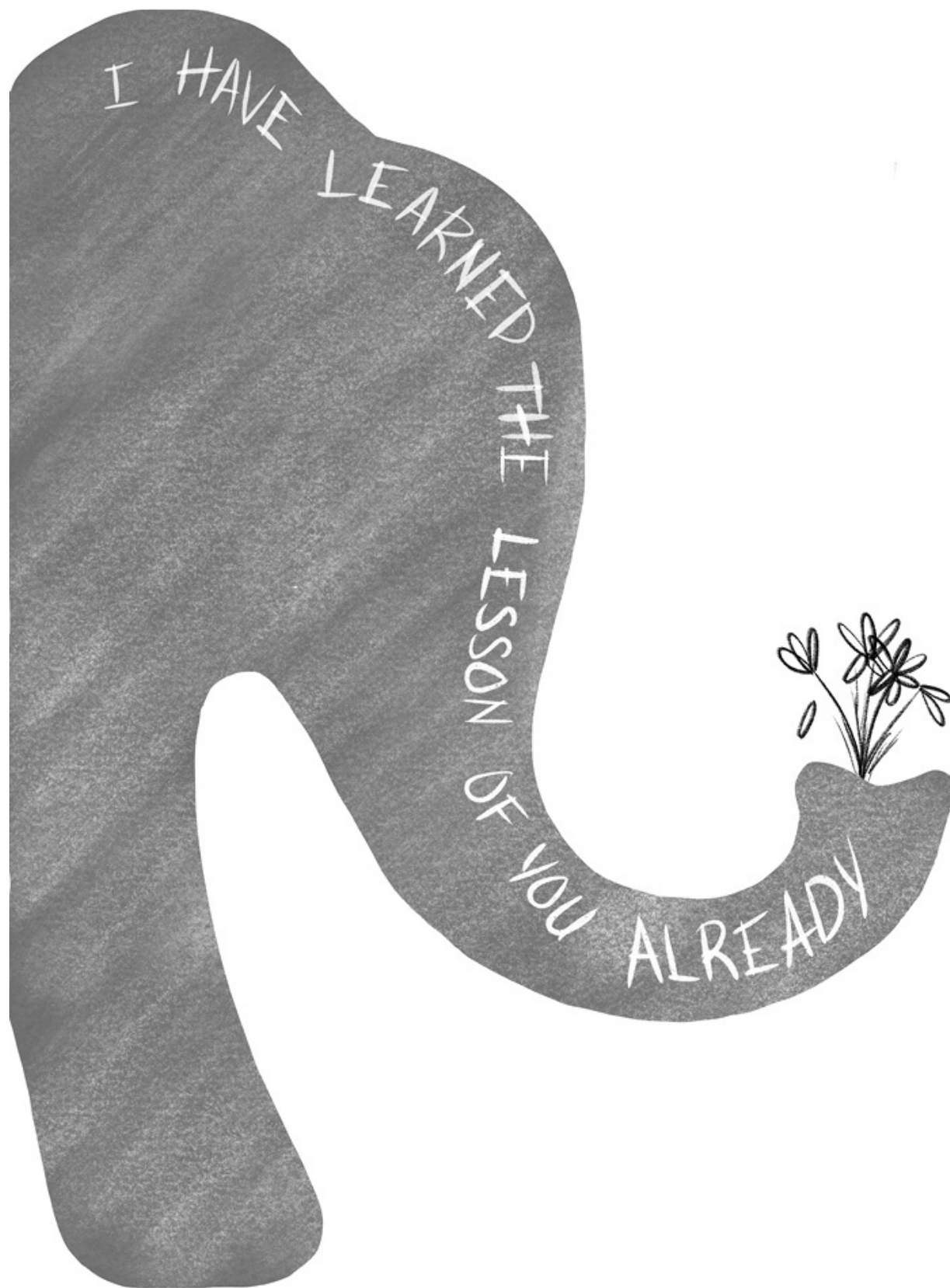
i screamed

i do not trust you to love me

*the way i deserve to be loved*



you keep trying to summon me  
but i'm digging in my heels  
i have learned the lesson of you already  
stop trying to teach me again



some people don't even  
have to die to haunt you

*ghosts*

they  
always come  
back when you  
learn to stop needing them  
could you come back please  
and just love me a little while longer  
i don't need much  
just give my hand a squeeze  
kiss my forehead  
could you please come back  
just for a second  
just love me in this instance  
i just want to remember a little better  
i just want to make sure i don't forget

