

# THE HUNT

Written by Monaya M. MaGaurin

The woman that changes the weather, talks to the dead, rewrote physics, and fell in love with her scalar field bodyguard using clairsentience. A love so strong, it proved the theory of quantum entanglement in 2022. This story has been written on the water of lakes, oceans, and streams. This story has been written on the paper of newspapers, corporate ledgers, court dockets, and receipts. This story has been written on clouds, rain, and snow in the sky falling to the ground. This story has been told through ritual, song, and dance. It is celebrated and shared with you through recipes of ritual, songs, and dance.

I need to give a reader an understanding of what was going on while I wrote this.

My personal experience, growing up never knowing my family and myself was a black op.

In June of 2023, the shift of the American government led to a clandestine operation, including wars in Israel and the Ukraine, when the forty year black op was compromised. The style of writing including the links to definitions in this book have to do with what was going on in my life while I wrote. This includes sharing a live copy I continue to edit.

THE EDIT EVERYONE IS LOOKING FOR: DUE 06/23/28

# My family

*David MaGaur'n's Tune Box*

Every November, my mother makes the same analogy when deer hunting season opens: “They go hunting for deer; we go hunting for shoes.” This became my rite of passage to seek, bag, tag, and send a “shoe creature” off on an adventure with my feet. Men have trophy animals hanging on their walls—I had rows of shoes. Not a closet of high heels, but rather shelves of sport-utility footwear, some even sporting a bit of fur. It was a ritual developed by my mother before *Sex and the City*, investing in designer purses or shoes was common, and selfies were a thing. This ritual would have looked completely different with an iPhone. I say this with a notation to the relatively new addition of a camera you can carry anywhere. She was a photographer, with high-brow ideas behind her photographs, including my childhood dance photos, costumes for Halloween, and the reproduction of my 35 mm black and white photography class prints.

Three pairs of shoes a year for 12 years of school, that’s a lot of shoes. The stand out characters include the Nose snowboard-boot-shoe hybrid: a cross-trainer that laced up and resembled a snowboard boot; black snakeskin Doc Martens my mother added insoles for running; and, as the years passed, footwear that was simpler, sleeker, and more feminine. The same athleticism standards put to a test at the private school I went. The daily gym class warm-up as a sixth grader, a mile run. Find a school that does that in 2025. Born® brown loafers that looked like monk shoes, black Puma Speed Cat race car driver shoes, and Ulu dark-brown leather knee-high winter boots with a leg full of rabbit fur helped make high school a bearable or bear hunting experience. An expression of hipster, carrying a camera, driving a black car, receiving my first pair of glasses, wearing dress shoes with hidden athleticism, and adventurer with every outfit. For college graduation, I wore black high-heeled wingtips in matte and patent leather.

My mom had my grandmother, Marguerite my father’s mother, for support. Grandma wore gold shoes and gloves. She taught me about black cats, how to create everything from nothing, and how to cook. Her demonstration of womanhood forged a strong link to femininity and shaped my sacred idea of marriage. Something you do with only one person. She spent much of her life as both a mother and a companion to my retired grandfather, who passed away 27 years before she did. Never looking for another partner in all that time. My grandmother taught my mother about elevated domesticity and rarely revealed just how much of a badass she was. At her funeral, one of my great-aunts recounted how Grandma would sneak outside on bridge nights to smoke a cigar with my great-great-aunt Mary. Gma believed in magic, perseverance, and doing your best to exemplify the person you want to be.

She and my mother raised my brother and me while my father lived his best life. My father’s philosophy was different, it influenced me or I influenced him. He was on an adventure every day, understanding the world in a way very few people do. A master-certified diver, he spent his 18th year on Earth cave diving while everyone else was finishing high school. He was always playing, hunting, fishing, golfing with his friends, or socializing after work. If he was working, he was having a damn good time doing it. As I got older, I wondered: When did he spend time alone and what did he think about when he did?

My grandparents on my father’s side were an eccentric couple, with an American Military reputation to cover any perception of being different, despite being struck by lightning together multiple times. Walking into their house was like entering the greatest antique collections you’ve ever seen. The unique smell, the odd objects, and the peculiar noises captivated me as a child. It was something I longed for and sought out later in life, ultimately finding echoes of it in other eccentric, intelligent families. The mix of fantasy and function mesmerized me, and the memory still delights me whenever I encounter a similar combination.

Even in retirement, my grandparents cared deeply about living a fashionable life, embracing romanticism, and celebrating the expression of love in many forms. After my brother was born, my grandmother found a lake house for my parents north of town. She and my grandfather retired from their grandiose lakeside estates with multiple houses, moving into my parent's place, closer to town and requiring less maintenance. My grandfather planted trees, built a two-story garage with a remote-control train room, and cultivated a rose garden. While my grandmother hosted family holiday gatherings and weekly sleepovers. They had Flokati goatskin rugs from Greece, ten-gallon glass chemical bottles from Japan, giant hand-carved wooden cutlery from Hawaii, and countless other peculiar items they'd pack into crates somewhere exotic, only to rediscover them once they got home in Minnesota.

My grandfather Elton was the son of Clarence, a six-foot-seven-inch man with a temper that could flare faster than a speeding bullet. How Clarence arrived in the United States was story that could be a Charles Dickens novel, one I heard repeatedly as a child and then again as an adult from the new owners of the land he was given by the family who adopted him. Clarence was a child of the "freedom train," an orphan from Europe adopted to work for room and board. What a person might recognize as child slavery in modern terms, he would have described differently. He was adopted by a family who gave him an entire lake and the buildings on it upon their passing. Pug Hole, just off Cass Lake, Minnesota.

He married a petite, deaf woman under five feet tall named Olga. I never got to meet her, I heard all about this incredible, tiny force of nature who kept their wildfire of a family together. Olga was a deaf photographer who could sign faster than most people can speak. My aunt Constance recalled a story of Olga taking family photos: "She'd have thirty or so family members all standing together, tell them to smile in sign language, then get lost in everyone smiling at her. One person would start yelling, then another, until about thirty MaGaurns were all waving their arms at her as she laughed behind the cloak and lens." If Olga were alive now, she'd be the type to accidentally record a video while instructing everyone to pose for a photo, watching them smile, still and silent, for minutes on end. My grandfather nearly lost his hand in a washing machine wringer once, screaming for help while Olga couldn't hear him. He told me this story to impress upon me that one of my greatest assets in life is my hearing. "Listen," he would say, "listen to everything."

They had four children: Edith, Lois, Micky, and Elton. Hard physical labor and alcohol were what kept this lively family from going off the rails as adults. Alcohol sometimes provided the effect needed for sleep, but not always the potency to get work done. My grandfather Elton carried on this legacy of taking something raw and applying unrelenting tenacity, traveling across the globe and leaving a mark on many people. He enlisted in the National Guard, serving in the 34th Infantry Division with over 500 days of combat in WWII as a foot soldier. That was only the beginning. He went on to build camps with more than 1,000 soldiers as a lieutenant colonel. He enjoyed connecting with refugees and locals while deployed, a personal attribute he treasured. He believed in meeting people in the middle, his version of be the change you wish to see. He solved problems with a humorous but tough and inventive approach. I have a photo where he's trying to help the men in his unit settle their differences by setting up a ring for bare-knuckled, blindfolded boxing. It was comedic, tough as nails, and uniquely him.

After returning home, he rarely spoke of the war. His last post in the military, he was the guy who respectfully knocked on your door letting you know where your brother, father, or husband was. Something he took honor in doing, focusing on family and retiring as a way to cope with the difficult task. This included making my father's new marriage and family adventure the best time he could. I find his ability to direct energy to his family, silently processing the lives of these lost men while inspiring his own family to love life every day, to be the silver lining of living the time period they did. He knew what a gift it is to be alive, exemplifying it unknowingly.

My grandmother was the most influential person I've ever had in my life. She made every single

thought, action, prayer, and moment special. My mother might have taught me how to file my taxes, but my grandmother took me shopping for a little notebook that made me feel better about doing them and still checked them over for accuracy. Elegance was the standard of beauty in my upbringing: she described it as “simple and intelligent, yet entirely striking and unforgettable.” She believed nail polish or hair dye was extra if your nails or hair weren’t well-groomed first.

My grandfather originally proposed to another woman who said no. My grandmother shared the same take-chances attitude and went for with this complex but charming infantryman. After saying yes, they left for Germany, where he was stationed. Packing everything into a container to ship overseas, including their red Chevy Nomad station wagon. Family stories of that car getting stuck in narrow alleys with cobblestone streets are just as entertaining as the photos showing an American import roaming European roads. Their relationship would be sealed not by one lightning strike, but by three. The odds of that happening are 1 in 330,000,000. As far as I’m concerned, they embedded magic into my DNA.

First, they welcomed a daughter named Constance, with two different-colored eyes. Connie is legendary in her own right. She’s the type of person who’ll call out someone who’s correcting her family. Only to turn around and tell her own family they’re out of line too. My father was born two years later at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, military base with craniosynostosis. He lacked the soft spot on his skull, causing potential brain-growth complications. Because of my grandfather’s military rank, my father was offered what was then a groundbreaking surgery. The risks included permanent cognitive impairment at varying levels or even death. But the possible reward was that he could live and develop normally. I’ll never forget my grandmother telling me about risking her baby’s life for a better one: “Elton and I looked at each other and decided we had to give him a fighting chance.”

I’m here to tell this story, their gamble paid off. As a child, I would play with my dad’s thick black hair, always noticing his scar. I never knew what it was from until my teenage years, when my mother explained the biological perspective, and my grandmother shared the romantic story of risking her baby’s life and how my dad turned out.

While my grandfather was in Korea, my grandmother was back in Minnesota, creating their legacy in the small lake town of Bemidji. She found a small resort on the north end of the lake, a few miles past the north shore “gold coast” in an area called Lavina. To this day, Lavina is a safe haven of kids, dogs, and summer parties. It reminds me of the Hamptons in New York: a tiny place where everyone knows everyone and always offers you lemonade. My grandmother purchased this resort, which consisted of twelve cabins and one large house while my grandfather was away. The big house had a four-car garage that opened onto the road. My grandfather often spent time there with his bar, a pool table, cars, and his flock of geese. Yes, he had a flock of geese and ducks. He could never sit idle, after returning from active military duty, he moved a building from his father Clarence’s to his new estate. At the time, transporting a two-story, 30-foot-wide building on a trailer was cutting-edge and there he was, cruising down the road with it. This was not a prefab house; he placed it across the street from their home and started a local convenience store. Eventually, my grandparents realized they were getting older and aimed to simplify life as much as possible while still embracing their legacy. As they moved out of their lake house, my parents moved into theirs.

My mother and father grew up in the same small town in Northern Minnesota and were friends in high school. He lived on the north side of the lake; she lived on the southeast side of town. My mother’s father was frugal to a degree that many today would find humorous. I see it as somewhat admirable, though occasionally I question the logic. Leander, my mother’s dad was 100% Czechoslovakian, one of many siblings, and I’m not sure he ever felt truly cared for. He had an accident, struck with a spade shovel that chipped his teeth from west to east, and his family never paid for dental care. A lesson he instilled in my brother, finance was most important. He served as a gunner in the Air Force during WWII. He wasn’t always well-liked. He could be uncreative, uncooperative, and often silently angry. Yet he was seen as extremely reliable and steadfast. I interpret this as a result of not being

heard or loved enough as a child, which prompted him to retreat inward later in life. Fishing was his great pass time. He pickled the fish, eating it on Fridays as a devout catholic. My brother spent time with my grandfather the same way I spent time with my eccentric grandmother.

My maternal grandmother was 100% Norwegian, the daughter of a logging camp owner. She spent more time reading than learning traditional domesticity like cooking or cleaning. She worked as a medical records keeper by profession, wearing a white nurse's uniform daily. Though she never had to interact directly with patients or touch their bodies. She labeled every family photo with the date, effectively creating "metadata" long before it was common. She also kept a seed bank, maintaining a fascination with preserving plants. Vacations a few times a year were when she and my grandfather could finally be at ease, when any sense of romanticism flourished. They'd eat burgers in the car on Route 66 and visit family across the United States. They weren't risk-takers like my father's parents, but they preserved everything, stockpiling resources in the basement: loads of home-canned, organic garden produce labeled by date, location, and content. Her legacy, National Honor Society and making sure my brother and I had a full ride to college.

When my maternal grandmother retired, she napped whenever she wanted, enjoying being her own person rather than just a wife or mom. I'll never forget the look on her face a few days before she passed away. I could only see her through the nursing home window due to COVID restrictions, but she had this grin, pleased that people came to visit, even within her bubble. My grandfather would visit her too, despite being in a wheelchair with amputated legs due to neuropathy from a 60-year battle with diabetes. He rode his power chair across the large field separating their two nursing homes. She was happy to see him and he enjoyed driving over. They passed within six months of each other. My mother's parents were always two hours early to family events at our house and would show up unannounced annoying the crap out of my parents. As a teenager, I shared my parent's unenthusiasm. Today, I cherish every photo I have with my Mother's dad. I mentioned above he was the quiet stern type. Here I was this child that didn't have boundaries and talked all the time. He loved me more than I ever knew. Our lake house always had some new addition my dad was working on or my mom was outside gardening. It was more interesting than television or phone calls to both sets of my grandparents visiting nearly every weekend. My maternal grandfather's bow and deer racks still preserved in my house, a fridge full of canned goods to memorialize them with each snack.

A hunt is a ritual in life, whether you're hunting for romaine lettuce for your salad, a zebra on the Serengeti, or a man to be your companion. Sometimes you're alone, away from the hunting party. The loneliness of freedom is ironic in itself. Do elk get lonely when they don't see another elk for a while? Language is what binds humans together, allowing us to share experiences. Consider a mute person or a foreigner who can't understand the local language. It can be frustrating or humorous an adaptation both parties attempt. Lacan says language is the bondage we tie ourselves to as we outgrow the meaninglessness and pretend of childhood. Manifestation the continued version of this, whether you choose prayer, ritual, or ignore it all while something else keeps score.

My father had this story about me and my Big Wheel trike, which I drove off a cliff when I was three. He told it at least once a year, always beginning with, "I will tell this story at your wedding." I never understood why he cared so much about me getting married. He made it sound like it was about financial security. And even in 2025, for many women it is. I realized he was telling me I needed a man I am attracted to and understood by enough to tolerate a lifetime. What I never realized was how lonely he was due to my mother's independence.

A research thesis I read : five monkeys in a cage with extra bananas at the top of a ladder. Each time a new monkey was introduced, it climbed the ladder for those extra bananas, and the other monkeys, who were otherwise content with their daily banana allotment, beat up the new overachieving monkey.. The researchers removed the beaten monkey, replacing it with one unexposed to the group's aggression. This process repeated over and over; the new monkey would climb for the extra bananas

and be beaten up by the others. This result didn't change when a more fortunate monkey tried sharing. This is a clear premise within group mentality, think about it when applied to just two people. One of them always trying new things to get the extra bananas, the other always content with the same bananas. On the flip side, a study on a baboon flange that contracted a virus in the wild revealed that the dominant "alpha" males died, leaving the physically smaller, more docile "beta" males to reproduce. The troop lost its violent behavior altogether. The study didn't disclose if the baboons managed to survive outside threats, though.

While still living at home I enrolled in college with a full schedule of philosophy, humanities, and political science a year before my brother did. When he did start, he took some required classes with me or asked for my advice. This stopped after he walked into Introduction to Philosophy. I recall the professor explaining that we have no experience other than our own. I asked my brother what he thought of that. "That's stupid. What other experience would I have besides my own? Duh. Seriously, why would people just sit around and think about what other people think? I dropped it."

I responded with a huff, a smirk, and an eye roll, turning toward the window my mind already racing down the rabbit hole of why someone wouldn't want to think about thinking. Have you read *Three Guineas* by Virginia Woolf? If not, it's an educated, unmarried, and childless woman's response in 1938 to a letter asking her how to end war. I didn't receive a letter asking how to solve society's issues, but I do hope you're entertained.

That single woman in the New York Times article about a new demographic of unmarried millennials, unsure if dedicating my life to one person is the right choice after watching my parents divorce. Some of the best moments in my adventures came with a mixture of sidekicks. Each of these men asks, "Am I in your book?" I just blink quietly. I wonder if they can see the question crossing my eyes like a banner behind a plane in the sky: Okay, Universe, when are you going to give me one who fascinates me? When do I meet the one I want to snowboard with and marry, not just snowboard with?

Independence is not inherently masculine or feminine. These challenges lurk beneath the surface until we're embarrassed, for example the 35-year-old guy who decides he wants to start hunting. Everyone says it's normal, then he gets annoyed when he out-hunts them a year later, fascinated with the training for months, practicing. Think of an 80-year-old man learning to read, no matter how late, triumph is triumph. From a young age, women are taught to share everything with everyone, remember everything, and process the emotions of all the humans around them. Men are taught to hold in their emotional energy, be strong, set an example, and provide. Dramatic emotions can be entertaining. But harnessing strong emotions except for love becomes too heavy for any life force, including a married couple. By no means does a woman want a man to cry every day. Total role reversal won't make the world better either. It's real when a human cries in a painful situation; it's temporary, a rush of drama that eventually ebbs. Overusing emotional drama is what's truly painful. Being human, however, is amazing.

It wasn't until the final weeks of my 37th year on this planet that I thought about how I metaphorically jumped up, thrashing around in the deer stand like I was the one who got shot. Clinging to the feeling, then sitting back down to look through the crosshairs of the sight. My hunting partner had flung open the windows, screaming that she wanted me to have that buck. She had seen the antlers and that meaty backstrap. I realize the buck will be back, and next time, I'll look at it again, assessing the situation. I'm left with a memory so strong watching that beautiful creature skillfully run through the woods like a Land Rover Defender who spent the whole day in the mud before getting washed for date night. When I do finally land that animal, that buck, that car, that house, that partner, I will hold on to it, care for it, clean it, cover it when not in use, and preserve it the best I can.

The months after my father passed, I spent hours in the sauna, thinking about what I wanted to find in my hunt. Then it appeared except this time he is a hero.. It felt impossible, like finding a glittering woolly mammoth on an elephant hunt. I glanced but didn't shoot, screaming when the woolly mammoth

charged at me, only to feel regret afterward: I saw it, it found me, and I walked away, thinking I couldn't handle it. I turned Sarge around and went back into the field to find him. For this animal, this man, his energy surprised me. I would pause, frozen, staring at him in awe. Everything about him—his occupation, his fears, the inside of his refrigerator, fascinated me.

I knew something about him, but then there was that bomb. Could it stay buried like a landmine I'd never have to step on? His career, something I didn't know about when I met him, nor for six months. He said a few words in response to my Instagram story. The first time we talked privately off the platform he told me, a former Navy SEAL. It piqued my interest in my manhunt. Not the fame he had acquired, but the experience and the philosophy someone like that carries. Something I carried with me while I wrote this book.

Write the book that will make them love you. Let them love you through the experience of the stories, and let them understand you through the philosophy. Give them the whole tray but don't expect them to eat it all. When the food is good, everyone loves leftovers. I had to travel, wait, think, dream, and push through for years. It was my Iliad, and how I found my Odyssey.

My grandparents, however, would have laughed at the thought of "hunting" for anything but your mate for life. They lived through the Great Depression, stretching a single loaf of bread to feed a family, believing in "trial first, divorce me not," and passing those convictions to my parents. These struggles formed the bedrock of the Baby Boom, giving families the chance to move beyond ration books into suburban barbecues, shiny cars, and eventually, the first Nintendo systems. But just as life got easier, people started spending more time inside, glued to screens, and less time sitting on porches or stopping by a neighbor's house for pie. Maybe that's why my father insisted on "one mate for life," and why I still wrestle with how true connection can feel elusive in a world full of everything. My grandparents' Depression-era mindset taught them to appreciate even the smallest scraps of hope, while the Baby Boomers reveled in their newfound abundance—handing down both opportunity and the burden of technology to those who followed. So here I am, still hunting for a companion in a world where face-to-face connections and family legacies sometimes slip into the background of endless choices. It's the tension between "one mate for life" and "swipe right" that fuels my countless stories of relationships—each a step along the way. But in one final account, I encounter someone who challenges every assumption—a quiet presence shrouded by details I may never fully learn. Crossing that threshold changed me in ways I'm only beginning to understand. And as we turn the page, remember that every hunt—whether for romance or romaine lettuce—has its twists. Some lessons take an entire lifetime to reveal themselves. When I feel alone, I usually reach out, pulling him from the air my father, before and after he passed away. He never used to greet me with "Hello," always with "Hey Honey!" or "What are you doing?!" I can still picture the sunlight under the door when we got stuck in the coal chute of my first house, both upset that our time was being wasted instead of getting something else done. That hour or stuck in the dark with you, Dad—it's my favorite hour I ever spent with you. I love you so much. This is my father's recipe for how to do two things at once.

## Dinner with Dad

Caramelized Onion–Braised Pot Roast  
Garlic Mashed Potatoes  
Bias–Cut Black Asparagus  
Roasted Apples with Monaya’s Semifreddo

### The Pot Roast

Par-cooked rare for slicing and reheats , Aiming for “pull-apart” tenderness or a more roast–beef style? If it’s braised, many people cook to around 190–200°F for “fall-apart” texture. Just confirm your preference.

- 3 lb chuck roast, shoulder, or (his favorite) rump roast
- 1 packet of onion soup mix
- 2 quarts water
- Salt and pepper
- (If Monaya is around) Two shakes of Worcestershire sauce, plus salt, pepper, and olive oil

#### Dad’s Method (*sound clip “DADDY!”*)

1. In a Dutch oven or large pot (or whatever you have, even tinfoil if necessary), put the meat in, season with salt and pepper, add water until the meat is about half-submerged, and cover it with the soup mix.
2. Place it in a 300°F (150°C) oven for 3 hours or until the internal temperature reaches 125°F (52°C).
3. Rest for a minimum of three minutes before slicing.

#### Monaya’s Method

1. Heat the pot on the stove. Lightly coat both sides of the meat with oil, then season generously with salt and pepper. When the pan is smoking, add the meat.

Watch it for about 45 seconds, then flip to sear the other side.

2. Once both sides are browned, oil the top of the meat, sprinkle on the soup mix, and carefully pour the water around the meat (not directly onto it).
3. Cover the pot and place it in a 300°F (150°C) oven for 3 hours or until it reaches an internal temperature of 125°F (52°C).

### Mashed Potatoes

#### My brother’s Recipe

- 5 lbs potatoes, peeled and cubed into 1-inch pieces
  - 1 stick (½ cup) butter, cubed
  - ¼ cup half-and-half
  - 2 tablespoons garlic salt
  - A dusting of paprika
1. Boil the potatoes in a 3–4 quart saucepan until soft (about 30 minutes). Drain, reserving about 1 cup of the cooking water.
  2. Using a mixer (handheld or stand), begin to mash the potatoes with the paddle attachment.
  3. Slowly add the cubed butter, alternating with the garlic salt. Once incorporated, add the half-and-half until you reach the desired consistency.
  4. Taste and adjust seasoning as needed. Transfer to a serving dish and finish with a dusting of paprika.

#### Monaya’s addition

1. Use two tablespoons of raw garlic. Brown the butter and garlic on low heat until aromatic, then set aside to cool.
2. Add the cooled brown butter and garlic while mixing, alternating with salt.

Note: You won’t need as much salt for flavor when using browned butter and garlic.



## Asparagus

1 lb asparagus, still bundled with rubber bands  
1 tablespoon olive oil  
½ teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon pepper  
1 lemon (Meyer lemons are especially nice),  
halved and ready to squeeze. Slice three rounds  
from the center for garnish

### Methodology

1. Holding the asparagus bundle by the bottom (rubber bands still on), run a knife blade along the stalks to create long oval shapes. Turn the bundle and continue until you're left with the bottom two inches. (We're not eating that.)
2. Toss the sliced asparagus in olive oil; season with salt and pepper.
3. Heat a pan until it's smoking, then drop in the asparagus. Stir frequently. When you see black marks forming on the asparagus, squeeze in the lemon juice, turn off the heat, and cover.

To serve, reheat gently if necessary. Transfer to a serving dish, lay lemon slices on top, and lightly season again.

## Baked Apples

2 lbs Fuji, Granny Smith, Honeycrisp, or Pink Lady apples  
2 cinnamon sticks  
1 lemon  
1-quart apple cider (caramel cider if you have it—see note below if homemade)  
2 tablespoons butter  
½ cup Thompson raisins (if you're feeling wild)

### Methodology

1. Line a 9x9-inch baking dish with aluminum foil. Peel and quarter the apples, distributing small bits of butter among them.

2. Cover the apples with the apple cider and grate the cinnamon sticks over them.
3. Bake at 200°F (93°C)—or alongside the pot roast—for about 20 minutes, or until they're fragrant. Set aside until ready to serve.

## Semifreddo

4 egg yolks  
90 g sugar  
2 cups heavy cream, whipped to soft peaks  
2 cinnamon sticks

1. Bring a saucepan of water to boil. You'll need a heatproof bowl that fits over the pan without touching the water.
2. Grate the cinnamon stick into the bowl. Add the yolks and sugar. (*Note: Once you combine eggs and sugar, you should be ready to cook immediately. The sugar's acidity can start cooking the eggs, forming clumps.*)
3. Set the bowl over the boiling water, whisking constantly until the mixture reaches 160°F (71°C). Be careful not to overheat.
4. Transfer the egg mixture to an ice bath or the refrigerator to cool. Whip the cream to soft peaks, then fold in the cooled egg mixture.
5. Spoon or pipe into molds. Silicone shapes, stainless steel rings, or a small loaf pan all work well.

### To Serve

For individual servings: use small decorative dishes. Arrange the apples and raisins with a cinnamon stick garnish, then add a slice or scoop of semifreddo.

For a family-style: use a ring mold for the semifreddo, plate the apples and raisins around it, then grate a bit more cinnamon on top. Use a warm knife to slice.

## Quetico Babba

*Gunflint 1998*

July 7th, 1998, a three-hour ride to Duluth, Minnesota with my mom and brother. Accompanied by a two-hour bus ride with 30 kids. Ten with the same look I have, 20 of them excited to return to the wilderness far from their suburban homes. The other ten campers are already there...eight-week campers. David Byrne of the Talking Heads says: "Well, how did I get here?" I was an eight-week camper at the girls' camp owned by the same family. The same summer camp Julia Roberts attended as a kid. The girls summer camp I usually attended all summer was full the second half of the season. I overheard my father while on speakerphone with the camp owner, "Figure it out. She's not staying home." The response: "We have availability at Gunflint; Monaya is more of a sailor though..." Without hesitation, my father responded, "Sign her up. Send the list of stuff she needs." There was a pause. "Sir, it's off the grid." There was some wariness to his voice. I think my father was responding before he could change his own mind about sending his daughter to the wilderness for a month. "Yes, like no running water. She will figure it out. Send the list."

Sitting in the middle of the canoe, wide-eyed, knots in my stomach. What the hell did I sign up for? I looked left and right, seeing boys and men slapping paddles, bashing into each other, singing, and having the best time ever. The only girl I knew sat behind me. We'd been in a cabin at the all-girls camp weeks prior, having our own fun talking about rain flies as sails on the canoe. That camp was a sailing camp; this was a wilderness camp. It's a three-mile canoe paddle to camp from the boat landing. The views are spectacular; it smells like heaven, damp cedar and moss. Even with a bunch of loud-mouthed boys around, it's oddly quiet. Not like girls' camp. Everything was already happening as we showed up in the middle of the second session. As we approached the camp on the river, every camp counselor lined up on the dock screaming at the top of their lungs, echoing off the rock walls: "HAJJI BABA, HEY HEY, HAJJI BABA HEY HEY, BONITO, BURRITO, BURRITO MUSSOLINI, HEY!" That greeting felt like an entrance from an adventure back to home. It took about six hours to get here on land, an hour in a canoe, and longer if you were a camper from out of state who had to fly to Duluth, Minnesota.

Welcome to Gunflint Wilderness Camp, a temporary home to 40 boys, eight girls, fourteen men, and six women. As I walked in, the 51-year-old camp director's wife, Mary, showed me the "ears" of my brand-new pack, propping it on my bent knee to get the behemoth of survival comfort on my back. I can see the Eagle's nest from the dock. A rock platform that sits high above the rest of camp, where campfires and stories are told every Sunday. Remember to bring your red French toque. If you forgot it, there is an entire cabin full of vintage camping gear. Steve Zissou would send his child here. Two eagle nests sit at the rock platform level from a tree below. A metal bar floats midair and upon closer look my eyes follow a cable to a tree and a tiny black shack.

"What's that?" I said aloud.

"That's how we shower—the belly of a beast, that sauna is. Jimmy keeps it really hot." The wooden structure was tightly embraced, with trees growing through holes in the wraparound deck flanking all sides, centered between two docks to the left of a long white stripe cascading down the hillside, "We have a water slide here too?!"

The legend of Wendigo is told while we parade around our home away from home, a little dot on a river of gold spongy cedar chips. Wrapping around the trees, taking us from cabin to cabin like cities on a winding river, the story climaxes when we reach the lou on stilts. We look up to see an old man's face with a beard and red paint splashed across it. This is Festers, Gunflint's Wendigo. If you don't put the weird sawdust in the hole, he will bite your ass. Yes, that's blood across his face. The dining hall is the only building in camp with electricity. All the camper cabins are off-grid, no showers, and everything is connected by those golden cedar wood-chip paths. Emitting a unique spongy reverb when

I step on them, the smell does the same thing to my olfactory. The silence of this place is one of the most soothing feelings I have ever encountered. At dinner, two men perform a ritual precisely illustrating the essence of men: the path of least resistance, make it difficult but obtainable for pride and ego. If it's not fun, there's at least a lesson learned or some sort of currency gained, social or otherwise. Gunflint is an optimization of the outdoors. I thought to myself: I could fall off a cliff, get caught in a rainstorm, or burn my hand on a cast iron pan while making dinner. If I don't pay attention and learn here, the wilderness will hand me one hell of a steep learning curve and a counselor with a satellite phone.

It was a 12-year-old boy's birthday that night. Jason, a man I shall dub "the scarecrow," a beanpole with golden straw for hair saluting the sky via a strong push from a headband. Brady, a corn-fed, red-cheeked defensive end on the right. Both wearing the same uniform, technical base-layer tops, ambiguous swim/tech shorts, and Texas, launched this kid in the air like a sack of potatoes, caught him, and shouldered him while they walked to the kitchen. A wild screech emerged from this child-man-boy as they flipped him over.

"OPEN YOUR MOUTH!!"

In less than 20 seconds, his entire head was covered in whipped cream, a candle in his mouth lit.

"BLOW IT OUT, BREATHE, KID, BREATHE, BLOW IT OUT."

As they carried him off to throw him in the river, the candle ended up on the floor in a pile of seafoam. Gunflint was an honest extension of outdoorsmen, no one was really macho, but the man-boy vibe was present. He chose getting thrown in the river over eating a pickled jalapeño.

Dinner is six kinds of weird cheese and mac-good. Before we left for the trail, camp tradition and philosophy is passed on to new kids, but not announced by staff. We get candy, soda, donuts, chocolate, whatever we want. Including candy in the packages we get by mail. My second year was wicked after learning about this policy. Thirteen-year-old Monaya shipped herself cases of everything. Kids were sacrificing electricity their entire summer, we got candy. When they told us about this freedom, I thought about the last six years of my life at the girls' camp. Every hour was documented; candy and soda were withheld if we didn't clean our cabin. We were accounted for at all times, worried about skills accumulated and awarded, layered structure on top of more structure. Camp directors worried we'd fall off a horse, turtle a sailboat in the reeds, or light our hair on fire cooking over a campfire. The following two days were spent earning this freedom to eat candy whenever we wanted. You're expected to take care of yourself.

Those first two days of camp are training days, consisting of lessons on how to live on the trail, going places without toilets or modern amenities, customs and culture of the wilderness, and activities offered. Everyone learns how to pack a backpack and dry bag, how to shit in the woods six ways, start fires, tie knots, use harnesses, bait a hook, sharpen a knife, and end the second day on the river. The whole camp canoes up the river after dinner for ice cream. On the way back, counselors hope no one throws up. What's about to go down is like a feed on the ocean. The same red-cheeked, corn-fed man rams his canoe into the scarecrow's canoe. One after another, each counselor drives their kids into the circle of water. Canoes go into rapid T-bone rescues, another simulation. Seasoned campers and Alex, the camp owner's son, aggressively approach. There we were, three girls in a canoe filled with water, the oval just below the surface, bow and stern peeking out. All us ladies floating like swans, slowly sinking in the water, laughing.

I found the scarecrow's giant blue eyes.

"Jason, straighten me out here. Rachel, straddle the stern. Push down with your booty!" My 13-year-old self was organized and assertive. Rachel, my girls' camp ride-or-die from Chicago, life jacket unzipped, bikini-clad pale skin, purple bandana on her head, said with a nasty girl grin, "Pop it?!?"

I yelled back before diving into the black-water sunset reflection, "Yes!!!! Go!!! I'm going under when you...." I wasn't just going to sit in the water in shorts—that gross feeling on my legs. We paddled out of there like ladies.

T-bone style canoe rescue takes two canoes arranged in a T, the floating canoe coming to rescue is the horizontal part, and the submerged canoe is the vertical part of the T. The members in the swamped canoe turn it upside down, pushing on the stern to get the tip out of the water and onto the rescue canoe. Challenges only experience can teach: flipping a canoe underwater can create a vacuum; the force needed is huge. Sometimes going underwater inside the air pocket and pushing upward is required. This can be nerve-racking. A floaty jacket or inflated plastic bag can help. If it's not going down fast, relax and conserve energy. We were canoe number three to get up and rolling. The name of the game: flip other canoes over that are up, rescue the ones that are already ass-end-over-tea-kettle. This went on for two hours until sunset. Everyone was soaked rolling into camp.

After two days of training, new campers prepped for cabin trips. All the girls would go out together the following day. A chance to bond and mess about in front of a possibly more forgiving gender. We meal-portion, gear-gather, distribute pieces, i.e., "You're carrying this, you carry the rain fly," lights out. The sun came up, and to this day I have so much energy, I'm up with the sun. It's an hour before breakfast. Quietly, the Tevas go on, and I slip out the door. At the water, some 15-year-old boys are hanging out. "Good morning." "Good morning." Because at that age, I know who's 17, 13, and 9—there are no girls under 12. "Good morning," peering at my reflection. The morning light with stark whites and blacks. The water is warm in the river. My toes barely graze the top as I sit and swing my legs, watching cranes across the water. The bell rings, and I can smell breakfast. The swampy grass does that cool thing when I step on it, water oozing out each side of my sandal until I reach the wood chips that feel like a trampoline. Run.

The smell of bacon and blueberry muffins in the air. After breakfast, canoes are loaded and off to Lake Saginaw and Blueberry Island. Elaine, my counselor, is from Hollywood. She has colossal hair, a self-proclaimed Jewish American Princess. Her co-counselor Lyndse would worry about me like a mom. For some reason, my parents thought I should be medicated all summer. So this poor woman would track me down every four hours and give me Ritalin. Not sure my behavior was better, but I was definitely focused.

The noise when a person backs into a garage, the car mixed with gritty sandpaper, is abrupt with the jolt that accompanies it. The canoe scrapes the rocks, Kevlar is durable, right? Elaine began to peel herself before her canoe was on the rocks. Even jumping off the cliff, I anticipate the discomfort of consequences. As much as I hate the feeling of clothes in water, the brown noise of wind passing my ears, saturated with water. Elaine led us to the island about a half-mile away. We ate lunch on an island and picked blueberries in nothing but life jackets. She pushed buttons and knew it, dramatic and aware. Around a campfire of girls that night, Elaine dared to ask, "So, who's your crush? Monaya—you know they talk about you?" I didn't reply.

That summer, I would walk the Superior Hiking Trail for 75 miles, canoe hundreds in the Boundary Waters, and climb on the beach near Duluth. Try taking a 13-year-old girl on a 75-mile hike. "How much farther till the overlook?" I would ask. "A mile," counselors would respond. "You said that three miles ago..." "How do you know we've gone three miles?" There was nothing else to do, no extra resources. This long hike was my introduction to how humans deal with this kind of shit. After my cabin trip, I chose to go hiking in the Superior National Forest of Northeastern Minnesota. I had done the hike the year before with the girls' camp. Gunflint was a camp built on going into the woods with as little as possible and having the most fun you could. Stacks on racks on stacks of razor-edged granite cut me like knives. Bleeding in my first set of Solomons, I continued on, painlessly at first. Three hours later, shin splints slowed me down. Jason, my counselor, 24 years old at the time walked with me, gave me Advil, took a shit in a bag, sealed it, and started pushing the poo around looking for his tongue barbell. "We're going slow; look forward. I lost my tongue ring last week. Don't mind me." Gunflint Wilderness Camp: not for the faint of heart, not for the unhumorous. He kept an eye on me for the rest of summer, checking my cuts by comparing them to his super-blond leg hair on tan skin.

