

# gESTURE # 6



Thanks for reading  
gesture.

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There's not a right way or wrong way to smile.  
Creditors wrote the constitution. "It's appalling,"  
the mob began to think "the beginning is near,"  
the beginning of what?  
I'd rather be ruled by the first two hundred names  
in the New York phone book than the people  
we have now. Our work is destroying the planet;  
the whole thing held together with scotch-tape.  
I wouldn't mind playing in mud with you.

I think it would be kind of nice to fall into nonexistence after death  
It would be kind of nice if we  
built skyscrapers in our heads instead of on top of trees  
Everyone is killing my friends and no one even cares  
I'm dying but its okay or something  
I've been told I have it really good  
so I guess the weight of my thoughts  
slowly crushing my body,  
internal juices spewing all over my living room floor  
don't really matter

Sometimes I'm a large house without an echo  
Sometimes I'm not a house at all

Your lungs are full of water and you are laughing with your friends  
ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha  
your seven year old self just committed suicide  
and you are laughing with your friends

when will i learn  
that its not cool:  
to list my vulnerability as one of my ‘redeeming characteristics’  
or to defend insanity as a ‘viable alternative’  
or to describe psychedelic sessions in which i believe i experienced ‘ego death’  
or to play freeform ‘jams’ on guitar thru fuzz pedals disregarding ABAB song structure  
or to let kittens playfully nibble at my toes while laughing and smiling and feeling happy  
or to say fuck it and quit my job for no real reason  
or to stay in bed for a day and a half every fortnight or so  
or to be shy and withdrawn one minute and overly exuberant the next  
or to try and pass off my ‘experimental blues rock’ as ‘avant garde sound poems’  
or to take over-the-counter sleep aids and herbs known for their anti-anxiety and sedative qualities  
or to say i like certain aspects of religion  
or to really believe the world is anarchy and chaos  
or to perceive inapplicability  
or to say or even think ‘im bored’  
or to desperately want richly symbolic dreams and sometimes have them  
or to openly praise my friends, being sincere whether they know it or not  
or to buy big bottles of whiskey  
or to switch from Patsy Cline to the Sex Pistols on a whim  
or to re-read my favorite books over and over and sometimes last chapter first  
or to say ‘i dont know’ or ‘its too complicated’ when the answer is important to the person asking  
or to ponder the socio-political consequences of LSD use in the 1960s  
or to smoke Pall Mall cigarettes because they are the cheapest, not because Kurt Vonnegut smoked them  
or to like ‘the idea’ of transcendental meditation but never practice it  
or to enjoy things that make me sad  
or to occasionally see things meant to make people happy as silly  
or to think having kids is okay as long as you understand they are smarter than you and love them unconditionally  
or to stare catatonically at bad drywall jobs and dents in hardwood flooring, not caring about workmanship just shapes and chance and colors  
or to make proclamations that Ozzy Osbourne lyrics are mystically profound  
or to feel really bleak when i know i should be excited about life  
or to not ‘be myself’ sometimes and almost use that phrase then chuckle at the absurdity of it  
or to like Jung more than Freud  
or to watch youtube for hours when i have stuff to do  
or to not put cds back in their cases  
or to even use cds when an ipod would be much easier  
or to sometimes ‘hate’ ‘smart’ people  
or to not talk to my parents enough  
or to talk to my parents too much  
or to be indecisive about whether to call a girl pretty or cool, when i should probably say either both or nothing  
or to say nothing when i want to say something  
or to want to take back things that i said, knowing its just selfishness  
or to wish i was rich or famous not to be rich or famous but simply to have more opportunities to meet interesting people  
or to laugh just cause everybody else is laughing  
or to laugh just cause no one else is laughing  
or to laugh to make someone feel comfortable  
or to laugh to make someone feel uncomfortable  
or to laugh when im alone  
or to cry in company

There are only so many words we’re supposed to use in each sentence. You can’t remember the exact number either. Sometimes we’re forced to communicate with small, tenuous gestures. Other times I shut my eyes and try to calculate how far, given the wind currents, a scream will carry. A story often simply stops at some point rather than fully concludes. When that happens, the blue-black night starts churning and even old-fashioned baby carriages bob up to the surface.

if i am my own reward and you are yours then why do i want you to  
bend to me crack your face into all of your mirrors at once and then  
sing to me of everything you cannot grasp or hold onto? i went  
walking in the woods and found a clearing not made by men. i sat  
down in the middle and offered myself to the afternoon.