i wish i could clean up  
the mess that i made of myself  
pack it up in boxes  
drop it off at the thrift store  
fill garbage bags  
with my self-criticism  
rent a dumpster to toss out  
the insults i throw at myself  
have a trash fire kindled with  
unrequited love and all the  
longing i do that lasts for too long  
is it thursday already  
don't let the garbage truck leave  
i'm not finished yet  
i just need a little more time  
to get this messed cleaned up

i'm sorry i don't have anything left in me  
i'm sorry all of me wasn't enough for you

why was i born  
with the feeling unworthy gene  
like my blessings are undeserved  
like my accomplishments are accidents

why can't i just feel good  
about the good things  
not ruin them with heart beating faster  
my own anxious drum  
pounding erratically

does anyone want to trade brains  
i'd like a quieter one  
does anyone want to trade me for sad  
i'd like happy instead

why do i keep falling in love  
with temporary people



baby, it turns out  
he's not coming back

*he was never going to*



teach me how to love  
with arms wide open  
my limbs seem to be  
permanently crossed  
i'm stuck here  
unclench my fists  
kiss my palms  
and tell them  
all my wars have already  
been fought  
and the cavalry isn't coming back  
remind me about the sun  
make me look up  
instead of down  
wish on my teardrops  
until they become moonlight  
i promise they'll become moonlight  
please don't give up on me

*please love me at my worst*

how can i love myself  
if i don't know who i am

please love me

for who i am

who i am

[ho—o 'ī 'āem]



*phrase*

1. a state of being, to be oneself

1. the true essence of a person without embellishment

1. one of life's greatest quandaries when posed as a question: who am i?

you cannot use someone  
else's map  
to find yourself

i am resistant to change  
i'd rather eat ice  
and cry on an airplane

i am fifty shades of who i once was  
always black lace underwear  
i am low-cut tops  
and no bras with bodysuits  
i am bare butt on the beach  
i am toes curled and painted pink  
i am nails long with little white clouds  
i am peaches tattooed on my shoulder  
i am soft  
i am dark  
i am mad  
and i am wild

you are allowed to be  
brutally confronted by loneliness




i pluck one gray hair every day  
throw it in the sink  
it disappears like its job is done  
taunting me since twenty-two  
i put sunscreen on my face  
every morning  
eye cream on my face  
every night

hangovers feel different  
at twenty-seven  
a drunk friday  
equals still tired on sunday  
my body aches harder now  
and i can't stay awake for  
more than fifteen hours  
without an iced coffee or two

i thought i was eternal youth  
drinking from the fountain  
turns out aging is  
the only thing i can't  
run away from  
and i don't know  
what i'm meant to be  
if i'm not meant to be young

i'm drinking cold coffee  
with cold feet  
my brain is numb  
because i forgot to sleep  
and though i never liked  
touching people  
i'd give my right arm to  
hold your hand  
can someone please  
breathe on me again

*can someone please love me again*



Can someone  
please love  
me again

we don't talk about friendship  
breakups enough  
they're less concrete  
less definite  
less written in ink  
sometimes you just drift away  
there's no fight  
no closure  
no real ending

*all you get is an ellipsis*

if i had a fairy godmother  
i'd ask her to make me  
less judgmental

i'm sorry my legs are prickly  
my toenails yellowed  
nails thin and short  
i'm sorry there's a reoccurring pimple  
under my right nostril  
and two bright red beacons lining my jaw  
i'm sorry there's a bug bite on my heel  
my lips are chapped  
and skin is dry  
i'm sorry to no one  
i'm sorry to everyone  
but most of all  
i'm sorry to me  
for constantly cataloging  
my imperfections

why is making decisions so difficult  
i thought by now i would have this down  
but left and right always seem to have  
the same pros and cons  
and i pick neither  
i can never choose staying or going  
so i end up in limbo  
if letting go is a choice  
i always run toward it  
but get held back  
by wanting to hold on  
how will i ever move forward  
if i feel so comfortable in the in-between  
how will i grow  
if i never take a leap