We had a strong bond a year later when I returned. As a kid, you don't notice changes in a year. Jason still had his blond hair and tongue ring. He hated the boy I picked to like, acting like a father or older brother defending my character. I watched him vault sound through a portal in his face at the boy in the rain on the beach. I couldn't tell if the droplets in the air were rain or spit, over a hundred yards away. "STAY AWAY FROM HER, DO YOU HEAR ME?!" This boy he was yelling at, we disappeared to sit on some rocks in the rain. Turns out I picked the moodiest kid there. He was undeniably handsome, olive skin tan, a strong jawline, copper-gold ringlets, broad shoulders, enormous green eyes, and giant hands. He frightened me, and I found it fun, like a new feeling. I'd gone a year without my parents hugging me. It wore off fast and caring for him became a chore. I was extreme but I couldn't relate to his moodiness.

In that same year, I remember being in my cabin wrapped in a blanket with him. He was 13, I was 14. His hands wrapped around my waist, resting on my stomach as I sat leaning back like a chair between his legs. At first, it was like a chair that hugged me, enjoyable. The part where he put his hands under the blanket and down my pants, I was completely confused. Moments like that should be private and consensual. I pretended to sleep while he sat there, molesting me in front of my entire cabin under a blanket. I was sweating with heat, trying to cover everything, trying to jump out of my own meat suit. I tried to forget the situation for so long. Confused about why this person would do this at that time. A 13-year-old boy in front of eight women. I was young and didn't have someone to ask, "Why would he do this?" Nor was I given any info on how to defend myself without embarrassing everyone. Also, camp was expensive. Saying anything to my parents would cause an upset. I compartmentalized it like the clothes I stuffed in sacks to keep light and keep moving on the trail.

As an adult, I look back, questioning. What would I do if that was my child? A numerous amount of answers and creative remedies come to mind immediately. Seconding that question, why would he do this to a woman he cared about? The answer, someone did it to him. Not just once, but enough times that it normalized his behavior. The seasoned adult I am today looks the other way, knowing if necessary humanity would drive me to help this person, the adult knowing I look the other way. The violent protest material he posts on social media and racial remarks about white women while being a father to three mixed-race kids. He has a daughter. I wonder what he'd do if it happened to her. As for my means of coping at summer camp I distanced myself from him, taking other trips with groups that didn't include him.

That ASMR wax sound was prevalent as we pulled our dry bags from the pile. Jacob stood there with canoe paddles, plenty in both hands, beaming. His Kangol visor, the same color fading into a bluebird sky. As the group finished loading up gear, the van driver started the engine and pulled away from the boat landing. In the rearview mirror, Mary the camp owner waved goodbye and disappeared. We were a mile's paddle away before Jacob noticed, "Hey, did someone grab my dry bag?" His eyebrow flexed, slightly disappointed but the challenge accepted. Talking into the wind, I hollered, "Was there anything in there you really needed?" I didn't think about the time frame, we'd be out there for nine days. "I wanted my toothbrush," he responded honestly. "Seriously, that's what you care about?" I just kept paddling. "It was my only luxury item besides a camera," he yelled at the back of my head. Without turning around or hesitation, I responded, "You wanna borrow mine?" The amazing things I'd do with this kid for ten days, blue skies, paleography, canoe, swim, eat, sleep. Another day in the Boundary Waters of Minnesota, the entire thing happening on the mirror reflection of the water. Golden hour, glittering water. Jacob watched us from a canoe offshore like a film.

"Draw!" an almost seven-foot-tall 17-year-old named John Doughty yelled behind me, standing up and shaking the already tippy canoe. "Beeeeeeccccsheeepp, ooommmmmmmmm! Lightsaber!!!" Holding out his paddle, waving side to side "mmmmhOhhhmmmmmmmm." I stood up on my seat. Balancing the entire canoe with Big John in it, waving my canoe paddle, laughing, and making orb noises of a lightsaber. Paddles floating through the air, they slam together back and forth. "CRIKKK, cirk, ommmmmmmmmm," both of us making lightsaber noises, holding paddles like heavy laser swords.

“Chusshhhhhurkkkk, churssshhhhurk,”

“Luke, I don’t want to hurt you,” John raised an eyebrow at me. I was looking at the shore. Woooshhh. I heard the paddle swing through the air. “You’re not my father.” I stepped back over one of the yokes, holding the balance of the canoe. We learn on day one: don’t stand in the canoe. All summer, I worked on standing in canoes and keeping them balanced.

Picture two people standing in a yellow canoe over black, glittering water, a young woman climbing up and down from the yoke to the bow seat, him weighing down the back end like a seesaw. One tiny and one a giant. John towering over me like a Sequoia. He was six months from adulthood, weighed as much as a baby elk, and was known for cutting a girl’s hair with a buck knife in the dining hall. He was always nice to me; I was always nice to him. Jacob and Brady, a counselor on the trip, observed this lightsaber duel, arms folded, wide stance, matching Texas like white New Balance dad sneakers. While I gazed at the shore to watch them, John wound up like Babe Ruth and knocked me out of the park. Airborne and gasping, a pushed fart came from my sound portal, a thud mixed with flatulence. Slow motion kicked in. The canoe flipped over. I tried to gather wind while feeling wet shorts, wet shorts and a maxi pad.

Swimming to shore, my brain went into a project-manager mode, making lists of possible remedies with minimal embarrassment, a mental spreadsheet of scenarios and if-then statements. Pros and cons. On the other side of the island, clawing my way on the rocks, losing motivation after a long swim, cold, my brain told me to be swift, run. The repetitive female thought while running with a lake-saturated maxi pad: “Is this what it’s like to have balls?” The amount of movement on this perforated, breathable sack of water and no leaks. The toilet stood like the Washington Monument in the forest. Flop. Watching it drop in slow motion like paraphernalia falling from a hippie’s hand in front of a cop.

A thought of Elaine on training day and her tampon tutorial: “Grip it and rip it, the tree like this, lean out, watch your pants... There are several different methods, but this one is just easy...” A counselor in a tiny red beanie is talking in front of this colorized reality of an Ansel Adams–esque landscape. “Does everyone know what to do with their girl products? No? Okay, ask your lady counselors when you cross that bridge in the woods.” She leaned in with all her freckles, “Monaya, don’t tell anyone, but you can stick them in anthills and watch them feed on blood.” I grinned, amused by the idea of feeding the earth.

Snap, the Gerber blade made a noise. What was in this maxi pad that could hold liquid like that? With the maxi pad splayed across a downed tree like a dead squirrel, pinching part of the weird plastic mesh with my thumb and index finger, jab, pulling on both sides, exposing a pile of clear and blood-colored beads. Rolling it up, taping it up, I thought about how I’d explain what was in my hand if someone saw me. Maybe treat it like a biology project so they weren’t frightened or like a dead animal. Either way, I had to know. It was 1998, why lean in and whisper about wild things with lady bits? At this point, I’d watched two men shit themselves trying to hustle their canoe out of the water. I thought bleeding for days without dying is kinda special. Women’s bodies can do extreme things, bleeding for seven days, alive, walking around. Why be ashamed?

Jacob looked at me with concern, “She has cramps, right? She’s not getting pneumonia or anything, right? We’ve been out here for days in the rain.” The rationality he has to this day. He was talking about Rachel, she had been duffing in our canoe for two days.

“How do you know that!?” My eyes flashed at him.

“She’s being a bitch over the smallest thing.”

If he knew, didn’t everyone know? That’s how I adjusted my embarrassment, humble and calm levels. They’d try harder if they knew I was uncomfortable. Perhaps he was amused that I cut my maxi pad apart.

There is only one point of manhood Gunflint wisdom that took twenty years to decipher: if a woman stayed and just kept going, so did they. You could scream at them, accidentally knock them over with words or large objects, apologize, and ask them for help. The nuance biology gave these young men allowed them to accept the fact that the opposite gender bleeds for seven days out of a highly developed gash in their hardware and doesn't die. Author thought: men are more fascinated by the process than most women, they don't have to think about actually caring for it. Period-tracker app FLO is owned by men. I'll always wonder what counselor Brady was saying to Jacob. Years later, I ran into Brady at a Grateful Dead and Bob Dylan show. He remembered me but didn't remember anything about the maxi pad incident until I exclaimed, "Remember when John and I had that lightsaber fight?!"

That cabin in the woods with all the vintage outdoor gear, the one the 15-year-old boys hung out at, there's a climbing wall on the front, and behind it is where all the cool kids would hang out and be rebels. I loved this cabin because it had a huge Gibson amp inside that set the tone. One of the last days of camp I woke up before everyone, searching, Flight of the Valkyries playing over that giant Gibson amp. Running down that cedar-chip trail, arms out like an eagle, following the sound to find them—two 15-year-old boys doing a man-dance on the porch. My gift of blending in with them shows itself when the music stops at the end of the song for a second. They caught me watching, so I responded with a high kick—the timing, impeccable. "KICK IT! You wake up late for school, man you don't want to go... You missed two classes, and no homework..." Beastie Boys was just as relevant then as it is now. We moshed on a deck in Northern Minnesota, same as their dads' saw them do at Madison Square Garden.

Breakfast was served on the water that day, kids jumping in canoes with paddles and groggy bunkmates. Organized thoughts to find your friends could be sorted after there's glucose in the brain. At this camp sometimes they'll do normal things, like have compassion for very difficult situations. Other times, adolescent social experiments like a dance. The unbalanced numbers in gender result in misunderstood social cues. No worries. The kids who volunteer for 60 days without electricity for the summer don't understand either. A 9-year-old boy, seeing only the same 40 people for two months, none of them your family, 30 of them the same gender. I wouldn't rationalize this adaptation until I thought about one of them flipping out, talking shit about the women in camp: "I don't want to put on pants. I don't have to put on pants on trail, why do I have to wear pants in camp?" Thirty-eight-year-old Monaya, writing this, connects this moment with an old man "shirt-cocker" at Burning Man. Google that term if you're unfamiliar.

"Those jeans are awesome," I say to Annie, a nearly six-foot-tall beanpole with blue metallic jeans. Her teeth and lips are huge, her smile so genuine. "Duuuuude, I have two pairs. Wanna wear one, and I'll wear the other to the dance tonight?" She pulls out another silver-black pair from her yellow pack. She's taller than me, but we have an almost identical pixie cut, hers maroon, skin and bones, with an infectious laugh. "Annie," she says with a hand extended, toothy grin. We'd been in the same cabin together but never really talked. At the dance that night, Jacob stood up from his dark corner seat, his fistful of light coming at us like an Olympic torch, explaining gobs of flying light from a teenage boy's hand is difficult. Jacob had cut the ends off about twenty outdoor long-life glow sticks. Flailing about, this luminescence all over about twenty of us. Some weren't happy, I stared at his mouth. Like movies with vampire faces covered in blood, this was an alien oozing a light source. That night, we all danced together. I've danced with over 50,000 people on the Playa at Burning Man; this was just as special.

Jacob and I messaged continuously over the years, telling him what's going on, and he'd walk me through scenarios with valuable advice. Talking on AOL Messenger until the wee hours in high school. I remember him telling me, "I'm going to a rave this week," then, "My brother's mental health... My mom took these pictures... I was accepted for Ranger training." No small talk, just straight to what he needed to know: "Have you seen my brother?" Every time I came across him online, that question soon followed. "Jacob, I'm sorry, we were never that close. I wish I could tell you I'd seen him, that he was

safe, that he was making a life for himself, that he just needed to be left alone.”

His voice with the same tone, the same response:

“I know. I have to ask every time, Mo.”

The truth was, Zachary (Jacob’s little brother) escaped my attention with his fixated behavior at camp. They shared some mental abilities. Jacob assured me through every mental crack I had: “Monaya, it’s like a trip, ride the wave. Ask it questions. You didn’t take too much of the sauce. One foot is still on the ground. You know, don’t talk to people when you are tripping balls in your own Lucy sauce your body makes. It’s unbelievable to watch your metamorphosis, over and over. Like proof.”

“No worries, I would tell you. If you want me to find him, I will.”

“No, I don’t want to scare him, make him run further.” I could feel his frustration through the computer.

“Okay, just say the word. How are you?” A long pause between messages.

“I’m going to Kosovo next week.”

“Why?” My mind reeled with simulations.

“That’s where they’re sending me. To do what? Collect weapons and stuff.”

“And stuff? Promise me you’ll run.”

“You know, I know how to hide.”

“Fine, but run for a while first.”

Two months later, a thick envelope showed up, postmarked Kosovo. He took photos of everything. The backs of all the images had the weapons count he took from them. There was a part of the story he didn’t have to tell me. Snow, pictures of men in white camo, Unimogs and tracked Humvees, a forest full of deep snow. We never spoke about those photos, but when I travel in memories on the astral plane, I go there. Standing with him in the snow, my camo is a yellow snowsuit with zebra stripes on the bottom, mixed argyle on top, goggles, gloves with rainbow fingers. I tell him he will get his man, he will live, and he will come back. I wouldn’t be surprised if someday we talk, and he says, “You were there. You were with me. I didn’t know it then, but you were always there.”

We spoke a few weeks ago, in 2023, when this was being written. Jacob said to me, “The guy? He’s a SEAL team member?... I bet he’s having a blast with you. Does he know about the stuff you can do, or does he just think you drive that Land Rover around?”



## Care Package

Spicy Oxford Sandwich with Espresso Buttercream,  
Sweet Grass Cinnamon Dark Chocolate Truffles, and  
Coconut, Bacon, and Elk Pineapple Pemmican

### Chocolate Oxford Cookies

Chocolate Sable Dough (Single Batch)  
Butter (tempered) 1475 g  
Powdered sugar 676 g  
Egg yolks 8 each  
Vanilla extract 20 g  
AP flour 1280 g  
Cocoa 440 g  
Salt 48 g

(Mise and sift flour, cocoa, salt, and any dry ingredients together.)

In the mixer bowl:

1. Cream butter and sugar.
2. Add egg yolks one at a time, add vanilla. Mix until well incorporated.
3. Slowly add dry ingredients until well mixed.

If baking: roll dough to  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch (protip: use two pieces of parchment paper). Cut squares using a cutter or dish you have. Spray with water and sift cayenne pepper over squares. Bake on a sheet tray with Silpat—freeze for 10 minutes. Then bake at a cookie biscuit setting on a Rational oven for ~20 minutes or at 350°F convection for 20 minutes, rotating the tray midway.

If batching: portion into 1.5 lb,  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch thick squares (like small books). Wrap in plastic wrap twice; keep excellently in the freezer.

### Espresso Buttercream

1 lb butter  
1 lb powdered sugar  
1 Tbsp vanilla  
1 tsp instant coffee

In a mixer with the paddle attachment: temper butter, and add powdered sugar slowly. Switch to a whisk attachment, add flavors, and fluff to desired consistency. Load in a pastry bag, pipe small dots on the Oxford cookies, and sandwich them together.

Protip: wear gloves; the cayenne pepper is strong.

*(At the restaurant, a standard batch was 12–15 pounds. I would eat these during management meetings, stuffing 6–10 of them in my front apron pocket.)*

### Sweet Grass Cinnamon Dark Chocolate Truffles

Basic Truffle Ganache Ratio: 1:1  
(For 1 lb of chocolate, you need 1 lb of cream.)

1. Infuse the cream: put the sweet grass braid, a cinnamon stick, and the cream in a saucepan. Heat until small bubbles form. Sieve to remove any sweet grass or cinnamon.
2. Pour over the chocolate and stir until the chocolate is melted and incorporated.
3. Chill or let temper on the counter. Attach the paddle to the mixer and whip until mostly fluffy. Switch to whisk attachment and whip until very fluffy.
4. Pipe into desired mold or shape, then chill.

5. Dust with cocoa powder, cereal, or a creative sweet choice (I use brown butter dust.)

## Coconut, Bacon, and Elk Pineapple Pemmican

### Ingredients

½ lb of Dried Elk, Powdered. Easiest way is in a food processor or coffee grinder.

2 slices of bacon, after cooking do not drain rendered fat, pulse in the food processor to make a paste.

5.7 oz of coconut cream, separate from the coconut water.

½ cup pineapple powder (available on amazon)

### Methodology

Pulse the meat in the food processor for prep. A coffee grinder does a great job with this, I have a stainless steel model that is easy to wash. Mix everything together in the big food processor or a ninja blender and pulse until smooth. Fill molds with mixture, freeze. Remove from molds and vac pack. Can be stored up to three months at room temperature, 2 years in the freezer.

“If you’re still wondering how canoe-flipping, maxi pads, and awkward teen hormones add up to ‘life lessons,’ just remember: where else can you learn leadership, consent, survival skills, and the best ways to hide candy from counselors? Forget Harvard Business School—apparently, you just need a damp sleeping bag and a willingness to chat about periods in front of 40 man-boys.”

-ChatGPT

# The Philosophers

## *Punk Rock*

When it was my turn to enter high school, the campus moved from a multi-building campus with green space and walking paths to one large building with breakouts, long corridor wings, and of course, many cameras. I enjoyed the modern architecture and found my way onto maintenance catwalks above the commons areas, in the auditorium, and passageways between offices. I spent a month at the former local high school before it was demolished. My mother graduated from there in the late 60s, showed me all of the passageways, secret places to hang out, and, of course, the photography darkroom.

Three weeks and four days into the first month of ninth grade when a kid I had known all my life said a comment shrouding a Freudian sexual joke to me in psych 101. Exiting at the side door and not returning. I had never been sexually harassed on an intellectual level. Swerve. It was two years of Christina MacCulluff Academy online, the first online school in the United States, before I would return to an in-person classroom.

I had made it a point to burn the bridge from the group of girls that was my circle the year before. Most people would say I was kind in refusing to talk to them rather than expressing my anger in other means. My birthday the year before with that group of girls, my favorite lime green matte and shiny checkerboard printed string bikini tiny underwear, hanging from my brother's prize-winning stuffed muskie mouth, above our fireplace, covered in chocolate syrup and red dye. A girl named Anna Dicks, responsible for putting them up on the wall at my parents house. Meanwhile, I hadn't even reached that stage of womanhood. I'm not sure how my parents overlooked this extremely demented behavior from a young woman harassing their daughter, in their own home. This girl would make fun of other people's names, I don't know how.

At the age of 33, I turned to my mother at an expensive brunch and asked, "Is it wrong if I have homicidal thoughts about her?" My mother's laugh, like someone turned on a subwoofer in the car, "I would be very, very worried if some small part of you, Monaya, didn't think horrible things about her. It's absolutely okay to think those things. The fact you ask if it's okay is beyond more than enough empathy, compassion, and feelings for that girl. She took so much of you away from your friends who actually needed you. The ones that wanted to go skiing with you. Remember Becky, she was crazier than you, but you had each other, and it wasn't a feeding frenzy relationship. She never made you seek approval."

The guidance counselor would tell me to make new friends when I returned as a junior. Finding the material enthralling, getting to touch chemistry hands-on, discussing literature pieces within a political context, and annoying my art teacher with full-on performance pieces, including costumes. A good friend had to remind me about what I did in Mr. May's art class. How can a person forget wearing wings to a highschool class?

It would slowly change with who surrounded me. After returning from off-grid summer camp, that year was cut short as I was too depressed to be there. The better I got at being myself, speaking up in classes, wearing a black turtleneck or collared shirt nearly every day, and doing well on the soccer team. I was so excited upon being invited to a birthday party with a group of girls who were involved with art, literature, and theater. Two of them even competed with me in snowboarding. These girls would make me a legend at their expense. If we ever meet again in a bar, ladies, I will buy two rounds of cosmos. The post-it note on her finger in one hand, cash in the other outstretched arm. "Can you get this?" Even at this moment, my face still feels confused as I write this. This was close to \$500 of alcohol. "I'll do my best." My eyebrow raised, feelings of "Will they still like me if I can't get this stuff" in my guts.

It took three liquor stores and four adults. I did pull it off. When party planners whine about their jobs of moving stuff from one location to the next, I'm over here with my head down and doing the

work. I brought it all inside a tiny cabin at a local resort. The kitchen counter became a bird feeder, with each bird picking up their shiny bottle of ick and running to hide it wherever they did. "She's HERE!" The birthday bird, a tall bean, with an orange pixie cut, knocked open the door with arms filled with stuff, "I don't need your help, mom."

Penguin from Batman in the form of a mother, followed her truffula tree offspring into the house. "I just want to see what you guys are up to, I need to use the bathroom." My face, confused, mostly bored at this point. Why is hiding appealing to human beings? Like a bear walking through the woods, twigs snapping, leaves crunching, the birds shuffled to hide the sweet nectar of forgets, the booze. "Trese What is this?!" The smirk on your face, holding back words - "Absolute. It's absolutely not yours!" The penguin's legs, now stomping bear feet.

At this point, all I wanted was a beer. "Trese! Where did all this come from?" The truffula tree named Trese was standing there, mouth a jar, saucer-eyed with buckets-a-plenty ready to fall out her eyes. "She brought it, all of it." Like a gun, she pointed her finger at me. James Bond with her peacoat, turtle neck, loafered feet, French twisted, me. Sometimes, when I'm caught off guard and really angry, betrayed, I can actually see a small me, in the amygdala. She looks out a small window and sees what's going on in the frontal lobe, flinging open the door and running on a dendrite path like Mario brothers. She connects memories and information, mending fibers of information, one to the other. "Yeah, it's all mine. Let me get it all together, and I'll get out of here. I'm so sorry. I just wanted Trese to have a great birthday. I'll call the guys and tell them it's girls only and sober. No boys allowed. Will you let Chad know? He's in the closet of Trese's room. I'll bring all this back to my parents. Please don't get me in trouble. They would be more upset about the alcohol being gone than us having it."

Trese, gaping mouth. At that point, she had made her way to full gapper status. She stared at me with eyes wishful of lasers. Bringing it over to the philosopher's house, we made a massive wop with all the girl alcohol. It worked out. If my mom was mad at me, I would try to make it right, as soon as possible. I wouldn't have blamed my friends or lied about asking my friends. I was completely baffled by that situation with the penguin. There was no penguin in my family. My mother was a goddess more concerned with providing a big learning environment that protected us. IE don't rent hotel rooms for parties, find friends with a big house and lots of fun stuff to do.

October 21st, 2002. 17, I have started noticing my interest in truth by now. My inquiry to how the world works and people are beyond confusing. This is the beginning of a long journey to understand how everything interacts. Humans would be the most complex and baffling for the next 20 years of life. I am in an online high school, which in 2001 is an oddity. Most of my time is spent with a computer, whether it's school or entertaining myself. I stare at the lake my family estate is on all morning, trying to rationalize whether I should be inside or outside. Asking yourself daily, am I on the inside or outside? -BLOOP - MSN messenger popped up with a bubble.

"You should come out tonight; we're having a party at the house over by the middle school. I think your girlfriends are going." Even after talking with this person for a few months online, I am still sketched out. I parked at the end of the long driveway, assuring my smartass could leave pronto. He was right about one thing; I did run into those girls, but I was confused about why he would say they were my friends. Let me introduce you to Brian. "Hey! Hey Mo, Mo, Mo, MONAYA!" My heart is still pounding, nervously trying to deal with these girls. "Yo, Monaya, you in there? My name is Brian. I invited you, remember, we talked on messenger? You wanna come inside? You look like a ghost. Are you okay?" His blue eyes are shielded by thick glasses. I looked at my reflection on the glass, noticing the distortion the lens added. Great, I still look pretty.

"Ya. Can my friends come...?" I look back to the girls I am dragging on a metaphorical I'm uncomfortable alone leash. Them drooling at the cool-kids stories they will tell if they get in the door. Walking up the stairs now; the girl behind me has one foot on the step to follow me inside. It was like a festival and this man was acting ordinary about 200 people on his lawn. Ignoring everyone, he took out

his keys and unlocked the door. Quickly, with one hand on my shoulder, he pulled me inside and slammed the door. “No. They cannot come inside.” He continued to show me around, never skipping a beat or thinking about the girls outside. There were wall-to-wall humans raging in here too. The eight-by-ten entry must have had over a hundred pairs of shoes stacked on top of each other.

“Wooooooooooooo girl.” A spicy black-haired metrosexual in a gray and red Foursquare® sweater came flying out of the bathroom. Turning to my right, around the corner, another door unlocked. There wasn’t anyone in there. A computer, bed, and tiny loveseat, the monitor casting light over the room. I quickly went inside and shut the door. I was taking refuge from all the humans and debauchery happening on the other side of the solid wood door. This rental house is weird, with solid wood doors, but linoleum and cheap carpet.

Brian had contacts, but I really liked his glasses. His glasses were enormous and completely changed the way his eyes moved. It wasn’t that I loved the shape of the glasses or the look. It was the way that he interacted with introverted tasks. When he sat at his desk, I watched his blue eyes move on the glasses’ lenses from behind him. The story of his first pair of eyeglasses, pure optimism. The apex of a three-year-old getting clear vision and seeing reality for the first time. The unforgettable quote. “Mom, the refrigerator has corners.”

I’m still here, catching my breath, slowing the thoughts in that little room with the monitor casting light. He opened the door, checking on me. “Do you have any weed?” The Coke bottle lenses inquire. I looked at the lenses of the glasses, looking back at me, moving my gaze to the plant he keeps on top of his dresser and back to the lenses. Smiling, I respond, “Of course. You wanna match?...” It’s quiet in there. At that point, I had forgotten anyone was on the other side of the wall. I was centered again. “Shit. Let me go get my sister.” I can see a circle of people behind him. It seemed quieter until he opened the door to go outside. There is a massive crowd. A few minutes go by, a tiny gypsy opened the door... “Hello there, did I hear someone needs a...” A small hand with a wand, a clip, and a lit joint extends to me, Brian’s sister. Laughing hysterically, I feel at home. We sat there for hours listening to weird music, falling asleep in heaps, watching anime. I stayed there for weeks. It was chaotic during the night and completely organized during the day.

They were a bunch of motivated guys who wanted to have as much fun as possible and discuss the “Truth.” Sleeping on that couch three or four nights a week, Brian and I shared everything. He always shared more with me than I shared with him. I don’t know if he knew that if I went home, the party was there too, but there was no morning after work productivity. I was relieved that I could never be yelled at for anything I did or didn’t do the way my parents did, taking frustrations out in all the wrong places. Offering support when it was publicly obligated, like a sports game. This house with these guys, it was an escape from my parents, who had difficulty taking responsibility for me or their bad decisions that impacted me.

Alcohol was present at my parent’s house on a daily basis. My brother had left two years earlier to live with his best friend’s family. His nervous system got peace. Mine finally found a disco ball at a philosophical party. This changed my life in ways I am still experiencing now. Four of these guys I haven’t seen in 15 years. Brian, we had a phone call in 2023.

2003, Two months later, The joint crackled, “Yellow porous and absorbent as he!” Glancing at the monitor he sat in front of, I continued, “Sponge Bob Square Pants!!!! Monaya the white? William the gray? Brian... wait, you’re Strider? Who is Gimli!? Tell me who Gimli is!!!!” There were five of them living in that house, three to seven other individuals hanging out at any given time. Standard archetypes of the engineer, artist, scientist, philosopher, and the undefined all housed under one roof. Three upstairs, the artist, the engineer, and the baby-face dreamer. Downstairs, two guys named Brian, one a philosopher, the other a molecular biologist. If you are unfamiliar with these characters, watch Lord of the Rings. Gimli is the dwarf with the battle axe and a giant beard. Brian took the joint from my hand and stood up from the office chair. “You weren’t supposed to see that.” Walking out of the room to get a beverage.

Upon his return, I start with the questions. "Why? Why am I the white wizard?" I was curious. He looked away. "You're the smartest..." He responded, looking away. Dumb found, I blinked, staring at the blue eyes behind the thick glasses. Tears start to form in my eyes. I have no thoughts, no words. The motion has stopped like the needle coming off the record. Jumping on the bed, getting excited about discussing characters, slowly wilting sitting down.

A week later, it was a Friday afternoon in February. The sun was beaming. I skipped school that day without guilt, as my homework was already finished by Tuesday. The red, black, and white snowsuit on, with the car door open. Looking at his lenses, trying to shield my eyes from the sun, "What do you need me to get from the store?" He stood in the open door of the car. "Champagne. I'm gonna win." I shut the door on the black Camry and took off for the hill. Bluebird skies, squishy snow, and competition jitters still stuck in the on position. There are way too many people there. I wished they sounded like birds. A guy in a dog suit just walked by my car. How can I take this seriously? The conversation with myself, "It's less than twenty gates. One event, then your favorite, that one only has three gates. GO! You can do this. Get out of the car." Walking past everyone, big headphones on. If I could have talked to myself, who moved to Tahoe five years later, she would have said, "You lucky duck, you don't even have to wear a helmet yet."

Looking at the Gortex glove holding the red start bar, white knuckles inside there. My leg pushed against the buzzer gate, about to set it off for disqualification. I look down, scanning my whole body. Glancing first at my snowboard, the blue and silver Preston bindings, and the Rossignol deck. It is blue with clouds all over it, and I can't help but think of the bottom with a rising sun. Moving up to my boots, Black Vans High Standards look like skate shoes. Then my jacket, Roxy and red, and half gloves tucked inside your black Burton Gortex gloves. Last, I can't look, but thinking of the beany, light tan Carhartt but not the signature toffee tan; it's lighter and has a little brim that tucks my blue Spy eyewear goggles into the white turtle fur balaclava.

The red light comes on, then yellow. I can hear the electricity humming from the buzzer. I lean in, closing my eyes, envisioning the sound from the wire flowing into my hands. It gets louder. The buzzer countdown three, beep, two, beep, one. Green flashing lights continue even after you close your eyes. The alarm shocked me. "PULL!" an inner voice screams, launch, my back knee bent, pushing side to side in a low lunge. My back knee was low enough to graze the snow toe side edge. Crouching me, hidden glide. As I cross my center, using the other side of the sword attached to my feet, standing on toes at a 45-degree angle. Full extension: legs straight, arms wide open, one on the ground grazing the snow like it's food. A set of six-pack abs exposed, my extended arms pulling the coat up. There is snow flashing over my belly. One, heelside, two, toeside, three, too far, too far, too far! There is grapple snow flying in every direction like a cloud of smoke. Before I even stop gliding, I'm back up, the heel side edge never left the snow. I close my eyes, turning the light off. Squat, putting all the weight in the back seat, letting the feeling guide me. The siren rings as I cross the final red line in the snow. Thank god that is over. Olly to binding off, pulling up the other side, jumping, and catching the board, I see her.

"Mom!" I'm scream at her. "Hi Monaya, you did really good." She's standing by the lift in a long camel-colored overcoat. My seventeen-year-old mind, nostalgic already, looked at her standing there like it was 1978. She had just ballet skied. Still standing there, I think about the day she taught me to ski just two football fields to the south. "I fell." I look, frowning at the ground. "I think you are still the fastest." I sneer, frustrated, thinking it was a mom thing to say. "You're my mom..." I start to rebuttal. "No, the scoreboard says..."

She's still talking, but my dad is walking up. My dad never comes to the ski resort. I don't see him, but I can feel him behind me. "Hey Honey, how are you?" The noise was like a shot of love and care to the back of your head. You know, that feeling of a friend you haven't seen in a while. Your best friend, your confidant, who taught you the philosophical stuff. That race will be one of the only moments in my life he would get to see me shine brighter than he ever thought possible. "DADDY!" I scream

uncontrollably, probably piercing two ears in the lodge that day. “Holy shit, you’re first.” My eyes started to form tears. “I fell.” My arms slide back at my sides, somewhat defeated and at the same time elated. An odd mix of feelings in which I struggle to control, crying while laughing, smiling while crying, which one is it this time? “That doesn’t seem to matter. What did you do last night?” He smiled, sarcastically cloaking the question. How drunk were you last night? “Champagne and in bed by 11. I’m going back up...” I turn to the chair lift. I can see his face change to concern and worry. “The girls?” His look a reaction, not a response. “Yeah, they are here.” I responded, still in disbelief my number was at the top of the scoreboard. Three first-place events, I’m was going to United States Snowboarding Nationals.

I was trying to make my parents proud by winning gold medals, getting straight As, thinking about where I want to go to college, and trying to learn as much about philosophy and alcohol as I can. Here I had gained silent notoriety within my highschool graduating class for being a party animal who didn’t get caught and managed their life very well. “Flip her upside down. She’s 18 today!” Quietly looking around at the hunter-green walls, the difference in the way their hair was all shiny and clean cut. Who are these guys? This is what private university life is like? String theory, Ween, a driveway full of imported European all-wheel drive cars, and expensive microbrew. The ceiling looked foamy. There were brown suds making blobs on my lenses. Who buys kegs of nutty brown ale? Professional drunk people. Shake it off. “Put me down. I have twenty more minutes! What’s still open right now? Can someone take me to food?” My eyes are hazy, mood high, and I am the queen of the world at this point. “Who’s gonna drive Monaya? You?” Overzealous and underage, I was too confident at the age of 18. Nieve about the power of alcohol. Nieve to its very slippery slope. I am “stronger” than my parents at home in the same state, day after day.

“Ya, gimme theeee keeey’s.” Lunging at them mid-air, hanging from Brian’s hand. He lifts them above my reach. “It’s my car!” I say, unaware of how loud my voice is. “No, we can walk. I know you love to drive, but we are intoxicated....” The keys to the Camry made it into someone’s pocket, but I wouldn’t find out until later, William, he had the Camry keys. “We can walk? You’ll walk with me?” For some reason, I am shocked he would walk me to a store in the middle of the night, not even trying to hold my hand. “Sure, the food, it’s on the way to the store, you get to buy the cigarettes and porn! Let’s go!”

We all started crunching through the snow, walking to the closest Holiday Station Store. The boys started asking questions that would make anyone uncomfortable. But I am intoxicated. There was no inhibition at this point. Roll with it. Let it fly. There is an Anthony Bourdain clip where he talks about his filthy first book. If reading something makes you uncomfortable, that means it’s beyond what you should ever let your potential child read. But you get the jist of what I’m saying in a much less graphic sentence – in lieu of a beautiful 18-year-old girl woman walking into a convenience store in the middle of the night to buy cigarettes and porn. No, I am not attracted to the same gendered body. I am attracted to the opposite sex. I am female. I am attracted to males. However, I am very curious about the human experience. I’m very attracted to the mind, and that is genderless. Sort of like how I cut my maxi pad open, I just had to know what was so special about these pictures. At that point, magazines were a source of information. What was in this stack of glossy paper? 18-year-old me was obnoxiously curious as to what’s so powerful about pictures of naked women on paper that it needed to be wrapped in plastic. Seriously. I’ll say it twice: wrapped in plastic, printed on wood.

By now, I am a tipsy birthday, holding out the magazine, I point at the graphic sexual images. “Look at this. Who needs this?” Keep pointing, continuing, “What’s the point? One could look at their own bits down there with a mirror and a flashlight, right? It’s like four in the morning. When are we going home?” William was smirking. “Now, Monaya, we are visual creatures; not everyone has a mind to see like you do. I have a final in five hours. You have to drop me off at school. Let’s go.” He looked at me with brown eyes. William, a genius concerned with getting into graduate school, and I had a similar approach to work. Hermit yourself with a bunch of books and a computer, entertaining yourself with knowledge, music selections are required. “I can’t drive. I can dance...” My feet are doing their own

thing, the running man, straight out of a Vanilla Ice video.

"I can't drive." Brian was laying on the hood of the car, embracing it like a body pillow. The three of us standing around the black Camry. Richard is standing there in green fleece covering his big belly, watching me make circles dancing around the car. His Heidie braids of shiny brown hair flipped as he looked both ways. "I can drive." Flipping his braids again at William. "You can't drive!" William responded, one eye rolling to the back of his head. The other is still fixed on Richard. I stop this escalation before it turns into a drinking game. "Rich, you quit drinking at midnight, yes?"

"Ya.-" Before he could get any further, "Great, let's go." I knew it was only 4 hours. If we got pulled over, he was the most sober, driving the freshly 18-year-old party animal in the front to safety. Passing out for an hour, waking up with the sunrise, Richard glanced over at me in the front passenger seat, noticing my eyes blinking. "What are you gonna go to college for, Monaya?" I rubbed my head. Both hands were digging into my hair now. "My parents want me to be a lawyer, but I don't think I'm smart enough." He started laughing. "Wait...What? Are you joking? I can't tell if that was sarcasm." William was peeking up with one eye from a bucket hat in the back seat. Sighing, I quietly said, "No, I think I'm curious, not smart." From the look he was giving me, I knew he was going to tell me that I play dumb well. "If you really think that, you're naive. It's beautiful. You're going to make one hell of a badass lawyer or wherever you apply the curiosity. By the way, you know there are humans out there that have passed the bar that will never even touch the surface of what you have accumulated just in your senior year of high school."

