

A Brief Theory of Entanglement

by

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## ABSTRACT

*A Brief Theory of Entanglement* examines the philosophical consequences that quantum mechanics has on our lives, our bodies, and our relationships. By framing themselves within the context of "daughter universes"—the theory that each choice on our plane of consciousness spawns an alternative universe in which the opposite choice was made—these poems consider pain and the power we choose to give it while imagining a multitude of worlds in which everything—even grief—occurs very differently.

To Victoria, as promised

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I.

## AFTER THE SUICIDE

I could not remember

her name. Like a ship

on the spine of memory

I had learned to dim

these things. I fashioned

my bones into mastheads

and sailed through glass.

I taught myself to speak

to smoke.

## FIRST ATTEMPT

In time, the body's deceptions

would reveal themselves

as the sleight of many hands:

how the swollen first incisions

would vanish and resurface

on your wrists almost at will

blotting themselves back into

the white cabinet of your flesh

like a pitying of doves

only to return, more brutal

than before, veins freshly lit

with blood of every hue

a rope of colored silk soaked

and threaded through your limbs

by an unseen street magician.

Still, the audience would not rest,

rapt for the next cut or trick—

the quick wave of your palm

your knife, no prop, now missing

and your pocket so suddenly full.

## SELF-PORTRAIT OF THE PATIENT AS A CORONARY LANDSCAPE IN SPRING

The man in the surgical mask hands you the scalpel

and this is it, you think, *yes*, I will leave this very minute,

I will strip myself of this altitude, forest of cold tables

and mountain of drapes. I will fold myself between

a molecule and a blade of steel, become a carbon shadow

of my former self, and they will not come for me here.

And yet, you, with the knife, cannot undo yourself

long enough to run, so you wrench what they will wrench

later from your body and offer it like breath to the other side,

knowing that you will pay for this in the year that follows

when they return for the blood's coursing, the always carousel

of your absent face, the cold-powdered ghost of your gloves

slipping you back inside yourself.

## DISCOVERIES

If you could peel yourself

away from the world

as the skin off an apple,

only a blade

spun downward

to part you from fruit

or seeds, dark waters

and darker earth—

If you could set sail

through your veins,

sight new light or land

in the rich streams

of your wrists,

time as compass

lone blood-arrow

turning, turning—

But it will not give:

the broken needle

your hand crossed

against yourself—

A shield. A cradle.

## PROLAPSE

fallen forward —

the holy hat of —

your heart — blown open —

a window unlatched

in the rain — a child spitting

onto her own split knee —

patting down the hurt —

*there, there—*

regurge — as in, to cast up —

a swimming pool, red

& backwashing itself —

from the sprung leak

of a wall clock —

& the heart again —

saying something soft —

a little stutter —

a quick word

of disgust —

## YOUR BRAIN IS NOT YOUR OWN

a dumbbell perched

on a yard stick

blue spinning plate

your brain is the last

balloon at the birthday

crushed & waiting

a tiny elephant

ushered through space

your brain defies

all sorts of gravity

like a tin trailer roof

your brain considers

imminent collapse

in any second

your brain longs

for a new Harley

but thinks better

of driving at night

in sleep your brain

balances its checkbook  
dreaming deeply  
of total preparedness  
your brain thinks  
certainly next year  
will be the good year  
your brain has been  
singularly waiting on  
no regrets your brain  
insists despite growing  
tired with age your brain  
is probably thinking  
it's time to find god  
a power your brain  
doesn't believe in  
like flying objects  
and family therapists  
instead your brain  
prefers to slow sink  
an anvil submerged  
in brain-shaped denial

until your brain can

no longer take it

blown head gasket

bottle to bottom

your brain as mirror

your brain a cut rope

## CONTRITIONS

what i was good at :: getting born :: what i was born as :: nothing good :: to ask you to get  
over :: the next hill :: a crevice spot :: dark punctures :: i've shook through you :: bad  
dice :: molded bread :: the turgid green :: of my mouth :: my mouth unwinding :: my  
devil mouth :: days we live with :: every word :: pushed out me like :: great shock ::  
metal jointures :: cabbage rot :: and the mind on the table :: and the heart eating out ::  
and the tongue plunged through fire :: and the world in its grave