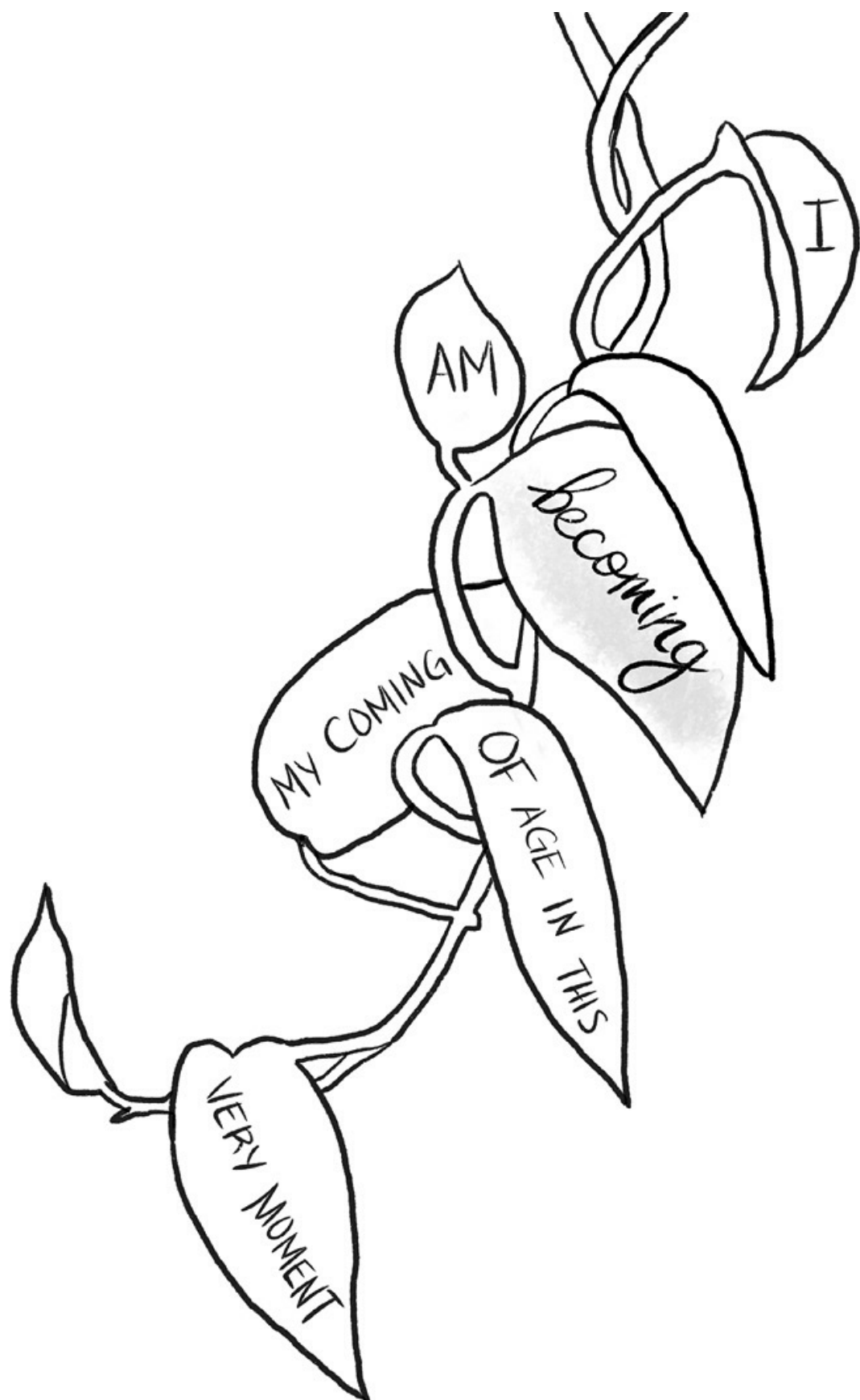
*the fool*

i wish i was a little less virgo moon  
a little more gemini rising  
i don't mind being a scorpio sun  
but i wish it hurt less to be vulnerable  
and that my cancer mars at twenty-six degrees  
made me less likely to be angry  
but not talk about it  
then blame myself  
i wish my mercury in sagittarius  
would stop saying things  
that are rude but true  
and i would happily swap my venus in capricorn  
for taurus or anything a little less analytical  
i wish my pisces midheaven  
had a little more self-resolve  
and my chiron in leo  
didn't try to sabotage my success  
all i'm asking is to switch some signs  
shift the sky