You're like, "I like evil girls!"  
I'm like, "oh shit you're right"  
You're like, "ok, no not evil, really, but"  
I'm like, "no actually evil is right"  
You're like, "but not evil evil, just like, you know?"  
I'm like, "I do know, and evil is used correctly here"  
You're like, "yeah but you're not evil though"  
I'm like, "I know, shit, that's what I'm saying"  
You're like, "ok maybe at some point I did like evil girls"  
I'm like, "I recognize this fact viscerally"  
You're like, "but I don't NOW because evilness is not good"  
I'm like, "evilness is good in bed?"  
You're like, "whoa"  
I'm like, "that's it isn't it"  
You're like, "well"

candace holmes

[COULD YOU PLEASE BOX UP THE  
REST OF THAT FOR ME?]

7

could you please box up the rest of that for me  
you can be as crazy as  
you need if you do it quietly  
is there more than one sun or  
just more than one shadow  
somebody is slowly harvesting  
my body parts and every  
day i wake up  
with slightly less of myself  
send me your semen in a turkey  
baster it's the only way  
i really don't know anything  
about gin except how to drink it

august smith

[WELCOME TO MY GARDEN]

8

Welcome to my garden.  
Yes I admit there is nothing growing here.  
It is a conceptual garden.  
The concept is that it's empty.

Look over there, at that patch of dirt.  
That is where I conceptually planted tomatoes.  
The hazy light hits it so perfectly  
that the birds actually fall asleep,  
right there on the ground,  
lying on their sides for days.  
Have you ever seen anything like that?

It's quite unlike the patch of dirt over there.  
Over there, the light falls harshly,  
like falling bricks,  
unshadowed by leaves and stems and fruit,  
baking the soft barren earth.

Okay, I admit that this isn't a garden.  
And I admit that those birds are dead.  
I really wanted to garden, though.  
I've always wanted to be a gardener.  
I even looked up how to do it—  
"how to garden"—  
but I got dangerously bored.  
Anyway, come, let us bury these birds,  
for that is why I invited you over.

Do certain things and certain results will follow.

One plus one makes two.  
And two parts hydrogen plus one part oxygen  
Makes water and water makes ocean.  
And moon makes tides  
And the silver splendour of evening.

Trust yourself to strange music and odd rhythms.  
Travel with gods in a spirit canoe.  
Row through the evening flowers on the altar.  
Row through roses rising to stars.  
Get drunk and row backwards.

Swim in these waters or drown in these waters.

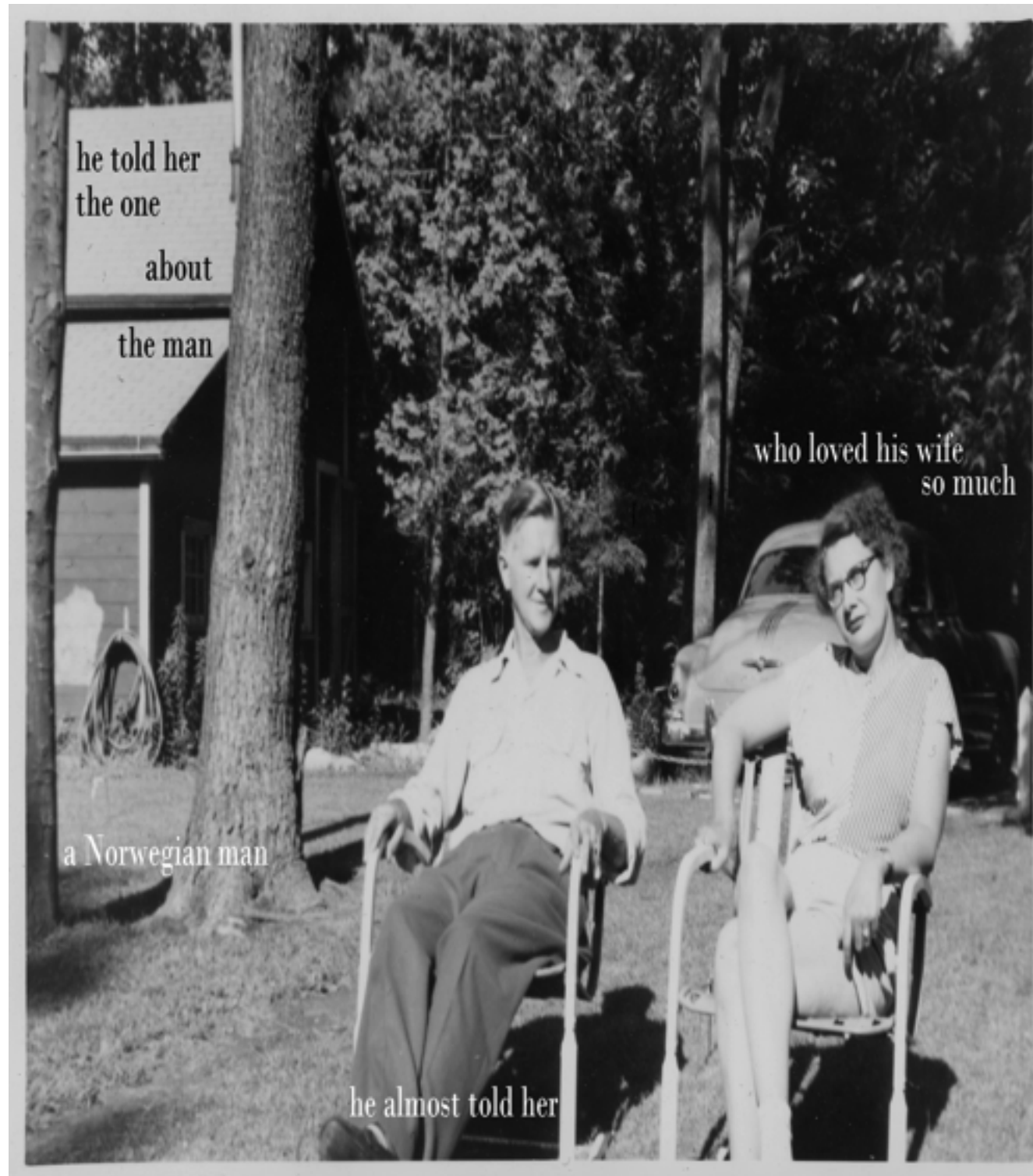
Do you understand yet?  
No matter.