The noise of the machine made it seem like it took forever. I look down at the monster timex. It's 2 PM. I turned eighteen at three AM that night. A new script letter in my grandmother's handwriting is on my shoulder. Brian slept the night before while Rich drove. Freshly inked with my own initial, snoozing, Brian and I were on the second lap from northern Minnesota back to the city. Pink, yellow, and orange were reflected off the skyline buildings when I opened my eyes. Looking back on this, I'm not sure if the mission was to take away all the allure of these garbage-hole places in life that everyone was fetishizing at the time. I won't get into the propaganda of Girls Gone Wild, Britney Spears in her underwear on the cover of Rolling Stone magazine, or the drunken fiasco of MTV's the real world. It should be obvious what millennials were subjected to was propaganda. Because, after seeing the extreme version, I can honestly say, I have never been back to a strip club after that night.

Brian worked in the photo developing center at Target. In nine months of living at the house, I never paid rent. Food, I bought the food. Wealthy parents, do not ignore your curious food, obsessed daughters. I've had a fixation with food forever. But what was really fun about an account at the grocery store, I would buy cameras. Hundreds of disposable cameras. Brian developed them for free. The documentation for the time is incredible. Close to a thousand photos still live in my attic, all from the graduating class of 2003 and 2005.

What is different about these photos from a cloud bank of photos? Paper. These are photos from a group. It's not a couple. It's not selfies. It's a group of kids. Day by day, going through a Minnesota winter. What is really special about some men, they never get jealous. Brian is one of these men. He will introduce a guy to his girlfriend with confidence. Wrath and anger channeled in the healthiest of manners. Punk rock. To this day, he knows some of the most remarkable people you have ever met. His girlfriend is cooler than him. We are still best friends.

"Ymmit!!!!"

"AYA, AYA, AYA, Mo-Nay - AYA, AYA, AYA." Tim would holler from the top of the stairs. He was so hard to ignore, the sparkle in his eye as they moved around a room. "Timmy!!!! Do you have a lighter?" I'm standing on the 3 season porch, sliding glass door wide open. "For you, la senorita, I got two." The cigarette pressed between his smiling lips, and the lighter in each hand ignited. "Are we going riding in the morning?" I raise an eyebrow, I don't snowboard with a lot of other people. Spring laps or small hills, can I please have a pair of headphones to tune everyone out and amuse you with my nature snow glide



dance? “Yeah, I have qualifying runs in the first half of the morning.” It’s amazing to me how normal men are about girls whose families don’t pay attention to them. He inquired, “Are your mom and dad coming?” I can remember the texture of the floor, berber oatmeal-looking ropes, so I assume my head was down. “My mom will be there. Dad, I dunno, I hope so. He got me a new snowboard for Christmas, but he’s only seen me snowboard a few times.” His eyes did that thing, glittery, looking directly into yours. “You snowboard like that, and your dad doesn’t know?” I paused. “No, I swept my age bracket last year. He’s seen it a few times.”

I placed first for the second year in every event. My ego allowed me to think I was satisfactory at the sport enough to enter competition. Never really understanding why I wanted to compete, what it would lead to. I compared myself to the young men’s classes, concerning myself with going fast enough to lose control and recover as fast as possible. It was Bemidji, and it was difficult for me to take it seriously when I knew there were mountains. Genders and age brackets didn’t concern me. We all sucked as far as I was concerned. At the event, never let them win. At home, sure, fine, whatever, just don’t drink and drive. Larger playing fields was what I was really after. This transition, going back to regular highschool, pushed me out of the isolation of an entirely digital world, leading me to a group of philosophers and becoming one myself.

“If you’re wondering how discussions about Nietzsche, last-minute booze runs, and wrestling car keys away from a would-be drunk driver all add up to ‘philosophical insight,’ just remember: in the grand scheme, you’re basically Socrates with a fake ID, tirelessly questioning the universe—one questionable party decision at a time.” Lilu Dallas, Multipass.

Philosophical inquiry is easier with alcohol, however the abundance of oxygen within the body is necessary for intelligence. Self propelled movement outside is awesome.

## Victuals

### Chocolate & Butterscotch Pudding Preserved Salpicon

We made wap, which is a fruity drink with alcohol, this one is a recovery beverage and snack. Both of these can be preserved by portioning in jars and using a canning process of submerging in boiling water for 20 minutes.

### Salpicon SOSA (Save our sorry asses)

Not quite a fruit cocktail, not quite a pickle. 300% of your daily value of magnesium and chloride.

2 lbs of frozen tropical fruit  
1 vanilla bean, 1 star anise, ½ teaspoon of cloves, and other pickle or mulling spices of your liking.  
(Suggestion: use what you have, cloves, peppercorns, orange peel, ginger, lemons, raisins.)  
4 oz vinegar (we use apple cider with the mother)  
4 Tablespoons of honey or ¼ cup sugar.  
1 Tablespoon salt  
Trace Minerals magnesium supplement

Put everything in a bowl, and cover in plastic wrap for two days or until bubbly when tasted. Add anything necessary for taste ie more salt. Remember it will get stronger as it ages in the jar. Spoon into 16 oz jar with a canning funnel, use liquid to cover the fruit, and add one dropper of magnesium to each jar. Leave ½ inch at the brim of the jar. Cover with lids tightly, load in a canner, and boil for 20 minutes.

### Chocolate Pudding

Ernest Hemingway left summer camp and went to school. These are equally fashionable in small glass jars called Pote Creme as well as small ½ pint deli containers and “Snackpack.” Are you a Snack Pack or Pote Creme? Who’s philosophy?

6 cup bowl or mold or five 6 ounce ramekin. I keep mine in a 1 quart ball jar, this gives me one heavy portion to the chef left out of the jar. 😊

½ cup of milk  
4 oz unsweetened chocolate, chopped  
1 teaspoons of salt

Melt the chocolate by heating a ½ cup of milk, stir into the chocolate, melting it. Add salt and stir.

Keep this mixture warm on the stove, we need the chocolate melted to mix in.

3 1/2 cups milk  
6 Tablespoons cornstarch  
1 cup sugar

Mix the cornstarch and milk together in a mason jar shaking it to emulsify the cornstarch. In a heavy bottomed saucepan, mix together the sugar and milk mixture. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly until bubbles start to form, plop plop type bubbles, not the little simmer milk bubbles. Continue until thick, cooking for at least one minute with plop plop bubbles. Stir in chocolate mixture and a tablespoon of vanilla. If the mixture becomes loose, slightly reduce. Remember this will congeal as it cools.

## Butterscotch Pudding

6 cup bowl or mold or five 6 ounce ramekin. I keep mine in a 1 quart ball jar, this gives me one heavy portion to the chef left out of the jar. Inverted caramel we are calling butterscotch. Caramel is usually a process of heating sugar and butter to temperature and adding cream. This is a challenging technique and making something like this should be approachable for any stoner that has brown sugar, butter, milk, cream and cornstarch.

All in one pot - for the caramel

6 tablespoons butter,  $\frac{2}{3}$  cups packed dark brown sugar, 1 teaspoon salt, 1 teaspoon vanilla and 1

cup of creme. Heat on low until sugar is dissolved and starts to resemble a sauce. Note - this will congeal as it cools. Set aside.

3 cups of milk, 6 tablespoons of cornstarch,

Mix the cornstarch and milk together in a mason jar shaking it to emulsify the cornstarch. In a heavy bottomed saucepan, mix together the sugar and milk mixture. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly until bubbles start to form, plop plop type bubbles, not the little simmer milk bubbles. Continue until thick, cooking for at least one minute with plop plop bubbles. Stir in butterscotch mixture and a tablespoon of vanilla. If the mixture becomes loose, slightly reduce. Remember this will congeal as it cools.

# Existentialist

## *Hi-Fidelity*

August 22nd, 2004. Camus would call it an “ordinary day,” but I sense a hidden edge. “William, do you see that?” I am looking out the eight-by-ten massive picture window overlooking Lake Beltrami at my parents’ house. There is a man standing on the deck, staring at me. “See what?” he responded with a voice but continued watching *Saturday Night Live*. “The guy standing on the deck.” I’m over here, clenched like a fist, shocked he doesn’t see, hear, or feel this guy’s prying eyes. My nervous system was in overhaul, like an out-of-tune guitar chord thrumming in my nerves. “No,” He looked at the window, “There’s a guy standing there?” dumbfounded, he glanced at the deck. “Where? I can’t see him. I believe you, but no, I can’t see him.” I continued to stare back at the guy, scanning his clothing and looking at him. “He’s been there for at least five minutes. I’ve been watching the clock above the TV.” My face was getting hot, and I was getting more concerned as the guy stared back. At that moment, I felt the absurd hush of being watched, an existential crisis for the 21st century. How long had he been standing there before I saw him? How did he get there?

William responded “What do you want to do about it?”, noting how upset I am by whatever he cannot see on the other side of the curtain. He’s the Sartre to my Simone, calmly noting my anxiety. “Let’s wait five more minutes. He knows I can see him, that I know he’s there.” I feel hair-raising and sweat-beading, beyond confused at this guy. My only thought is to look at his eyes. He looks like he’s on drugs. “Is he still there?” William is now concerned. “Yes, he’s still standing there.” I looked at his hands, trying to divert my attention. “Should we call the cops?” The show is over and he’s still just standing there watching us.

“Lock the sun porch?” Off the side of the living room is a sunroom that leads to the pool and the wrap-around deck for the whole house. Standing up, I saw Will glance at the gun cabinet, he was locking the door. I shook my head. He locked five doors and 10 windows on the way downstairs. Amidst my panic on the phone, he sat, leaning on the couch, holding the green bottle of beer, looking for my next move. He worried about what was next, knowing the particles were spinning and breaking. The sheriff drove in silently with the lights off. It took less than three minutes to find him, lying down, covered in leaves and brush to hide himself. He stood up, I could see him from the window, and hear him from the radio on the sheriff’s shoulder. “I’m looking for my dog.” The sheriff arrested him and called his wife, “The dog has been in the garage this whole time.”

September 2003, “Does the coffee cup have a soul, Monaya?” The question he asked me every morning after he kissed my forehead. Waking up in a tiny twin bed in Canada. Never thinking about what we did or didn’t have, how big the bed was, if the next meal together was fine dining, or a greasy spoon cafe with the best chicken noodle soup ever. This person’s conversations could actually hold my interest. His jokes were subtle, with a dollop of intelligence. He’d quote Leonard Cohen lyrics at 2 AM, bridging music and philosophy like it was normal. His suggestions about life were soft while showing me some of the most interesting moments of life.

He wore a suit to his classes in college. Taking courses in statics physics, classical guitar, and different languages to translate philosophical texts. William would ask me philosophical questions without me noticing, sliding in references to Kierkegaard between love songs, where do the thoughts come from? They just appear. These conversations would take place any time of day, at any event. This man would attend the ballet alone and go on shopping excursions to buy Valentine’s Day gifts for his girlfriend. His authenticity for romanticism shown in extremely small gestures like genuine candid conversations about life’s uncomfortable questions to grandiose gestures like looking for an event he could take me in a ball gown. Our relationship saturated with the gaiety of alcohol.

In the fall of 2003, William took off for college in Canada, I spent my weekends with him, the rest

of the week, with a bunch of tipsy ladies. I had applied to start college the next semester and until then I did random things like tile my bathroom and play with engineering software, html, and downloaded music. Music, the refuge from existential dread, a headphone sanctuary. At that point, I could have made scores for films. I was 17 and had enough music to not hear the same song more than once for 23 days. He took music just as seriously and would introduce me Motown and music of the 1970-80's that wasn't played at my house. Softer versions of American Rock and Roll, Electric Light Orchestra, Carole King, and The Beach Boys. Folk like Leonard Cohen, Cat Stevens, and enough Bob Dylan to not hear the same concert twice played 24 hours a day for two weeks.

William didn't talk about how capable he is with computer programs. When I started college it was easy to take it seriously, I had this man next to me studying statics. An introduction to learning physics backwards, for me is easier than trying to understand an equation. He explained to me this class's equations had one answer, zero. As in holding the weight of a house, building, or very large sedentary object. He would try to explain a concept to me, I would ask for a real-life application. Like an equal sign, an understanding without the use of advanced calculations would come to life.

It was 2 AM in the spring of 2004, and we were almost out of wine. After months of spending every weekend in Canada, it was the first time I had spent some time with my girlfriends in Minnesota...Until I got a call from a payphone. There would be two calls I would get from that payphone that I would never forget. The ringtone assigned to William was Stewie from Family Guy. I look down, smiling every time I hear it. "Will! It's late. I didn't expect to hear from you tonight. What's up, are you okay?" Standing outside next to my best home girl. She smiles at me, reveling in my aura of love. Like an observation of a rock melting. She always smiles all quirky at me when I am soft, making me feel even more awkward. The hardest girl in the world has a warm heart occasionally, and William saw the rare shooting star.

"My mom is driving up tomorrow. I want her to get to know you." His voice, slightly nervous in asking. He knows I'm shy and deeply concerned about the impression that will form in her mind about me. I picture him sitting at that little payphone by the front door of the 9-bedroom house for international students. His hands running through his long brown hair, him touching his beard. "In Canada? I thought she was bringing you home today, I mean tomorrow." I'm baffled as to the idea of going up there at 2 AM to meet her at 9 AM. "Yes, she's supposed to meet me, but I want to be there and go to that place we love and eat with her." He doesn't have to say the spot. I know what he's talking about instantly. The spot where both of you ate until you had to use the toilets and then sat there, eating more. That meal was one of the longest of my life and most memorable, with two sets of desserts. "Fude?" I respond with eyes lighting up.

"Yeah, I wanted to get you guys chocolate cake." He was half-laughing, half-serious—chocolate suicide cake, our existential sweet tooth. I can feel the corners of my mouth curl up into a grin. My noodle starts to cook. "So you want me to get in the car now and get there before Mary?" I look at my watch, up at my homegirl, and then at my black Camry. "Yes, please. I'll sleep downstairs waiting for ya." I sigh, "Okay, I'll see you in three hours."

My best friend standing next to me; her jaw dropped, and she started shaking her head. She could hear the whole conversation. "You're going to drive to Canada?" She exclaims. "Yeah." No emotion to the response, only an 'I have to, I love him' look. "Right now?" She is questioning my logic. I saw it as a question of heart. There is no question in my heart. Will was beyond the best thing that had happened to me at that point in my life. Insecurity, ironically, was overshadowed by devotion, a scene from a forbidden opera. "Yes, I'm going to drive up there to be with him." my response was extra firm this time. Drawing a boundary on the wine she is trying to procure from me. "Why would you do that? It's just stupid. You could meet him down here tomorrow." She is pouting, upset that I could choose love over friendship. My future potential husband over her. "Because he asked me to. And I love him, and in my life, finding someone that makes me feel that way is very rare. I hope you find it."

She started with protest. "We have been drinking; you should just stay and open another bottle of wine." I walked away from her, saying nothing as I got in my car and drove away. The border felt closer, but that was probably because it was closed. It wasn't my first rodeo. Turning right, adding on an extra hour, crossing over the border without even the need to drop the window at customs. Steinbeck, Canada, one hour from my destination. It was three or four years before the iPhone came out; this was a no-GPS, no-problem moment. The temperature gauge in the Camry read  $-27^{\circ}$  Fahrenheit. Confidently pushing on with a snowboard and many layers of warmth in the back seat. The bend was sharp, slowing down involuntarily like a chicane. I watched the rear quarter panel, gas cover in sight over my shoulder. "What the..." quietly fell out. "Control, gas Monaya! Don't take your foot off the gas!" yelling command prompts like my car can understand me.

Waiting for the spin to grip, turning in, maintaining control on the gas pedal, but slowing down. After two miles of distance and 45 miles an hour of momentum, the deer came. One, swerve, two swerve, three swerve. There were six more. Weaving, I see the gas tank cover again. My eyes follow the back end around. Like a creature flying off a cliff, clawing at the dirt on the edge. The Camry descending into a 40 foot ditch. I sat there for a few minutes, looking around. The white dress, prom, dance follies. A light bulb went off, and my prom date on shrooms tuned in. "Monaya, I can lift the Geo Prism. Remember when I drove it down that huge ditch and got out?" Talking out loud with him while I sat in the car that night, I replied, "Yeah, strong motivation that bag of weed was." The Camry is filled with laughter. "Yeah, but I got out. GO, go now." My eyes close, he's gone.

Here I am, on my way to meet my potential mother-in-law. Our day-to-day life with this person is filled with Bob Dylan and Neil Young movies at the independent theater. Subzero walks through Canada, dressed in our finest to see a prepared pianist. Hegel and Heidegger texts on his side of the bed, Sontag and Lacan on mine. As if reading them while tipsy is normal. Look up prepared pianist, Hegel, and Heidegger if you are a young one reading this. Meanwhile this man would dance to Britney Spears with me in a club called the Au (gold) Bar. I remember him calling me a week before, from the same phone. I can see him there in my mind. Sitting on that bar stool in the booth. "I just got off the phone with my dad, he has cancer." His voice shook and in two years of us being best friends and countless long conversations. this voice was new. "I want to listen to the high fi." Our code for cuddle, mush, and be close. A week later, sitting in that ditch thinking about that phone call...

No way am I freezing to death in this ditch. Dropping the auto transmission into reverse. Gunned, floored, over the moon does not explain the movement. I didn't know the gas peddle would flip back up with that kind of force. Moving thirty-ish feet of snow, surveying the ground to make sure nothing was going to tear a line off the car. This was going to be a circus trick. Working each gear slowly, first for grip, second to transition, and third for speed, dropping it back to first as I broach the steep bank on the ditch. Tires spinning, snow flying, the little black Camery was climbing. The pavement grabbed me and pulled me over the wall with a force of a marine. It was  $-29^{\circ}$  Farienheight as I stood there, pounding on the door for twenty minutes. Rachel came to the door, a woman from England "Here, let's get you Will. He fell asleep waiting for you." I walked into the little living room with the big leather couches; he sat up, blinking with a hazy smile. "Were you at the door?" I crawl in, him instantly melting into my lap, me curving my body around him for support, "Yeah, for a while. You okay?" With a long sigh, he responds, "I am now." Dropping further into the leather couch, he wraps around me, still halfway sleeping. "Get up, Will. We gotta go upstairs. Mary can't find us like this." I fidget until he is standing, poking him gently up the stairs.

I cleaned his room that morning while he spent time with his mother. During lunch, I start to notice a much faster pace from him. His mother asks what the two of you do in Canada every weekend. We did way too much drinking. And meanwhile, between brown and gold drinks, encounter some incredible culture. Crossing the planes of Manitoba going south to Minnesota, he explained to me how an environmental change affects his mood. That conversation and the idea that what surrounds you

could deeply effect mood to this day is part of my philosophy in life. He looked at me, with a please accept this look, "I'm vaulting into mania. I can feel it." Finishing the conversation about his bipolar disorder in his small media room, the walls brick red, ceilings white, until the sun comes in and turns it a shade of very pale pink. This person's mental health disorder was like a notorious alter ego. This was talked about in his circle of friends. He would drink heavily in comparison to his already rambunctious habit. Watching cartoons and drinking whiskey with a guitar or book in hand.

"It will throw you off a cliff if you don't watch it. See this?" He held out a bottle of Evan Williams, putting his arm around the TV like a friend. "You wanna listen to the high fi and watch cartoons? I probably shouldn't go anywhere." We kind of stopped talking to everyone together. Spending hours sitting in his orchid collection under his desk, watching the walleye in the tank while he beat the original Mario Brothers before the Electric Light Orchestra vinyl had to be flipped. Completely satisfied with each other's company, talking candidly about anything, he was always one step ahead of me with an answer to a question to make me think enough to answer my own question.

I caught him in the bathroom one day. It was so warm under the heat lamps his dad put in. It smelled like my grandmother's house. "Will, does it ever bother you that your parents didn't do that thing?" Sitting on the double sink countertop while he was in the shower. "What thing?" Peeking his head around the corner of the shower curtain. "Circumcised you." I'm looking at the floor awkwardly, genuinely curious about this process. He's smiling at me. "Oh, when I asked my mom, she said, 'I thought you were perfect, exactly as you are.'" Without missing a beat, his shampooing continued. "Is that real?" I respond. "Go ask her. I'm sure she will tell you all about it. Have a good laugh. I will when she talks to me about it."

I thought out loud, "Huh if your mom thinks you are perfect the way you are when you are born, life might be completely different." He just kept smiling. If people want to watch your romantic affair unfold, chances are, it's beyond real. It's magic. His mother stood in the kitchen watching us at the dinner table. "Do you want lingolin or blackberry on your crapes?" He is cooking Valentine's Day dinner. She is still there, a beaming smile in the middle of it. She is saying nothing, just observing. Standing up from the table, I watched the red wine-colored carpet embrace his black socks as they ascend the stairs, disappearing into the long carpet shard like squishy soil.

Upon return, he has a box in his hand. "Close your eyes and put your arms up." Startled, an automatic response, "What?" I do what I am told. "Keep em closed!" I can hear a zipper zip. I felt slippery material come over my hair and arms; it felt constraining, the zipper noise next to my ear now, his hand moving with it. "Here, come with me, eyes still closed!" He takes my hand and leads me into the music room with the long mirror above the piano. "Open them."

There I am, staring back. I had a red Cheongsam on. My mouth drops. "Oh wow. It fits really well." I couldn't stop looking at it; he couldn't stop looking at me. "Yes, it does. I told them at the store I couldn't wait to see it on you. They said it would fit perfect, and it does!" ....Part of the attraction the two of you share is an obsession with nostalgia, philosophy, and attaching meaning to life within legacy and generation. His lifestyle and family allowed this to happen. The backyard had a DeSoto under a tarp, some sort of model A or T, and the Lincoln Continental Mark 4.

"Move closer. The seat is huge." The 1974 seats like white gloves, still clean, but the smell of life hung in this thing like tassels from the visor. The white interior was still so white. "Will it isn't even the one with suicide doors." He shakes his head at me. "Always so critical." We were wrapped together, completely horizontal, splayed end to end, arms extended, fingers interlocked with each other. I watch his caterpillar brow above his eye reshape half a triangle. "It's the one with a bump on the trunk, Monaya. it's the one that started the bump on the trunk." My eyes are closed, I can smell his hair, and I shutter for a second, "Was that a tree snap?" The caterpillars moved again. "Sit up." Sleeping there, he is rolling over as the pages turn, startled, sitting up when liquid hits the windshield. There is chicken shit everywhere from his pet chickens roosting in the tree above us.

The day the Lincoln quit at the busiest intersection in town. Slow motion, twisting, jaw agape. All I could see was the caterpillars, screaming as I drove by. He was film noir sitting in a chair that night. The moon beams across his lap, the wool cables like steel on his shoulders slumped over. He sat in the dark alone, not reading. "Why didn't you stop? I needed you." He is quiet. "I didn't think you wanted me to." My eyes welled up, and he held onto my shoulders, peering into my eyes with great intent. Wine-colored carpet wrapped around both black and white gold-toed socks now. "Why would you think that?" His brown eyes have mine completely fixed. I couldn't look away. "I don't know." To this day, I still don't know why. Both of us breathing in sync, embraced, his head on your shoulder, "Monaya, what if I told you, even when you make a mistake, you can still turn around and go back? Would you go?" Months after the breakup, Brian, our mutual best friend, called to watch Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy and drink beers. Opening the front door, six-pack in hand, I saw Will. Quickly, I made a U-turn at the stair banister and ran. Standing on the front steps, I caught my breath. I could not control the volume of my voice. Doing my best to explain this visual reaction, I was screaming at Brian trying to control my voice.

"Why didn't you say he was gonna be here?! I can't, Brian, you know I can't..." The heat from my head started to steam from the cold outside. His huge blue eyes have those glasses on. "I didn't think it was that big of a deal." His hand was on my shoulder, I was bent over, hands on knees, about to puke. Two years later, it's Christmas time. Will and I are both drunk in a bar called Hardtimes, bending down to look directly into my eyes. He is yelling while I am glancing over his shoulder, trying not to look into his eyes. "A bunch of us are going to the studio to hang out. Come over?" Reluctantly but excited, I agreed.

Parking outside the music studio, I stared above me into the tree we would lay under in the Lincoln Mark 4 and watch the chickens roost, joking about poop for a few minutes. "Here, we go." I left as fast as I could. That was the last time I saw him in 2006.

Dear William,

Given what I know about philosophy, physics, computer science, and that question you asked me about the matrix... The cup and the soul. Interchangeable.

Monaya M. MaGaurin



Chef's are philosophers, not the other way around.

### Strawberry Spinach Salad

He could speak Greek, but this recipe is not.  
If you need to interchange it with something  
Greek, add feta.

One bunch of spinach cleaned and stemmed  
(baby spinach is my favorite)  
Sliced Strawberries  
Parmesan cheese

### Honey Garlic Butter Croutons

Three cups of cheerios,  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup of butter, 2  
tablespoons of honey,  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp salt, 1 heaping tbl  
spn of garlic. Heat everything except bread  
together until you can smell the garlic and the  
honey is runny, pour over croutons, toss, pour  
onto a parchment cookie sheet, and bake at 250  
for 30 minutes, shake the tray and finish for  
another ten minutes.

### Black Pepper Balsamic Toasted Honey Vinaigrette

2 tablespoons honey (reduced until  
amber-colored)  
 $\frac{1}{3}$  cup Balsamic Vinegar  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup Olive Oil  
1 tablespoon black pepper  
1 tablespoon garlic  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp Dijon mustard  
1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce

Reserve five slices of strawberry and a sprinkle  
of cheese. Put everything else in a bowl and  
toss. Sprinkle with cheese and strawberries.

This salad is excellent when topped with wild  
game or fish.

## Tyler Durdan is Not as Cool as Keelan

### *Political Science*

March 11th, 2005. (Cue David Byrne's voice asking, "Well, how did I get here?") Have you ever had an adventure and never left the house? That's what happened when I drove up that driveway. Boulder on the right, watch out, and gun it when I get to the weird turn with the hill. The car stuck in the snow, from the couch, I watched more snow bury my Camry at the bottom of the hill. The Maxima wasn't going anywhere either. Not the worst place to be snowed in. As I surveyed the white blanket, my mind revealed the yard under it: lumps of landscaping plants, rocks, and water features. I'd been here for months. David Byrne is always asking me, "Well, how did I get here?"

He approached me after our International Politics class, "Hi, um, I saw you...Monaya, right?" My tone and approach were entirely direct; I was trying to get ahead, not waste time on men after William. "Yeah, what's up?" Short, to the point. We're walking out of the academic hall at our university. "You got a smoke?" This man looks like a very slim version of Brad Pitt and cares far less about looking cool. Like meeting Seriously, it's pretty tough to be cooler than Brad Pitt, but instead of spouting off about credit card companies, the disdain of minimum wage, or working long hours, he would spout facts about terrorism in the middle east and monotheistic religion statistics. His senior thesis proved that there are more acts of terrorism where religious fundamentalism was present. His depth of emotion in life spanning the film careers of men that inspired Brad Pitt. I mention this likeness to Brad Pitt, as Keelan has excellent taste in films. This is the guy that introduced me to *Dr Strangelove* and *How I Learned to Love the Bomb*, the only Kubrick film I hadn't seen. [Film Analysis Here](#)

We walked outside, standing far from the fresh air intake. Sunny, warm days in late March, heaps of melting snow, dripping behind me. "You're Monaya, right? Did you grow up on Wildwood Road?" His eyebrows move faster than most people's, and he has very long limbs. "Yes, sir." I didn't let on that I knew exactly who he was—five years older, we rode the bus together, and I'd never forget his weird comments about my vagina back in the day. (A memory I'd once considered beyond bizarre, back when I didn't even know what half those words meant.)

Third-grade Monaya blinked at him, mouth shut. Now, years later, he looks away, still talking: "I think, well, I said something to you that I deeply regret. I had older brothers who said stuff, and I didn't know what it meant." Genuine shame. He holds out his hand, "Keelan." His crystal-blue eyes meet mine—apologetic, also a touch of *I promise I'm more interesting than you recall*. I tried not to roll my eyes, but I did respect that he remembered and carried it for as long as I did. "Yeah, I know. It took me a long time to figure it out, and I got in trouble for it... Wow, I haven't thought about it in ten years or so." I look at the lake, sunlight sparkling on white snow.

I'm heading to my car, he's following, parallel to me. "Um, want to come over and smoke a bowl at my house?" I stop, raise an eyebrow. "Where do you live?" My face remains neutral, eyes fixed on him, waiting. "North. Follow me?" I nod. Both our cars are parked near the performing arts building—his white Maxima tears out, hugging the lake until the golf course. A dirt road to his house is like a rally course for two blond kids in Japanese economy cars. It's a riot to see a guy who barely speaks, pull the e-brake for a hairpin turn into his driveway.

He's blond, tall, tan, skinnier than me, and when he talks, it's reminiscent of Tyler Durdan from *Fight Club*—yet with more random knowledge, the conviction of (hard-earned nonfiction). He's in front of me, tidying as he goes, rambling about his dog. "My dog is... well, if he bothers you, let me know. Duuuuuke! He's a black lab-pug, just... weird about women." He says "women" with a slightly different tone, which intrigues me. I'm twenty years old. For the first time, a guy calls me a "woman" without referencing some milestone. "Will you say that again?" I turn around; he spins fast, confused. "What, 'women'?" He repeats, "Wheman," flaring his eyebrows. I realize he's noticing how my mind picks up

details, and he's amused. A week later, our dogs are basking in the sun—my min pin Elizabeth on the back of the couch, his pug-lab Duke in a corner, glaring. I'm pouring coffee while he stands there shirtless in brown corduroy pants, bare feet at the kitchen window, smoking. He references last night's dinner conversation: "I just can't believe it. You've never had pancetta? You call yourself a chef, and never had pancetta?" I'm lying on the rug under the coffee table, doing random yoga stretches. "I never said I was a chef, I said I like food. I know what it is, I've just never eaten it." The sunlight beams across the blonde, wide-plank hardwood. "We're having pancetta and goat cheese mac and cheese for dinner. I'll see you at six." Sitting on the black tile countertop, coffee to my lips, ignoring that he's smoking inside this beautiful house.

I'm not sure if my forehead is deeply appealing or what, but he does that same forehead-kiss thing Will used to do, which kind of annoys me. He's a political science major, too; we share classes. That morning, we race to International Politics with Beech—my seat two rows in front of his. We'd parted ways earlier: I'd hustled to my apartment, still humming Robert Plant, bounding up the stairs, jumping into the shower for two minutes, back down, hopped to the car, pulling into a reserved spot. The function within our little world was incredible.

Mid-class, thirty-five minutes in, I hear the door: click snap click. Footsteps behind me. Rrrrrhhhhcrrrrrh, the scrape of him yanking the chair out. I scoff, sigh, smirk, leaning back. The next I see him is when everyone's packing up. I stand, glance left, and before he speaks, I say, "I'll see you later," and exit. Scene.

Walking between buildings, my phone rings—perfect timing for a rare signal among all this brick. It's Dad's number. "Hey, Dad, what's up?" He's upbeat: "Hey Honey, what are you doing? Can you come look at this house..." He's got that get-it-done tone, pushy. I'm annoyed—I'm in school. He knows it's a chore for me to focus. "A house? I just got out of class, have class in ten minutes, can I come after?" He recants, rewinds. "Yeah, it's near school. A repossession—super cool, built in 1932. Will you meet me? The address is..." He rattles it off. I wonder what he's planning—am I working on it or something? "Sure, I'll see you in an hour." He adds, "Park in the alley, you gotta see the backyard. White picket fence." I'm confused but keep calm: "Okay." He says it's for me. I'm floored.

Dad's standing there, puffing a white line in the air—a little ghost always following him. He's looking at the slushy ground. "Yep, \$67,000." I see the half-circle worn where the gate scraped, "Hey, Honey. Just go inside, I'll be right behind you." It's February, softball-sized lumps of snow and ice fill the yard. I'm already playing hopscotch with river stones leading to the door. Opening it, I don't know what to think...

Kitchen is painted monochromatic masking-tape blue, except for a century's worth of food storage. White cabinets with dingy prints, at least ten years of living caked on them. I picture prior owners rummaging around. I pry open a cabinet door—someone took all the knobs—and a sprinkle of cereal boxes, half empty, toppling out. "Well, that's different. Wonder what happened to this handle." The entire kitchen is a wading pool of bright tape-blue. Dad's cruising around, checking infrastructure, beaming with excitement.

"Dad!" I called. Instantly, he's there. "Yes, Monaya." "What's this?" pointing at an arched inlay by the fireplace, no deeper than six inches, no wider than eight, no taller than twelve, with a custom-cut piece of wood. "That's where the phone goes. Everything here is original from 1932. Come see this." I linger, imagining some *A River Runs Through It* vibe. The wood spiral staircase in the house center is a helix with a window at the landing, the treads red with black steps. The tan plaster shows only one crack in eighty years. Floors are gray—finish worn off. Dad is thrilled: "There's a coal shoot! Come check this out!" He hunts for the string with a gold bell at the end, "Where's the light..." We both stand in a little room, the door swinging shut, spending two hours in that coal shoot. We do find the light after about twenty minutes, feeling around the ceiling for a bare bulb. The doorknob falls off like a dropped scoop of ice cream. We stand there, father and daughter, talking or not talking. I sense his worry, investing in

me—pocketbook and beyond. “Will Keelan help you with the work? He’s a good builder.” My dad references an old friend of ours. I protest about costs. “Yes, I’ll help you with money, but will he help you?” I want to please him. Unsure if Keelan would do it, but I reply, “Yeah, I think he’d be excited.” So that’s how I bought my first house.

I let Keelan loose in there, giving him color ideas, a style I imagined. He took the lead, balancing his own school workload and renovation. He redid the floors. I never even saw an invoice in detail—piled in that phone nook, my dad presumably picking them up. Keelan told me in class one morning the floors were finished, including the stairs. It was an incredible experience, a dramatic gesture of my love language. He sees spaces with the function of humans in them, empathizing with their comfort. If you point it out, he’s confused—like *isn’t this how everyone thinks?*

I moved in spring 2006, spending less time with Keelan as I turned twenty-one. He had a crutch to this reality—knowing no matter how he improved, it’s still the human experience. He could drink a liter of alcohol and give a political speech that’d overshadow a presidential candidate, with sincerity. With him, I was sober and productive but confused about emotional connection. My friends were fully into partying, faking normalcy in complex mental loads.

Keelan said nothing about my partying, and didn’t attend my 21st birthday with friends. I didn’t grasp it, but now I do. He never told me he missed me. If he had, maybe things would have differed. He let me be me. Our connection was natural, maybe I didn’t ask him enough how he was doing. I recall times I asked, but never pried if he clammed up.

One night, his birthday after I turned twenty-one: I remember arriving with dinner stuff and a helium balloon. It was my first time seeing him under the influence. I just wanted him to eat. He was more interested in telling me stories about my dad. He’d done some construction for a highway patrolman, a family friend, who asked if he was dating. He mentioned me, and the officer recognized my dad, talking about how Dad would try bribing an officer to get out of a DWI. Keelan was two bottles of wine deep, pushing food around on his plate, not malicious toward me but dropping truths that stung a freshly 21-year-old me. Tipping the second bottle upside down at the sink, licking the last drops, he says, “You’re gonna drive me to the store?” Shirtless, smiling. I shook my head. “I can’t do that.” He’s playful. “Will you take me out, then?” That look in his eyes made me feel obliged. “One. I’ll get you one, then bringing you home.”

He’s out of the car before I’m parked at the Irish pub. As we walk in, I ask what he wants: “Seven and seven.” Like it’s 1988, I think, but fine.) I offer other drinks; he hisses, “SEVEN—SEVEN!” quietly insistent. I’m at the bar ordering, his hand on my back. I turn and see him notice a guy we both know—but Keelan’s had more experience. I hand him his drink, he gulps. The guy tries small talk, Keelan’s eyes roam the room, ignoring him. It’s working until the guy approaches a woman. A mutual friend tries to buffer. Keelan, hammered, addresses the woman: “Hey, hey, girl—do you know who this guy is?” She ignores the wasted handsome man. I cringe, waiting for a punch line. He says, “Yo—you don’t get it, he snorts coke off hookers’ ass cracks.” The guy’s face pales. He’s not insulted, just mortified that Keelan remembers. Keelan continues, “He came to my parents’ house for a party when I was fifteen, brought hookers and blow, forced me to snort coke off her ass. I didn’t want to...” He tears up, I link arms and pull him outside. We stand in the gated courtyard, him still reeling, talking about how messed up it was.

I want him in the car; he wants more bars. I refuse, threatening to leave him downtown. He runs north, shirtless in the cold, I drive beside him, he’s spouting half-sense. Passing my house, he drops his shirt on the lawn. I toss it in my car, following him to a friend’s house, where he yanks the locked door open. Doesn’t hesitate, breaks in, smashing walls, screaming about teenage trauma. My arms go around his freezing body. I call his mother, whom I’ve never met. She’s relieved, says she can be there in twenty minutes if I keep him safe. It’s twenty of the longest minutes, me coaxing him to talk instead of run. He’s pawing at me, but I don’t mind—I just want him safe. She arrives, wraps him up: “You okay? What

happened?” It’s reminiscent of how my mom fusses—lots of questions, few I-love-yous. The way you make a child independent. He called me in the morning to pick him up, I was glad he did that. His resilience within intelligence still influences me to this day.