*i just need a little change*



today i love me  
more than i loved you  
and that's all i can ask of myself  
i keep waiting for my coming of age  
but if i wait it will never come  
so i will sit here  
i will float  
i will write about my body  
the way it doesn't fit quite right in this bathtub  
the way it doesn't fit quite right in this bra  
the way it doesn't fit quite right in this dress  
until i realize it's not me  
it's the bathtub  
it's not me  
it's the bra  
it's not me  
it's the dress  
and i am becoming  
my coming of age  
in this very moment



you are the only person  
who can put yourself first

*therapy lessons part III*

even though it's over  
and i think i learned my lesson  
i'm grateful to have been loved by you

remember,  
you are like the moon  
you can choose how  
where and when  
you reveal yourself

hello, i think some girls are pretty, but doesn't everyone?  
hello, i can't stop thinking about that girl's eyelashes  
hello, is your roommate gonna be there? no reason, just wondering  
hello, hasn't everyone drunkenly kissed a girl?  
hello, did you know tove lo is bi? just thought it was interesting  
hello, you can't deny that monopoly is a catchy song  
hello, ya i went to see betty who twice by myself  
hello, i'm just an ally  
hello, i might be bicurious  
hello, i'm probably more than curious

*hello, i'm bi, nice to meet you*

cheers to the bisexuals  
the lesbians, gays, and queers  
cheers if you liked to be called all three  
cheers to the trans folks  
to marsha p. johnson and sylvia rivera  
thank you for letting me be here  
cheers to the two-spirit  
to the nonbinary  
the questioning  
the not sure yet  
cheers to the allies  
cheers to everyone who did work  
so i could fully be me

sexual experiences don't have to define your sexuality



how do i know if a girl likes women  
i'm looking for rainbows  
maybe a phone case  
or key chain  
is that an equal sign tattoo  
was that just a friendly smile  
or something more  
was that just a friendly message  
or something more  
do i need to buy a pair of vans  
or cuff my jeans  
can somebody help me over here

*how do i know if a girl likes me*

let's talk about the karens  
i'm sorry fellow white women  
but *we don't claim her*  
isn't going to get rid of her  
let us claim the karens as our own  
examine the illness of our whiteness  
that they scream so clearly  
don't hide from it  
let us recognize the karen in ourselves  
don't slip up now  
what have we learned this week  
karen is obvious white supremacy  
but what about the things we do  
have we ever been the only white person in a room  
have we taken part in creating entirely  
w h i t e s p a c e s  
i'm in this with you  
it's time to make sure that  
the next time our karen tries to come out  
we've done enough work to muzzle her

white man  
why don't you wanna fight, man  
don't know what anti-racism means  
cause books are too long  
and social media makes you tired

white man  
why don't you pay attention  
spend more time coordinating  
fantasy football than  
calling out your racist friends

white man  
why are you oblivious  
more upset about your team losing  
and your scratched bumper  
than police brutality

white man  
why aren't you listening?  
can name every part of your car's engine  
but have no interest in naming  
the institutions that uphold white supremacy

white man  
we need you to fight  
we need you to pay attention  
white man—  
you're missing the revolution

i don't want a past love  
i don't want a baby boy  
needs to be reminded about their mom's birthday  
or when to reapply sunscreen  
i don't want to tell them to do the dishes  
or groan when they forget  
what i asked them  
three times  
i want self-sufficiency  
reliability  
don't tell me twice  
i want no nagging  
i want thoughtfulness  
i want doing things because they get it  
i want doing things because they remember  
all baby boys are meant to be with someone  
but i really hope one is not meant for me

i tell the sun i love her  
and in return  
she gives me freckles under my eyes  
tans my shoulders  
streaks my hair  
warms my chest  
tells my soul that life is still worth living

i keep shouting *who am i*  
into the void  
the echo screams back

*whoever you want to be*

i am happy and i am sad

i am lonely

i am alive

and i am me

please love who



i'm becoming

becoming

[bi-ˈkə-mɪŋ]