## SECOND ATTEMPT

You were almost the kind of *better*

you ought to have been by now,

almost awakened as the rational daughter

this world supposed you to be—

remote and disclosed, ornamental,

reborn with everything you'd wanted

clasped already in your tough glass hands

as devotional, lit candle, proof of this—

your goodness, your good sense

of belonging to this widening land

which so lovingly churns itself

into newness— the fresh start

of your hospital linens taken away

for the mid-afternoon washing,

a bathtub bleached back to white,

the bedroom windows thrown open

for light and measure, every road ajar,

all of it welcoming you to stay

a little longer—to stay

your whole life, if you'd like—

But instead, this not saying goodbye—

not pouring the coffee, not kissing

your sister's cheek as she nibbles toast

at the counter, as she calls after you her line

*see you later*, not a question— as you rush

through the door, out into your last morning—

to the clean campus office, elevator bells,

and back home before lunch, where you will think

at last, so permanently, how none of this

matters— not time, not sister, not October

and its blinding briefness, not even you —

or *just* you— you, turning the key, breathing

the steaming engine, allowing it to do its work,  
good work, the work of removing you from  
yourself.

NOTES FROM THE DIVIDE

not so young or graceless

as to praise the divide

not yet grown enough

to discount praise—

\*

as beggars

should we meet again

—years from now

at the downward cure—

I will wave to you

from some astounding ledge

or universe

until I am called back

to the rooftop

of myth—

\*

as a girl

when language still arrived

through bright fog

of prospect

I could think only

in the veil

of the body—

\*

at the clinic

that day

I plucked out

by request

the cello heart

of a dead man—

\*

despair had not

occurred to me then

as it would later

in the clutches

of the quiet engine

and sealed garage—

\*

somewhere, beyond

the balcony rattles—

a glass waiting

to be sounded

beneath the startle

of trains.

AFTER THE SUICIDE

City blocks crumbled

at your touch—

You, gargantuan

strangled miles of power lines

set unfenced fields

into delirious flame—

At last, the swollen body

could bow

to the mind—

Emptied

of this world you made

a new pact—

No one would catch you—

No one dared try—

II.

WE BEGIN WITH THE BODY

*your* body

small & tight

a fistful of tar

shrugged close

to its core

& flaming

elocution

SEE HOW THE BODY HUNGERS

for an axis

to turn the eye

against its molten

self splitting

& sure a crevice

of restitution

speaking:

*—you will be replaced—*

& your new body

your new cruel body

so *man* in it

rough, uncut

no trace

of you

BUT THEN NOT YOUR BODY

not you

not yours

hasty mistake

that someone else

might think

your body

so equitable

isn't this

why you depart

each time—

to delight

in your own

re-arrival

to emerge deep

in its waters

arterial spoil

precipitating

always this

gorgeous &

—*oh god*—

so open?

NO YOUR BODY IS

*the good stuff*

when you call, it comes

the torso as prism

through which

you cast out

the world

& the hands

which strike

& re-mold for it

cover in the shape

of your lengthening skull

IN THE BODY, THE JUDGE

ticking

dark robe of

cargo coming

through

& the message

which calls

from cavity

into law

*what you long for*

*is not long for you*

NOTE THE BODY

which may be heard

is the body to be found

in its travels it has sharpened

the teeth of its knowing

it has come to greet the weight

that knees can bury

& speak of what

the bowel or breast may know

IT HAS RISEN

this body

as new planet

one which may

gladly unfurl

for you and you

alone—

IT IS YOURS

yes this body

yours to keep or lose

to lose or kiss

to kiss and discard

III.

WARNING:

I was expecting death to happen better // faster // from behind— like when someone else's husband pats your ass at the cocktail party // or when you crack a new wine glass on the floor & your father beats you half-deaf, saying *I told you not to, I told you not, I told you—*

—If you tilt a black eye toward everything being ripped out of you so fast, it's almost as if your mother is back at the barbecue, crying into Easter grass & asking for her purse. She wants to know what day it is. She wants another drink. She wants her kindergartner to drive her home.