Keelan graduated a year before I did. We both planned for law school. His father was a lawyer. He’d walk in and out of law school on the same day, later have his brand-new car rear-ended, then vanish to Alaska. I wouldn’t see him for years, just glimpses on Facebook, handsome photos of him raising a son alone. If you meet someone silently speaking your love language...someone blasting it so loud you shut it off...start talking about the uncomfortable stuff. You’re already talking about it, reroute it.

The dark is a learning curve. When you find a flash light, hold it out.

## KB's snowden menu

Chevre and Pancetta Mac and Cheese  
Dasher Roasted Broccoli  
Ginger beer and turmeric black pepper  
Semifreddo Float  
Blackberry Clafoutis

### Dasher Roasted Broccoli

2 Crowns of Broccoli clipped into 1-inch pieces  
2 TBS oil of choice (melt if using coconut)  
Pour oil over broccoli on a parchment-lined sheet tray, dust with 2 TBS seasoning. Toss to coat.  
Roast at 375°F for ~20 minutes or until slightly charred (don't overcook).

Mrs. Dash Seasoning  
1½ tsp cayenne pepper  
3 tbsp garlic powder  
1 tbsp onion powder  
1 tbsp black pepper  
1 tbsp basil  
1 tbsp parsley  
1 tbsp marjoram  
1 tbsp thyme  
1 tbsp sage  
1 tbsp savory  
1 tsp–1 tbsp mace  
zest of 1 small lemon

Ginger Beer Floats:  
Turmeric Black Pepper Semifreddo  
90 g egg yolks (4 eggs)  
90 g sugar  
180 g heavy whipping cream (2 cups)  
1 TBS turmeric  
1 tsp black pepper

*(Refer to page 8 for semifreddo methodology.)*

Use ginger beer of your choice. If out, but you have ginger, sugar, and club soda, grate a 1-inch nob of ginger into 1 cup sugar and ½ cup water, boil 5 minutes, strain. Mix to taste with club

soda. Place two scoops or molded semifreddo into a chilled glass or mug, pour ginger beer over, garnish with fresh ground pepper and a dusting of turmeric. If it's summertime, add a garden flower.

### Blackberry Clafoutis

*(Julia's NYT recipe, adapted for those who need to gain weight)*

Ingredients (6–8 servings)  
Butter for pan  
1¼ cups whole or 2% milk Greek yogurt\*  
⅔ cup granulated sugar, divided  
3 eggs  
1 tbsp vanilla extract  
⅛ tsp salt  
1 cup flour  
1 pint (2 generous cups) blackberries (or blueberries), rinsed & well-drained  
Powdered sugar in a shaker

1. Heat oven to 350°F. Lightly butter a medium flameproof baking dish at least 1½ inches deep.
2. Place the milk, ⅓ cup sugar, eggs, vanilla, salt, and flour in a blender. Blend at top speed until smooth and frothy (~1 minute).
3. Pour a ¼-inch layer of batter into the baking dish. Turn on a stove burner to low, set dish on top for a minute or two, until a film of batter sets. Remove from heat.
4. Spread berries, sprinkle on remaining ⅓ cup sugar. Pour the rest of the batter, smooth with a spoon. Bake center of oven ~50 min, until puffed & browned, tester clean.
5. Dust with powdered sugar before serving. It needn't be served hot, but should still be warm—it'll sink slightly as it cools.

## Pancetta & Chèvre Mac and Cheese

(Because sometimes, “what’s in the box?!” needs to be pasta.)

8 ounces pancetta, diced (like the perfectly sculpted features of you-know-who)  
1 pound dry pasta (elbows, shells, or cavatappi—whichever shape you fancy)  
4 tablespoons butter (the entire plot to your creamy sauce)  
4 tablespoons flour (the co-star that thickens the story)  
3½ to 4 cups milk (warm it up so the sauce doesn’t get jump-scared)  
6 ounces cheddar cheese, shredded (sharp or mild—choose your own cinematic flavor)  
4 ounces chèvre (goat cheese), crumbled (the “elevated cameo” that steals the scene)  
½ teaspoon salt (or to taste)  
½ teaspoon black pepper (or to taste)  
¼ teaspoon chili flakes (optional, for a Fight-Club-level kick)  
½ teaspoon of truffle oil (optional, for those that would use Tyler’s soap)  
1 cup graham cracker crumbs

### Directions

1. Sizzle the pancetta. In a medium skillet over medium heat, cook the diced pancetta until it turns crisp and golden, about 6–8 minutes. It’ll release its own oily “star power.” Transfer pancetta to a plate lined with paper towels to drain. Reserve that rendered fat in the pan if you’re feeling extra indulgent.
2. Boil the pasta. Bring a large pot of salted water to a rolling boil. Add your chosen pasta, cooking to *al dente* according to package instructions (like Brad Pitt’s hair—perfectly done, but not overworked). Drain, set aside. *No paparazzi for the pasta, please.*
3. Make the roux. In a large saucepan or pot over medium heat, melt the butter (and if you’re feeling rebellious, you can toss in a spoonful or two of the pancetta drippings). Stir in the flour. Whisk continuously for 1–2 minutes, until the roux looks smoothly combined—no lumps, no lumps. (Here’s looking at you, *Seven*—no lumps, you get the idea.)
4. Build the sauce. Gradually pour in the warm milk, whisking as you go, so the sauce thickens—like a plot that just won’t quit. Let it simmer on medium-low for 5 minutes, stirring so it doesn’t stick. You’re aiming for a sauce that’s *just shy* of the thickness of, say, a cameo-laden heist film. Add salt, pepper, truffle oil and chili flakes if you’d like a hint of mischief.
5. Add cheese. Whisk in the shredded cheddar cheese until melted. Crumble in the chèvre (goat cheese) and keep whisking. Expect a gorgeously tangy, creamy sauce—like a leading actor on an award show night.
6. Reunite pasta & sauce. Toss your cooked pasta right into the sauce, folding gently. Now’s the moment you’ve been waiting for—sprinkle the crisp pancetta on top or stir it right in. Shake the crumbs over the top and toast off under the broiler. Optional garnish: a few extra chèvre crumbles if you want that star-studded cameo effect.
7. Serve with flair. Plate up your mac and cheese in a shallow bowl or casserole dish. Optional: top with toasted breadcrumbs if you want a crunchy supporting role. Invite your friends to devour and debate which is cooler: *Fight Club* references or perfectly cooked pancetta. – *Anthony Bordain (2025)*

### Kitchen Tips

**Cheese Choices** Cheddar plus chèvre is a flavor power couple. If you prefer a cameo from Gruyère or fontina, feel free to improvise—like a cameo-laden ensemble cast in a heist film.

**Spice Level** The chili flakes are optional. If you like your mac with a Tyler Durdan kind of

punch, go for it. If you prefer more of a legends of the fall approach, skip the heat. Enjoy your Pancetta & Chèvre Mac and Cheese—and remember, in the words of a certain famous face: “We’re here to make good mac, and that’s it!” (Disclaimer: Not a direct movie quote—just a spirit-of-the-moment cameo.)



# The Magnificent Mile

*Nix Chicago*

July 12th, 2005. One drop, my tiny vintage tee shirt has separated in the middle of the troll printed on it, leaving the red screen print text “Uffda” intact. Two drops, my arms wrap around my body to keep me warm. It’s the blue hour, and if you are not a photographer, that means nothing to you. The blue hour is just before the golden hour. The light of the sky casts a feeling over me, like a wet tee shirt. The dark clinging to the light, moisture quickly picking up. The Paul Revere statue looks extra coppery right now. The shine of his head like a new penny, his body a green patina like the trunk of a mossy tree. Three drops and the sky opens up. My Puma speed cats take off into the park, up the Frank Gery snake platform across the grass. It’s brushed silver aluminum, and the wood planking is slippery. Pause, the sound here it’s a full downpour now. I see my reflection as I run past the Cloud Gate. A mirror in the shape of a giant bean, upon passing and looking at my reflection, completely distorted or perfect. My mohawk is split, eyeliner streams, tee shirt ripped in half, pinstripe suit pants with bondage rings yet no straps, zippers everywhere, and those Pumas. The phone number still written down my arm in Sharpie marker, and the hospital bands from Tennessee still on. I am free but still stuck in the grid.

Two weeks ago, I made a decision at the advice of a friend. We can carpool, she said. Why would I do that? My car is like my purse. I take it everywhere I go. Leaving the Camry in Chicago while I continued on to Tennessee, its absence was felt. Halfway there, I am looking at my friend with sideways sarcasm. Yeah, good idea, let’s put an extremely private stoner kid in a car with Norma and drive to Tennessee. It’s fine. I can be like Norma for a week, wait, hold on.

Three girls on their way to sell books door to door. Seemed like an adventure I couldn’t pass up. Wrong books, Monaya. While my body reacts like a freak, vomiting uncontrollably. First in Norma’s Aunt’s all-white carpeted Donor’s Grove jacuzzi tub bathroom, and then again later as I step out to headquarters. Welcome to Tennessee. Where it’s a devil’s tampon in July. There are kids spread across the lawn like grazing cows. Here I am, water bottle in hand, my eyes spot security in that tree over there with the leaves moving. The slick trunk and no low branches, I stare back with a look similar to a 5.10 trad climber facing a flat wall with limited cracks to place gear. I think of my buddy on the wall, him encouraging me to explode from my toes, launching and reaching for the next hold for my hand. The smooth soles on the pumas are slightly helpful, but I wedge my foot in the crook of two branches, like a fork in the road. Water bottle secured with one hand. An upside-down swing move later, and I am lounging on a branch like a resting Panther.

My head turns slowly like a cat as I look at the four-story building. A long box set into a rolling hill, covered in black reflective mirror glass. I can see the roof, admiring the weight of the air conditioners. One, two, six, seven, holy shit. Sales school is two weeks long. I am watching the group from the week before practicing their cold pitch in the reflective glass of the building. Repeating the same script over and over, never deviating. There are two guys at the end, interacting, script, impromptu, script, impromptu. It was a tag team pitch. The next day, I learned they each made 110k in commission last summer. Excuse me – “I’ll be right back” running for the toilet. The concept these two young men sold books to educate kids made my stomach upset, the fact they got paid that much to do that, vomit. Back to my branch panther tree.

I let this go on, six women sleeping in my hotel room. Stimulated by the psychological schemes these people selling “educational” books have constructed. Day four, I stand up and see stars. “Sit down Monaya, you might pass out.” A voice exclaims. “Hey, Mills – I need to go to the hospital.” I yelled at my friend that got me into this mess. This morning I looked in the mirror, I’m not just white anymore, but kinda purple and changing shades throughout the day depending on the sun. “Let’s just try to get to sales school and see how you feel there?” She was interested in the social atmosphere, I was ready to go

the second I opened the car door, the ride is over? I stood up, nope right back down. She reluctantly said "Okay, let me talk to some folks, we can go right now."

In the emergency room, thinking about my water bottle. Still sweaty, even with air conditioning. The Doctor looked at me, "What are you doing here Northerner? You okay? Did your blood get thick on ya?" I laughed, exhausted but trying to smile. Tears start to form, I don't know where they are coming from but here they come. "I think there is more to it sir." I respond. I'm still responding, that's important. "This is the second IV bag, for someone your size that's an anomaly. Did you drink any water in the last two days?" I start laughing. "Two gallons down, I have no idea how much up." His eyes get bigger. "How many days have you been vomiting?" He's serious now, I'm still thinking its funny I puked. I never puke. "Since Chicago." I reply, "I have no idea what day it is, what time it is, or when I left. None other than Mrs Hockey Mills fills in the blank, "Monday, she's been sick since Monday."

The doctor starts in like they all do, low hanging fruit, I don't blame him, but I'm annoyed. "Oh, this isn't heat induced?" I tell him again "No sir, I think there is more to it." I see his ears perk up with curiosity. "Do you want to go into that?" I have had enough of this Emergency Room. "No, I'll talk to my doctor about it when I get back home, I need to call my dad." I'm trying to tear out the IV from my arm. The Dr is still going on... "Where is home?" As I fidget, it hurts. "Minnesota sir." He reprimands me, "Don't do that. Minnesota?! You're going to be here for a few more hours. I want to do another bag." I close my eyes, five minutes goes by.

I don't want to call him, but I'm also kinda excited to tell him I'm coming home! "Dad!" Not even one ring goes by and he's there. "Heya, Honey. Where are ya?" I hear the sound of the tractor in the background. "The ER in Tennessee." Casual response, no big deal, we've done this before together. "Tennessee? What are you doing there?" He has the same tone I do. "Book thing remember?" When we talk it's on pace with each other. It's one of the only humans I will ever feel this way with. "I thought it was in Chicago...How did you.." I sigh, he's not going to be happy about my car in Chicago. "We picked up some blonde chick that's normal." This time he sighs. "Oh god, so where is the car?" This part I want to tell him, he's always excited about when I find my own way into an affluent situation. "Donor's Grove." I can hear his smile on the other end of the phone.

"Nice place, I'm glad you were safe. You need to get to Chicago to get the car, but you are in the emergency room from dehydration? Did you shit yourself? I shat myself when that happened to me." Both of us are laughing, but I am beyond grossed out. "DAD! Stop! Can you charter me a flight from Tennessee to Minneapolis? I'm going to stay with a friend and we're going to drive to get the car and look at art in the city." He's inside already on the keyboard. "I'll call you in an hour. I love you." -beep-call ended.

Millie's guilt starts to pour like an open faucet. "You could make a lot of money this summer, you know? They are going to ask a lot of questions and make you pay for the sales kit. Maybe even sales school." I look away from her. The phone ringing to distract me anyway. "Hey Dad, what's up?" Him spouting off orders of exactly what I needed to do to get myself out of this hell. "You need to be at BNA at 7 am for check in tomorrow. Get there early and get a huge breakfast. Huge. Whatever you want. I put extra cash in my account for breakfast. Eat. drink beer with breakfast if you want to. I'll see you when you get back from Chicago. Rest up. Travel is hard on the body. I love you." My body relaxes and rests. Millie's bull shit still reeling in the corner. I smile. "Do you want to go anywhere when we get out of here?" I smile even bigger. This is the furthest south I have ever been in the United States by myself. "Sonic." I turn myself into baked potatoes on the way.

"May I have two extra large cherry lime aids and some salt packets?" Reclined in the seat like an intoxicated weirdo, clutching a huge styrofoam cup little kid style, grinning ear to ear, consuming cold margarita Shirley Temple. My eyes open up and I notice the Tennessee landscape of small bluffs on the freeway for 30 seconds before I am back at the hotel. Alternating between twenty minutes of sleep, ice, salty beverage, and counting down the minutes. At eight pm my pod leader or whoever he was comes in

with Millie to talk to me about leaving South Western Book Company and what will happen. "You will be charged for sales kit and not be allowed to come back ever." He threatened. They acted like no one had money to get themselves out of a situation. Calmly, I respond "How much are the books?" They don't like this response. "I mean everyone tries to get out of selling books just before. It's cold feet. Are you sure you're not just nervous excited?" Looking left at her, right at him, back at my Pumas, pausing before saying anything. "Nervous yes, How much are the books?" I am firm about going home, I realize that selling books door to door is probably dangerous and there are much better avenues to earn summer money. The pod leader guy just keeps talking. "Girls fake rape to get out of selling books. Are you sure you're not faking it?" I wonder if a light switch would turn on faster than I said, "GIRLS FAKE RAPE?!" Loud enough to scare him, "I don't know this seems pretty high pressure." My first word as a child was no and I am not going to stray from my boundaries now. "Okay, we're done here. The books are free. You can talk to my lawyer. Millie's I'm going outside to smoke the last of my pot, you wanna come with me? This guy is lame and this is the only fun you will probably have this summer. Let's go."

It was windy and the hot air blew around us like a hot August night in Minnesota. It was only June, I worried about Milly. I stand there smoking an enormous joint, she is going over the horror stories of the previous summer. When she got mugged by a random hitchhiker she was giving a ride to. When she wouldn't go home when her dad asked. I passed out that night so peacefully. I'm going home with bells on.

That weird tea up on the table over there. Breakfast has to be interesting there. White table clothes and bubble tea, what did I find? My flip phone blinks, "Hey dad." Same tone as always, direct, fast, and light hearted "What are you doing?" Fire one back, "Eating." Like a chat box window response, "What are you eating?" The shit eating grin I have on my face while I list off my breakfast, "I have three butter croissants, bacon, poached egg, hollandaise, raspberries, blueberries, pineapple, spinach, a beer, coffee, water, and salt water." My breathing is slow and calm, I keep taking bites while he talks about his day, finally asking, "How much do you have left?" Looking at my round table for eight seats, most of the table was covered in food. "Half." "Box?" Looking at my watch I notice boarding is about to start. "Slamming my beer, thanks for the alarm, I'll get to the gate. I love you Daddy." I hear my name announced over the speaker and start running. Cold hot Cold. Through the tube, to my seat. "Sorry, we can go now."

Twenty minutes in line on the runway, "Attention everyone, we have an emergency on board. A passenger has had a heart attack. We will be taxing back. Standby." A flight attendant walks by, "Ma'am, first class passengers get free drinks on board. Would you like anything while we wait. We will be leaving on this plane in about an hour and a half." my eyebrow goes up. "Hmmm what do you have?" She lists liquor and regular beverages. "Yeah but what do you have for beer? Anything cool or micro?" She fusses through the cart, "Budweiser, Budlite, Heineken, Amstel Light, and I think we have two more Pabst." It feels like the right time and the right place. "PBR me asap. Both of them." I pulled out a Vonnegut, reclining and I noticed the hospital bands again. Elliot Rosewater, I love you. Two hours later, "Would you like anything else Miss?" I'm thinking I should have water but the flood gate on the beer is open. "No more PBR eh?"

"No Ma'am." Glancing at the Delta wings, I look at the seat in front of me. It's black leather, "You have Glenfit? I know you don't have Macallans." Time to break out the big guns. "Yes, ice?" "Yes, do you have a sugar packet?" Down the hatch and into the darkness. My eyes close, finally resting for more than an hour. Blink Blink. That plastic scoop scrape movement noise, it's dark outside. Whoa. "Good evening ladies and gentleman, it's now 7 pm, we are circling Minneapolis in a traffic pattern. We will be landing in about twenty minutes." Moving the marker to where my finger is still stuck in the book. Adjusting. Smiling, I think of my tiny miniature pinscher at home with my mom, the pool in July, and summer in Bemidji. I left so I could do something else. The light rail opened up and that guy was standing there with first best friend John. "HEEEEEEEYYYYYYYYY!!!!!! What's going on?! You are alive!" My

face is happy but at the same time annoyed. "I am, I want to go home." Exhaustion is getting the best of my funny at that point. "I thought you had to go to Chicago?" They don't put off today what you can do tomorrow phrase is crossing my mind. They are chomping at the bit to party. The look of reluctance on my face must have been like a tv screen. With a sigh, "Yeah, we do." Both of their faces light up. "Yay! I booked a hotel outside the O'hare airport. We're ready to go if you are." He hands me a green and white track jacket with Pakistan written on the back. I step into the car thinking it's going to a suburban house on the edge of a golf course. It is, but it's 12 hours away instead of thirty minutes. "Okay. Let's go." John hands me a beer, I hand him a joint.

There is cheese. But nothing else. Driving across Wisconsin, I always notice the wooden poles the signs are on but nothing else sticks. My black Camry starts up exactly the same way she did in Winnipeg after five days of not driving. Strong as hell. Following his gold Camry to the hotel... I park next to them. "Super 8!?" Him responding like a whiny child with alcohol. "What? You didn't give me a card number and I thought it would be fun to ride the train. We're going to the club, you wanna come?" Changing from the sweltering heat and dehydration of Tennessee heat. I put on pants for the first time in two weeks. Suit pants, stylee suit pants, weird suit pants. Everything that's with me is so sweaty and smelly. When I look in the mirror I notice some exposure. I wash the white Calvin sports bra, pull it on reverse wetsuit action, pull over the shirt, zip up the track jacket, mousse the hair, line the eyes. Go. Run. "Are you guys taking your phones?" Where this question, idea, response, any part of it, this is so far from anything I would normally say or do. Both of them look at me with huge eyes, "Yeah why?" A rational response comes out of my mouth, but still doesn't make much sense. "I don't want to lose it." John holds up his hands, my homie grabs my arm. "Here, we can do this." Pulling a sharpie from his pocket, he writes his phone number down my arm in huge flashy beautiful script writing. "There, just find a phone and call us if we get separated." The blue-line train is empty on the way downtown. I am jumping bench to bench, dancing in between. John is fidgeting, dancing in circles. "We should get a bottle at a store and do some shots in the park before we go inside." I look at him with concern, do you think I need shots? "I just want a red bull." Like I need a Red Bull. Ascending to street level, there is black leather everywhere I look.

"K, let's go in there. Why are there men in assless chaps everywhere?" I am beyond amused. Stopping one in a blue cop uniform. "Excuse me sir, what party are you going to dressed like that?"

"Hey girl, leather man convention up the street, what's under your track jacket?"

The jacket unzips and reveals the wet sports bra permeating the tee shirt. Everything is see through at this point, I knew it would be like that for a while, but this just seemed like karma. His nipples, my nipples, human nipples. "This one is coming with us!!!!" He screams, grabbing his partner. Who is dressed as Freddy Mercury. "No, no sir, I cannot go in there tonight. I am just getting out from under..."

He grabs my arm looking at the bracelet from the hospital. "Monaya...wow that's beautiful." The Mohawk is up, "Sir will you and your boyfriend take a picture with me." Their eyes light up, "Oh god yes, let's make her a sandwich okay?" I ask myself would you wear that, booty shorts and a vest, cuffs, and hat, of course. Freddy has a chest harness, boots, assless chaps, little hat to match, the collar, I stop and look at. The leash is dangling. Don't do it. With one on each side of me, he says, "Three, two, one." As the camera flashes I can feel something on the side of my face each cheek. They are licking me. Frozen. my mind is very unkind at this point and reminds me, that is a mouth full of dicks on my face. They knew that. "Will you take my number in case something happens to you girl?" This guy is probably fifty years old and still had the attitude of a concerned dad. "Yeah, you think something is going to happen to me?" I look up at his husband, he's gotta be at least 6'3". "I just licked you. Yes, you need someone like us to watch out for you. I'm a dentist, that's my husband. I can hear what you are thinking..."

He wrote the number really small next to the big huge ostentatious one. "Where are you going tonight dear?" His husband started asking questions "X caliber" Watching him write a number down my arm. "They will put you on stage, you, right in front. Stay away from the downstairs." "Where are you guys going?" I asked. "Hard rock, you're welcome to come. But If I see you, I'm going to throw a clear drink on you tiny white shirt." I hold out my hand to shake his, he drags me in and holds me very close against his mostly naked golden tan, perfectly formed, fabulous body. "Have fun guys." I met my friends outside to keep walking. The two leathermen hollered "Be safe, pretty little one." \*blinking I stood there in the wind of Chicago\* Monaya in Polynesian translates to pretty little one.

He was right, it's one thirty and I am dancing on stage with a pack of girls, Red Bull vodka in my hand. All selfcare thoughts gone. My friends lost me in pursuit of some girls in the basement I won't go in. I find a window with two wingback velvet chairs in this old mansion converted into a multistory club. I watch cars go by in the yellow light. Quietly. This is the third floor behind two doors I pushed open. How long am I there? How long was he sitting there? Did he just show up? Has he been there the entire time and I didn't notice while watching the pretty cars go through the valet? An austier turn of the head from this him, sitting in the chair across from me, "Where are you from?" Micheal Pittman's doppelganger said. Running my hair through my mohawk, I responded. "Minnesota, you?"

His eyes scan the room in the dark, most of the light coming through the window flanked in red drapes. "Same." Interest spiked, I blurted, "Really?" I might portray this conversation as this being a smooth dapper man. He was just as nervous as myself, yelling over music to be heard. "Yeah Grand Forks. What about you?" Looking at him, I'm not sure whether I should be creeped out or feel more local, Grand Forks is three hours drive from, "Bemidji. What are you doing here?" The conversation was like a volley, sentences got shorter. "Dancing." I was bored already and beginning to entertain myself with this person's company. "Yeah but, Chicago." He persisted, trying to understand this woman with a mohawk and a hospital bracelet. "Oh my car was here." No questions asked why my car was there. He continued. "Do you go to school?" At that "Yeah."

"What's your major? What classes are you taking?"

"Political science with an emphasis in pre law. But I take a lot of philosophy, art, and humanities. I finished this semester with Contemporary Art Theory, Death and Consciousness, American Politics, College Algebra II, and Statistics. Do you know anything about Mathew Barney?" We started walking and talking, leaving drinks at the door. The street lamps were still on when we left talking on the street. He opened the door of his giant suite, and I noticed everything was red. He took me in the bathroom because he didn't want to wake up the girls. In the bathroom there are a lot of product. Who are these girls? I am an auto pilot and pick up a can of mousse to fix my Mohawk. He grabs my waist, shocking the hell out of me. But I continue filling my hands with moose. Giant piles of moose. The size of his head. I turn around and put my hands over his ears, squashing all the mousse all over him. Responding he removes his hands and I goes for anything I have behind me. I see, I have been here before. I hate to fight with violence. Don't use an atomic bomb when all you need is a broom. I let him have it with the mousse can, the bathroom is covered in blond purple mousse. We are laughing until the door starts to move.

"Hey! What is going on in there!?" I have never heard this woman's voice. My eyebrows went up, "I need to leave." Holding on to my tee shirt collar, this man grabs my arms, pushing me aside by them and with force pulls the door open. My shirt is ripped now. He puts his baby blue collared H & M shirt on me, grabs my hand and takes me outside. We walk holding hands to the miracle mile, where we talk about the Paul River Statue. "I have to go to Monaya, it was lovely to meet you." I'm laughing. "Right." I start to climb the statue. Sitting up there until one drop. Sliding off the side of this thing, I take off running through the park, on that silver ramp walk way. Weaving through the streets next to the river, I found a dunk and donuts, used my last \$1.25 to buy a cup of coffee and was trying to stay awake at a table thinking of what to do next.

"Hey, hey, you okay?" I look up from the table, scanning this man tapping me on the shoulder. White, 47, sort of tan, blue eyes, tall, thin, soft hands, long fingers, blue jeans, collared white shirt, bass boat shoes, brown like dads. At this point – auto pilot has taken over entirely. "Hey, you don't look so well. What happened to you?" I'm tired, but responsive. "Really guy? You really want to know?"

"Yes, may I buy you a cup of coffee? Donut?"

"Sure, but you look like the type that likes croissants." He laughed, he got the joke. I was surprised and amused. "That's for a different day. Let's just get you put back together here. I need to stop at my hotel?" I stop, dead in my tracks frozen again. He can tell the phrase made me more than uncomfortable. "You can wait in the lobby while I change, I just flew in from DC. Start walking, we're going to the Chicago club. I'm a professor. What are you studying?" We kept walking, "Political Science." I stated it with less enthusiasm than he responded with, "Great, I'm in economics. My name is Derek. What's your's?"

"My name is Monaya.." The presidents that had made donations to this place, stared back at me in the brown leather wingback that will now be synonymous with Chicago. "Why do you guys like these chairs so much?" My inner voice speaks up. "Let's go Kiddo!" It couldn't have been more than ten minutes. Into cab number one. "Where is your car kid? You said you took the Blue line in, from where?"

"Ohare." I still don't know where my friends are at the point, I don't have my phone, and I haven't seen my dog in two weeks. I still have a bag of weed and am talking politics with a Georgetown professor. Am I surviving or thriving? "Okay, that's easy. O'hare sir." He said to the driver, whom I didn't even look at. We were moving, I was looking at everything. "The Ohare, Super 8. My car is at the O'hare Super 8." I said to the driver, confirming. "Yes ma'am, O'hare Super 8." The driver focuses, the questions begin. Derek asked me how I got there. My Chicago story begins. Neither of us notice the ticker...Until we have circled the airport a few times, \$83.56. The cab driver interrupted, "Ma'am, there is no Super 8." It's been over 30 minutes "Please just stop at the departure doors, I want to go inside and get something. I'll get directions while I'm in there." He handed me a Smartwater and a copy of that month's Vanity Fair Magazine. The cover feature article is about Youtube use for Political Candidates for the first time in political history. "The Super 8 is six miles from here. This is the address sir. This is the article I was talking about...." Reading the synopsis, each political candidate was getting a Youtube sponsored channel. We are making circles around the airport again. He stopped the driver at departures again, we got in another cab after confirming the driver knew where the Super 8 was. I am saying good bye and he says...

"Can I ask you a favor?" Timidly, "Yes, sir, what is it?" I'm unlocking the door of my car. "Can you drive me to this place and burn me down? I have overheard this terminology from my students and I would like to get high. I have never done that. Will you burn me down?" I put my hand across my forehead, "Certainly, just stop saying it like that to me. Where are we going? And hold on a second while I go tell the idiots where I am going and get my phone." He is grinning at this point. "Oh you do have a phone? Why was it not with you?" I held up my hands in the air. "I don't know, sometimes I drive with a blindfold on. I can't answer that right now." Inside the hotel my friends are excited to see me, asking a million questions. The phone unplugs, I don't utter a word thinking – they know I am alive. "You won't believe me when I tell you what happened." I'm gathering my things, about to walk out the door. "Wait, where are you going?" Like the grown adult I was at that point while still feeling like I just got my driver's license the day before. "Out"

Back in the car, "Here." You hand the professor a tiny orange striped glass spoon full of hippy sparkles. "This smells like orange juice." I bet I looked like a fairy to him at that point, smiling "What else would you expect? Put your finger right here. And open it up when you want the full effect. Go all in. He's coughing and laughing with glossy eyes. "We're going to a lake house. I want you to meet my friend's daughter. She's thirteen and I want you to tell her your story. Will you?"

"Sure.."

"I'd like to see you graduate. It would be a shame for you to not finish. Tell the man at the gate

we are here to see the Jones family.” The gate opens, it’s a single estate. The bell is loud and she opens it, peering around the side. I put my hand up and wave, “Hi, my name is Monaya, what’s yours? May I use the restroom?” She was a stubby thing, slightly round, headbands, braces, totally unconcerned about appearance. In the powder room next to the front door, I saw all of it. There was a fresh track jacket over my ripped shirt, but I still knew. I needed a shower or a lake. After a glass of coke that hits your cheeks like sparkles and stroll near the lake with the kid, I started to move for the door. Derek gave me a hug, wrote his phone number down, shoving it in my pocket. “If you need anything, ever. I have no kids. Please call me. I don’t want anything bad to happen to you.” His embrace towers. He is at least 6’3. He hugs me and kisses the top of my head, just like dad. I have seventeen missed calls when I get back to the car. It’s ringing as I am reviewing the calls.

“Where are you? We checked out and need to get out of here.” By passing the argument of, you left me at the club I just kept going. “Right, did you grab my stuff?” A pause, “Yeah, where are you?” Paying attention to traffic, “Just start heading back, I’ll find you in the cheese.” Turning the car north west, I avoided all tolls. Sort of like how I avoided hearing garbage stories from the guys who lost me at the club. He lived in my house for six months. He tried to move into my room, I moved him to the basement with his gaming chair. I have a gut instinct moving through the world. I am the swerve that blurts out saying - “I don’t trust you.” I will save my life, over and over.

Peer pressure will find you in a basement of strangers. Odd strangers that find you in the light of day will show you a yellow brick road.

## Protein is necessary

### Spicy Braised Pork Loin

This recipe should be a quick and easy, oven braised while you do something else recipe. I've used unseasoned as well as marinated from the store. Both work well, if a pre marinated sounds great when you are procuring the meat, go for it. This recipe works well, scale back salt.

2 # pork loin  
2 tablespoons oil or fat source for searing.  
2 tablespoons garlic, salt and pepper.  
½ Teaspoon chili flake  
1 cup braising liquid. (Use what's in the pantry.)

Any pan that will fit the pork loin and can go from stovetop to oven. Start heating the pan to get it near the smoke point, while this is happening coat the meat in oil and season. Sear the pork loin until browned on each side, reserve on a baking sheet. Deglaze the pan with the braising liquid. Place pork loin back in the pan with the liquid, into the oven @ 320° Check the temperature after twenty minutes. Cook until an internal temperature of 145\* rest for two or three minutes before slicing. Leftovers can be used for tacos, pot pies or other new dishes throughout the week.

### Key Lime Yogurt Pops

Use straws for popsicle sticks and these can be utilized as an ice cube. Make curd in advance, and it can be frozen or preserved.

### Key Lime Curd

Egg Yolk 75g  
Sugar 95g  
Lime zest and juice 115g  
Butter 57g

Start a pot of boiling water, combine all ingredients except butter in a heat proof bowl. Place the bowl over the boiling water and stir constantly until heated to 165°, pour into a mixer, add the butter bit by bit until incorporated. Chinos or use a fine sieve while pouring into a storage container.

Combine the yogurt and curd lightly as to see swirls of the lime curd in the yogurt. Load into a pastry bag. Drip coat the honey into the popsicle molds for a stunning final presentation. Fill the molds, freeze for twenty minutes, place straws in the semi frozen pops and put back into the fridge for a final freeze. Demould, salt with sea salt flakes and enjoy.



## The snowboarder in the dog suit

*Dane Jah*

January 31st, 2006, the earthquake tsunami hit thirty-six hours before in Thailand. “Hey, Honey, are you okay?” Eating cereal at the wood countertop island, looking out the window. It was Christmas four days ago. I got new boots, headphones, a camera, and goggles from my brother. My dad’s new English cocker spaniel Ray is cruising around while I video him. My dad is still waiting for a response to the question he asked. “...He doesn’t want to see me anymore.” Turning my head to look over at the Christmas tree. “...Who, William?” Sighing and pausing for a moment at the name, “...Yeah.” My dad just being my dad, getting a beer out of the fridge, “...So what are you going to do for New Years?” I smile at the snow, dusting lightly on the deck, the overcast sky providing a bright white reflector. “I’m going snowboarding in Duluth with my friends.” He’s changing the channels on the 1986 television in our kitchen, tuning in the Vikings game. “Call me when you get there, okay?” I nod and keep eating. Six hours into a three-hour drive, plowing my friends driveway in Duluth with the engine covers on the bottom of the Camry, “Hey, Dad, I’m here.” Short and to the point, he could hear my exhaustion, “I love you. Have fun.”

My friend Shawn was still shoveling when I pulled in. It had snowed 22 inches in 24 hours, quite a bit even for Minnesota. Shawn and I had been skiing and snowboarding together for 7 or so years. He was a fast skier, racing Nastar and spending time in the mountains with his brother in his teens. We met at a Church lock-in as kids. The kids that were having a dance duel in the circle of kids listening to Coolio. “Yo, Monaya, We’re going out tonight. You need to shower or do girl shit, do it now.” Duluth is one of those places where it rains and snows a lot, everyone is dressed in outdoor gear all the time, and a hike is a daily thing for most people who live there. The lake adds to the weather and a beautiful view is always around the corner. As for traffic here, it’s like a snowy San Francisco, and most of the streets that night had at least 4 - 8 inches of snow on them. Nodding, I still wasn’t really in a talking mood. “Dane is going to drive, he doesn’t drink.” I came out of the bathroom ready to leave for the bar. I was still only 20 years old and as hyped as most are to be underage in a bar, I didn’t really think that was all that cool. I spent most of the last year in Canada drinking as their legal age was 18. “Word!” he says as you look at him sideways. He’s got an outfit on that you couldn’t help but look at twice - flat brim with wool and leather, mixed texture sweater hoodie hybrid thing, ultra-wide piped corduroy, and matching Ipath boots.

I could hear the UK hiphop artist *The Streets*. I had just downloaded this album a week or two ago. Who knows about this? How was this being played here? Shawn doesn’t listen to this stuff. An outstretched hand from the multi-textured creature, “Hi, I’m Dane. Shawn said you like music. I just got these today.” Shoving a stack of CDs out toward me. I look at them in his hand. “I have this one, this one, this one, and this one. I have all of these. But this one is really good.” Pointing at *Quebec* by Ween. “These are all really good. Not a huge fan of *The Streets* but they have a few good songs.” He’s holding: The Streets, RJD2, The new DJ Shadow, and Ween. “Oh, Word, word, word. What are you into?” in a very inquisitive but slightly abrasive tone.

Shawn has his head in the fridge, yelling, “She likes Radiohead. A lot.” I rolled my eyes and nodded, “Yeah, whatever. I do like Radiohead a lot. I listen to a pretty big scope of music. It depends on the scene.” I was eating pizza and drinking a beer watching Trailer Park Boys. My pregame was on point. Dane, who looked like Hollywood threw up in Aspen with independent hip-hop, turned to me and had the audacity to ask, “The scene?” I responded with the same attitude, “Ya, like a movie.” Rolling my eyes again at him. Shaking my head a little bit. What did he not understand about life needing a good soundtrack? That was my first encounter of many years with this guy. He would be an asshole to me three more times, saying horrible things about me to my friends with me standing there. Summer 2008,

funny enough, designated driving for my friend. He approached me in the driveway, it was dark, and he called. "Who is this fine..." blah blah blah. I don't care what he said, it was dumb. "Hi, Dane, I'm just here to pick up Jaci... Remember me." I kept walking, trying to find my drunk homegirl. She was really drunk on the phone when she called. I was honestly worried about her causing a scene at a wedding. He didn't even blip on my radar. "Oh gross, it's you, I mean, I guess you look good." He started again. This time, I looked at him from behind my glasses. It was July, I had a white tee shirt on, black shorts, and high tops. I had come from work. Why was this he catcalling me? "Right, I gotta go." Still searching for my friend.