*noun*

1. to become or grow to be

1. a process of change involving the realization of potential; a movement from a lower level of potentiality to a higher level of actuality

i am tired of writing  
sad lonely poems  
imagine i wrote about you  
before i met you  
tall strong hands thick neck  
or short and soft long eyelashes  
this isn't a poem  
this is a wish  
a wish for someone better than before  
a want-to-hold-you-now  
a wish-you-were-here-already

love is sharing a banana split. and letting you have the last spring roll. it's reminding me that i need to wake up early tomorrow. and staying up until i fall asleep. love is driving me to the airport. bringing takeout when you pick me up. love is grabbing your hand on a roller coaster. or during a scary movie. love is asking if you need a jacket. it's feeling sad for me when i'm sad. love is knowing your favorite pizza toppings. love is surprise notes. love is being honest. love is showing up. love is all of it.





love is  
all of it

darling, i'm not interested  
in flowers or lust  
offer me a bouquet  
of empathy and trust

here i am  
simultaneously  
all that i've ever been  
and everything i could become

and when the shore  
seems out of reach  
don't forget that

*you can always just float for a while*

give me rippling lakes  
and a deck hot on the soles of my feet  
give me black iron armrests that sear my elbows  
a cloudless sky that turns my nose pink  
the way air moves differently near water  
chipmunks all named chippy  
an otter that lives under the dock  
and a loon that coos to the sound of the wind

*i am ready to breathe for once*

every  
night the moon  
sings me the same song

*there is room for softness here*

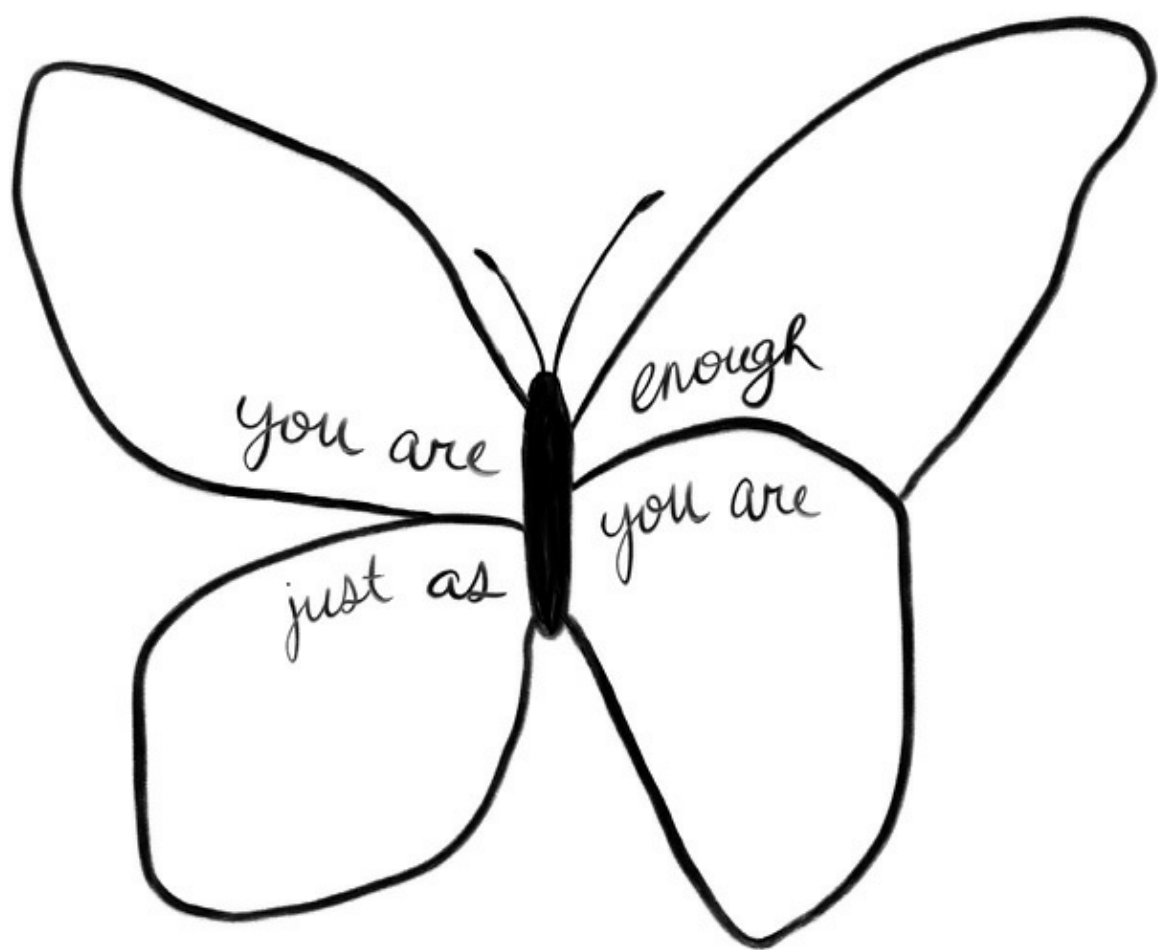
my kind of love goes deep  
but it has boundaries