But forget this // there is nothing at the center. Look how well I am fixed now: less than one-third of my day spent considering how to rid myself of the other two. I cartwheel to work, braid small children's hair on the lawn. I look street performers in the eyes again, shake sweaty hands at the pharmaceutical luncheon, wish good fortune on your baby, the future engineer // saying *congratulations // how wonderful // and my god, no, I can't believe how fast you lost the weight—*

## WHAT IT TAKES FROM YOU

The cutlery. The cupboards. The gold filigree crystal  
from your grandmother's first wedding. Your wedding.

The half second you faced the sixth grade schoolyard bully  
and the flight of stairs you tumbled down as consequence.

Consequences: the boiling kettle burn, bathtub split lip,  
check-marked cheek scar from your sister's Braveheart impression.

Your retribution: a slap, a scream, hair pulled clean out of the scalp.

Razors. Carpet burns. The hardened silver ring of your first beer's sweat  
and the silk couch you threw up on afterwards. Canopies. Late lunch.

Last kiss under burnt out Christmas lights, the brown moving boxes  
stacked in the hall. Your mother's cranberry lipstick dropped on the new rug  
and your mother crying in your bedroom, crumpled like I don't want to go,  
I don't want to go. Clean hospital beds. Chewing gum. The orchard outside  
the nursing home and the wormy apples you accidentally ate, not yet knowing  
what a worm might taste like. Roast chicken. Time outs. Dollhouses, and later,  
Grown Up houses. Crossing the threshold with a coffee table and books  
and the man you might have met had you not turned your back to the window,  
walked out into the lampless night. Intellect. Entire continents. Memory,  
or the expectation of it. Your father's middle name and what his face looked like

the last time he cradled your childhood in his arms. The whirling cerebrum,  
its canyons in centimeters. Nerves and their steady winter breath whistling  
down your spine. The temple of your clavicle, built in cracking bone,  
and the brisk hush of living before the bulldozers rumble in...

NOCTURNE for the ER

I.

Here, twelve weeks too late. All defeat.

The waiting room empties, unhurried.

A woman with kidney stones tells you  
you have the most beautiful skin.

A drain of color. A dying place.

II.

There's nothing quite like the sight  
of your own bare ass peeking out of a paper gown  
to put you right back in your place.

III.

Never have you so often been asked  
to wiggle your toes. *Look here. And here.*

Two vials of blood and an unused IV later,  
a young tech pushes you to radiology,  
apologizes every time the gurney hits a bump

IV.

The CT scanner whirs:

concussion, surely.

Brain meet skull. Meet floor.

Pain comes swift and sacred,

lingers like a stern talking to

from the heavens.

V.

Three months ago, you sliced open your body  
with a boning knife and still woke up

but a bump on the head

and here we are—

Isn't that just like God's sense of humor—

that endless, booming laugh,  
row after row of gleaming teeth.

REVERSALS

A crowd of poppies nestle

beneath you

and the crown

of your color dissolves

into white.

Your skin becomes

your skin again

—taut and new—

and your dutiful eye-bulbs

crawl the shrine

of your face.

Patient, they return

to their orbits.

The tongue

spins its wiry cocoon

in the branches  
of your closing lips  
and the lungs heave  
air in buckets like coal.

The hands  
unbolt themselves  
from the frozen wheel.

The engine  
rumbles back into  
its sleepy cave.

And here, the key which floats  
through your palm  
tells the door to invite you  
out of its arms—  
and the body  
and the mind

and the grief

of your wholeness

forget themselves

for a moment

and step back

into the cold

of an incalculable

Thursday morning.

## WHAT TO SAVOR

Overcut grass. The library books turned in  
almost on time. Someone else's kid crying

just out of earshot, that little mouth of fathomless need—  
not yours to listen to or gratify.

When your sister left the headlights on overnight,  
you were sure the car battery would die. But it didn't.

The garbage truck backed up over only one of your cats,  
and that missing postcard reached its destination eventually.

Sometimes grace sneaks up in the ugliest of ways,  
and you learn to call it the miracle of living.

The streets grow half-quiet.

The ambulance passes without you in it.

IV.

## A BRIEF THEORY OF ENTANGLEMENT

I.

Who was I

before Myself

if not Another

nameless

on the cutting board?

II.

In this world

I am

everywhere I am

at once

gone & tomorrow

again.

III.

Was I not always

wading into

this moment?

The knife

I raise

cuts throat

&

bread.

IV.

We would never

leave you—

V.

Did one of Me

not say this?

VI.