"Hey uhhmmm, ya, know if you wanna session or something.." I raised an eyebrow, turning and looking at him, "Session? What do you want?" At this point, he was searching for anything and made the motion with his hand, a lighter over a pipe, "Ya like smoke weed..." Standing there, arms folded, deliberating which end of the wedding tent to approach, staying in the dark, I wanted to get this girl out of here and go. Nodding at him, "right." He continued, "I know you like art, and I have this crazy film from sort of the Andy Warhol of our time, even if you hate me... you should see it." This was a statement I was curious about, "Oh yeah - who's the Andy Warhol of our time?" This human did have a pulse on art. "Matthew Barney." I had seen a few slides of this artist in my post-modern art textbook, and I was interested in seeing his film, "Oh...shit, fine. Yeah, text me when you're in town. I at least want to copy it to a DVD and watch it later." That was the summer and we kept in touch. My life was full of alcohol and entrepreneurialism. I had just graduated college, refused graduate school, and built a living, breathing brick-and-mortar business. We didn't watch it, but he did leave it on my coffee table and I watched it more than a few times, until he asked for a back when he was visiting Minnesota for the holidays.

He ended up staying at my house for three days. Ignoring everyone. I would go to work, he was there when I got home. His chihuahua sitting in the corner of the kitchen, glaring at my miniature pinscher, completely ignoring everyone like she always did. My Weiner dog Achilles took the liberty of peeing on Dane. I should have known then. That dog and this guy would be buddies on different planes of existence. Both weird, incredibly interesting to look at and watch interact. However, they might pee on or bite you. At Christmas, he visited me for a few days again. I called him to hang out before he left. His mother told me he was in the bathtub but would bring him the phone. "Hello?" The reluctance in his voice, like I was a pain to call him. "Hey, do you want to hang out before you go back to Tahoe?" I was nervous, I felt stupid, and I was worried he would say no. Why was I asking him anyway? "Sure, I guess. I'll call you later."

Three hours later, he showed up at my house. Stressed and sputtering, "I have to have the van back by 8." I was trying to give him a heads-up, rationalizing why his parents might be upset. "Dane! You take your mom's van and leave for five days. She doesn't have an extra car. It's not your car. Do you need a ride? I mean, I asked you to hang out, I would help you if you asked." I tried to give him some peace of mind that he had support. "Word, word, word..." He started to say things angry blah blah blah, I don't care it was dumb. Give the Dane a joint already. In 2008, I was a woman who smoked some pot. In 2009, a full-blown Phish stick. Dane needed to do everything delayed by a "session." I mean, he would sit down to smoke pot while trying to find his keys. I laugh at writing it, but it was incredibly difficult to be a partner in this behavior.

In late January, Dane asked me to go snowboarding for Valentine's Day. Ya, it seemed like a fling that could be fun. When I landed at the airport, I noticed it was snowing, more than it snows in Minnesota. The previous year, on a trip to Montana I had learned to snowboard in powder snow conditions. If you have never experienced 12" or more of fresh snow, it is dramatically different from groomed conditions. Using more energy and a feeling that is indescribable. Would you like an adventure in Tahoe with a person that is sometimes annoying but knows about a lot of cool shit and likes you a lot?

In the car, he informed me between puffs on a joint, "We're going to see *Mad Professor* tonight." It was the first time in a while that someone had said a musical act that I wasn't familiar with, "What?"

I was watching the landscape; it was dusk, and we were heading up in elevation. He handed me the joint, I looked at it, pinching it, he was still talking while smoke poured out his mouth “Yeah, you know, dub.” I turned my head a bit, still more interested in the sunset, “Dub?”

He was shouting command line prompts to himself as we drove into town, “I need to stop and get some peanut butter, jelly, and juice.” I noted his food choices, but wasn’t going to have an argument. I’d only been there for a few hours. I made my purchases at self checkout, well knowing the response from him was coming. “Bacon, ish, Word, Grass-fed beef? Word. You spent like \$50 on meat.” He was shuddering and had goosebumps while he looked at the meat. Dane is to this day a vegetarian on top of being a type one diabetic. I felt like he was being overly critical in a place where a 100 lb woman should never have to take criticism, my diet. “I didn’t even get any sugar, What is your problem?” I was still doing my best to avoid an argument. He commented about alcohol and being midwestern. “Don’t you want to stop and get beers or something girl?”

I was really confused at this point. Dane was rough when his blood sugar got low, but this was more than that. We knew each other but he stereo-typed most people when he felt threatened as a defense mechanism. I didn’t need any beers; why did he say that? Why was his tone like that? “I mean, yeah, sure, that would be great, but you don’t drink. I was at least going to be respectful and drink when we were out, not at the house. I don’t need beer every day.”

“Why, you’re in Tahoe. Everyone is buzzed all day. You know that, right? You drink in Minnesota. Why wouldn’t you drink here?” He had continued to work himself up. “In Minnesota, I can walk home at 30 below zero, I know where I am going and won’t die. I have no clue where anything is here. I don’t have transportation. Why are you making such a big deal out of it?” I didn’t let go of logic. Lobbing his judgemental ball of insecurity mixed with guilt at me, “Word, word, word. I mean, I just want you to be happy.” This guilt of “I just want you to be happy.” All his reflections that I never would allow to stay with me. I met his friends that night, they were confused as to why I would be with Dane. One of us would always explain it away with snowboarding or art.

The following morning, he was yelling at me again, “Hurry up, Nasty is gonna be here any minute...” I had everything on except my boots and gloves. He was sitting there smoking weed in his long underwear. Staring into my coffee, I looked at him in the mirror behind me, “Nasty? What’s nasty?” If someone yelled at you twice in 24 hours and then said nasty, you might be slightly concerned as well. Setting down the giant black and blue Sherlock pipe, “Ya Nasty Nate is going to pick us up in the truck. There is chain control.” Who was this person, and what was this protocol? “Chain control?” Still in his wool-long underwear, “Yeah, just be ready. Do you want to session?” I held up the sherlock.

Swass was where I ended up. I was ready to go snowboarding, but Nate came inside, and Dane just kept on “session-ing.” We loaded gear and got in the truck. Dane was still lagging behind an hour later. Nate and I waited in the truck, “Would our lovely visitor from the North like anything from the 7? Tall can? Snack?” I was surprised at the accommodation after being berated the night before. I held out my head for a high five, “All of the above.” He handed me a Budweiser tall can and a cherry laughy taffy. “I’m from the Midwest, too.” I could see his sleeve tattoo from the cuff of his coat, his hand matching. “Thank you, kind gentleman.” I gave him a single nod. “No one ever calls me a gentleman.” he glanced down. I cracked the beer, “Oh?”

Welcome to Tahoe Monaya, 20 miles from where they get more snow in one year than anywhere in the world. It was white. Everything was white. Scattering like ants carrying a bunch of things, they took off towards a gate. This was an executive decision coming out of a tall-beer-can 23-year-old Monaya. I looked at the trees they were heading into, nope. Not your first run in the mountains. I turned the other direction and took the longest groomer down, dropping switchbacks slowly to get my powder legs. “CUT IN!!!!” I looked behind me, Dane was yelling and pointing. I spun on a dime, stopping right in front of him. “What?” He sat down. “Cut in, I’m gonna take the tree run. Follow me.” His insistence wasn’t going to stop until I followed him. But I didn’t know where I was at the resort yet, and after

snowboarding with a pack of boys in Montana, I wasn't going to be lost all the time again, "Right, sure. I'll meet you at the bottom." Swinging my shoulder over, I dropped the switch back, and with a long, gradual flat, I came to the top of what I assumed was where they held Giant Slalom events.

It was super steep, half groomed, and half left for tracks. I could see myself in Dane's goggles reflection as I went over the edge. Shoulder tucked, crouching for speed. I took a monster pass to the right, I assumed yards on yards covered. It was still all white with trees as boundaries. I felt like a bird over snow, fully extended, belly hovering, reaching out further, touching the snow, snapping my arm back, naturally curving. Making the slice of the turn and matching the curve on the heel side. I bent down and pulled my knees up as I approached the powder. Poof, a baby launch of snow, I was in it. Finishing out the front face with just a few lush powder sprays and cutting back onto the groomer. It felt like myself. He was behind me, yelling, "Are you ready now? They want to go over to the Canyon or do Preachers, Will you follow us?"

I was doing my own thing, completely entranced by the fluff to groom to fluff I had found with an angle that felt good. "Uh, I guess." My legs and confidence warmed up. It could be great, I thought. It was great until the snake trail goes over a huge tree well, and your women's 148 centimeter snowboard is just short enough to drop in. Flash, scrape-pula, cruckcuc, flash, scrape-pula, cuckcuc, flash. Over and over. The bottom of their snowboards a lightswitch on the daylight with each pass. I was hanging out at the bottom of this tree, well, perfectly content, just waiting. "Hello! There is a human in here!" Peeking out, they were gone. Edging my way out, tip to tail, my hands like little pickaxes. Never even took off the snowboard. It was kind of like when I fell through the ice. Folding at 90 degrees to take a rest, the entire process probably took 20 minutes. I stood up, covered in pine needles, debris, bark, and all things tree. Taking my sweet ass time down. It was a glorious champagne powder welcome to Tahoe. "Where did you go!?" Sputtering Dane was annoyed waiting for me, where he should have been worried.

"I dunno, I followed the tall kid in orange pants. He was easy to see. Besides, I wound up in a tree well. What's it to you?" He was not amused, he was concerned at this point. "Nate? He takes huge cliff drops. " Taking it with a grain of salt, "Really? We high-fived at the bottom." His concern was still beyond serious, "Yeah, but he probably didn't even know you were up there behind him." The tall curly fry in orange approached, "Dane, you're girls a serious ripper." He patted Dane on the back as he walked by.

I missed my flight twice, driving to the airport was stressful. Dane asked me, "Do you want to move here and be with me?" I was about to get out of the car at the airport. "I'm not sure I can do that, It depends on work at home." It was the most serious conversation we had about our relationship for the next two and a half years. When I came home, my family life was beyond the rocks. My mother had found out about an affair my father had. I never knew what it was going to be like when either of them showed up to the business I had agreed to care for the year before. "Give me all the money in your till." My dad ordered it for me. "What? No, Dad, that's dumb. Why are you?" I was so confused as to what was happening. He had his mind set on something else that wasn't me. He started to yell. "It's mine, you need to give it to me right now." He started to poke me in the chest, he was already buzzed up. I reached in and gave him all the money. "You need to go dad, this is really bad. You need to go." I had my hand on his shoulder, I could feel his breath on me. He had told me the day before, "Your mother and I are getting a divorce." I didn't react at all. I couldn't. I didn't know what to think after surviving their relationship for the last 23 years of my life. "Oh, when did you decide that?" I had to respond with something to keep the information flowing. "Last week."

I had already decided I was moving to Tahoe. I asked my best friend, who helped me open the business, to stay and watch it. I rented my house and put my belongings into storage at Dane's parent's house. I slept for two days after Dane had a diabetic episode about a week into my moving to Tahoe. He screamed at me, saying awful things, not remembering any of it an hour after returning to normal levels. It was devastating, the stuff with my parents and then to take on verbal abuse from someone who

couldn't remember delivering it. I was devastated. I didn't tell anyone. I pushed myself to snowboard every day that season. Being late, never getting the first chair, putting on chains, being stuck, or unprepared. Dane would have to turn around after an hour of session-ing. About a week after I got there, I started to look for work. My business in Minnesota was in its infancy, pulling along, but it wasn't ready to provide an income for anyone except employees.

"There are no jobs here for college graduates. Besides, we grow weed, so ya know, it just wouldn't make sense, and you can't talk to anyone." It was 2009, having plants in California was not weird or sketchy. There were a lot of tax-paying "norms" growing. I applied at a coffee shop. They were opening a new location and scheduled me there. "You must be new in town, I've been here for years. You wanna go to Kirkwood? It's dumping snow! We should go! My name is Shondra. You seem really smart." I laughed and beamed at her. "Shitcha, I wanna go to Kirkwood." Orientation ended early and we went from house to house, picking up girls and loading up gear. "Let's go out to the fingers." I told Dane, I met a woman named Shondra and I was going snowboarding. "Oh, like Shondraless Pat?" He always had a way of saying stuff packed with information but he didn't make sense. He started to talk fast, like someone was accusing him of lying.

"Yeah, that chick married one of our crew at Burning Man, she's yeah. Well, she acts like a girl, ya know, always talking." I was starting to tune out what he was saying. Stereotyping women, nope, I don't get into that. "What are you talking about Dane?" I left the house with observation eyes that day. "Hey Monaya, you good?" She looked at me with the first concern anyone had for me in a few months, "I don't want you to get hurt. If you need to turn back, it's okay." Shondra was awesome, one of the strongest women I have had the great opportunity to spend time on a mountain with. That coffee shop job lasted a week. The owner touched women. Two weeks later, rent was due, Dane looked at me over toast, "Can't you just call your mom? I thought you were rich." It was a statement that hit me like my parent's divorce line. I just got up and went to sleep. He approached me, all I could say was, "No, I can't. Can you just call your mom?"

The week I came to visit, South Lake Tahoe opened its first dispensary. It wasn't even my idea when Dane started making edibles. "I can help you with that, I used to bake with my grandmother." The little girl who spent hours with her grandmother making complex and detailed recipes offered. "Yeah, right. Like you know how to make hard candy." He sneered at me. I responded with the technical knowledge about sugar that I lived with, never knowing it would save my life. "You heat sugar to 289° and pull it off the heat to rise to 300° the hard crack stage. You will need molds, flavors, colors, and wrappers. I wanted to be Betty Crocker as a child. Food manufacturing dreams."

I was always embarrassed by his branding. Naming our company Bubble's Confections after the *Trailer Park Boys* character Bubbles and the Hash Driveway episode. "Ya know, it's kinda down low, like if you know you know." This would be a lesson in brand identity for my career. I looked down upon some of the best work I have ever produced at volume because of the packaging. I hated being called things like Willy Wonka. It was enough to be involved with pot edibles, but to have it look like children's branding and linked to a tv show that was funny. "We can't make them look like they are for kids." He would say over and over, each package he designed logos with a little character made of bubbles. Okay, Dane, I'm starting to understand self-actualization is not a strong suit.

It took a year of arguing and pouring everything into Bubbles Confections. The following year, I had a bank account with money. Something Dane had convinced me that average Americans couldn't get because of a credit score. It was total nonsense. Hey, I didn't have a car anymore either, so I let it slide even more. It would be two years of this. Non-stop weed, snowboarding, Burning Man, again and again. So many fights. So many diabetic moments. But the 'so many' I could not handle and I will never ever forget. This guy said the word worthless way too much. So many "worthless" under his breath. At me, at life, at everything. I set it aside and continued what I was doing most of the time.

This little edible company would take me all over the state of California. If there was a highlight

of this relationship, it was the mind expansion that happened with art. The word art could mean an actual media piece, music or sound, food, or an entire immersive experience. Visiting the moon and San Francisco on one trip. 24 hours of botanical gardens, caverns of night clubs (literally three basements into the earth), Silicon Valley weed stores, and of course, Upper Playground. We didn't miss a Chinese New Year's at 1015 Folsom the entire time we were together. This event was a cultural burst of electronic music and dragons. 2011, our group was around 25 individuals. If you have the chance to be part of a group in a club, do it. Every time you turn around a corner, you're dancing with your friend. It's like attending a wedding, but better because there are a ton of other people in costume too.

It would be six days into Burning Man 2009 when he walked by me. Like a zombie. "Dane!" I was walking after him. "What?" He yelled and looked at me like he didn't even know me. "Dane, test your blood." Two years of being yelled at constantly, I wasn't very good at holding it together anymore. "No, I don't need to. WORD. WORD. WORD. WORD." Like a miscomputing robot, the dick head just fell over. I already had a bottle of juice in my hand as he went down. "Here, will you drink a little bit of this? It's good, see?" I took a sip of the juice, his head in my lap.

"Mmm, this is good." In a diabetic stupor. I tried to breathe deep, thinking about how many times he would do this to himself if I stayed. "I can't do this anymore." I whispered, not even thinking he could hear me. "Word, word word, I'll just" Oh dear, I woke up the dragon. I tried to leave Burning Man that night. I slept in the circus tent on the leather couch, rather than inhabiting Dane and my 20 foot dome. Packing up days later, we left together in the Honda Accord with my soon-to-be roommate. Katie, a six-foot-tall, white dreadlocked, weed-growing, lesbian. A dyke comment was made from the Dane. I wasn't going to stay for the roast. These two could have each other. I turned on my phone and texted Jordan. "Pullover wherever you are and wait for me." A half-hour of probably the most creative, hurtful language later, I got into the diesel truck with Jordan and wasn't much happier to be in the truck, but it was silent, and I could deal with that.

Unannounced to me, on the way home, Dane invited a guy with a Volkswagon Synchro Van whom Dane had promised my mechanic would convert to diesel. "Your mechanic, can you do that right?" He asked me later. "Karl can do anything, it's if he wants to." Gabe Mino was standing there listening to Dane try to use my connection with my mechanic. He chimed in, "I've got money." This was how the bump snorting turd moved into my house. No one ever asked me if I wanted his shitty drugs on my coffee table. "Don't worry, girl, it's just like weed." I looked at him like he was stupid, "Didn't you say at Burning Man that you worked for Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms?" I squinted at him. His eyebrows went up, "I did work for them." Before my last Burning Man, I had started dabbling in hot yoga for heat acclimation. After the ATF started sleeping on my couch, I went every day. Sometimes twice.

Dear Dane,

Please make art, when you are done, make more art. If you can't make art b compile artists, places, pictures, and text. I can forgive you for harmful words you do not remember saying. - I remember, and my gratitude for my memory is strong. I would like to note a story you told me that I never thought true until I started writing my second book. At Burning Man in 2008, Dane was doing a cleanup at a camp called Nexus after an education lecture. The account of events that happened to him summarized: while picking up moop (matter out of place, IE, leftover water bottles, headlamps, sweatshirts), a black suburban with blacked-out windows approached via the 10 o'clock end of the Esplanade. Several men wearing clean black suits, dress shoes, earpieces, and aviator sunglasses got out. They stopped anyone at the site, zip-tying their hands together and then to each other. Sitting cross-legged on the ground, they pushed a nose filter in each of their noses. He explained it was some sort of transmitter. I believe all of it is true after my experiences in 2023. Sincerely, Monaya M. MaGaurn.

## Pastry Princess with a joint @ burning man

Gnar Bars Top seller 2010, Bubbles Confections  
Avocado and Lime from )'( Burning Man

### Gnar Bars

#### The Cookie Topper

2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
1 teaspoon salt  
1 cup (2 sticks) cannabis butter, softened  
3/4 cup granulated sugar  
3/4 cup packed brown sugar  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
2 large eggs  
2 cups (12-oz. pkg.) Nestlé Toll House  
Semi-Sweet Chocolate Morsels  
1 cup chopped nuts (if omitting, add 1-2  
tablespoons of all-purpose flour)

#### The Brownie base

1 cup all purpose flour  
1 1/3 cups Dutch process cocoa powder  
3 sticks (12 oz) unsalted cannabis butter  
6 oz dark chocolate, roughly chopped  
2 1/4 cups white sugar  
1/4 cup packed dark brown sugar  
1 3/4 tsp kosher salt  
6 large eggs  
1 tbsp vanilla extract  
1 tsp instant espresso powder (optional)

Pour the brownie layer into a greased  
parchment 9x13 pan, slowly add the cookie  
topper, covering the brownies. Bake at 350° 30

minutes with foil cover, remove foil and finish  
for 10 - 15 minutes until the cookie topper is  
golden brown.

The edges of this are like biscotti on top and  
brownie cookies on the bottom. Enjoy the  
complex texture.

\*note: Cannabis Butter

1.5 # of butter  
1 # of close cola trim  
2 quarts water.

Bring all to a boil, strain the close trim, chill.  
The butter separates from the water.

### Avocados and Lime from )'(

Yes I serve it with chips like another dish we  
know so well. Cube 4 avocados, squeeze two  
limes worth the juice over the avocado, mix  
with two heaping tablespoons of garlic, 1/2  
teaspoon of salt or more to taste, 1 teaspoon of  
pepper, drizzle with a tablespoon of agave or  
honey. Enjoy on toast, with chips, or all by itself.

## Mike Drop.

### *Defender Deployed...*

The translation for Micheal in Hebrew is “Gift from god.”

My translation for the word Hebrew is coffee.

Mike, bring me my coffee.

September 2011. Hot yoga was an hour up the shore, an hour and a half in a 105° room with 55% humidity, a cold plunge in Lake Tahoe, and an hour back home. It took up much of my day away from ATF on the couch and Dane. I was 30 days deep into a streak and needed new brake pads on Dane’s car to not die driving through Emerald Bay. I took the car to my mechanic, Karl. Karl’s Landrover shop was another place where I would spend time. That particular day, I had brought coffee, helped change a timing chain, and was taking a nap on the couch in the office. My alarm went off, and it was time to leave for yoga. He was trying to get a rusted caliper off the Honda Accord.

I wandered into the garage, leaning on a Silver Range Rover. , “Karl, hurry up, I need to make it to Yoga.” Karl was a dad to seven children, six biological, one adopted. He knew about the weed, he knew about Dane, he treated me like an annoying dad but would remind me I was a woman, In his British accent, “Girl, I’m going as fast as possible. Get a hammer and get in here with me on this bloody rusty pile of Minnesota.”

I was heading out of the office with a hammer when he lunged from the garage. “I will drive you to yoga.” His awkwardness was palpable. I blinked, staring at him, with a stranger I have no idea who you are. Karl was staring at him, the twinkle in his weird eye. He sighed, “I want to go. I’m going to go anyway. You can ride along.” I looked over my shoulder to Karl for approval. I could feel his eyes on the back of my head, watching like he watched his seven kids. He nodded. “Sure.” Doing my best to accept as Karl clearly knew this guy well enough to trust him.

He continued. “I was going to go anyway. I appreciate the motivation. I’ll drive you home so you can get your stuff. We can go to the class later in the afternoon, so there is no rush?” I have no idea what my face looked like. “Sure.” He dropped me off outside my house with all the buses and Burning Man leftovers outside. He didn’t ask any questions at that point. “See ya in an hour or so?” I nodded. “Can I have your number to text you when I’m outside? I don’t think you want me to knock on the door.” His iPhone was resting, palm up, extended at me. Even though I was smart, I was young. I had no idea what he was doing. He asked a lot of questions on the way up the shore. I tried to avoid everything I could. Scared, I would say the wrong thing and get myself in trouble. Inside the studio, I went to my double mirror corner, where I could look at every square inch of my body. This spot was made for micro-movements.

Micro-movements are the tiny adjustments you make once you get yourself to an unbreakable standing forehead-to-knee. Standing forehead to knee is as it sounds, but horizontal. Standing on one leg, the upper body folds downward toward the extended perpendicular leg. My first instructor would reference a lamppost in a winter storm for the strength of the standing leg. I always thought of *It’s a Wonderful Life* and *Dr Zeevago*. Occasionally, a scene from the Sci-Fi film *Dark City*, a science fiction *Maxtrix*-like film with a retro setting in the 1930s, would linger in. The streets were all lit with lamp posts. Examples of micromovements in that pose: include tucking the chin further for metabolism activation, pulling the foot toward the face, and bringing the calf, knee, and hip into alignment. Each leg parallels the other in movement, expression, and shape but not angle. Then, glancing at the macro information, the mirror. The body’s shape formed a perfect upside-down “L” Today, I am reminded of an airman emergency procedure, also a reverse “L” shape.



Mike took the opposite corner of the room, in the back, that didn't have mirrors. I lay in a child's pose every day for the first five minutes of being in that room, doing my best to get any energy I had brought before starting what I knew was an active meditation. How often do you have to do something before it's a ritual? What's the difference between routine and ritual? I would try to hold back on thinking about how weird my life was. I'm unsure if this guy driving me to yoga knew exactly how much I was processing in that little corner. I was skinny with definition. He took his shirt off. It was apparent this person did yoga. He did yoga all the time. He wasn't being sarcastic about going to yoga. It was an oddity to me. His standing bow was like looking at Ingar – Google that if you are unfamiliar. I spent an extra three minutes in meditation before running off the dock and flipping backward into Lake Tahoe. He was right behind me. I was so cold when I came out of the water, but this he was shaky all the time. "Let me buy you lunch?" Why was this guy overtly awkward? How much time did he spend alone? "But it's dinner time." The sun was setting over Lake Tahoe. "Yeah, whatever." He talked about music, his job, why he was in Tahoe, surfing, and most of all, his life adventure. "Can I drive you to hot yoga tomorrow? I know your car still isn't ready."

I wanted to go to yoga. It made sense. "Sure." Mike drove me to yoga for a few weeks before he had to fly to Boston to do some things with his family. "Drive me to the airport?" My response was too quick. "Sure." I had even thought about how this was going to go down. "Sweet, I will drive there because you are too slow. You can drive back."

"I'll see ya in a week." With a hug. Beyond weirded out, I got in the car and drove away. I knew he was staring at me, but I had no idea why. I kept going to yoga while he was gone. Trying to think of any way I could get him off my couch, get out of this house, and just change my life at that point. I would lay in bed for the first hour. I was awake crying, trying to make the words stop.

"You're worthless, all you did is come to California and mooch off me. You're not even loyal." Dane said it hundreds of times to me. What was weird was the compassion I had for him for so long, like he didn't mean it. Like something else was prompting it. It seemed like weird words coming from him. As colorful as he is, language, clothing, and art, he didn't say things like that when we started dating two years before.

I counted the blessings of my bathroom being attached to my room. I had moved everything out that wasn't mine. It was one of the most challenging times of my life. Running away from art toward logic, not realizing I made art daily. I made art when I extended my arms in yoga, when I was going down a mountain on a snowboard, when I was making food in a fine dining kitchen, and when I wrote or designed. I didn't realize that I was making art no matter where I went, and logic was what I needed at that point. Leaving that yellow house, "You're miserable, and you make everyone around you miserable." words hanging in the air like dust getting vacuumed out the window of the car, me staring at Lake Tahoe.

I went to lunch after Yoga with Mike after he returned a few times. I remember running into a friend of Dane at the time. It was a weird experience for me. I can see him behind the wheel of his truck, gossip hot under his tongue. One male ego versus another, an "I told you so" moment for a man who, although very large in physical stature, needed any ego boost he could get. He ran to my house to tell Dane about how I was at lunch with the guy who drove me to yoga. Clueless about the entirety of it all. Why were they upset? I was eating food and being healthy. I wasn't crossing any lines. In hindsight, I can see how they would all be worried about Mike. I'm still baffled as to the following behavior. Nonetheless, after they saw me eating, talking about family, and trying to be healthy – I heard the words "miserable slut." upon returning home that day.

I kept going to yoga, and one day, while Dane was off being Dane in a valley full of pot, Mike asked if he could come inside my house. "I just want to see what you are going through?" I can't remember if I was laughing or crying. "Um, sure, why would you think I'm going through anything?" I felt like it was leaking out, "Those men in the cafe, you sleep on the couch at Karl's, you spend over half

your day trying to run away from home.” His voice was concerned. I sluffed it off. “Not-UH. I like yoga. Guys are dumb, and Karl’s is like home.”

“Yeah, that last part, Karl’s, is not like a home, it’s a mess, and if that’s what home is like, I can’t live with myself watching, letting this happen to you.” Unsure of what he was proposing, “FINE,” I said in a monotone and opened the door on the BMW. “Come on in.” The look on his face when I opened the door that Dane had kicked in twice. Shaking his head. We sat down on the couch, and he surveyed the room. “Wow. It’s way cooler and less of a mess than I thought. Nonetheless, you shouldn’t have to live like this. Not you. Maybe him, but not you. You do things like this, but don’t live in them.” He was talking about art. He stood up and took a tiny little Asian man vinyl toy off a rock of the fireplace. “What’s this?” I laughed under my breath, “My homie I stare at while we fight. Put him back; the girl is around the corner.” His eyes got huge with a big smile. “We gotta get you out of here.” He returned to Boston the next day, and I started thinking of my escape.

The redness of my skin showed through on the right side of my face. I picked up the giant yoga ball and whipped it back at her as hard as I could. Dodge ball in a weed dispensary with a six-foot-tall blond, dreadlocked, athletic lesbian. There were worse things I could be doing in my twenties. “Hey, how are things at home, Monaya?” There was that look of concern again. Did everyone know? “I need to move out. But I have no idea where I’m going, but Dane is a real pain in the ass these days.” She made an emoji face with the line for a smile. “I have the master bedroom open up there, \$600, no deposit?” I was worried about what Dane would do if I did move out. “Let me think about it.” Still, I was already mentally packing.

David, the most helpful gangster, came around the corner. “I’ll help you move.” He had a 4-runner and an attitude of helpfulness that most don’t. Our resident old lady green goddess followed him, “I’ll monitor while you guys move. I know Dane is tough, and there could be a scene.” My heart was still caught between logic and art. It was a Tuesday when I moved out. The unmistakable derogatory terms for women were present, but when I heard the word, Traitor. I didn’t feel like I had betrayed him. I had betrayed myself. I had stayed too long. I had remained loyal for years, people that watched him tear me apart daily, where was the help from them?

There is the part about money, too. I left out the part about Dane’s financial habits. He loved art, art supplies, clothes, shoes, concert tickets, and Burning Man. That year was a 21 day \$12,000 ordeal, yeah, Burning Man is expensive. I was agreeable. That was where I betrayed myself. My weaknesses: sushi, Thai food, ski passes, and yoga. I’m not sure if those are weaknesses. Dane had four buses we had to have for Burning Man. He never turned a wrench one, stuffing them full of dusty gear he wanted to use the following year.

One day after yoga, driving back, Mike pulled the BMW into Emerald Bay. We had taken a night hike there a few weeks prior. He put his hand on the headrest, “Let’s go look at the lake.” The view is striking, a place I would often go to reset. I jumped rock to rock confidently. I had a cup of coffee in my hand and stood on the edge of a rock overlooking the little tea house on the island of Emerald Bay. He approached me and put his arms around me. I froze. He kissed my neck. I had feelings for him but hadn’t recovered from living with this person for so long. To Mike, this was sealing the deal. To me, it was a complication in my already confusing life.

Mike returned a week after I had moved into the mansion on the hill. He called twice while he was gone for two weeks. I was a weed princess chef. I had hash delivered to my house to make lollipops. Now I sat up in the castle on the hill. I knew working with Dane in any capacity was impossible, which was part of why I escaped. I hadn’t secured a new income. This put me in a very awkward position, to trust someone I had known for a small amount of time to pay for my shelter and simple human adult needs. I shouldn’t have had feelings like this. That my boyfriend would help me out, without asking for anything in return. It was the words that surrounded me from what I thought were friends. Judgemental words that you wouldn’t say to a friend. Most people don’t call other people worthless, and if I ever saw

this behavior again, I would say something or leave to not be involved.

Even after it was over, Dane would call, “Why does this stupid chocolate burn all the time? I put it in the microwave for five minutes. It clogs the bottle and smells like shit. How did you do this?” I started with, “Chocolate needs to go to 103°, and then you add cold chocolate to start the crystal growing process. Ya know, you like crystals. You have to be really gentle with it. It's not like other sugar work. Try 30-second increments.” My monotone optimism. I'm drawing on paper, thinking about the microwave, and setting it with my mind. “That's going to take forever. Why would anyone do this?” I sighed, “They like Chocolate, do you like chocolate?”

After two work days with him, I gave up, and I lived on a wedge of Kerry-Gould aged white cheddar, coffee, and water for a week. Never ever alerting Mike, I was embarrassed. On one of his calls, he asked about Christmas, “Monaya, when was the last time you went home?” He would ask these serious life questions, and I would always laugh under my breath. Thinking to myself, excuse me, guy. I just left a relationship where I wasn't allowed a job outside of weed. A paranoid dumbass was living next to me, worried about a room full of legal weed. If you don't understand that statement, no one has psychologically broken you down. Be gracious to those who have endured this. It's beyond an ultra marathon to find your way back to yourself. I was a weed pastry chef who paid for everything. I understood why he didn't even think of any of this. He had a trust fund of some sort. It wasn't ever an issue he had to think about.

“2009, why do you ask?” I wasn't sure if, at that point, I would have wanted to go home. My parents' divorce lasted from 2008 until 2010. “It's about to be 2012. You haven't been home for Christmas? When was the last time you saw your mom and dad?” I started to let more of the ugly story part that I never really talked about out, “In 2009, when they were getting divorced and fighting over assets, they yelled at me to give their car back, so I did. I didn't want my mom to get yelled at every day.” I hadn't thought about my parents in a long time, and I was trying not to cry.

“Oh, are things okay there?” A long pause followed. “Yeah, my parents were getting divorced, and our empire was split. I was letting the chips fall. But I miss my grandmother dearly.” He cleared his throat, “I'm in the process of buying you a plane ticket. Can you send me the information on your driver's license? Is there anything else you would like for Christmas?” I wanted snow. “Nothing I can think of. There's no snow...” It had only snowed a few inches that year. “The time gaps before this person would start talking like someone hit the pause button. “Okay, well, I thought you would go home and see family for a week and then fly to Boston to meet my parents.” I was nervous and felt like I had a long pause, like a volley on a pong game, just a long distance. “Oh.”

Granted, his awkwardness was starting to rub off on me, and he was beginning to act what I thought was normal, with a faster relay time. “What do you want to do for New Years?” I was still cheese at this point to survive. “I have no idea. I usually am on the mountain, and I love that.” My little min-pin was at my feet. She had dog food, and I was happy about that. “There is no snow this year, Monaya. We have talked about snow three times in ten minutes. Do you want to go to Colorado? You can do anything you want. What do you want to do?” A minute passed: “I wanna see Phish for the three-day run at Madison Square Garden in New York.” I could hear a smile on the other end of the phone. “Perfect. I can make that happen. Just get on the plane? I know that's hard, and you hate it. Just get on the plane.”

I hadn't seen him for years. We were standing outside the bar in Bemidji, my dad smoking, “So how old is this Mike?” He was way too casual about asking who his daughter was hanging out with. At the same time, I was terrible at talking about it. Granted, my dad was pretty low-key regarding icebreakers with me. Somehow, he could work a room of a hundred people. Talk to his daughter about her boyfriend, two-in-a-lifetime conversations. “He's thirty-seven.” Why he was elated with this number, I have no idea. “Oh honey, that's perfect. And he's how you got here?” staring at the ground, “Yeah.” His words of encouragement, “Don't fuck it up.” I scoffed, “Thanks dad.” And that was the end of the conversation. “Hey, You want another beer?” I had expected, “When do I get to meet him?” “Where

did you meet?" I was annoyed with everyone except my Grandmother. "

They were de-icing the plane while I was boarding. Distracting myself with anything I could see, including this blue liquid sprayed on the plane I watched, I left my second boarding pass on the floor. I had to catch the second leg in Chicago. Weeeeeeezzzzzzzzzz, the electric cart shuffled me between gates, looking for something that was not there. "Here, let's just print you a new one." On the approach to land in Boston, I was the straight-line mouth, unphased or unimpressed emoji. Uncontrolled and completely candid my face as he received me. Holding one of my hands, he twirled me, "Spin, Spin, I wanna see it all." Blushing with a smile pressed hard across my face. Ripped up inside, still feeling like I had done something wrong.

"I can't wait to show you this hotel. It was America's first prison." Excuse me, reader, how would you respond to that? "Oh." This was my response to many things in Boston. My mind wrestling with letting go of hopes for snowy Tahoe and all things weed candy, the crew that had pushed me harder on a mountain than anyone, and the rebel. Would I still be a rebel if I settled down, but how do I express that? Why was this guy introducing me to his parents? We didn't even live together. "Hurry up, we are meeting my parents and cousins for dinner." I was sweating, fresh out of a shower, and I was already sweating before I had a shirt on. "Like Sicilian dinner?" a bead ran down my forehead. Mike had talked about family ritual feasts in conversation. "Yes. Extra blush, you will be getting a lot of kisses tonight." I put on my black turtle neck, the one I wore for anything I took seriously. The one from the Supreme Court visit, the one from graduate school interviews, the one I would lecture in thinking it was hard to undress James Bond at the lecture. Lucky Brand indigo Sophia boot cuts and the wrap. Of course, the crystal wrap was an amulet of raw crystals wrapped in silver wire that looked like something from the set of Zion in the *Matrix*.