When you get right down to it  
Have faith in yourself.

Fill in the spaces.  
It gets easier.

I read DH Lawrence on the train.  
I write raps on the toilet.  
I wear bras that make my breasts sit higher than they would without a bra.  
I used to worry that my breasts were too small but I don't anymore.  
I wonder if I am your muse.  
I think you are my muse.  
I untie my hair and tie it back up again.  
I eat Vietnamese sandwiches with extra sriacha sauce.  
I wear colorful tights with patterned dresses.  
I write poems in my head then write them down on receipts and bank statements.  
I write poems in my head and try to remember them when I don't have a pen; try to remember  
the poems in my head until I can find or borrow a pen.  
I listen to one album over and over again until I kill it dead.  
I drink tea with lemon and no honey.  
I drink black espresso and hot water and nothing else.  
I untie my hair and tie it back up again.  
I write poems that I don't really want my family to read.  
I publish poems that my mom thinks are depressing.  
I publish poems about you that say things I can't say to you.  
I wonder what you think about, who you think about.  
I stare into space and wonder why I'm doing this.  
I smoke and I'm not sure if I'm inhaling correctly.  
I untie my hair and tie it back up again.  
I think about painting my nails, but don't.  
I tape pictures on my wall that remind me of friends I don't see anymore.  
I buy groceries from the liquor store. I read Jean Rhys in bed.  
I watch TV shows with predictable plot lines.  
I brush my teeth with a manual toothbrush, even though I own an electric toothbrush.  
I laugh out loud on BART while reading Hunter S. Thompson.  
I untie my hair and tie it back up again.  
I miss you when you are not next to me.  
I think about writing another letter to you.  
I have daydreams about us obliterating each other.  
I roll one spliff after another, chain smoking.  
I look in the mirror and dance to music I liked in high school.  
I try to remember how many times I've told the sycamore story.  
I untie my hair and tie it back up again.







I'm starting to feel more interested in my savings account.  
I'm starting to feel more concerned with how I spend my money.

I'm starting to feel more like I want to watch the news.  
I'm starting to feel scared by what's on the news.

I'm starting to feel more interested in building furniture.  
I'm starting to feel more interested in growing a garden.

I'm starting to feel more content with the idea of having a nice house.  
I'm starting to feel more interested in the idea of a home loan.

I'm starting to feel more concerned with my long term goals.  
I'm starting to feel more concerned with my short term goals.

I'm starting to feel more conscious of how I look to the world.  
I'm starting to feel more like I don't care how I look to the world.

I'm starting to feel more like my parents.  
I'm starting to feel more like they actually know what they were talking about.

I'm starting to feel more sympathetic to others.  
I'm starting to feel more scared that my friends have kids.

I'm starting to feel more comfortable with how I feel.  
I'm starting to feel uncomfortable about being comfortable with how I feel.

I'm starting to feel more like I knew how the economy worked.  
I'm starting to feel more guilty with how little I know about politics.

I'm starting to feel more like I stick out in clothing stores.  
I'm starting to feel more like I don't stick out in supermarkets.