Before we knew you

we knew there was

You.

VII.

We could sense

You

as probability

the soft particle spin

of your approach.

VIII.

The knees we bent  
we saved for years.

IX.

To observe

was to worship

your approximation.

X.

Still, we grew tired

of waiting.

XI.

We watched ourselves  
into nothing.

We struck the thread  
to our own skin.

XII.

Sick with knowledge

we were called to teach You

this lesson.

XIII.

We untied You  
from Us  
like a little boat.

XIV.

We knew You again

as a world

we could turn from.

JUDAS RETURNS TO GOLGOTHA AS A QUANTUM PARTICLE

Enough with consequences

the ground's wide mouth

wolves turned

blank to their promises—

Let no one claim to hurt

harder than I did hurt

at the feet of the absent body.

If I had known the knot

I tied through time

my life

for his life—

If I had walked further

and more artfully through the garden—

But instead I watched

the final atom

torque, dive into

its plaintive extinction

and whistled his name

the whole drive home.

JUDAS AT THE THIRD ANNUAL RED CEDAR BBQ

If a fish could split itself

scale by scale—

If a single loaf

could cure disaster—

If I could unearth my disappointment

and mount it like a cross—

If I could send the whole world

home—

But Christ, instead

climbs a picnic table

slips a saltine sleeve

from his leather jacket

and tosses it to the crowd.

Not a tipped grain of barley—

Not a trout head to the nose—

If I could turn my fork

in the wrong direction—

If my shame could plummet

through a bed of western ice—

But drowning is much like

kissing, he says

and so we'll die

or touch—

He won't recall.

JUDAS RUSHES THE HOLY SEPULCHRE'S CHAPTER OF SIGMA ALPHA  
EPSILON

After the crowd

had scattered

we tossed

gristle-scrap

to stray dogs

and watched

our mothers

un-nail him

from the post.

All that trembling

in the arms of men

and still he only did

as all gods

and men do—

Sing. Leave.

JUDAS DOES GRINDR

This is how he walked from me—

through brick walls & windows

on the toes of foster children

past every sun-plastered inner-city playground—

quick stop—

Venice massage parlor

grinning and towel-less, like—

*It is I— Be not afraid!*

—then straight across Silver Lake

shoeless, mid-July—

a ghost floating the thin, tight line

sick of men—

buzzcuts with water skis

& a predilection for suffering—

Now it's Christ on a high wire

with his ribbon baton

& two dudes like skyscraper beams

jutting through heavens of smog—

Christ above us—

Christ the gold medalist—  
Stopping traffic in his Calvin Kleins—  
Buses running bumper to guard rail  
and me, staring dumb down Wilshire  
at his cell phone photograph  
nothing left to devour but  
his back, the hands—  
the last of it.

JUDAS DOES CHEMO

All the stars done smoking—

His face turned away—

Burnt out, a constellation

of breath—

And me, in this armchair—

This needle—

This need—

Concerned enough

with the triumphant farewell

I banished him to a place

without expectation

where men are greeted

with bourbon and fists

no ice cooler—

organ twist—

no popsicle to the brain—

The blondest nurse

straightens her scrubs—

I pretend to see

straight through them—

Christ taps my catheter, says—

*Lighten up, Judie.*

*I've got a joke for you—*

*Rasputin and I walk into a bar...*

JUDAS TAKES A WALKING TOUR OF THE TOMB, CIRCA 2013

So this is what it means

to be *human*—

one for whom the unfelt bruise awakens.

In the courtyard,

tourists cover their throats

unable to resist the story—

splitting wood with iron

the fleshy white sail

of Christ

—here, a pudgy actor—

lifts onto the cross

all over again.

And then, the vanishing act—

They are so moved.

Weeping over the empty rock

one woman says

*—If only I had been there*

*to stop this—*

but in one universe or another

I would have strung him up.

JUDAS AS THE LAST EYEBROWED THRUSH OVER GETHSEMANE

Swearing on the lamppost

of indemnity—

a hand raised solemn

to itself—

and still, hovering

on any clear night

above the evergreens

I can spot myself

leaning

toward his bright

pitted cheek—

Had I plucked out

my blood

from body with beak—

flooded

the last theatre floor—

But to return

is to return

to certainty—

For the final act,

the world disappears

within us.