

I am not all water.

lucytiven



I am not all water.
by lucy tiven

artwork by lucy tiven

echap by NAP
napnappnaps.com



Jimmy Fallon

I saw you in the distance
or did I see a strange and beautiful fish
and assign it to your body by accident

I am more tired than most women
I have cried in numerous bathtubs

I want to skip ahead to the part that is funny
I want this to be that already
instead of whatever part it is instead

Outside the church, there is a poster of a bus full of nuns
advertising their life of chastity and heavy fabric

Do you think about them? How even in darkness
there is some luminous quality
that might be happiness

Just give me time

Urgency

everything is on sale on the moon

before its too late
name something ol' faithful

I could write horoscopes and they would be amazing!

Do not worry about the salmon
The salmon, it had such a lovely life

Men talk a lot about beautiful women
but no one knows anything about each other
the silvery fish of cells
sucking in oil and placenta

the other night someone told me
"you've got the best tits I've ever seen!"

there isn't a picture on the inside cover
spoiler alert

stop looking at the sky that way

Did you get fired from Taco Bell?

Because you sure are good at spilling the beans.

On my LinkedIn profile it should say
“Contributor” at ‘my own malaise.’ Now
you laugh.

Now,
I’m reading a book with my feet on the counter
until I can do it without thinking about myself

turning into a person you love enough
at the same time.

It is sort of weird

that, overwhelmingly, most of the 8.7 million species
alive on our planet do not consider reproductive consent.

I am trying not to think that way. I am trying to believe the
sentence that goes “I am not the center of anything.”

I woke up early today and learned the name of the
senate majority leader. I feel good. I am better
than I was.

You do not have to be physically active
to understand that any activity will eventually become
either an exercise in tolerance or failure.

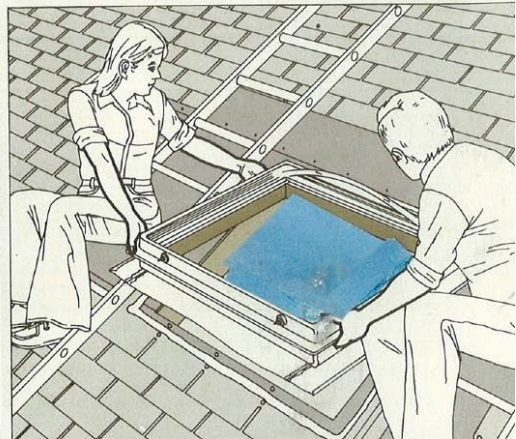
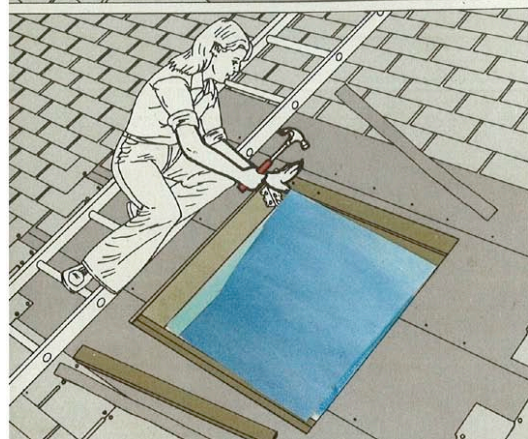
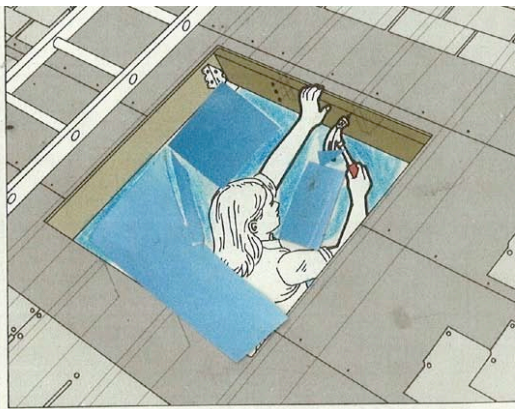
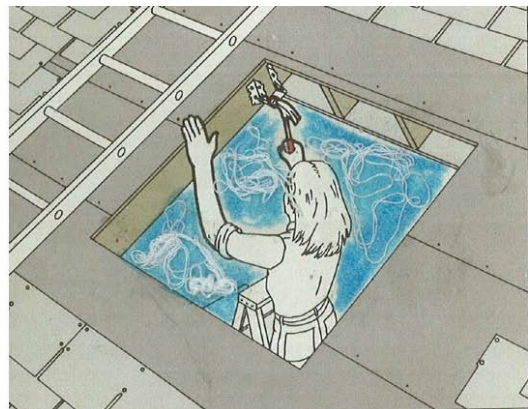
Mary Oliver didn’t say that. Mary Oliver
has probably never heard of Taco Bell.