*love me by giving me space*

stop making  
choices that prioritize  
other people over yourself



if you have a body that wants to be seen  
don't you dare let anyone tell you to cover it up



you deserve to be loved without condition. you are enough. without trying harder. without learning new things. without accomplishments. without success. without getting bigger or smaller. without getting smarter. without improvements. without changing anything at all. you are enough, just as you are.

i just want to be in love with somebody  
who wants to be in love with me

i wish i could skip forward  
at least four years  
i just want to get to the good parts  
i wish i could blink  
and be in love with you  
whoever you are  
i just want my simple future love  
all i'm looking for is happy  
why do i have to go through  
all of this growing first

*why do i have to find myself before i find you*

look at this body  
look how she lets you breathe  
a belly filled with air is healing  
an exhale is surrender  
look at how she lets you move  
hips following rhythm  
feet dancing through sunlight  
look at her glow  
look at what she's done for you  
tell her you love her  
tell her it's not about what meets the eye

*it's how she makes you feel*

loving your body  
is a small revolution

*ignore anyone who tells you to change it*

and just like the full moon  
you can release  
you can let go

*and make room for something new*



baby, you will find someone  
the right one, someday  
but for now, take this time as a gift

*learn how to love yourself*

what i'm learning is that  
i can control no one  
but i can set intentions  
ask for healing  
bring love to the center  
i can tell myself

*i have been worthy all along*

you are everything you were ever meant to be. don't forget to celebrate yourself. celebrate who you are and your potential of becoming. dance in your kitchen and use a pen as a microphone. run outside and spin around in the rain. sing as loud as you can in your car. ask your inner child what they want, and give it to them. you owe it to yourself to live this life in your wild. you owe it to yourself to find out who you are.

*my final words to you, dear reader*

## acknowledgments

to my readers, thank you for being right by my side on this journey. i can't believe we made it to book three! thank you for your commiseration, your stories, and your words of encouragement. you really make me feel so loved. to my dad, thank you for being my number one supporter and maybe the only one more excited than me over the past four years. to my oma, thank you for giving me twenty-eight years of wisdom and showing me the importance of enjoying your own company. to nana, thank you for watching over me, for showing up in elephants and butterflies and always reminding me that even though you aren't here, you are with me. to chinye, thank you for being my confidant, the brightest light in the dark spots. to my agent, james, thank you for finding me in a corner of the internet and believing in my potential as an author. and to all the wonderful people at andrews mcmeel publishing, thank you for taking a chance on me and making my dreams come true.

## about the author

michaela angemeer is a canadian poet who grew up in brampton, ontario. she went to the university of waterloo, receiving her bachelor of arts in psychology and english in 2015.

after sharing her poetry on instagram for a year, she self-published her first collection of poetry, *when he leaves you*, in 2018. the book debuted as the #1 new release in canadian poetry online. her second book, *you'll come back to yourself*, a collection of poetry inspired by modern dating, was released in 2019, making it to the #1 bestseller in poetry the following year. her third collection, *please love me at my worst*, is inspired by loneliness, unrequited love, and not being able to let go of past relationships. it has themes of connecting with your inner child, loving the worst parts of yourself, coming out as bisexual, and focusing on self-growth.

michaela now lives in kitchener, ontario, with her frenchton, beatrice, a lot of books, and too many plants.

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*please love me at my worst*

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Andrews McMeel Publishing  
a division of Andrews McMeel Universal  
1130 Walnut Street, Kansas City, Missouri 64106

[www.andrewsmcmeel.com](http://www.andrewsmcmeel.com)

ISBN: 978-1-5248-7547-3

Library of Congress Control Number: 2021940034

Editor: Patty Rice  
Art Director: Holly Swayne  
Artwork: Michaela Angemeer  
Production Editor: Margaret Daniels  
Production Manager: Carol Coe  
Ebook Production: Jasmine Lim

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