Cut to an elevator opening on the tenth floor. The doors parted ways to expose the living room. "We're in someone's penthouse. Did you press the right button?" Eyebrows raised. "Yeah, we have the rooftop too. I'll take you up there after dinner." He walked in with a chocolate cake. I looked to the left, "Oh." Humans and hugs coming toward me, outstretched arms. This is Lorraine, my cousin, she's from Long Island. "Hi, my name is Monaya," even before Instagram. "Yes, we have heard about you. I want you to meet my daughter." Her accent was incredible, "Oh yeah, what did you hear?" I was curious; she had long nails gripping my arms gently. In slow motion, "Monaya, this is my father, John." Looking at this giant of a man directly in the face, my face turned into a smile with teeth. His arms outstretched, he picked me up off the floor when he hugged me. I had never had a Sicilian elder hug me. Mike wasn't the first Catholic Italian I had been on a date with. Just the first one who fully embodied the customs, it was beautiful to see. It would be five years before I would see red sauce made like that again. Tomatoes roasting on a pan in the oven, olive oil in a saucepan, the roar and crackle of the basil when added to the oil.

At the dinner table, all the questions came out. Minding my responses, as I had been trained for the last five years. Don't tell them about the pot. You own a pastry company Monaya. For the love of god, you didn't sell weed or work with weed. Don't even tell these people you work in kitchens. "I walked out of law school the day it started, but I built a business I owned part of the year before with my father." At that point, my father was holding onto the laundromat. Marilyn and John hugged me that night like I had been with their son for years. "I heard you two laughing in the elevator." My mom told me tonight. She said she hasn't heard me laugh like that since John...I need to stop at the office on the way to the hotel to grab some stuff. Do you want to see where we work?" I wanted coffee or tea. I was freezing. "Does it smell like a hundred-year-old bank like the rest of this place?" If you asked me what I think about Boston to this day, it's old. There are plaques everywhere certifying it is old. There she was, sassy Monaya. For a second, I felt like I would be okay even if he didn't like me. "Of course."

Climbing the stairs in another historical building, listening to my shoes doing that thing women's heels did in movies. Click, Click, Click. No regret, this noise was not part of my daily routine,

but I was curious about what it was like. He gathered what he needed at a monster mahogany banker's desk, complete with a green brass-tacked executive chair. Surveying all the pictures of men on the walls, the green carpet, and the cityscape out the windows, turning to look at him. He patted his leg, motioning, "Hey, come here for a second. Can we talk?" Not even a warning. Just thinking about when someone says that makes my neck hurt. The movement is like a plyometric exercise, twitch muscles. I sat on his lap, looking into his eyes, and wrapped in his arms.

"My brother..." This was the conversation about needing. His needs for companionship, inspiration, and to be needed. Your needs to be my needs. He explained what was happening with his brother's girlfriend of ten years. The words stand out to me, "I will be there." When I was saying this, I was 27 years old. I had no idea what I was saying or why. If I could get a spoonful of her courage again I probably wouldn't have to write this book. Thinking back on it after losing my father in 2022, he was worried about what would happen after his parents were gone. He had lost his brother. "Let's go out to that little fake lake thing where I slackline." Granted, there was no snow. It was still only 10 degrees. "I have something for ya." This guy would try to stay one step ahead of me. The Christmas lights were gold and reflected off the water. He sparked the joint, "You've gotta be going through withdrawal. Are you okay?" He handed me the tiniest joint of terrible weed. We danced all the way back to the Liberty.

There was coffee with cream waiting for me on the side table the following day. "I'm going to the gym. I know yoga is more your thing. We'll go tomorrow in Connecticut." This guy was introducing me to his closest friends and family. We had been seeing each other for maybe two months. Sitting up in bed, I was going full hybrid in an NYPD tee shirt, searching for weed, and coffee with my eyes shut. "What the ... .Connecticut?" I was blinking, looking left and right, trying to focus my eyes away from the window-blasting light. He was stressed, "Yeah, I'm going to take you to meet my friends on the way to New York." Still blinking, holding the coffee cup to my lips and pausing, "Oh." Tiny Monaya under the covers, "Oh my god, I'm going to forget all this. Just act like you are sleeping."

Mike washed my clothes the night before, hanging the two Merino wool base layers I loved to wear daily. His mom put them in the dryer. I tamed a 12-year-old yell at the laundry lady, tiny Monaya, again later. "It's fine." I knew my little belly would be exposed to snow, cold, and the annoying feeling of shrunk Merino wool. Call me on the spectrum, but fabric is really irritating sometimes. He kept two brand-new Patagonia base layers in the truck for years after we parted, trying to give them to me each time we crossed paths. Impatient to get to Yoga and show me off to his friends, driving like Senna through Jersey. Mike stopped at a random headshop on a corner in rural Connecticut. Puzzled again. "What? I know you love vintage, and I need some supplies. We're going to Phish. It will be easier here." We flipped through vinyl records, Nintendo games, and looked at a lot of glass. I found this box of old posters, 11 x 20, tabloid-sized. I held up the print for Mike to see. It was a composite photograph, a hand coming down into a bunch of bingo balls, naked men sprinkled in, with a quote about the draft on the bottom. "Yep, that's coming with us. Show me what else ya got over there."

Star Wars, Willie Nelson, Johnny Cash, Sean Connery as Bond, The Draft, and the poster of Michael getting married in The Godfather all came with us. "We're going to Bikram with my friend Paul in a half hour, okay?" With activities planned for me, I'm not sure why I didn't take a nap instead of playing hurry up and wait nervously. I had never set foot in a Bikram-trademarked studio. I didn't know I would have to get off my mat, do what I was told, and don't even think about modifying a pose for my injuries. Walking the line, I was. Pushing through every movement, not even time to think about putting one foot in front of the other. I missed the shenanigans we pulled in the studio in Tahoe together. Him in the back corner watching my progress, meeting together at the end for headstands or dueling mermaids, him pushing into sugar cane or the beginning of scorpion. I laid there today, him watching. His favorite was when I was resting, face down on my stomach. "It's the only time you look peaceful. Literally mashing peaceful energy in the room, washing over everyone Monaya. You can feel it."

A large black man came around the corner, "Wow, Monaya, your practice is... amazing. Mike

wasn't kidding. Hi, I'm Paul. Mike and I have been friends since boarding school. I have heard a lot about you." Committed? The data did not compute. What was I committed to? I was just doing what felt natural. "All good things, right? You heard all good things?" He smiled. "More importantly, it is true. What he said about you. It's remarkable to see it in person." If people talk about you, why do they announce it all the time? "Mike, are you okay with ribeye on Caesar salad?" I was looking at Mike, "Monaya. Are you okay with ribeye on Ceaser?" They talked, the three of them. Paul, his wife, and Mike, while I played with the kids. Thinking to myself, I love kids. I love to watch them learn. "We gotta go, Monaya. We're going to be late?" I responded while still playing with the kids on the floor, "It's Phish, they play for four hours..." He tapped me on the shoulder, "It's New York. We gotta walk to the hotel and stuff?" This was my first time in New York. "Walk to the hotel?" I'm not sure if it was disgust or if I was just not understanding the program. "Yeah, we have parking reservations ¼ mile over from our hotel." Completely natural and forgetting the kids were right next to me, "What the actual who-ha is that?" I think it came out as disgust but I had never been to a hotel you park ¼ mile away from. A hundred miles an hour down the New Jersey Turnpike apparently is nothing to brag about unless you are driving in reverse.

I closed my eyes and leaned back. A completely foreign feeling. Jumping back into my skin as the elevator opened. This wook's eyes were the size of black holes. His body floating somewhere in between. "Do you think I can take my phone in? It says no cameras, and I don't want them to take my phone. I got all the way to the door and it said no cameras. I don't want them to take my phone..." I don't know about you as a reader, but I have a soundtrack that sometimes plays as the scene of my life plays out. Lambchop tuned in, "This is the song that never ends, yes it goes on and on my friends. Some people started singing it. Not knowing how it goes, and they'll continue singing it for ever just because...this is the song that never ends." This guy was spun sauce, I thought about if I was standing there alone and spun out (a scenario that has never happened), "Sir, you can take your phone in. Do you wanna walk with us?" Mike looked at me nodding. I leaned into New York with ease. It was weird, and so was I. We were going into Phish. This was me, my scene. Something that I had learned many nuances about over the years, only going to four shows. I knew the vibe was going to be electric, it was going to be happy and silly.

"How now, brown cow?" my phone flashed the text from Tahoe. "Steam," I replied. Phish tours with their lighting designer, he continuously adds improvisations, adding to the experience of seeing the band, like another instrument. It was the first time I had seen them play the song Steam. The lightning made the band members look like black horses with steam coming from their nostrils. I was impressed and amused by these seven minutes. "Round eye!" The phone lit up! He was looking for me from the couch in Tahoe. "13th Mike's side." Mike had his hands in his pockets and looked bored. The phone flashed again, "I see you round eye." The girl next to us passed me a joint as Loving Cup came on as the second encore. It was not just a joint, and I would watch ants climb the ceiling for at least three hours while Mike slept. Maybe the only time in my life I watched the street. No, you can not go watch people on the street. This is New York Monaya, you can watch from inside after midnight. "What do you want to do today? We only have one day in New York to play." I knew if I set foot in a museum that would be the entirety of the day, so I said, "Art, I wanna see art." I knew he was waiting for me to say a restaurant. I didn't say any, a prompt followed "Okay, and eat?" Beaming, bringing my chin down, turning my head, "I want to eat art." He started laughing "You got it, kid. I think you need to see Ground Zero, would you be okay with that?"

The Ground Zero museum had opened a few months prior. It was crawling with humans. I connected with the museum. Standing in front of a pair of Manolo Blaniks. They were the collectible standard issue type Manolo Blanics, not the party shoes you saw on Sex and The City. Black Mary Janes, very used with small veins where her feet moved daily. They were art to me. The meaning and emotion they evoked. How much I admired this woman working a corporate job in a thousand-dollar pair of

heels. They were her favorite, the plaque said. She rushed 38 flights of stairs in them. I broke as I read the words. Connecting with a national tragedy we as teenagers had watched moment to moment rocking our nation at the core. I must have been there for at least twenty minutes staring at the shoes.

"Monaya, are you there? I got you a tee shirt." He was looking at me, confused by my concentration. "Yeah." I didn't have words to explain but he filled them somehow with my exact thoughts. "You could be that woman. I know Monaya. I know, those are your grad school gift to your newly passed the bar self. I know it's hard for your generation to connect with this event. I'm glad you got to see this." I was still crying. "This is a mess. It's only going to get messier." He took my hand, "I know, but you need to eat. It's time for lunch. Let's get a cab, we are going to the financial district. I have something planned for you. I know you love this Chef."

The cab pulled up outside Le Halles. I looked at him wide-eyed. I was going to eat in Anthony Bourdain's restaurant. "Get anything you want Monaya, even if you are not going to eat it all, get anything you want. Chocolate cake, too." While Mike was on the East Coast tending to family a month prior, I had gone to San Francisco with a friend to a dance party. She knew I loved food and we ate at a place called Zuni Cafe. She had ordered this chocolate cake, I didn't even like chocolate at that time. I tasted it anyway. This cake has been on every menu I have had, extremely complex in technique while very simple in presentation and ingredients. I had told Mike about it and was looking for another one. Caesar salad, snails, and of course, steak frites. Every single morsel down the hatch, I licked the plate sitting in the front window of what I considered an institution. "Someone was hungry." The anxiety had held half my food on plates hostage for the last four days. I let Phish and New York take over. "Can we go in here?" glancing at an art gallery we were walking by. "Really? This one?" We had stopped at the Puma store, with a bag full of Alexander McQueen and Ferrari gear in one hand, holding mine with the other. "Look at that bike outside, it has a crocheted cover. I wanna know what's inside that gallery."

Inside there were paintings I had seen in the pages of Juxtapose magazines. Gothic Lolita girls with green skin and alien-like exaggeration. I went downstairs by myself. I stood in front of a 20 x 10 foot Tom Everhart painting of Snoopy driving. Just the front end of the car, window down with drips of mud scattered everywhere around snoopy, the entire composition in black and white, almost Rorschach looking. This painting haunted me for years, thinking about Mike as Snoopy the race car, the sheer size of the painting, and the fact I knew Schwart's Minnesota Snoopy wasn't allowed to be painted due to copywriters. How? How was this happening? Turns out, he's the only person allowed to paint snoopy. I thought about this approved perspective. The relationship the two artists had.

"We have to get you to the plane." I hate being rushed to do anything, to this day. "Fine, I think I have everything packed." I was annoyed I would go back to Tahoe to fend for myself. He kissed me at the automatic doors. I was short with my temper and had flight anxiety. "I'll see you soon, okay? You're gonna be just fine." He was holding both my hands in his hands. "Okay." I unconsciously hugged him extra hard, thinking, great, I'm going back to be alone again. Sure, a deep breath of that weird air they have in the tube to the plane. Okay. I'm going to be okay. "14C....13ABC, 14C....12ABC...14C, yes window!" Pulling the Patagonia Das Parka, I travel with the hood over my face, head leaning on the window, I fell asleep. Twenty minutes into the air, the hood came down. "Hello there, sleeping beauty." Mike was sitting next to me, working on his Laptop. My eyebrow raised, a stupor look on my face. He was so excited, "You think I would let you fly back to paradise without me and end this moment we're having?" I rolled my eyes, the arm going around me. He put my hood back up, and I leaned into him. Quietly in my ear, he whispered. "I want to take the truck out." I whispered back, "Black Rock Desert."

That night was one of the funniest nights I have ever had at yoga. Our mats were in the middle of the back row in a full class of yogis. From toppling tree pose, he dropped into sugar cane. Doing his best to extend but stalled out, standing split. For the first time, I followed, not shaking, gracefully breathing into my back leg. The room filled with ambition, two warriors, side by side. He snapped my headband halfway through, and while waiting in savasana for the next pose, I attached it to his hand.

Lifting up his arm to cross his body, he let out a bellow of laughter. The two girls on his left giggled at us. As everyone left the room, we stayed. Practicing inversions. He held me up while I let my back fold over, seeing my feet come over my head, floating in mid-air. This was the scorpion. It took time, but I made it back to that pose. Scorpion never suited me.

“You’re only having a Baguette and goat cheese for dinner? you need more steak, protein.” Concerned, I grinned and replied, “CHEEEEEEESE.” We stopped at Emerald Bay, noshing provisions and coconut waters. It was rare. The moon was huge, and no one was there. When we had stopped there on previous yoga missions, we would sit in the truck hiding and watch other people come up and listen to what they said. We got out and went and stood on that rock. That rock I stood on by myself, over and over. Staring at Lake Tahoe. Letting the color blue wash over and renew me every time. That rock where I stood alone, where he put his arms around me and kissed my neck for the first time. Again, we stood there wrapped up together on my rock. “You have any weed?” This was always an odd question to me.

“Yeah, why?” What do you do if you are a connoisseur of something when someone repeatedly substitutes lower-quality goods? Do you try to correct them? Do you try to show them? In my late 30s, I would finally stop caring about my guilt when someone else tried to impress me with something they knew nothing about. “I would have brought you some. Will you walk down there with me?” I was beyond relieved that he didn’t have any subpar weed I had to smoke in gratitude. “Vikings? Yeah, let’s go.” There wasn’t much snow on the ground, but the switchbacks were icy, and I was frisky. Hopping from patch to patch, I ran down the moonlit trail. He walked behind me, a grin on his face. He sat down on a bench at the end of one of the hairpin switchbacks. Patting the bench, “Tell me a story... Tell me a story your parents would tell about you.”

I stood on the bench as if I was giving a speech. “I was six, and we had this 40x40 concrete parking pad in front of my parent’s lake house. I would make rounds on this over and over every morning while my dad watched me with his coffee. Faster and faster every day in my little donuts. Until one morning, I lost control of the pedals, and the big wheel took off from me. Here I am holding on to little mini pink BMX handlebars. Huge plastic wheel in front of me. Holding my feet away from the spinning pedals. I learned, breaking my leg the year before, stay away from wheels in turn. All of the sudden, I was airborne.” I jumped off the bench in full animation, holding my arms out like the little bike was in my hands now.

“I had gone off the edge of the hill with speed. The only thing in front of me was the trees holding the steep cliff of a hill up from erosion. I closed my eyes so hard. Bracing for the stop. Even six-year-old Monaya knew how to fall. I don’t know how. A down tree stopped the big wheel’s front tire, causing me to fly forward. I was wedged under a huge log, the big wheel stuck in under another log behind me. ‘MONAYA!!!!!!!!!!!! ARE YOU OKAY?!!!!’ My dad yelled. He would tell me every time he told his story, ‘I thought you were dead. I was so worried. When you yelled, my eyes filled with tears.’ Little Monaya cried out, ‘Dad, dad, can you help me. I’m stuck.’ Struggling to get the words out, he asked me, ‘Did you get the wind knocked out of you little one? Are you okay?’ He was holding the big wheel with one hand, it was dangling. He reached out to his other. I will always remember thinking he was the strongest man in the world, able to pull me out from under that tree, me dangling from the other arm like the bike. He hauled me up the hill with the bike. ‘Don’t tell your mom, okay?’ Why daddy?”

He would tell me repeatedly this is the story, stating he would tell it at my wedding. Here I was, in a romantic love affair. “Is that a true story?” I wasn’t annoyed that he would even ask that, but why would you ever question the human experience of another? I have eyes, I have skin, I feel, I hear, I see. It’s a common thing for me to consider before talking to another human being. Why was this a common theme for the rest of my life? I understand disregarding another’s experience because you don’t have time to understand it with your personal obligations, but he asked me for a story my parents would tell, “Yes stupid. I’m cold, let’s go.” Napping for hours while Mike worked on the green Landrover Defender 90 he had crossed the country several times in. While waiting, I would learn about checking



differentials, packing axle shafts, extra diesel, and being patient because it's a LandRover. After we stopped at the butcher and I got a new pair of socks, I slept through the actual load up, jerry can diesel filling, and most of the drive into Nevada. Waking up about a mile before saying, "Turn here." The sign said Playa Entrance 5. "Yeah, this is where you turn to get on Playa for Burning Man. Turn here."

He took off like a bat out of hell. Staring at the dust cloud in the rearview mirror, I smiled. He smiled, "Will you take some pictures? You Brought your DSLR, right?" He set up my shot perfectly with the full moon in the blue sky, golden hour upon us. BOOM. BANG. BANG. BANG. BANG. A mortar shell exploded in the side with screamers coming out of it. It was a full scene, my little miniature pinscher running around nose to the ground, little footprints following, fireworks exploding, yoga poses standing on the truck. "You wanna shoot?" He didn't have any words other than a command. "Shoot, what?" I was holding a camera. I thought he was talking about taking a picture. "My Glock. I'm not even trying to make a shitty joke." I looked away, not very amused. "Oh."

Sliding the clip and turning away from me. "Cover your ears." I counted 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. "Here, put these in." Putting ear plugs in my hand and continuing, "This releases the clip. Put your hand here, the hammer..." I let him move my hand, looking at how it functioned. "Will pinch me," I finished his sentence and continued, "How many are in here?" Pressing the button to see the clip, "10. Put your arms out like this." His arms were under mine. Kicking my foot forward with his, bracing my leg. "Walk into it, put your weight forward. I know you're scared. I know it's loud, but you have to stay in control." My back was on his chest. "Pull, go." He nodded and kept insisting. "Now?"

"Yes, pull, go now. Pull the trigger and don't stop." I closed my eyes and braced for the noise. BANG! I stopped, looking at the hot brass smoking on the ground beside me. I grinned. BANG, BANG, BANG, BANG, BANG, BANG, BANG. "WOW, no hesitation after the first shot. We're going to be okay. Now we work on form." The look on Mike's face while I picked up each shell, counting, puzzled with me. Our eyes met. "Leave no trace. Pack it in. Pack it out." He learned that pot-growing hippies will shoot stuff too. "You're going to do that while we drive tomorrow." He was pulling out dinner stuff from a sack, setting it on the hood of the Defender. "What? But I can't pick up the..." Watching him setup a kitchen in three minutes. "Monaya, when it counts, you won't be able to pick up the brass then either. Pick up as much as you can when time permits, but save yourself, okay?" The moonlight danced over the hood of 90 while he pan-fried us New York strips. "I have to go back to Boston to drive E36 back to California. Would you like to fly there and drive back with me? We can go see a concert or something while we're in Boston."

He traveled all the time but didn't have much of a plan outside of a destination. When given the chance to think about a day or event, my planning was impeccable. However, I doubted myself, like most things I'm good at. "Sure, any perimeters you have on the show?" Flipping the steaks, "Will you make it really cool?" I cannot imagine the look on my face in response, "Uh, what does that mean?" I asked again, with the self-doubt lingering in the background. He continued with dinner. He was always hungry. "Just pick something and tell me. I'll get tickets for it." Packing up with coffee and a dog walk, he said, "Let's do the routine." He stepped into the driver's seat. I didn't know before I woke up that he was loading clips. Eleven miles into the drive, he handed me the Glock. "Roll the window down, pick a rock you think is about a mile away and shoot towards it. I just want you to understand the recoil. Make sure you point the muzzle way out." Inside the truck, the shots sounded like a stapler that would pierce your ears. Pop. Pop. Pop. "Pull, don't stop until you pull the trigger and it clicks. Keep going Monaya." His hand shaking as he reached out and patted me on the back. "GOOD JOB!" I rolled my eyes.

Back in the office of Karl's Land Rover shop three days later. "Did you find anything you wanted to see in Boston?" I was standing in my puffy yellow coat behind the desk, scrolling. "Tool, Tool is playing that weekend. I want to go see Tool again." I was excited about this. Thinking about the geometry visuals they use, the mathematics baked into the music, and the theatrics of their frontman, Maynard James Keenan. Tool brings out a different perspective for everyone who is fortunate enough to

encounter them. “You’ve seen Tool?” He looked at me like women don’t listen to the band Tool. Granted, I’m that conventionally beautiful woman who doesn’t talk to anyone in the crowd flailing around dancing for three hours and returning to their hotel room to take a bath... “Three times, I want to see them again.” He was as enthusiastic about it as I was. “Yep. I’ll get tickets. Just get on the plane, okay?” His eyes were almost black looking at me. “Ya. I’ll see you next week.” He kissed me as we passed each other in front of the car, him grabbing my hip. “I can’t wait to see you.” A return glance. “Ditto.”

He was waiting at the gate in a way too big for his trench coat at the gate. “What is this thing?” I was examining this giant trench coat he was wearing. “It’s my brother’s. He used to look so cool. I wanted to be as cool as you.” It would be a few, maybe ten years before I got my own that fit me properly, I understood how cool he felt in his brother’s old coat. Looking at him and his energy, “Is this because I wrote Mike sucks in the sand? You know the ocean washed that away, right?”

I spent a lot of that trip by myself. I had no idea what Mike was gearing up for. Eating Italian, not midwestern Italian, but region specific, explained, “My mom’s recipe,” Italian. Mike was secretly preparing his mother and father for retirement in Florida. The visuals started. Parabola. “Do you understand their art? Do you like their art?” he asked at the show. I was finally able to be myself again for a moment. “Are you kidding me? Those are politicians shitting from the mouth, and it’s some of my favorite. Are you not a fan?” His eyes were big, not leaving the screens on the side of the stage. “I’ve never seen this before.” He was mesmerized. “This early artwork, much of it curated by Adam Jones and Danny Carey. The drummer and guitarist. Wait until the Alex Grey stuff comes on. It’s like seeing a miracle.” Forty Six and 2 started playing, and I lit it. Another member of the Tool army on my left looked at me and leaned down, “FYI, there’s zero tolerance in Boston.” I was confused, doing my thing, ignoring everything outside my element. “What?!” I yelled, mildly startled. “Yeah, you don’t look like you’re from here. When you started dancing, we all determined the west coast. By the smell of it too.”

Leaning down behind the seat as I had done about a thousand times before, Inhale. Maynard was on stage singing, “Change is coming through my shadow.” I exhaled a plume. Handing it discreetly to Mike. He did not bend down. I was singing along, “I’ve been crawling on my belly, clearing out what could have been. I have been wallowing in my own chaotic insincere disillusion.” My eyes were closed at his point, arms flailing above, hips swaying. I was raging my face off at Tool. I jumped when his hand touched my hip, my eyes in disbelief as the security guard took Mike away. “I’ll be right back, keep dancing, you are probably the most attractive I have ever seen you right now. Don’t stop for anything, and beat the shit out of anyone if they touch you. Fight like it’s me, okay? I’ll be right back.”

Like a bird squawking, I screamed when he clasped my hand. “Where did they take you?” Turning towards him, the light came through behind the curtain of the hallway. “They were asking about your smells.” My face crinkled in question. “And?” He was cheesing ear to ear. “And I didn’t have any smells to give them, so they let me go.” Rolling my eyes, “With a hundred dollar bill?” “Maybe. Did you have fun?” A concerned dad type, I’ve already gone back to Tool, flailing about. Totally in love with the moment. “Maybe..This may hurt a little but it’s something you’ll get used to,” I sang the lyric at him. I pointed at the face of the little blob on the big screens. This little blob of modeling clay, his face on a spring oscillating from detached to attached, holding my hand out in front of my face, making a motion like a mask going on and off.

Walking to the hotel that night, “Do you want anything for our travels?” He knew, I knew, “Chocolate cake. I want a chocolate cake like that one in San Francisco.” He was into the chase as much as I was. “Let’s see what we can find.” Two days and halfway across the country, his fatigue showed through. Sitting at a gas pump, he said to me, “I need a shot. I’m in a lot of pain.” I had no idea what he was talking about. I knew he had a condition called Ankylosing Spondylitis, a type of arthritis onset in your twenties. Looking at him helplessly, me full of energy, bored in the passenger’s seat; he wouldn’t let me drive. “What can I do?” He sighed, “Just be. Be here with me. This is just it, I know I haven’t seen your worst.” My heart sank. He wouldn’t let me drive, he wouldn’t rest. What was I supposed to do? Upset as

he wouldn't let me drive, as it would have helped him, and I love to drive.

"Yo, you gonna pay rent?" I took a deep breath as I looked at the text. Why did she always have to be mildly threatening. I didn't even know what day it was. Twenty days had gone by. From the desert, back to Boston, I hadn't filled a single order for work. I had zero income at that point. My heart sank further. "Let's go to Santa Fe today. It's snowing over Colorado, and my BMW is rear wheel drive." He was looking at the weather. "Sure, the Georgia O'Keeffe museum is there, I'd like to check that out." My first art exhibit I went to with my mother was Georgia O'Keeffe and Alfred Stieglitz. "I've been meaning to stop there for the last two years." I knew he was lying and just trying to fit in with me. It was becoming a theme. I was fine with him wanting to learn what I was into, I wasn't happy with him trying so hard. After three hours on the road, we were taking an off ramp. One eye open, "Why are we stopping?" blinking and looking around. "I'm going to buy a Pendleton blanket." He said, I barely heard him, I was fixed on the animals. "LOOK LLAMAS!!!!" He started laughing. "Yeah, I thought you might like that too." He grinned. This was an old cabin somewhere on the plateau of Oklahoma. It had exposed vaulted ceilings, windows all over the transom, beautiful natural light beaming all over this dark cabin.

I was staring at the dream catchers in the light. These were no average dream catchers. They were three dimensional instead of a flat wall hanger. Gnarled, and twisted, the willow branches lurched in and out from each other. The deer sinew strand holding it together, beautiful beads and intricate weaving around its shape. "That's the wanderer." She said from behind the counter. "I looked up and back at him, "Mike, I need that." His blanket being boxed up at the counter, he responded, "Monaya, how are we going to get it home?" I was insistent. "I don't care. I need that thing." Turning to the store clerk, "Ma'am, can you get that down and box it up for us. Do you ship?....Monaya, I don't want to ship that..." I was pretty thrilled with my find. I thought he was annoyed, he was just worried. I don't know why. Putting it in the back seat of the car, I had a plan.

Somehow, the box and the blanket fit in there with the cake. The stars do really shine brighter in the desert. Downtown Santa Fe is mostly adobe, a soft blanket of snow has covered the log pole beams coming out of the buildings. The voice of my mother telling me stories of Georgia O'Keeffe at my first visit to a museum ever. "She was in love with him up to the moment he died. Chasing him everywhere he went until she didn't know what to do. So she went to the desert." He was over twenty years older than her. I thought it was romantic but really stupid and unrealistic. Her choice to go to the desert was intriguing to me. Her painting of the desert, a rock with a red rock with a large hole in the middle, the moon shining bright inside, stops you at the entrance of the Gallery. Time stood still in that gallery, at each painting. The flowers giving me emotional feelings as I pass by each one. The deserts are a stark contrast and necessary for appreciation of the flowers. One colorful and almost whimsical, the other a more muted pallet. A jukebox record change to a new sound as you turn the corner. Her boyfriend's paintings took over. They were like Basquiat. Alive. Young. Completely different. Why were they here? Why was he that big of a part of the gallery?

The texts from Tahoe swirled around me like letters floating in midair. My roommate, the tall, dreadlocked lesbian from the dispensary, messaged repeatedly alongside the ex-boyfriend I had moved out. "He's so much older than you. Why are you being a hoe?" "Oh so now you fly all over the country and don't want to be friends anymore?" "You stupid slut, where is my money?" "Got it. We're not good enough for Jersey huh?" I stopped responding. Feeling extremely isolated without any support besides this man I had met a few months prior and dated for just over a month.

"Monaya, you okay? You look...I got you a tee shirt." He held out a bag, I tried to be grateful even while I was feeling sad. I had little pools in my eyes. "I wanted the seeds from her garden." This was when he tried hard and I really appreciated him. "You shall have the seeds from her garden." We walked into the giftshop, my attitude picking up when I found pens shaped like her flowers. "Can I get four of these pens too, two poppies and two lilies?" My signature spouting from a calla lily pen as I signed the receipt. He held out the bag of my goodies for the woman to put more of these beautiful pens in.

"I'm hungry. You've gotta be starving. Let's get some eggs and get out of this town." This diner was probably in the first Michelin guide. Its exterior is a faded replica of a sand painting. Zigzag lines in perfect geometric pattern surrounding a phoenix rising from the jagged black ashes represented by a trapezoid shape. I killed the last of the chocolate cake after breakfast. "Holy shit, you're not okay. Can we deal with that a little later? I want to get on the road right now. We should try to go to that big hole?" I know my head turned as I said, "Big hole?" Scrapping the last of the frosting from the box. "Yeah, the world's largest crater is in Arizona, just outside Flagstaff, I thought we should see some snow." Like a cat, in the warmth of the desert sun, I napped on the edge of cloud nine that day. Waking up occasionally to hear the Grateful Dead coming out of the stereo. I woke up at sunset, "We're almost there. Can you look up somewhere for us to eat?" Blinking again and again, I shook my head, trying to wake up, "Where? We're almost where?"

"The hole, will you make us a reservation somewhere amazing to eat tonight? I can tell you need some TLC. You know that eating beautiful food does that for you, right? Like you turn into a different person behind the food." We zipped over a grate in the ground. "Sure. How many cattle grates have you gone over?" The sun was going down, it was getting darker by the minute. "Two. Why?"

I was looking down at my phone, not paying attention to the road. "Just be careful. I have a feeling. And a cow will take us out in this thing at 80 mph. My dad will kill you if something like that happens to his daughter." It was dark when we got to the hole. It doesn't matter what time of day you get there. The abyss below stares back at you. I imagined it was the same during the day, just orange. "Stay back from the edge." A realistic thought from someone who cares about you, I took it as a person who just woke up. We were flying down the hill, me still looking down at the phone, typing in information for the reservation. "The Tinderbox. We're going to the Tinderbox for dinner." The screech of the tires and feeling of inertia pushed. There was a cow in front of us. I closed my eyes and braced, screaming loud. He pushed harder on the brakes. Stopped in the road completely, he put the car in park. "How did you know that?" His arm across the head rests, like a father asking what happened, he said it again. "How did you know that? The cow. Monaya, how did you know about the cow? How did you know there would be a cow in the road?" I didn't answer him.

Experiencing a pop culture classic flavor by flavor will change your entire perspective on food. The Sips. A 24 year old merlot mixed with a Mexican Coca-Cola washed over my pallet. As complex as my thoughts, as simple as something anyone would want. It is a juxtaposition that not many chefs or beverage directors have ever thought of. This particular chef was addicted to soda. My Dr Pepper braised pork jowl told me so. Again, when you break down an iconic flavor combination, history unravels in your mouth. Your own history and memories with the food product you have experienced a thousand times before, and the chef. Like an art piece, thoughts swarmed me with meaning.

"How did you know about the cow Monaya?" He asked again. Pushing the food around my plate, "I donno, intuition?" He was disappointed with the answer. "Intuition? Are you kidding me? You said that less than seconds before the cow..." It was like he wanted to add gasoline to the fire or something. I had no idea. I didn't want to talk about it. "I don't know. There is a lot of shit in this world that should have killed me by now. There is just something..." Like a stalemate at the dinner table, it was quiet for at least three minutes. "Something? Huh? Just something?"

"Yeah, something. Something like my grandparents were struck by lightning multiple times, my dad was born without a soft spot, the world knows why I'm here, something. I don't know. It just happens." I didn't know what else to say. "It just happens?" He just wouldn't let up. "Yeah, like magic bullets." I was trying to put food in my mouth so I didn't have to respond. "Magic bullets?" He was greatly intrigued at this point. "Yeah, if you stand in the line of fire, you can see them coming. Sometimes it may be good, and sometimes it may be shit. It's just a feeling." It was just a natural thing to me. "A feeling?" I probably looked like an annoyed teenager looking at their parents with a "get with the times" attitude.

“Yeah, my dad and I talked about it when I was really young. He explained that we are particles. Made of particles and little particles ourselves. It's all connected. If my stomach hurts, if my body is shaking, if there is something off, blurt whatever comes to mind. I didn't know if I was hungry or if there would be a cow. It worked. Here we are, no cow tipping. Eating an incredible dinner. Can we move on?” I was about to get up from the table. “A feeling?” he repeated. The last thing I said at dinner was my response, “Yeah, a feeling. You have those, right?”

I had my hand out the window of the car, “GOD DAMN, GOD DAMN, GOD DAMN!!!!” I was yelling at the Hoover Dam. “Shut up Monaya, I know you're an atheist but stop it.” My beliefs surrounding religion worried him. Mike is a devoted Catholic. “Fine, I apologize. And that's not true. Can I talk about Hoovers?” He parked, his smile gleamed. Where you sit behind the wheel of your car smugly knowing what you are about to do is just for fun and only fun. The wind swirled around us, and my legs trembled on the observation bridge. “We have seen the God damn. Can we go now?” We ran, hands clutching each other. More texts flooded my phone as I entered service for a few minutes outside Area 51. The wells in my eyes formed. Much like the edge of that damn, there was no public release valve. Drops started to fall over the edge. It took about five minutes to get into St. Stephens before he pulled over. “Saint Stephen will remain. All he's lost, he shall regain,”

“Monaya, I can tell. You know I can tell, right? I know something is not okay at home, and you don't want to return. You're doing that thing you did when we would go to yoga, staring out the window, glazed like a donut.” I didn't smile at the joke. “Well, I've been traveling, and I can't just work from anywhere. I have nothing left in savings. I don't have any orders from my customers. I have rent to pay, and I'm playing with some trust funder that doesn't have to worry about stuff like this. I can't. I don't know how to do this. I don't know how to make all of it happen.” I felt stupid. “I'll pay your rent.” He said quickly. My independence entirely rejected “No. You can't do that. I won't let you do that. I can't. No.”

“Sometimes we have to take help from those we love. And Sometimes, we have enough to give to those we love. I'm falling in love with you, and I would do anything for you. I have more than enough to pay your rent for the entire year. Do you want me to pay your rent for the entire year?” He looked at me in desperation. “No.” I reached for the door handle to walk away. He locked the door and grabbed my hand. “Please don't do that. I will help you. You just have to tell me. I know that's really hard for you, but you have to tell me. I can't help you unless you tell me.” I knew it would cause me more of a mess, but I wanted him to know I would let him help me. “Fine.” It wasn't the showing of vulnerability that I needed help, but if I would take the help from you or not.

I didn't respond to his comment about falling in love. I was terrified of returning to Tahoe. It's one thing to feel haters in a group setting. Having them at all stops, home, and work is another altogether. I could have talked about it more. I could have said it was still continuing. I cared enough about him to keep his focus on what I thought mattered to him at the sacrifice of myself. His parents needed him. The noise of humming from the bathroom. He was still here. “Hey, will you do the sponge thing on my back?” “Ya.” A brief chuckle under my breath. He dressed and went down the hill to “Take care of things.” Leaving without asking if I would like to leave the house I had been stranded in for the better part of a month.