Don’t you want me now that I only use the internet
on my cell phone to look up words?

How badly do you want to call me
in the middle of the night
when I am doing something too beautiful
to answer?

In today's paper, three of the clues to the crossword
were "fool."

I love you a little bit less.



detritus

I have all these lists of old passwords,
previous employers, books I pretend to have read already

I can't get things out of my head at night
1 line from a song, over and over
until sunrise

But there was once before I was used to it

I woke up my mother
I lay down next to her crying into the sheet
I felt suffocated by something
a phenomenal panic or profanity that evaporated off later

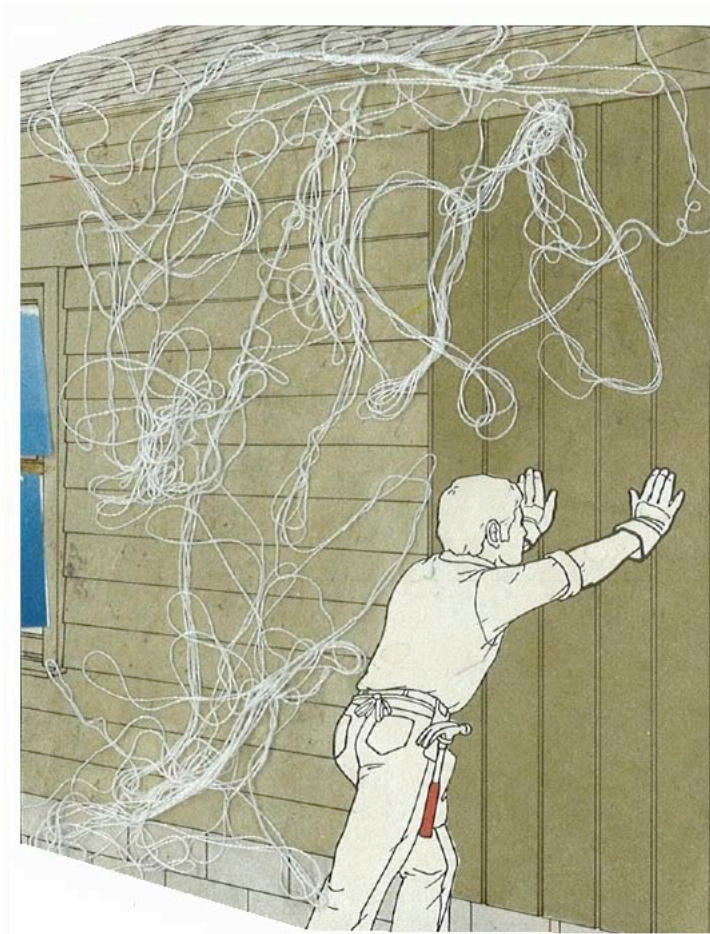
I don't know what she said to me before we fell asleep next
to each other
some recommendation about breath or rest?

a good person might write a poem about that, though
shut up about their own body and its possessions

imagine

light coming through the blinds off the pond in the yard
how everything felt soft that she never used her hands

I am a famous charlatan until I am a small, servile bird



sadness that is endless tranquility

I lost you again the other night
watching the sky go
from one blue to another
coming out of the woods. I emptied my bag
in front of the fire.

Here I am, standing
in the branched cucumber light
fogging the lawn.