I'm starting to feel more like I can share these feelings with the people I know.  
I'm starting to feel more like they don't care and that they have their own problems.

let's smash our chakras together  
this is called Gaming The System  
this is for everyone's good

i am touching your aura and healing it  
not really, i made a really big mistake and it is broken  
bits are everywhere please don't get them in your eye

"please reiki my butt"

please reiki my brain  
(cut open my head and feel the heat radiating from my massive intellect)  
i feel better but not in the way i expected

i buttoned my shirt up wrong but there's nothing i can do now

kate gervais

[A SONG FOR MY WIFE]

15

To be honest, the smell of cat food reminds me of being home. The elevator smells like a station wagon, and if I catch a whiff of my fingers (after rubbing) I am with you again in a room that is not my own loving you and feeling the rhythm of femininity over and over again - sing to me like I am your mermaid. And I will miss you when I braid my hair and buried in someone else's sweat. There is no room for apologies between brown eyes like yours because we all breathe similar air with different nostrils. When I wrap myself up in something like regret, there will only be you and I in a rose garden, holding hands, being the love other ones have tried to make.

justin etc

[FUNERAL GARLAND OF MEI HELLHOUNDS  
AND TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION]

16

if my heart is a sepulchre wrapped in electrical tape  
w/in the eye of a static storm, for only a moment,  
in the corner near a baseball glove of tulips on the radiator  
near where the paint peels against ruminations...  
i'd insist i told the truth, somewhat, over a glass of wine  
vinted by a friend and named after a dead courtesan—

upon waking i suddenly realized this isn't the kind of dream  
i'd ever recognize so i wrote it down, somewhat,  
like pouring Everclear on a tremour of tulips and lighting it on fire...  
you see, every ghost i inhaled was a dead child, clamoring  
for another tomorrow and how cd they forgive us that  
when memory is the perspective of an analogue, i guess—

if my dreams are the memories of an analogue  
then yesterday was one last caress before fragmentation

alex gallo-brown      [I HAVE BEEN CONVINCED OF  
SOMETHING HERE]      17

Giving myself pleasure  
to feel sad today.  
Meant permission, wrote pleasure.  
The line in my head  
like a song fragment.  
Now the fragment exists  
but not the song.  
Now the panic exists  
but not the collision  
brought on  
by the sudden contusion.  
Or was it, confusion.  
On Facebook earlier a poet  
was talking about whales.  
Or my girlfriend was telling me.  
Or I stopped taking my medicine.  
Language can get really tiresome  
as you get older,  
don't tell the children,  
our budding poets, ha ha.  
Another possible human being was shouting  
in some ethically-sanctioned way.  
You know, typing, but it felt like shouting?  
There was a time when I could  
get down with a little disembodied self-  
righteousness in my brain chain.  
Lately, I have been feeling like less  
of a brain so possibly more of a mind,  
it's hard to say.  
Especially today.

jeremy hight      [MOM ONCE SLEPT (THERE)]      18

There is a bed somewhere where she once slept  
There may be sheets and pillows  
There may be two of these places  
One of the syringe edged octopus lines of machines now burping data for another name  
(many names past hers)  
One may be now the place of an impoverished yet loving family in some moment gathered in  
time and moment.  
One may be the derelict space craft of some digital photo somewhere on a rotten tumblr.

There may be none of these things. Erasures like her body to ash, her name to memory.  
I choose to see sheets and pillows, life, flapping in some breeze, home to things continuing

when i asked you to  
and you whispered in my ear “yes”

i gave you pajamas:  
an old anti-flag shirt  
    i asked you if you’d ever heard of them  
    you said no  
but when you saw its “military free zone”  
and the ‘x’ over the silhouette of a missile  
you said  
“this is exactly what i’ve been looking for”

we didn’t fuck  
(you were on your period)  
but we held onto each other  
all night  
and giggled  
at the independence  
of a freshman year  
of college

in the morning  
i woke you  
by kissing the corners  
of your mouth

then we  
went and got  
bagels.

I don’t know how to complete the space between your hands and mine  
laws of physics have shown that ‘touching’ as we generally understand it never actually occurs  
we get close and a force abruptly repels us from each other  
at the base of the stairs your warmth is an illusion

I feel defeat on my knees, both of them simultaneously giving  
you jump up to a rooftop and look for a sign above you  
and the dumpster is unsteady but an inevitability

I sigh into my boots on the front steps  
intersections aren’t so much this time through  
you’ve got me dancing a waltz but the only one I know is a suicide

you hold one of two watches but won’t give me a time  
and I balance on a wheel, rocking back and forth  
attempting to argue logically with my body’s momentum



this will become the basic understanding of your existence  
you were/are alive/dead/never born all at once  
every second is a ballet of new possibilities  
every second  
an incalculable number of realities is born  
you are living this one  
we are alive right now  
we are coexisting between the woven fabrics together  
the ties between the you right now and the you one second ago are severed and you a part of  
its beautiful rhythm  
do not concern yourself with what has happened  
learn from its beauty and move forward  
leave no mental stone unturned  
do not become overwhelmed with your placement here  
there is no hierarchy now  
you woke up today  
be here  
breathe  
that is the feeling of the entire fucking universe  
you are the entire fucking universe baby  
it's time to feel alive

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