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Index of a Hypothetical Journal

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MICHAEL CIEPLY

Index of a Hypothetical Journal

AMORPHOUS

The shape of the jam jar and its contents, shattered on the tile.

AROMA

Comforting. It clings to you relentlessly. Shared with my childhood blanket after its monthly bath.

BILE

The substance spewing from my throat. Someone laughs.

BREWERY OMMEGANG

Veggie burgers and frites. Where I saw you for the first time in months.

BRUSSEL SPROUTS

Embarrassment at Easter dinner. Retribution by Christmas.

CRY

What I do when you do.

DOG

[run play jump fun dig kick drool mope shit eat pant bark love]

DRESS

Our shared apparel: hand-me-down shirts with mangled necks; woolen socks traded in the February snow; faded mittens, dripping with nostalgia. I sustain these articles like my memories, wondering if they are still yours.

END

Of the night, of the film, of the blanket, of the tea, of the ride, of the walk, of the embrace, of the cone, of the visit, of the fight, of the wait, of the laughter, of the daylight, of the rain.

FEEL

Not the warmth of fresh blood billowing from split lips, not the witnessing of friends diminishing their potential, not the city smog. When your hand finds mine.

FIONA

The three-legged dog I see whenever I drive through that town.

GRAVEYARD

Where I want to walk with you. Where you do not want anything.

GUILT

The entrails of a raccoon staining my tires as I accelerate to reach you. Knowing the necessary words, but not saying them. Taking you for granted.

HARANGUE

Sexist politicians. Ignorant doctors. Wicked preachers.

HEAD

Your face your ears your hair your nose your eyes your cheeks your eyebrows your tongue your lips your lips your lips your lips your lips your lips.

IMMACULATE

[see 'HEAD']

JARRING

How much funnier that joke is when I hear it from you.

KATHLEEN

Name between names. From the ones who loved you first. It can never be taken away.

LOVE

Resisting the urge to watch the next *Breaking Bad* on your own. Feigning laughter to fill the silence after an unfunny remark. Identifying the ways you are willing to change.

MEMORY

Contemplating in bed as I flirt with slumber. Mind's destination on long car rides, too far for my GPS to navigate. Simultaneous happy place and tormentor. Flexible, changing with time. Easily manipulated. Worst torture of all. Source of all guilt.

NEEDLE

The cross-stitch you brought into this world for no other reason than my contentment. The acupuncturist's tools that have helped you more than all the Ibuprofen in the world.

OBSERVATIONS

The process of converting your thoughts into text, rearranging into sentences, and escaping your mouth with exactly the right intonation. Insightful. Witty. Unique. Perceptive. Never vainglorious.

PRINCESS QUEEN

Unsure why I started calling you this. Unsure if stolen from a television show. Unsure if you are the queen of princesses or the princess of queens. Unsure which is better than the other. Unsure if I will ever stop using it. Certain that it suits you.

QUIET

Walking in your house at night. Adjusting myself so I can watch you wake. Trying to think of what to say in a fight. Driving home after a weekend with you. The highest attainable volume on Netflix. 4:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.

QUINTESSENTIAL

The middle piece of a cheese pan pizza.

RAIN

An anarchical presence that signals the hopelessness of productivity, the cancellation of events, and the stalling of progress. Emancipates behavior otherwise unacceptable during peaceful conditions. Only when we are in the thick of a storm's pandemonium does time seem to renounce its rigid schedule and take pause.

SWIM

Summertime pleasure. Total connectivity in a body of water. Sensual dancing in 360 degrees. The struggle to stay afloat. You in a bikini.

TRAIN TRACKS

Our early destination. I suppose we were too scared to cross it. I suppose we never had a good enough reason to leave.

TROCHILIDAE

The bird around your neck.

UNDERSTOOD

That quick glance you just gave me. The corner of your mouth twitching. Why you wore that shirt. What you would say if you were here. How much to drink on medication. That joke in *Arrested Development*. The occupancy of my discomfort. The moment just preceding hatred. That I did not mean to say what I did.

VEHEMENT

My passion for breakfast/your passion for filtered water.

WEGMAN'S

Where all roads lead. Inviting to all with shirt and shoes. Instant satisfaction. Gluten-free macaroni and cheese. Cheddar bunnies and coconut water. Ingredients that we silently agree to not try to pronounce.

XENON

The word that always catches my eye on your Scrabble mug. I imagine something extraterrestrial. Something fantastic.

YESTERDAY

Wanting to go back to relive it/wanting to go back to change it. Wanting that same high. Wanting to forget the consequences.

YOUTH

Never stolen, just misplaced. Never lost, simply prioritized. Release all preconceptions if you wish to retain it. "Oh, to be young forever," we hear the townies in the bar say.

ZUCCHINI

Yellow and green spread before me. Eaten only after that joke bombed. Your blue eyes are the only confirmation I need.