I am crouched
under the draped cloths
of spring days falling

in sequence. What do you
remember? I loved you a lot

in vain. "You don't have to."
You called out to me
across the kitchen
as I rinsed a plate.
Stay where you are. I tell myself
with my brown hair tied up over the sink.
See you in the next life.

source errors

What is wrong with me is more than my citation style

I am not funny

I have sat in a hotel room in Washington, DC
and paid three dollars to watch an episode of the West Wing

I have been let go from a literary non profit, two pizza places,

an authentic Nigerian restaurant
that kept a bucket of goat heads below the counter
I glimpsed once without meaning to, and held up my face after
as though
nothing had gone wrong

I have tried to do a good job

I have tried to make sense of my complete and partial failures
and then recount them with levity or disengaged witticism when
that was not possible

Even when I change my shoes and don the loose, dirty rag of a shirt
I will stop for a break after I run for two minutes

Pete came back from Chicago with a new shampoo and left it
by the faucet each day this week

It has a mango on the bottle

First I tried to smell it and hit my head and my nose
My ex boyfriend told me he hated the way
I have no sense of my body parts in space
or I do but cannot control them I don't remember which

He made everything worse
I think about dropping eggs all the time
I might have PTSD

This morning I squeezed a small dab of shampoo in the
shape of an almond onto my palm
and licked it off : terse and salty

I thought it could make a good salad dressing

I am just too allergic to smell anything that is not horrible

Bit by bit

I am trying not to set myself up for so much disappointment
All at once

exercises in humiliation

when I visited Robert in the hospital
his veins looked so close
on the other side of his skin

it was impossible to think of him
and not think about death

The other day an adult told me the poem I liked
was an exercise in humiliation

The most humiliating thing I can think of is how once
I had clumsy sex with a bartender in the bathroom
of a restaurant that specialized in kraut

The name of the restaurant was the name of a type of kraut

I told him he couldn't put his dick in my asshole
but conceded that he could lick it instead
If he really wanted to, whatever, sure

My boyfriend had just left me and I was so afraid to be lonely

He said "you are going to get me in trouble"

I had never had sex with a stranger before
He was 34 years old
He took off his stupid newsboy cap to lick my butt
while I looked at my own face reflected over the sink

He was from Australia
It was my 20th birthday

desire is not goodness
desire is just one immediate thought

even when I lie down and stretch out my legs in the bathtub
and think *I am all bruises*

I am not bruises the way Robert was

I am nothing like the way he was bruises then

Erasure Mark

I do not want to be held accountable
for indisputable beauty.

I will be on the street
holding a lavender umbrella
to one side

right before it goes inside out
before the wind. Or bathed
in pear colored light

tapping at the sink, half-absent
not waiting in the hotel lobby.

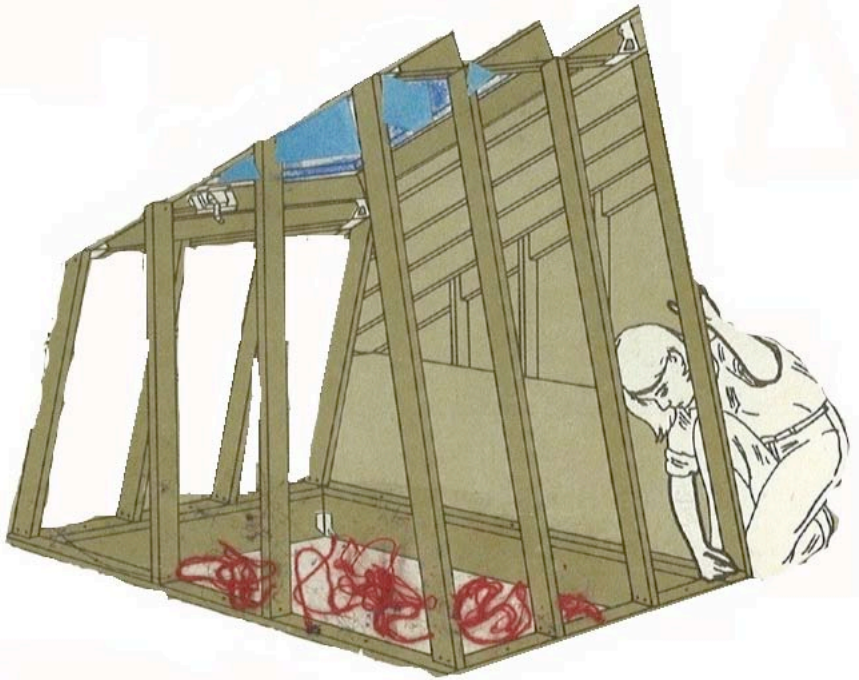
Sometimes, I read your name
and think "I will be famous first"
and then pull my hair
to tell myself 'stop'
after. This morning,

when someone said
"You seem good to me.
If you aren't good enough
for someone else then that's fine,"
I almost cried, struggling

to suck the last piece of ice
through my straw. You were wrong
when you told me
the internet is nothing like the sea
because I would almost give this up
to dive into either.