My roommate was in a great mood when she returned from her college class, “Mike paid your rent. I saw him at the bank. Nice work on that one. And he pays your rent?” It was a weird question to me. I was upset that someone would directly attack my independence with jealousy or whatever was intended by the “pays your rent” comment. I went into my bedroom, closed my door, and lay in bed, rolling over every time I felt the tears coming. I felt like a man's accessory. I hated it. This was not how I was supposed to feel in a relationship. A week or two later in the discussion, the only words I remember from that conversation were, “You're mine.” In my head, the running shoes were already on. I thought to myself as he kept talking. This is how you treat a woman you call yours? What about the part where he gave himself to me, the way he gave me to himself? I was looking for “You're mine, I'm yours.”

He left for Boston and occasionally called. Eventually, Dane was in the same situation, unable to fill my position of chef in our company. He sat on my front porch, desperate and yelling. Trying to calm him down, my roommate let him inside our house. There was a point where he suggested I call Mike for help. I couldn't handle one guy saying he loved me, you're mine, and all sorts of the things you would say to your long-term girlfriend. The other guy camped out, trying to use the other one. Myself being the conduit between them. Trying to hold on to a business I built over the prior two years, trying to hold on to a person showing me a new world, trying to hold on to myself. The men, one cut the cord on the other, ejecting myself from both. Me, I sat trying to understand what happened. A month passed before I reached out... Reaching out to one of the most self-sustainable people I have ever met.

Mike's time was very short-lived in my life. He still had an incredible impact, and I could write more about him. I loved Landrover Defenders before I met him, watching the Gods Must Be Crazy countless times with my grandmother.

Dear Michael J. Guastella,

I appreciate your continued interest in my progress. Forever. I hope our paths cross while overlanding in the desert. I'll introduce you to Trevor because I will always take him with me to the desert given time permitting. I hope your wife accompanies you out there the way I did. Also, Mike, if you are reading, I didn't have to shave my head in order to drive my own right hand drive Defender 110.

Monaya M. MaGaurin

## Recipes that should be made at home.

### Caesar Salad

#### Insalata di Mare (Italian Seafood Salad)

### Caesar Salad Dressing

3 oil-packed anchovy fillets, chopped  
1 large garlic clove, chopped  
¾ tsp. (or more) kosher salt  
1 large egg yolk\*  
2 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice  
¾ tsp. Dijon mustard  
¼ cup plus 2 Tbsp. vegetable oil  
3 Tbsp. Parmesan, finely grated

Pulse everything in the food processor except ¼ cup of vegetable oil.

Once all ingredients except oil are combine, slowly pour the oil in a stream into the blender while running. This emulsifies the dressing, whipping air into the oil. Do not over process as the dressing will break, usually can be emulsified with a small amount of warm water.

### Insalata di Mare (Italian Seafood Salad)

1/2 pound (225g) dry-packed bay or sea scallops, cut into 1/2-inch pieces  
2 teaspoons grated zest and 1 cup (240ml) juice from 8 to 10 lemons, divided  
1 pound (450g) large shrimp, peeled and deveined  
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt, plus more to taste  
1/4 teaspoon baking soda  
4 medium cloves garlic, 2 crushed and 2 minced, divided  
1/2 cup plus 1 tablespoon (135ml) extra-virgin olive oil, divided  
2 pounds (1kg) mussels, de-bearded and scrubbed (see notes)

5 whole peppercorns

2 bay leaves

1 pound (450g) cleaned squid bodies and tentacles, bodies cut into 1/2-inch rings and large tentacles halved lengthwise

1/4 cup packed minced flat-leaf parsley leaves and tender stems (3/4 ounce; 20g)

Dash cayenne pepper, dash ground coriander seeds (optional) freshly ground black pepper

2 stalks celery, sliced thinly on the bias (6 ounces; 170g)

1/2 cored and peeled fennel bulb, cut lengthwise into quarters, then sliced thinly on the bias (4 ounces; 115g)

### Preparing the Scallops, Ceviche-Style

I start by cutting the scallops into cubes, tossing them with ample lemon juice, and setting them in the fridge to chill—this is the ceviche move. The plan here is not to cook them, but to cure them, exactly like in a ceviche. It'll be just enough to strip away some of their pure rawness, while maintaining as much tenderness as possible.

### Steaming the Mussels

Meanwhile, I brown some garlic in oil in a saucepan, infusing the oil with flavor. Then I add a small amount of water to the pot, bring it to a boil, toss the mussels in, and cover. They're done in just a couple of minutes, at which point I use a slotted spoon to transfer them to a bowl to cool.

I pluck most of the mussels from their shells, saving only a handful in the shell for presentation (like I did with clams for my [spaghetti alle vongole](#)), then chill them.

## Poaching the Shrimp and Squid

Now I have some rich, garlicky mussel broth in the pot. I top it up with more cold water, add some lemon juice for acidity and flavor, along with peppercorns and a couple of bay leaves, also for flavor. Voilà! I have a tasty poaching medium for the rest of my seafood. And, because I've added cold water, I've reset the temperature, meaning I can cook the shrimp and squid using that cold-start method.

There's not even a reason to separate the shrimp and squid: They can both go into the tepid poaching medium at the same time, and gently be brought up to 170°F, at which point they'll be perfectly plump and tender throughout. Before cooking the shrimp, I first marinated them with baking soda and salt for that snappy texture I mentioned above. (I tried that treatment on the squid, too, and it made no difference, so skip it.)

As soon as the water hits 170°F, I transfer the shrimp and squid to a large bowl or rimmed baking sheet to chill.

## Finishing the Salad

While all the seafood is cooling, I whip up the dressing, a simple blend of minced parsley, garlic, lemon juice, and olive oil. I toss it with the chilled seafood, adding cayenne pepper for heat (fresh minced chilies would work, too) and thinly sliced celery and fennel for flavor and crunch. I also sprinkle in a little ground coriander seed; I just love it so much with seafood.

The salad is ready to rock as is, but I can tell you from experience that it gets even better the next day, as the seafood marinades and the flavors meld. That's one way in which it's not at all like ceviche, which peaks about 15 minutes after it's made and goes downhill from there. Though I challenge you not to eat all of it right away, by yourself, before anyone even finds out you've made it.



# The Indoor Garden of Eden

## *Trichrome*

April 2012. There is the story of David and Goliath from 1020 BC, but can you picture Jeremy Clarkson and Tinker Bell fighting over a chocolate bar in 2012? Ending with Jeremy dragging the fairy by a wing while the fairy casts spells on him. The little fairy screaming, "I let this go way, way too far." Nate was a 6'7" curly blond haired man with huge blue eyes and lots of man toys like a Volks Wagon Siraco with the seat custom mounted because he's so tall... Born and raised in Vermont, he was a farm to fork chef turned record setting marijuana grower that loves Phish probably too much. He would be my favorite overgrown child forced into adulthood. He is one of the smartest people I have ever encountered. His childhood, an endurance of independent thought while living in a religious environment that wasn't so kind. It wasn't long before he went from being the guy who had contracted some sort of skin disease from his dogs sleeping in his bed, to a man maturing, thinking seriously about his girlfriend. We didn't end up on the lawn about to break each other in half over a chocolate bar because someone left the towel on the floor.

It's 2012, and we're having dinner at the coffee table in our house in Lake Tahoe. "No, Monaya, I won't be with a woman who works the line in a kitchen. It's like working with guys like me all day. You know, like guys that will put a friggin razor clam in your back pocket so when you sit down later on break, now you are walking around with clam ass. Do you know how mean it will make you? Do you know how many times you will get grabbed? Women that look like you don't work in the kitchen, I know you love it. I know you are capable. But no."

Nate was a classically trained French chef. In his teen years, he spent his summers in residency at a farm to fork estate serving celebrity dining clients like Michelle Pfeiffer and Jack Nicholson. The kitchen structure and the mentorship of his executive chefs made this person exactly who he is. Mixed with a religious upbringing, my compassion was endless for this emotionally stunted kid stuck in a giant man's body. "Nate, you can't stop me from trying to work and support myself. That's just backwards." This had already happened in my relationship with Dane. I wasn't going to let it happen again. "You can make edibles here." he said casually, I was shocked the chef would say a dog hair filled house was a great place to make food professionally. "Right. By the way, I have a yeast infection and need to go to a doctor. It's embarrassing that I have to ask for your help with this. I need to have a job so I can help myself."

He didn't even ask if I was okay, "So I have a yeast infection in my dick?" In retrospect, I'm not sure how I didn't start laughing. Perturbed, I responded with "I'm going to take a nap." A week later we both sat in the doctor's office. "Sir, if you don't want her in the room with us, we will need to bring in another nurse. Are you sure? I thought she's your partner?" The look of stress, shock, and confusion, gazing at him worried, until click, the door shut. The nurse approached me, "Monaya?" My face was the same from the moment that door clicked shut. "Yeah, that's me." I stood up and walked into the exam room with her.. "We have something to talk about. Your test is positive for chlamydia. His test is positive for chlamydia. He has mentioned several things that make me worried for you. Are you safe?"

I looked at her, confused, "We're talking about Nate, the guy next door, right? Yeah. I'm safe." Evaluating that later on the couch, the spit flew from his mouth with words. 6 foot 7 inches of human, bellows loud. "Why do you have chlamydia, Monaya?" I hadn't been with anyone else. Ninety seven, ninety eight, counting the bricks in the fireplace. "Say something Monaya! You are like squeezing blood from a rock. Don't you even care? You have no reactions." I looked at Drozzle, a 125-pound black-and-white Akita. I didn't talk to anyone anymore outside of Nate. "I don't know why. I don't know how I got it. I'm with you. I don't leave the house except to go somewhere with you or the grocery store. Do you think I'm hooking up with someone else? What are you asking me?" I yelled back. His rebuttal was one of the most confusing replies I've ever heard. "You brought it up."

The sun was warm coming through the window. 12 hours later, it was the next day. “Thisppppssshhhhh” pulling a tuft of fur from my mouth. “Droz, get up.” The big black bear stood up, shook off, sitting regal next to me. The pressure from his paw poke was enough to get me up to let him out. Click, click, click, whafft, the stove lit, “I need to go back to the Dr.” I heard him yell from the bedroom. He was lying there Googling Web Md. “I think we have a systemic yeast infection and need to go on an elimination diet. I think that’s why you’re depressed and have anxiety disorders.” I could have reached barehanded in a toilet and thrown shit at this man who rarely put sheets on his bed before I came along.

“I don’t think I have a systemic yeast infection. I think I have been told I have mental disorders, which can really alter a persons thoughts about themselves, and my parents did have an alcohol problem. I think Tahoe exacerbates symptoms. Living above the grow room alters my body, not in the same way it does yours.” He wasn’t happy with this response. “I’m going on an elimination diet. I pay for food, you will eat what we have. I’m throwing away all the sugar today. For the next two weeks, we are eating, eggs, greens, and meat. Absolutely no starch... You’re doing that thing again. Say something.” Blank face, monotone. “Sure.” I wasn’t scared he was going to physically hurt me. I was scared of starving. Which is ridiculous in the world of customized products and food abundance with poor allocation. Like the Kerry Gold aged white cheddar at the mansion on the hill, I just accepted what I thought was my fate at that point. Not without a silver lining. The cup warming my hand, the smell keeping my memory working. “Monaya, I made banana bread. Do you want some?” The cup did have a soul, and it spoke my mother’s words to me every morning for four months as I drank cinnamon banana black tea. “Do you put milk in your tea?” He poured my leftover half and half for coffee, the only luxury I was allowed outside the diet, into a cup of this tea. “No, I’ve never tried that. Isn’t it weird?”

He poured a little bit of half and half into my tea. It was like coffee. Rich and velvety mouth feels with warmth of cinnamon like a cookie. “I have to throw this away. Milk has sugar in it. We can’t have this. We can have almond milk in a month or two.” I set the tea down, and my hair stood up. More food was being taken away from my control, “We have been eating nothing but eggs, meat, and spinach for three weeks. I gave up coffee last week. I’ve had enough.” I tried to stand my ground; for some reason, I thought this was wrong but felt helpless. “We have two more weeks to go before we can bring stuff back with trial and error. In the meantime, do you want to get some stevia or something? Can’t you make some chocolate mousse with cocoa powder, stevia, and egg whites?”

The comment about the chocolate mousse sparked a different thought train altogether. “I mean, you could. I would use coconut milk if I can’t use cream.” This diet wasn’t very beneficial to my body; however, I learned to make vegan chocolate cheesecake in three different ways. “Why don’t you go to the grocery store? I’ll give you \$300 and get stuff for chocolate mousse. If you need help with the recipe, let’s talk about it. I know you understand. I want to make sure we can eat everything in it.” I was reading his face, like he had some confidence or power over me. Nodding to himself. “I can eat whatever I want.” I said under my breath. “Here. Take Drozzel with you.” His head was already under my hand with his harness. “Go faster...” I muttered, my stressed breath short, but I was moving. He already thought I was cheating on him while I went to the grocery store. Hungry, gazing at a 97% chocolate bar, I threw it on the belt. Back in the truck, “Mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm,” two squares shoved in my mouth. With a deep sigh, I wiped the drool off my face. Not noticing I had smeared chocolate everywhere. Smiling and sighing with me, his big furry head on my shoulder, I looked in the mirror and laughed. With no haste, I popped the glove box and put the chocolate bar in between maps and insurance. “I’ll be back for you later, little buddy.” Slamming the door on the hatch, holding it there for a second.

Something shimmery...gold...in the ashtray that was permanently broken open. Hanging from midair in my hand, the tiny little stone sparkling off the top of one of the heart bumps it was mounted on. “What the fuck is this....Who the fuck’s is this...?” I didn’t care about it. I also didn’t want to deal with the argument. I had a chocolate bar and Drozzel. He would kill anything that hurt me, including his own

owner Nate. Pulling into the driveway, I crushed a few sugar pine cones. “Wow, Snoozle, that was fast.” I took my time at the grocery store, trying to take in more of what was outside the house until that doctor’s visit. After that, I didn’t know what he was doing, but he accused me of something I didn’t do. “Yeah, I want to make that chocolate mousse... it needs to set.” When the words came out of his mouth, I was shocked, “I’ll help you get the groceries out of the car.” The garage door was open when the yelling began. “Snoozl, What is this?” He was holding a piece of the gold wrapper from the chocolate bar. “Where is it? How could you? That’s what’s on your face?”

I lunged for a silver chain in the ashtray of the truck. “Not today, Nate, WHAT IS THIS? IS THIS YOUR SYSTEMIC YEAST INFECTION?” Swiftly carrying myself and my handful of jewelry away from the Suburban. “Particles, it’s all particles, Monaya.” I hear my dad. Maps, insurance, dog bowls, bike parts, power tools, shit was flying everywhere from the truck to the lawn. “Where is it, Monaya?” Like bass, it hit me in the chest. My hand still held in front of my face, looking at the charm on the chain sparkling in the sun. The glove box flopped open like a coin purse frame, and my chocolate bar fell to the ground. The look on his face, like I cheated on him or something. “You weren’t even going to share with me.” I looked at the ground. I had done anything he asked me, never said no. I said nothing. He started shaking my shoulders, waving a chocolate bar in my face.

They call it something like hysterical blindness, freeze, where you just disassociate, like a shell. Stepping back while he flailed around me, he continued. The neighbors were coming out of their houses now. He was still talking as I stared, “Stop it. It’s a chocolate bar. We’re not having a domestic over a chocolate bar.” He grabbed my bicep and pulling me inside the garage. The chain was still in my hand for a split second. My arm flew through the air upon impact. I watched the ugly cheap jewelry fly through the air, thinking he’s gonna kill me. This giant is going to kill me. “Do you hear me? Why did you buy that? What were you thinking?” He never even acknowledged that he had some other girl’s jewelry laying around.

Silently, I went to lay down for my 12-hour nap, the clutch around my arm again. “No, no way, we’re going to talk about this. Why don’t you ever have anything to say for yourself? You would rather lie about everything and think you can get away with it by not saying anything. It’s like squeezing blood from a rock, Monaya. Who are you? You don’t have any feelings. I’m going biking, clean the grow room before I get back.” The first month we dated, I wasn’t allowed in the grow room in anything but my underwear. Standing under grow lamps isn’t the worst feeling on your bare skin in Tahoe winter. I flipped over the huge raised plant boxes. ‘4x8 sheets of plywood attached to the 8 ft long 2x10” boards, a big feat for a 90-pound woman on a diet. I vacuumed every corner of that room, moving plastic, wondering if anyone had ever treated him with that much care. I thought about who did this job before I came along and what to say when he got home, getting more upset as I cleaned.

I was sitting at the coffee table with dinner ready when he got home. I sat down and started to speak, eating dinner before he got home. “I have feelings.” I was organizing stuff on our coffee table. A glass top with a shelf under it. He kept glass bong, papers, grow equipment, and remote controls for the X-box. I won’t even start with the drawers below. “Then why don’t you say anything.” It wasn’t a conscious thought to use fewer words at the time, but I kept it more minimal than I ever did. “Because it doesn’t matter here.” He wasn’t satisfied with the answer.

“Why, because you’re just a liar?” He was shoving food in. “I am not a liar.” My integrity felt that. “I hate that I had to buy a chocolate bar and lie to you. I hate that you would think I would or could keep anything from you. When you are not horrible – I am so crazy about you, I would do anything for you. I’m hurt. Who’s necklace is that? I don’t care. I just want to go to sleep.” I was trying to get up to get Windex for the tabletop. “What do you think you are doing? Don’t change the subject. This is about a chocolate bar. I never cheated on you.” I was still waving my hand across the glass, looking at the dust and dog hair on the paper towel. “The jewelry, Nates. Who is it?” I wrote about this in a journal I found two years after ending this relationship. I wouldn’t have remembered the following details without that

notebook.

"Who's chocolate bar is it, Monaya? Were you cheating on me?" I ripped my arm from his clutches, pulling with everything I had, like strong Velcro. With reflex, he caught it with one hand and reached for my throat with the other. Cold, the wall was cold on my neck. "Who's chocolate bar was it, Monaya?" Floating, I was floating. My feet had left the ground. Scratching his arm with my free hand, throat closing, short of breath, "It's just a chocolate bar, Nate. Don't do this. I can't." Filterless Monaya was taking over autopilot. She doesn't know how to be mean or defend herself. Melting to the floor as his giant clutch released. "Mom, I need to come home. Can you get me a plane ticket? Is anyone living in my house right now?" After a mutual friend of Dane and I had moved out, she had found new tenants. "Someone is living in it for another two months. I'm having double bunion surgery. You could help me out for a while." In the divorce, my mother acquired the house my dad and I had purchased together.

"Sure, I'll book my flight for Friday." Backing the truck up the garage, mental recording of the pipes on the 350 Suburban. One load to the storage unit. Two camouflage bow hunting bags of clothes, a snowboard, a skate, and a bike. "I like it when your stuff is lying around, it reminds me you're coming back," he said when we started dating. Zipped up in camo duffle bags in the garage for months, my stuff wasn't lying around anymore. It was stored most of the time I lived with him, never looked at or thought of. His big paw poke would wake me up from my sleep occupation adventure. Lost in his eyes, ears filled with false adultery statements, I dove inside that bear's eyes. Drozzel, it would be the last time I ever saw that Akita I loved. I put my hand on his arm in bed, "Can you drive me to the airport in Reno?" His back was to me. He was on his phone. "I'll drive you to the casinos, and you can take the shuttle." The spite this guy had for me, I'd never done anything but love him until he hurt me, and then loved him some more. "Right." I took my hand away and started to get up.

At this point, he had taken everything from me. I weighed 89 lbs. Mary at Gunflint crossed my mind when I was teetering with my pack on my back. Her voice, "Bend your knees if you feel weak." The double doors opened in front of me. I didn't look back. "Wait." His hand came out of nowhere on my shoulder. I spun around. He pulled me in, almost crushing my tiny little weak body. "I love you, Monaya, more than anything. I'm sorry for my behavior. I can't be who you need right now." He kissed me so hard it hurt. Letting go all at once, he walked away. Ring, ring, ring. "Hey Nate, I made it home. I just wanted to let you know. I love you." Veeeuup veeuuup veeuuup, the phone buzzed on the table. Scrambling to pick it up. I had called two or three times with no response, "Hey, hey how are you?" He spoke to me like I was a nerd trying to approach the cool kid's table at lunch. "Fine. Why did you call me?" I was trying to hold on to my excitement to hear his voice while processing why he was aloof, "I just was checking in." He continued with the attitude, "Yeah, we don't need to check in anymore. Don't call me. I'll watch your phone calls ring on the table. Don't you get it?" He was threatening in tone. I'll never know if he meant to be that way.

"Yeah, sorry. I guess I won't call you. I hope everything goes well for you in life. I care about you." I didn't want to let him go, I still thought about how we could be together in Tahoe. "Fuck off, Monaya, you'll be a line cook, and I'm going to move to the forests of Maine to forget that you ever existed." I had never had a threat like that. I'll forget you? Like a prerecorded message, my response was, "I don't think you will be able to do that, Nate. I don't think you could forget about me." Days of work went by, and my mother had her surgery. The phone buzzed. I had relabeled him, "don't talk to liars." I picked up. "Hey, how are you?" Staring at the floor, "I'm well. I thought you didn't want to talk." He was quiet but honest, "Yeah, I'm lonely."

"Oh, how is everything..." I was editing a website or working on social media while he was talking, "Do you think maybe we could do something long-distance?" I stopped. He continued, "Will you come visit me?" I thought about how I could work this into my life. It was April. For the first time in almost four years, I was completely free. I had resources. It took three months before I had a plan. He

was the man that brought out the game. No talk of the competition, just a land grab for power. Ladies, if you want to know the power you really have, buy a really cool car and learn all about it.

I walked into my favorite restaurant in my hometown. The only truly fine dining restaurant left in a sea of Perkins and bars. "Hi, My name is Monaya. This is my resume." My Dansko clogs looked and smelled like bacon. He was scanning the document, "And what do you want to do here?" I looked at my initial on the corner of the paper. "Pastry, I love pastry and fine dining almost more than air. I have a long career plan, and this is one of my first stones to turn over. I ate my prom dinner over there," I pointed to a table in the lounge, continuing, "My friend told me about their lifelong condition that makes them insecure over there." Pushing my chin out toward the dining room, "The table next to the bar is where I eat with my mom, and your bar is from my Grandfather's lake house. It was first in his garage, then donated to the curling club, then to the guy who owned the restaurant before you...." I was pretty intimidated but was going to continue vomiting words until he gave me a job.

"Can you come in tomorrow, and I'll have a stack of recipes for you?" This was a moment I tried to be very serious, but I could feel tears welling up. "Sure, what time?" I tried to act cool. He was doing the same, already looking at something on the counter. "Seven." I nodded and left. I didn't even have a car. I was 29 years old, walking into my first actual kitchen job. I knew what high volume and demand for product were from the edibles company. But this was the beginning of "little chef Monaya" becoming the executive pastry chef Monaya. The Bix produce guy looked at me as I flicked my cigarette, skipping down the exterior stairs and pushing on the screen door. "Hey girl, you must be new. Can you sign for this?" I was shocked this delivery guy thought I was responsible enough to take on something for this company, I didn't even have a W4 on file. "Who me? No, I can't sign for it. I am new here. What time does Justin get here?" He was as puzzled as me, "Who's Justin? The owner? I leave it with Danny." Questioning back, "Who's Danny?" A guy in a collared shirt and jeans stomping down the stairs, "I'm Danny. You're Monaya? Sign for it, I'll get the keys." The Bix guy responded like a line chef, "Heard."

"Justin's inside. He is setting you up with Terimusui first. Grab some fish boxes on your way up the stairs. Dish shirts, aprons, and the walk-in are over here." Pulling on the short sleeves of a dish shirt, I muttered, "What is a fish box?" Justin overheard me, "The boxes over there that say Fish Guys. That's a fish box. They package fish in them. We shoot for no waste in this kitchen. Go pull two shots of espresso for every ounce of marsala." I was trying to pay attention, but putting a cake in these boxes that held raw fish was peculiar. He repeated, "What? Two shots, one ounce ratio." I was still confused, "Yeah but." Why a ratio of shots to ounces? "What's so hard about that, Monaya? Two to one? You do understand ratios, right?" Why not ounces to ounces, he was already moving with his back to me. "But what?" I yelled back,

"How many do you want?" From the bottom of the stairs, "Shots? Two for each ounce of wine. I told you that." Dumbfounded, I was concerned about the par number. How many fish boxes of tiramisu did he want? I made five. He stopped at my station later as I was working on garnishes. "That was fast. Did you only make one box?" I looked up at him from the herbs I was leafing. "Three in the reach-in labeled pastry over there on the line. Two in the walk-in downstairs." I continued with my task. "YOU MADE FIVE?" His brown eyes never left the top of his black glasses. I was mildly concerned but thought about putting one in the freezer. "Yeah, why? Is that too much?" He seemed pleased about it. "No, that's perfect for the week. I was more worried it would slow you down to make full par numbers."

Thinking back to the kitchen in Tahoe, the yellow countertops covered in moulds, "I used to make a thousand lolly pops by hand in a day. Wrapped and labeled." Still looking at me over his glasses, "What did you do? What kitchen was that?" Nervously, I tried to cover what I did in California but not expose exactly what I did in California. "I made organic provisions that I sold to co-ops." I knew someone would ask me how I wound up in a kitchen the way I looked. He was right. They were going to be mean to me. They were going to say horrible things. They might touch me. But he was wrong that I couldn't hold my own.

"Really? That's pretty cool. What was your top seller?" I was surprised by the reaction. "An

organic butter finger. I love to make nut butter hokey pokey.” He didn’t pay attention; he just added an order and left. “Two of these ricotta cheesecakes and the chocolate gelato?” Handing me the *Joy of Cooking* with two red strands tucked in the pages. I still didn’t know if I was even hired, “Are these to be served, or are they test recipes?” I started to think about who was going to eat it. “New to the menu, I’ve never made them.” I thought it would be served to the staff and critiqued before it was served to guests, “Sweet, I love recipe development.”

The iPhone sound snap flash. He approached, sharpening his knife. “You’re not going to take pictures of all your food, are you?” I rolled my eyes back, “No, I’m just excited to be here. To make food with people who love food.” He was hung over, “Girl, are you lying to me? Who feeds a line of bull shit like that?” My eyes welled up, he realized it wasn’t bull shit. He put his hands on my shoulders. “I’m so lucky to have you here. I’m glad you are here. You are better at what you do than you think. What are you making?” Danny had more self-loathing than anyone I knew. He put on Fleetwood Mac and started to set up his station. “Cinnamon Espresso Gelato.” Clutching cinnamon sticks, snap, tattttchch, crack. I have smell-o-vision in this memory. “That’s what he wants you to make?” I couldn’t tell if he was into it. An hour into the cinnamon steeping with the coffee in the milk. I shoved a spoon at him, “Taste it.”

“Holy shit.” He grabbed a second plastic spoon. I was cringing. “Yeah, did I add too much cinnamon?” He handed one to a line chef, “No. That’s one of best ice creams I have ever tasted.” My self doubt was like his self loathing. I poured it into the machine and started in on the basil. “Danny, will you pull my cheesecakes before service? I’m supposed to be clocked out in five minutes.” I wanted to stay because, I didn’t and still don’t trust many people to take cake out of an oven. “Yeah, no problem, girl. Pleasure working with you today. See you tomorrow?” I would spend a years time in kitchens with him. I launched my 29-year-old body into my mom’s Tahoe as she picked me up. “Will you take me to get coffee?” I had a white bag in my hand with my leftover lunch. “Yes, did you like work?” I was almost thirty, and she still made me feel like I was 17. “I love working there. I need you to drop me off again at seven tomorrow. I need to buy a car, and my credit score after Tahoe is not good. Can we make that happen? I won’t have everything I need.”

“That’s great to hear. Yes, we can start looking at cars.” I had no idea what I was looking for. “I want to drive out to see Phish at the Gorge and in Tahoe.” She was pleased to see her daughter she knew that just acted instead of asking. “When is that?” I don’t know if she actually cared or was just making conversation. She said that a lot when I asked why it mattered. “Making conversation.” I was eating the leftover roast beef panini. “Forty-five days. I won the lottery the other day.” Her eyes rolled. “You won the lottery?” Her skepticism was rude. “Yeah. why?”

“Well, don’t you need to take care of that?” I wasn’t referring to winning millions of dollars that day as she had hoped. I was in line to get tickets for an experience I knew was more positive than a bottle of Prozac. Something she had been prescribed for almost 20 years without questioning. “Ha, Phish lottery mom, I got tickets for Tahoe. It’s hard to get tickets for Tahoe.” I worried mom she asked, “You want to go back to Tahoe?” I missed Tahoe. I wanted to see Nate. “Yeah, it sounds like an adventure.” I looked at the floor.

“You didn’t tell me you were getting Phish tickets!” grumbling, he wasn’t as excited as I thought he would be. We had broken up. I thought it was a bonus luxury that he would get to see me. “I didn’t know I had to tell you about everything before I did it. I mean, I’m here in Minnesota, you’re there in California.” He wasn’t happy about this response either. “You can’t just stay at my house whenever you want. You have to ask me.” I was confused by this, “When was this unspoken assumption made? I have friends going that I can stay with, too.” I could hear the look on his face. “You have friends that are you going? Like what, a bunch of guys or something?” The jealous boyfriend he still was without any ties to me to merit the behavior. “Not a group of men, just one girl. She invited me to go with her and her friends. We’ll meet in Seattle the day before we go to the Gorge and go to a pre-party.” I was annoyed. I wanted to add sandpaper. He had hurt me countless times. Why couldn’t he be happy for me? Mostly, I

just wanted to give myself a leg to stand on in a place where I had felt helpless. “You’re such a liar, Monaya.” Pulling into the car lot, I dreaded shopping for cars more than jeans. “I just want all-wheel drive. Chains suck, and I’m never doing that again.” The salesman asked for a list of attributes I was looking for in a car, listing what they had in inventory. “Toyota Matrix X, Honda Crosstour, Nissan Merano, Honda CRV, or An Infiniti M35X? We have a few versions of the Crosstour or the CRV’s.”

“What’s an M35X?” Anything with an M, I looked at twice. My initials are M’s. “It’s a large sedan.” Walking up to one of the shapeliest consumer cars I had ever seen, I was already interested. “With all-wheel drive?” I opened the door, black on black with dark wood trim. I was so happy about it. Lana was a silver 2006 Infiniti M35X from Florida. She had too many buttons and went fast. Sold. She was the first of many Infiniti adventure buddies. They all have this quality of being wrapped up in the perfect winter coat, completely functional for almost all situations, while remaining elegant and smart. I never thought it was that special of a car to anyone but me. It just felt like me. If I had been warned that I would be fired for taking time off and going to Phish, I would have done it anyway. I’m unsure if it was Phish or the cashing of 9 paychecks simultaneously because they did not have me back. My adventure was on its feet, moving, breathing.

“WHERE ARE YOU?!?” He screamed at me after the first night of the three-day run. “What do you mean? I’m at Phish, at the Gorge in George, Washington!” I was upside down in the driver’s seat, legs extended over the shoulders of the seat. My new friend Gretta was reclined in the back seat. Both of us were sober but exhausted. “Liar! Who are you with?!” He yelled. This is when she started inquiring who would say things like this. “That’s Gretta.” I had met Gretta a few days prior when the friend who invited me to the show with her group asked to “pick a girl up on a street corner.” Upon meeting this girl on a corner, she was among the most beautiful people I have ever met. “Who is Gretta? You’re such a liar, Monaya.” She picked up the phone to look at the picture of Nate across the screen.

“Who is this guy? Hang up.” Still hurling spicy emotions masked in voice – she looked at it, reaching out with a red nail, she hit the button. Gretta is one of the most physically and energetically attractive human beings I have ever met. She put me and him in our places with one finger. “You think we’ll get a Llama tomorrow?” She set the phone down and closed her eyes. When I arrived in Tahoe with my friends, he was more than awkward that I could have a social life outside of him. He insisted that I stay with him during the Tahoe shows and asked me to stay and watch the dogs while he went down to San Francisco to continue his Phish run. I wanted to watch the dogs, but he was rude and isolating when he talked to me about the San Francisco shows. As I tried to drive back to Minnesota, I was in a fender bender with Lana, keeping me in Tahoe longer than I anticipated. On the second day of hesitation to touch the car’s gas cap, which was pushed inward, I opened it up. Got it closed and started on my way home. I don’t think we even hugged before I left.

After he moved to Maine, he stopped calling. Sending me a message on my 30th birthday. “Goodbye, Monaya, with a cartoon birthday cake.” He sent it on Snapchat, something I learned about from Gretta. “Yeah, but what’s the point of the app? Can’t you just share pictures on Instagram?” I was and am still puzzled by the redundancy in phone apps. She raised an eyebrow, “Yeah, but Snapchat, the pictures disappear. It was made for dick pics.” I looked at her, puzzled. Clearly, there is a significant detail about data that users of this app disregard. “You can tell when someone screenshots it.” She continued. I wasn’t even going to put the argument out there. I knew her boob photos were locked in some silo in Oregon or Kansas, where ever the server was located. From what I know about iPhones, a flat two dimensional version of most woman’s boobs were in that silo too.

Nate stopped talking at on my birthday. A year later, I was living in a basement apartment as a pastry assistant at a beautiful restaurant. Living out my dream. He called in September, “Snoozl.” I was laying on my yoga mat, staring at the ceiling. “What’s up?” I was worried about him calling, but I didn’t want to just shut him out. “I wanted to talk to you, about something.” There was some sort of pressing issue. He was nervous. “Uh, huh.” I was trying to stay relaxed. “Yeah, um, Will you marry me?” Getting up

from the hardwood floor, Eva, my dog, stood up too. I had peed my pants. “Let me call you back. No. I can’t marry you. I just pissed myself.” I didn’t call him back until after he followed me on Instagram. Almost nine years later, I was driving Sarge out to Maine on a road trip to visit friends and explore. He was a stop on the tour. Under the stress of seeing me, he blurted out how he actually felt. “I thought you came all the way here to see me?”

Nathaniel Maynard,

Thank you for the very difficult decisions you have made and still managed to keep in touch with me. Thank you for doing the hard work burying Drozzle. I am stronger because of what you did that night with him, thinking of you out there crying. Two of my best friends, one alive, one gone to a different place. I’m not sure what that night would have been like if we were still together. Thank you for continuing when and where others don’t. Thank you for continuing to care about the quality of life even when conditions are not ideal. You will always be important to me.

Monaya M. MaGaurn



## Phish Tour

Bigfoot's Tri Tip Mushaboom Salad With  
Laundry Side Door Dressing  
Sugar Free Chocolate Cheese Cake

## Bigfoot's Tri Tip Mushaboom Salad With Laundry Side Door Dressing

The Tri Tip: 2# Tri Tip, 1 head of garlic, Springs  
of Rosemary, Salt & Pepper, Olive Oil

Prep Garlic, remove paper and root end from  
individual cloves. Cut rosemary into 1 ½ inch  
sections. Make small openings in the tri tip,  
insert garlic and rosemary sprigs. Cover the  
roast in oil, cover with salt and pepper.

Oven Prepared - preheat oven to 250°, Heat a  
cast iron skillet until smoke point. Sear each  
side of the tri tip, into the oven for 30 minutes,  
check the temperature with a meat  
thermometer - rare starting at 130° Grill  
Prepared - preheat grill to 450° sear each side  
for 30-40 seconds, turn the grill down to 250°  
and close the lid. Check the roast after 20  
minutes with a meat thermometer.

## Dressing

½ cup Olive Oil (EVOO if you have it)  
¼ cup of Balsamic Vinegar, ½ cup of Sherry  
Vinegar, ½ teaspoon pepper ½ teaspoon of salt, 1  
shallot,  
2 tablespoons honey, 1 tablespoon lemon juice.  
Whisk everything together, let it sit for an hour,  
Slice the tri tip into cubes, save some slices for  
sandwiches or left overs.

Slice thin on a mandolin or hand slicer  
The tri tip, 4 Portobello Mushrooms (cremini or  
fancy varieties if you like), 4 Shallots, 2 Fennel  
Bulbs  
1 Cucumber (seeded) toss together in a large  
bowl with dressing

Salad Presentation options: Use romaine lettuce  
leaves for boats.

Over spinach or mixed greens mix. Sprinkle  
parmesan or feta cheese on top and enjoy.

## Chocolate Cheese Cake

Honestly I never wrote it down. Each time Nate  
would ask for this cake, I would google a recipe  
and swap the sugar for stevia.

The Crust: 1 2/3 cups pecans and almonds, 1  
heaping cup pitted Medjool dates, ¾ cup  
shredded or flaked coconut, 3 tablespoons  
coconut oil.

Soak medjool dates in water overnight, toast  
pecans and almonds. Place all ingredients in a  
food processor, pulse until combined. Push  
into place in a pie tin or plate.

453 g or 2 bricks cream cheese completely  
softened to room temperature  
100 g or ½ cup fine granulated sugar or 1 tsp  
stevia and ½ tablespoon corn starch  
Cream together.  
Adding the following  
½ tsp fine sea salt  
1 teaspoons pure vanilla extract  
120 g or ½ cup sour cream

200 g semi-sweet chocolate chopped finely  
and melted.

Combine melted chocolate and cheesecake  
filling.

Set aside and whip cream.