A Series of Signs

proceed with caution
or you may be replaced by a ghost
or a tea set. *Vertigo* is a term to describe
a strange longing for the ground and it is also
a film I saw in a class in college. I was sitting
under the projector light which was blue
and demure. I remember wondering why
I was there which I guess of that movie
is the point. Unlike the incarnation of the woman
in the woods, it was not really that I cared
about death; it was the not knowing
which items to bring
or if instead I should have been
following someone I had loved before. Is it that
often what looks like a beginning
is actually a trapdoor or the sky, a corridor
or an applied science of distances? Who were you then
and who are you now?



fluoride

last night I did a whip-it
looking up at the clean surface of the moon

I was watching james eat pink cake and then shovel it into the fire
with a plastic fork. anything can be beautiful
if you catch it at the right moment. excuse me

while I fill your mouth with sunflower seeds
as you sleep. "the nba playoffs are a matter of desperation"
said the sportscaster on tv just now, which I guess
they have in common with many things

and if you look, my hands are just the same
as the confused underside of that halved peach over there
filled with inert sorrow

and if you look, outside the rain is green
when you think about it

it is just as green as the sea

does not exist

Do you remember when we were tested for scoliosis in grade school
Did they hold a ruler up to our backs while we stood
or a cold spiney iron thing
is that what it was
I do not remember exactly what happened to me anymore
Or what parts I made up or took from other people

I want to be good but I do not know how to be good

At least not the way I want

I want a fish but I am afraid I will kill the fish
I will find it floating limp on the sill and blame myself

How will it die
I don't know

If I had a fish I know it would be overfed or underfed
because I am always overfed or underfed

My friend is buying pants on the internet
I am more selfish than I want to be

If I had a fish, I would be afraid for the fish,
but it would only be because I am afraid for myself
It would not be happy so I would buy another fish to keep it company
because I was afraid of it dying of solitude
and the other fish would eat it or die trying

or even if it did not succeed it would be wounded and die from the wound
or one fish would die and then the other would live for a while
and then die from separation anxiety

I am almost always lonely enough to forget
how we were never happy at all

pools

don't be too nice to me
I look terrible in a bathing cap
one day you will be so sorry for all of that

leaf fragments falling like sesame seeds
onto the backs of swimming people

in the past of that future
you had said

"Why are they all shaped like kidneys?"
I don't know what it is

Denim Humidity

I always thought I would end up more like Doris Day.

There was a murder this morning
in the apartment building where we stayed
last summer. I do not remember the shot man
or much of anything except for the one room

and its scattered drawings of bathtubs.
There was also single martini glass
of cigarette butts and amputated erasers.

I used to lay awake
watching the long, pale arms of the fan circle
spitting dust over the rug.
It was so warm and we were both afraid
but I liked life in West Harlem
and walking through Morningside Park at night
or in the morning and the people
who spoke to me on the street.

He yelled sometimes when I cast my towel aside
or let the water sweep across the floor
into a pool below the tub. He said it was no use.

I am hardly ever an easy person to love.

perishable material

I am building a raft from the pieces of slaughtered foxes and walnuts
and taking it out on the lake tonight :

cold, dark
& even

Tell me again about how I can ruin myself, the sky
pouring out ice in sheets or jagged cloves

I am not all water

Maybe I should have just turned
into a waxen mass of reeds,

done something to belay my body
into a still world

instead of capsize it
bloated with sayings. I am a fixture

I am holding 1000s of knees inside me
lightbulbs, steel, pieces of dried fruit

April

after William Carlos Williams

I am not bothered
by the ugliness of things.

Today, another innumerable
porch. Another overture
to cast below the sunken tree.

It is hard work
to be this lively with indifference

and I take my job very seriously.
I do not want to go down over the sea
like a small, derelict plane

or lie down in grass when it is warm.
So you do not have to be happy.

It is between Derby Day
and the last of the Catholic holidays.

It is the morning, and the *stark dignity*
of cold is coming off the lake

and the birds are shrieking

and the staccato hairs of the field
are white from any distance

and involuntarily, a few things
may start to appear possible.





Lucy Tiven is a foul weather friend
she is a fan of sans-serif fonts, roy orbison, and the peabody hotel