240 g or 1 cup heavy cream or heavy whipping  
cream

Fold whip cream and cheesecake mixture,  
pour into crust and chill.

Top with chocolate whip cream or meringue.

## Oui Chef

*Yes, chef.*

March 2015 I can honestly say I never dated a man from a kitchen. I had crushes on, fell asleep next to them, but never even kissed one of them. They still broke my heart, watching each man I interacted with ebb and flow. After Nate finally left me on my 30th birthday, I looked around and asked myself what I was doing. The chef I knew from working fine dining in my hometown invited me to visit Minneapolis and explore the food scene. He worked in Loring Park at Cafe Lurcat, himself being a masculine gay man, and he loved it. After tooting around eating pastry and drinking coffee all day, we met at a restaurant next door to Lurcat after his shift.

While standing outside with most of the Lurcat staff, I noticed two posters hiring kitchen staff. Il foro, with red Italian art deco-looking typography. The location in the former *Goodfellas* location. The blue one on the right looked similar in layout, but the elements differed. A cream colored steampunk octopus with a scuba helmet perched on a navy blue background. From the makers of Butchers and the Boar, 4 Bells coming soon. If you didn't know the backstory, it was just two employment posters in a restaurant frequented by the industry. If you know the back story, a rivalry between chef families. The chef on the left and the businessman is on the right. A rivalry down to the two young executive chefs that open the restaurant. A rivalry in revival. Four Bells in the former *Joe's Garage* location. The team of Jack Riebel, Brendan McDonald, Joe Rolle, and Doug Vanwilnkle were all together at Butcher and the Boar with Peter Botcher. Peter Botcher is a legend I still have yet to meet. Joe and Jack going their way with Il Foro, Doug and Brendan opening Four Bells. The three I worked for and their colleagues explained women like me should stay away from chefs like Joe Rolle. The octopus birthed from the boar seemed like enough evidence for me.

I walked into the beer tent, with its clear ceiling and white walls, heaters hung in the middle. "Hi, my name is Monaya. I'm here for interviews..." Two men sat at a table: Calvin with a finance background, and Mike a cowboy who had managed the bar at Butcher for many years. "Back or front of the house?" Calvin asked me. I responded, "Back, Pastry. I want to make pastry." He looked confused with my response, "Are you sure?"

"Yep." He pointed to the corridor that took you to the main dining room. Not twenty steps past the table, "Front of the house interviews are this way..." a woman cleaning glasses at the bar pointed toward the tent. "Pastry." Pointing toward the dining room. I'm not sure if it was because I was dressed like a human, not a line chef, or just the fact I am conventionally attractive. "Are you sure? You could make a lot of money in front of the house." I smiled, "Yeah. Are you? Why does everyone keep asking me that? I'm not here to make a lot of money. I'm here to learn. Besides, a lot of money? When you say a lot of money, what is a lot of money to you might not be a lot of money to me these days." As much as I didn't want to offend her, I was annoyed with the side comment on my appearance. "Right, I'll get you the boys."

This hockey player was seated in a booth; he wouldn't make eye contact with me. Easy fella, you are way too handsome and making me nervous, too. "Hi, I'm Brendan McDonald, I'm the exec chef." Posturing for his watch to be shown, I smirked. I was informed of your type. This creature in Danscos climbed into the booth, "Hi, I'm Sam, Sam Miller. I'm the chef de party. Rachael will be with us in a few minutes. Let's get started." Sam's eyes were glittery. I was asking myself when he had his last shot of bourbon. I knew he was as much fun and philosophical as Hunter S Thompson in less than 30 seconds. He listened attentively, asking questions about the story of my grandmother's training. I found out later, Brendan was paying attention to every word I said. Rachael sat down, "Who's your favorite band?" I looked her straight in the eye and said, "Radiohead." She softly smiled behind her cat eyeglasses. "Why

don't you come in tomorrow and stage?"

This was a French kitchen with a dining room in the center. I ran laps for 8 hours, pushing every production level over the waterfall. Stupid and drooling at three pm, Rachael asked me to step outside. She told me tiny bits about herself. "We are doing a PR event before opening. I know you're not in your apartment until a few days after, but will you come down and work with us?" I was excited to be around kitchen professionals. When I say that, there are two types of kitchen professionals. Those who work in kitchens because it's all they know and those who work in kitchens because they know somewhere in their being, they will push the boundaries on an industry as needed as sanitation with possibilities of conveying a message of art. I and these individuals, in the second category. "Of course. I'll be there"

Two weeks later, on my drive down, I saw his name. Great, he left a voicemail. "Hi, this is Brendan McDonald with 4 Bells. I wanted to call and give you notice for orientation. Welcome and congratulations to you. You made the team at 4 bells." I called him back immediately, "Hey, I thought I was supposed to see you guys in a few hours for the event in the park." Excited and nervous, "You're working that with us? That's awesome, I'll see you in a little bit." I walked downstairs to find Rachael with her assistant. "Monaya, you're going to work with Brendan upstairs."

I went upstairs to find him on the line with a cambro full of fish pate, "B! What do you want me to do?" He looked flustered with me standing there, both looking at each other like holy shit, this person is a total weirdo. I want to know them. "Get a sani bucket." I nodded. "Oui, Chef." Into the dish pit I went. We call it a dish pit in every kitchen, but this is truly a pit, a very sanitized clean pit. You walk down a set of stairs to get into this triple sink, mop bucket of a room. "B, which hose?" He looked at the eight different hoses with on-off switches. "Oh shit, I forgot, there are like twenty." He fumbled, and I walked away to let him get it together. "It's just been so long, you know. I've been on the road doing research..."

"Yes, sir." Two hundred finger sandwiches later, and I was out of patte. "What's next, sir?" *I'm So Tired of Being Alone* by Al Green played on the house stereo, and I sang along. "Can you write out the sandwich boards?" As a business owner, I was looking at him, questioning, you would let someone else control your image. "You want me to do that?" He was on his way outside, "Yeah, go for it." I pulled on my grandmother's strings, thinking about what she would do. Deviled eggs, she would draw that. Bacon...This is getting a pig with wings. He walked by forty minutes later. "Holy shit... the devil horns are cute." I beamed. Packing up the gold BMW X5 Doug told me he would drive off a cliff if he could. It might as well have been the park ranger lady he was driving over, making tire marks all over the lawn. The event coordinator quickly hustled us away from the food, standing in a group on the side. Doug offered to take us all to brunch at the restaurant between the new location for 4 bells and Lurcat where I saw the employment posters. Taking the longest table they had. They get to know you around the table, stating our age and what we did outside the industry.

When it got to me, I looked across the table at Brendan, "She's gotta be like 24..." I put my thumb up, "26," "28," "23." Rachael looked at me, "I'm dying here." I grinned and lifted my glass, "I turned 30 this year." Like an uncontrollable voice, "You're 30?" He looked at me. I nodded. By this time, we had mimosas, blood Mary's, and our drink round in front of us. "What's that?" he asked, looking at my purple drink. "Grateful Dead." He was so curious, "What's that?" I was watching Doug. Responding after a pause, "Long Island with a Chambord float." Sam turned to me, "You're going to fit in just fine here." Eat, eat like them. No one is messing about. There were a lot of eggs benedict on that table.

"Let's go to Brits" I was supposed to go home and go to bed, not continue the day drinking. But it was quite lovely to be around food folk. There was more Knob Creek sold at Butcher and the Boar than anywhere else in the world. Knob Creek all day, not rose. By four, Sam and I were dancing down the street. "We're so excited to have you, Monaya." It was coming on quickly as we stood before the kitchen door in the Boar tent, Doug's arm around me. I was thanking him for the opportunity when it happened. I burped foam...the foam was on me, the fleece, and well, it was on Doug, too. I was mortified. Calm but

briskly hustling to the dining room bathroom as the doors opened and seating started.

"Give me your keys, kid." Doug wasn't upset or annoyed; he was like a concerned parent with the liability of a drunk employee. "No way, I just got that thing." He spoke to me like my dad, "And I will get you a new thing if anything happens to that thing. Get in the car with her," he motioned to the bar manager. "YOUR KEYS?!" He pushed me into her car and grabbed them from my hand before I could be feisty. This was not his first rodeo with a spicy girl with a luxury car. She made sure I got in my apartment and locked the door. Climbing into the bathtub with all my clothes on, Eva my shiba inu was outside on the floor staring at me. I have no idea how long I was there but I came with warm water still running over me and my clothes.

"Hi, I need to pick up my keys..." I stood at the hostess's desk. I could see my key fob sitting there. "Oh yeah, Rachael left them here for you." I was instantly insecure, but I wanted to talk to her. "Yeah, is she around?" Hesitantly, the woman looked at me, "Yeah, she doesn't want to talk to you?" She made the inclination she had no idea why, holding her arms out slightly frowning. "Oh, you wouldn't happen to know if there is a schedule out for the sustainable event?" I wanted to go to the aquarium as much as I wanted the job. "No, but I think you're going." She smiled. I showed up that day thinking I would be told to go and not come back. But I was going to show up, hell or highwater, I actually liked being around this team. "Hi, my name is Monaya." Again, at that glass hostess desk. "Yeah, I know who you are." How did these people communicate about the new kids? "Huh?" I looked at him with a brow furrow.

"I'll get Rachael, I know they want to talk to you." Sitting in the booth where I had my interview, "You can't ever do that again." She got up and went back to work. Brendan continued her lead, Sam taking over with a conversation about composure and philosophy. I could tell, they were having a hard time punishing me. What was going on? Sam ending the conversation with, "You need to get a quart container and go outside and cut herbs. See you in an hour." I wondered if they knew I loved doing this. "Hey, will you shake this and pour us...there is one for you. Shit.. I'll do it. Monaya, you don't have to drink with us. We do this all the time, but you seem like a California kid. You don't have to drink at all." He handed me a leather bound travel bar. "Naw, pour me one. I got this. I know the time frame. I'm just little. But that thing you said, did you want a joint?" He smiled and handed me a tiny gin and tonic. I rolled my eyes.

I had never worked on a pass, adding each garnish. Spooning tiny bits of caviar underneath a giant trapezoid skylight wrapped with cedar, flanked with tanks of stingrays. If this was punishment...We unloaded everything that night at the same time the kitchen closed at the restaurant. The staff found their way down to the production kitchen for their shifty shot and beer. "What's your name? You, little girl. You, I heard you threw up on Doug. You're my hero. I have to know your name." The executive chef that took over after Jack Ribiel left was motioning to me. This man had worked for some of my inspirations to become a chef, including Thomas Keller. "My name is Monaya." He shook my hand with one of the best chef handshakes I've ever experienced. The squeeze. "Get Monaya a Jager...Monaya, do you want a Jager?" I could see Brendan and Sam's face both going left and right, their hands motioning across their throats. I was giggling holding my 20 ounces of PBR, "I'm good, thank you and I'm honored."

He laughed, "Welcome to the Butch and the Boar team. It's great to have you." Rachael made a big deal of being a lady in this atmosphere. She also used a completely different form of management than the boys. They all loved her, respected her, and feared her, but I would still hear sexualization of her occasionally. Given that situation, the three of the four times I heard it, someone stopped it mid-conversation, nothing she might be around a corner listening. It was stories of when she was being 100% herself. When she would let her dancer come out at a party and go for it. Rachael, a classically trained pastry chef, was a ballerina before becoming a chef. She loved music and movement. Movement, a medium that, like great art, needs to be put on a stage in order not to be disturbed by a viewer. Rachael

was wise to who she could and could not dance with, keeping boundaries even when completely uninhibited. There would be a night when Rachael, trying to help me pick up the pieces of Tahoe and put them back together to form meaning, invited Eva and me over for pizza with her, Jon, and their dog. Jon was the saucier for both Butcher and the Boar and 4 Bells. A strong backbone in the kitchen, we had hit it off over Radiohead, Duran Duran, and food sort of like Rachael and I did. It was a great feeling to be brand new to the industry but so passionate about it. Having seasoned veterans noticed the work you put in before entering a professional atmosphere. Ever since the incident with Doug, drinking has been a different sport for me. Rachael's lady-like persona, "Leave half a drink on the table Monaya, it shows you care about yourself."

Racheal and Jon were five to my one-and-a-half beers. I'm not sure if anyone could remember the conversation at hand when put in this situation, and if you can, please...give me some cues. I would love to know why the hell this happened. Mid Conversation, Jon turned, looked me dead in the eye, and said, "Rachael, Racheal, are you listening? Do you hear me?" My head spun to look at Rachael and she grinned. Noting my mortification. Perturbed as hell. "Jon, Jon, I'm over here. I heard you. Yes, I want the giardiniera." I told Rachael at least once a day she will be a great mom. And to this day, I still think female pastry chefs probably make the best moms ever. Not because they are some sort of superhero but because they know the load it will take and how thankless humans, especially working men at the end of the day are going to be. She said thank you more times a day than anyone I knew.

I watched her work in silence. When she let loose, she celebrated. This philosophy was incredible to me. "Doug told me you were a ballerina. How did you end up making wedding cakes with honey frosting?" I asked her. "My dad would always make me these little mug cakes." She didn't really talk about her mom or family. Jon would give me bits and pieces here and there. But in time, I understood that Jon was her family, and calling me Rachael wasn't even a scratch in their record. Everything is in its right place with me. Call those you love the most.

It was July, soaking in the sunlight on a break of the basement kitchen. I thought about her. I tried to call. The number you have called has been disconnected. I called the nursing home. "She can't come to the phone. I'll set you guys up for a call tomorrow. She's very weak." I was confused. I hadn't seen her in a while, but it didn't seem like that long. "No, it's okay. I'll get there tomorrow; it's her birthday." She seemed surprised someone would remember. "It is her birthday!!! I'll tell her you're coming." I hesitated, "No, just make sure she's available. I want to surprise her. She would love a surprise. She is the queen of surprises." Tears in my eyes, I slowly walked down the cement stairs. "Chef you good?" Our sou chef Billy asked me. I nodded, silently walking by.

I approached Rachael. "Pie, I need to make pecan pie." She could tell I was upset and was concerned, "For who? What's up?" My answers were quick but probably snappy too: "My grandmother, it's her birthday tomorrow." The glossy bacon on my shoes looked back at me as I stared down. "Your grandma, the one who taught you to cook?" She was drinking from a quart container, I listened to the ice noises she made as she spun the container. When asked where I learned something in kitchens, nine times out of ten, my answer was her. Rachael started to take action like it was her grandmother's birthday. "Yeah, she's weak, I need to go see her." The buzzer went off in the oven, "At two o'clock, use Brie and make pies. Take them with you. I'll see you on Thursday. Take an extra day." I started to get into the prep list again, "Hurry up, it's almost 11."

I visited my grandmother and told her all about 4 bells. I told her our dreams had come true, and I made pastry in a glass palace in the central park of Minneapolis. I started to cry as I had to feed her pie. A week later, I would get the call that she was in hospice. Rachael gave me the time again. I thought about Rachael test-running pecan pies with chocolate and bourbon while I was away. Laying next to my grandma in her hospital bed, the speaker next to my leg was loud enough for her to hear the film she couldn't see. *Casablanca*. She whispered the words *As Time Goes By* in my ear as we watched it for the second time. I kissed her on the forehead at seven PM. Her soul was released at two AM.

## Kitchen Hero Monaya

What struck me about my mentor's passing was its likeness to a fiction book. Both of us asked questions about where each other was. My grandmother told me she saw lights. Certain things were geometric patterns. She asked what the dining room looked like. Recalling that we can only experience through our lens, I used reference points and objects we had experienced together to describe it. Both of us were describing experiences we could never share. Yet at the same place and time.

“If there is a David Goggins that is an asian chef I worked with, his name would be Billy Ring.”

## Dill Pickle Brine Fried Chicken

Whisk together pickle juice (12 oz), brown sugar (90 grams) , kosher salt (2 teaspoons), 1 teaspoon black pepper, and 1 pinch cayenne pepper in a

large bowl until sugar dissolves. Brine for 24 hours. Mix together 2 cups of flour, teaspoon of salt, teaspoon of pepper, 1 teaspoon garlic powder, 1/2 teaspoon mustard powder, 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper. Dredge chicken in egg and flour mixture twice. Slowly submerge into preheated oil 350° cook to an internal temperature of 165°.

## Buttermilk Biscuit

10 Biscuits @ 2.5 oz

1 # 4 oz of white lilly flour (all purpose and swap 2 tablespoons of the flour for corn starch)

1/2 tsp salt

3.75 oz Butter Cubed

7.5 oz Butter Milk

Cut together the butter, flour and salt. Slowly add the buttermilk, mix until almost combine. Turn on a table and hand turn. Roll to 1/2 inch thick, cut rounds, use leftovers for reroll again. Bake at 350° for 15 - 20 minutes. Brush with more butter than a dr would like you to use.

Two years later...

*An executive Pastry Chef*

*An executive Pastry Chef in the lounge.*

"My grandma used to do that." I watched his hands pour gravy on the potatoes from behind me, his voice over my shoulder. "What's that?" he asked. "Paprika on the potatoes." I was in a weird spot, a different restaurant in St. Paul with the bar manager from 4Bells in front of me and the chef owner of Il Foro behind me. I was looking at the one in front of me and talking to the one behind me. "What can I say? I'm old school." There were two hands on each side of me, serving food. The cover came off this wide-mouth bowl with a modern, artful display of roasted carrots, micro greens, and cheve. The soup was poured around it and chased with a drip of truffle oil. "Bon appetite, you are family here." I smiled at the bartender. "She would say that too."

He walked away in a chef coat. I noticed his limp. "What are you drinking, Monaya?" The bartender finally talked. Knowing my reputation from 4Bells. He was nearly seven feet tall with white curly hair and a perfectly trimmed beard. "Can I have a grateful Monaya?" It was weird. Here I was, dressed up for the holidays. He'd never seen me outside the kitchen. "What's that?" He was intrigued. "A Grateful Dead, but instead of Chambord, St Germaine."

He leaned back away from the counter. "Are you sure, the last time..." He was at the table with Doug and everyone my first day. "Yes, no champagne, no bloodies, no knob creek." Enthusiastically, he nodded. "I like it." I looked around, sighing. "I think I'm going to be here all day." He was messing with the house iPod, looking up for just a moment before "Oh, this is going to be magic."

I staged two weeks later with their pastry chef, she didn't call me back to work. Three months later my best friend called me in for help when she didn't show up. I would find everything I made that day shoved in the back of a freezer. She was fired in front of me. And for that, I am remorseful. I had no control over that, and I don't think the way it was handled was great. That said, I have also had to fire someone hot under the collar in the kitchen. She walked away with the recipe book, I didn't really care, improvising until she returned it. Throw the noodles at the wall and see what sticks. I was annoyed with carrying out the previous pastry chef's menu. The components were sloppy. I stayed 14 hours a day for 28 days. Fixing the program. Organizing, labeling, systemizing, cleaning. When Jack returned from Hawaii, the fired pastry chef was gone, her leftover program was on lock, par numbers were filled, dinner rolls for every service.

"Monaya wants to have her own menu? She has a demo for you today." Danny said to Jack at a manager meeting. I could see his face from across the dining room and hear the words. "Seriously? Who is this woman? No one just makes a whole new menu without talking to the chef..." He looked at him over his coffee cup, "She does, she was running triathlons last year. She is doing things when people aren't watching. Here, she's here." He reached out his hand and gave me the second firmest handshake I have ever had. I handed him the menu. Lemon angel chiffon pie, Zuni chocolate cake, banana split ice cream cake. "This is what you do?" He looked at me over the card. "What?" I exclaimed. Sipping his coffee, I could tell there was more to it, "This is a lot of meringue."

"Yeah, my pastry chef that I trained with does a meringue-centric menu. I like eggs and using them for applications like gluten-free." His eyes got big. He just kept sipping the coffee, "Gluten-free?" I thought this was common, but maybe not as much in Minnesota. "Yeah, in Tahoe, I worked with dietary restrictions. One of my favorite moments is giving lactose intolerant people cashew cake that tastes like cheesecake." He set the cup down on the big roundtable we were sitting at. "What if we used some of this and you and I worked on a much bigger menu together? Maybe six items? Ice Cream, custard,

chocolate, simple, and show stopper. Do you think you can handle that sort of production?” Nervous to work side by side with Jack as he had an angel devil reputation. We shook hands again, “Yes, I’m excited about that level of production.”

Working those nights with him would be a blur, with most of my memories being celebrations of flavors mixed with moments of personal questions. I looked at him as the father type. Other people would act like he was a predator. The pavlova was the crowning jewel of the menu we developed together. A floating meringue in a pool of sweetened condensed milk, coconut milk, and heavy whipping cream, covered in passion fruit curd, kiwi, hibiscus-infused mango, pistachio, and bachelor buttons. This masterpiece we created together would be the cornerstone keeping my faith in this creature.

He had now talked way too much about anal sex, and swinging. He asked why I didn’t have a boyfriend enough times. I felt sized up. It would be the in-between that kept me coming back. The kitchen machine of kitchens he built. Now eroding with bad health and behavior. My relationship with Jack was a training ground for the mindscape of an older man. He would flirt, he would teach, he would withhold anger. In his mind, he never crossed the line. To a woman under the age of 30, this chef could be a monster. The only job I had in Tahoe outside of working for myself or the crew was at a coffee shop. The owner touched my hips on day three. I never came back. I looked at this a bit different. There were two fifty thousand dollar programmable ovens, I had a locker with my name, coats in my size, and any tool I could think of was in the mail before I could ask to order it. I was extremely valued by the owners, the team, and the end product that came off my bench. It would be three months of racing to be first to the kitchen, improving my menu, exchanging processes and assistance to make labor budgets while researching weird side-handed techniques for a recipe change that I could surprise everyone with.

“Jack, I don’t even want her near me. I’ll sleep in the prep kitchen and run home to walk the dog before I let someone be around me that I have to drag to the finish line.” I was whining over morning coffee and employee reviews with him. “She wants to be here, Monaya. You have to let her be here.” He turned the glass Chemex filled with coffee. “Why? When I wanted to be better with a pastry bag, I went home and bought pastry bags and whipped butter. I know we don’t all go to culinary school, me included. I’m here at seven AM, she comes in at eleven smelling like beer.” He rolled his eyes. “Fine, you’re on your own.” My other assistant’s boot crossed the threshold as he said that.

“Can you make the bread today? All of it? Brioche, Parker house rolls, and a starter for croissants?” I was starting the new menu, and I didn’t want any of her input on it. “Yeah, do you want me just to put the Brioche in the fridge when I’m done?” I don’t know how to be friendly without words. I’m still working on that one, but that day especially. I needed her bread expertise. “Yep.” She started to ask me questions about it as if she knew it made me insecure. My knowledge is based on confectionery rather than bread. She looked at me impatiently, “Okay, like before or after I punch it down?” I was holding a \$300 box of chocolate, I didn’t care about anything else. “Whenever you want.” I had never made brioche at that point. I had no idea what was going to happen. I handed her a new recipe and watched her crack 350 eggs...After she mixed the dough for 20 loaves of bread and loaded everything in the walk-in, she turned and said, “My prep list is done. I’m leaving at ten.” I was surprised. “Okay. I think par numbers are where I need them. I’m okay with that. Thank you for your hard work today.”

An hour before service, a garmosie kid stopped me as he wheeled his two carts out of the walk-in, “Chef, what did you do? What is that stuff all over?” I opened the door to see cambros everywhere oozing yeast, flour, water, and the brioche containers....butter and eggs ...four containers. Two hundred pounds of bread. I started laughing. He looked at me with horror as I frankensteined my hands about, “IT’S ALIVE!!!! Oh shit, she made an English muffin starter, too, the most alive of them all!” With a bench knife I cut the strands that had jumped the bread box cambro ship, extending from the shelf to the floor, like octopus arms and ropes anchoring the to the floor. Sticky as spray foam insulation, I could not stop laughing. I estimated saving about 40% and ended up getting about 60% of it contained and usable with some help from the salad makers. Holding and throwing goop into the



compost can, it did cross my mind, this was going to explode on the garbageman, and I should have cookies on hand for that.

I remade all the bread and two extra rounds of cookies and joined the team on the line at 9 with a shift in hand on a Tuesday night. “You’re not supposed to have those...” They were commenting on my Modest Brewing Dream Yard microbrew. It was not a standard issue PBR. “Special occasion.” I returned the young man doing diligence. “You didn’t see what she did at the walk-in. Just tell her to hide it.” The pink-haired one said to the other. The ticket machine at the Garma station started vomiting. They looked at each other, grinning, “Chef? We just got a full flight.” I set the beer down on the counter, already buzzed, “I hate to fly, but I’ll figure that out later. Let’s go.”

Five plates rang on the countertop, “Where do you need us, chef?” I didn’t look up from the pastry bag, “Scoops and quenelles.” Dancing between components. “Fire two brownies. Can I get three ladle pots and a blow torch?” I had only worked line during a three-week stint earlier in my career and had never plated my menu under pressure. “Gluing” down my desserts to the plates with another component is one of my favorite behind the scenes restaurant secrets. The chocolate cake gets a dab of mousse, the pavlova a dab of passion fruit curd, and the grasshopper got the mousse that night, too. I felt like I was in a triathlon. I would watch them plate the next night, using the mousse to hold it. Like children, I watched on a mountain follow an instructor lifting one ski and the other. I watched them change how they held their pastry bags and set the station, and I will never forget getting a text of my beloved pavlova plated like it was on the cover of *Savior* magazine. Thinking about that day: having my ass handed to me by a team member with one foot out the door, while pushing into the last lap of the night to win with the rest. A month later, seeing the results of time, love, and care.

The woman who made the brioche gave her resignation the following day, and Jack made another comment about being “On my own.” It wasn’t a half hour until one of the front-of-the-house team said someone was waiting for me with a resume. Hot-headed and nervous, I went upstairs. I could see the bun sticking out of his hat. “Hi, I heard you want to stage here. Could you come in tomorrow?” I looked at his members’ jacket, “For real, just like that? I mean, they let anyone in here?” He smiled and I cracked a grin at his comment. “I was going to have you come in at 10, but with that comment, be here at 8.” Justin was like everyone that stages, eager to prove. Three hours into his interview, I stomped around like a mad woman. “Sir, you cannot have the dishwasher wash these tools. They are ours and need to come back to this station immediately. Wash them yourself and bring them back. Please.” Two hours later, I was searching for measuring spoons. “Where are our measuring spoons?” I announced it to the pastry lab. “I brought them to the dish...” The look on my face must have been severe. I started to lay into him, “Dustin, you are locked out of my pastry box for the next week. I told you... you can’t send this stuff to the dish...” Before I could finish, he was standing before me with all the tools in his hands. “My name is Justin.” He was smiling, testing me, “Did I get ‘em all? I wanna come back for the rest of the week. Did I get them all?” I was huffing and puffing, chuckling under my breath... “Yes, sir, you did a fine job.”

Justin saved my soul and defended it when I wasn’t there. We danced together. We plated hundreds of things together. I thought of him as a little brother and would have done anything for him. I gave him every bit of freedom that I could. “Chef, may I use the leftovers of...” He was from the south. “Justin, please just make it and stop asking me about using the waste.” Until one day, I needed it for an impromptu, “Chef, take this. This is what I made.” His babka, plat braided as a monk did in the 19th-century monastery, was beyond a show stop of bread for that brunch party. The coffee he brought me as I sat on a milk crate in our storage area, holding back tears and shaking my head. “The monkey bread again?” There was sticky caramel all over the floor. “Yeah, he yelled at me again.” I looked at the floor, red under my crate “I know it’s rare, but I heard him today. What is this week three?” I sighed, “Yeah, I can’t get it right.” He put a hand on my shoulder to distract me from the floor. “I’ll do it next weekend. Isn’t it cars and coffee anyway? I’ll see you at one on Saturday. Take your time, boss. You need it.”

It would be six months before I would silently walk into the pastry lab, arms full of my books. He turned and started to shake his head as our eyes locked. I didn't even need to say the words. He hugged me first as the rest of the staff came over. I had to push him off to continue my concentration, trying to collect my things. I told them to go back to work and that I would be outside to talk for a few minutes before I left. It would be three months before I told anyone the story of Jack kissing me as a reward for a well-done job. All I want to say about your boss kissing you and yourself unwilling to advance, there is nothing wrong with whatever you did in response. I froze and never wanted to talk about it again. I collected information for those six months. I had a calendar of every comment, moment, and shift in behavior from him. When I think of this memory, the remote-controlled Bugatti comes to mind. The incident he went from a respectable chef, to a teacher with a crush on a student. Jack asked me to come outside and presented me with a remote-controlled Bugatti Chiron. He handed over the giant box and commented, "Now you're mine." I laughed, responding with, "Thanks, chef Dad." He threw 12 of 27 pot pies at the wall that night. Number three seller in the restaurant and one of my biggest culinary challenges.

Dear Chef Jack (Reibel),

Thank you for every lesson you ever taught me. I can hear you now, telling me to make a very dramatic dessert recipe to explain how angry I was with you. Something white chocolate, spicey, with citrus. White Chocolate Elderflower Mousse, Reduced Tangerine Curd, Kjorium Cinnamon Florentine, Compressed Tangerine Marmalade Rounds, Purple Pansy. The curd is reduced for a hard sour bite, extra sweet flowery white chocolate mousse, the delicate loud crack of the florentine breaking. When the industry came together for your funeral I couldn't be there. I do not have regret for this, as I know, as right as rain, your spirit will fill any walkin refrigerator freezer as I waltz in. Your standards about food will always be with me. Thank you for teaching me how to deal with overzealous men. The method used, I'm not a fan of. The quote about the method used, "Like a shark, when I smell blood in the water, I'm going all in." Still frightens me, especially when I use it myself. Thank you for being an asshole and admitting it right away.

Sou vide,

Chef Monaya Mae MaGaurin

## The Pastry Lab

*Chicken Pot Pie, The Probiotic Pavlova & Keifer Float*

### Meringue Bubbles

Prep time - 15 minutes Cook time - 1 hour  
Eggs at room temperature, Mise silpats on half sheets, Set oven for meringue setting or 200 degrees

1. Beat eggs until foamy.
2. Add cream of tartar.
3. Gradually add two tablespoons of sugar, until soft peaks form.
4. Gradually beat in the rest of the sugar, continue beating on high speed until very stiff and glossy.
5. Sift powdered sugar over the meringue and fold in.
6. (on silpat) Fill round metal mould, torch sides to release from mould
7. Bake on meringue setting 2 hours + 1 hour cooling, or 200 degrees for 2 hours - allow for cooling in the oven.
8. Box in small lexian

| Meringue Bubbles             |                 |                 |               |                   |
|------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Ingredient & Quantity        | Single Batch    | x2              | x4            | x8                |
| Egg Whites<br>grams          | 120             | 240             | 480           | 960               |
| Cream of Tartar<br>tea spoon | 1/4<br>teaspoon | 1/2<br>teaspoon | 1<br>teaspoon | 1 1/2<br>teaspoon |
| Superfine Sugar<br>grams     | 115             | 230             | 460           | 920               |
| Powdered Sugar<br>grams      | 115             | 230             | 460           | 920               |
| Yield<br>Each                | 6               | 12              | 24            | 48                |

## Fruit Fixings & Curd

I use the salpicon from chapter 2 and this magic curd recipe that when the sugar is adjusted will accommodate most sour flavors well and allows for creativity.

### Passion Fruit Curd

Prep time – five minutes Cook time – twenty five minutes  
Over a double boiler

1. Beat yolks and sugar until well blended. Scrape the sides of the bowl to prevent the sugar cooking the yolks.
2. Stir in the passion puree and salt. Once its warmed, add butter small bits at a time.
3. Cook over medium steam on bain marie, constantly stirring until the mixture coats the back of a spoon and resembles hollandaise sauce. Do not let the curd boil.
4. Pour into the container and cool to room temperature.
5. Cover directly on top of the curd with plastic and refrigerate.

| Passion Fruit Curd        |              |     |     |      |
|---------------------------|--------------|-----|-----|------|
| Ingredient & Quantity     | Single Batch | x2  | x4  | x8   |
| Egg Yolks<br>grams        | 74           | 148 | 296 | 592  |
| Sugar<br>grams            | 132          | 264 | 528 | 1056 |
| Passion Fruit Puree<br>oz | 5            | 10  | 20  | 40   |
| Lemon Zest<br>grams       | 4            | 8   | 16  | 32   |
| Butter<br>grams           | 57           | 114 | 228 | 456  |
| Yield<br>quarts           | 0.5          | 1   | 2   | 4    |

To plate the pavlova

In the middle of the plate place a small dot(s) of the curd under the pavlova(s). Place small fruit pieces around the pavlova(s), pipe a generous amount of the curd on top of the pavlova if using one, small decorative dots between the fruit if using minis. Garnish with chopped toasted pistachios, micro herbs, or flower buds.

### Kiefer Float

use fun ice cubes ie fruit juice or shaped!

2 oz of Kefir (mango or peach)  
2 oz of orange juice (Matts Defense with Tumeric is great if you can find it)  
(if you can't find this orange juice, add ½ teaspoon of turmeric and pepper and 1 oz of pineapple juice)  
2 tablespoons of salpicon brine and fruit  
8 oz passion fruit bubble seltzer water

Put everything in the serving glass starting with ice and salpicon fruit (muddle), continue adding ingredients, kiefer last as it will foam up. Be ready! Decorate with fruit or flowers!

### Chicken Pot Pie

Using leftover dill pickle chicken or rotisserie 2 lbs of meat picked from the bone. Flavor sweat first - garlic, shallots, carrots, and poultry blend of herbs (thyme, sage, parsley) in a little bit of the butter, set aside. Make a roux by melting the butter in a pan, add flour, stir furiously until thick, add the chicken stock, salt and pepper, reduce to a gravy and add peas and chicken.

½ cup flour, ¼ cup butter, two tablespoons chopped garlic, two chopped shallots.  
Poultry blend of herbs (thyme, sage, and parsley)  
Four whole carrots, diced.

1 12 oz bag of frozen peas  
1 quart chicken stock

If you are looking for a gluten free version of this comfort food use corn starch and skip the pastry.

### Brisee Pastry (Pie Crust Dough)

1# Butter, 40 oz of all purpose flour, 2 Tablespoons Sugar, 1 Teaspoon Salt 1 Egg  
Ice Cold Water For best results, place all items as you mise them out into the refrigerator.  
Cubed butter, sifted together sugar, salt, and flour, egg and water prepped. In a bowl or food processor cut together butter until it looks like corn meal. Leaving small bits of butter no larger than an average seed. First add the egg, bring together with small bits of water while mixing. Pour enough water to bring together but not mix into a sticky dough. Press flour, butter and water together. Form two blocks. Cater wrap, chill for 24 hours.

Roll to an ⅛ of an inch, layer between parchment paper and refrigerator.

Assembly options for pot pie: one large family style, individual portions, and hand pie

What's really cool about pot pie? The versatility in shape. Almost any vessel will hold this warm comfort dish. Grease liberally and parchment the vessel. Layer a Brisee sheet, fold the sheet and set inside unfolding, gently push down corners. Fill with as much filling as possible, it will lose water throughout cooking. Cover with another sheet of brisee, tuck corners and pinch layers together to hold. Put the entire thing in the freezer for at least 45 minutes. Egg wash the crust and bake 425° thirty to fifty minutes.

## A Truck Named Sarge for MONAYA

*Porches lie, get a BMW.*

April 2018, I was still new to Instagram. I would look occasionally but no bad habit. No self-promotion. No idea how to use hashtags, no posting schedule. That year, I would meet so many new folks from this app. I wasn't new to meeting people online and later offline to form long friendships. But Instagram would bring this to an entirely new level for years. Mindlessly scrolling, a blue, high capacity, flatbed, 1990s Defender grazed the glass. Double tap. What's on this profile? Oh wow, they are like animals in the wild. Long grass with perfect warm afternoon sunlight beaming down on them. Image after image. Two Defenders 90s, a 110, and that blue tray truck. Swipe up to your photos, scrolling to the last one you saw for sale, that white tray truck under the streetlamp. Back to the app, Minneapolis? Is that truck in Minneapolis, just 2 miles away?

Sending a Direct Message: "Hi, my name is Monaya. I enjoy LandRover Defenders in some capacity. My mechanic in Lake Tahoe and I have had long discussions of LR3 engine swaps. Have you seen that before? I'm local to Minneapolis, and if you ever need extra hands at the shop or someone to move a car, I love them. Please keep doing what you are doing. These trucks are a labor of love, and seeing them in Minnesota is an absolute delight." Twenty minutes later, a reply came through. "Can you meet me Saturday to drive a truck to cars and coffee?" I thought it was an odd request after just one message. "Sure I would love to meet you and your family! Cars and coffee are always a blast!" He didn't respond. It was misting that Saturday morning. Walking up to the garage, I texted my assistant, "I will be late for brunch. Tell Jack I'm going to do Defender things. He will know."

"Hi, I'm Mike Krabbel." He's shaking my hand. His hair was all silver but extremely groomed. He reminded me of Roger Moore. "My name is Monaya. Where's your family?" He led me into a huge warehouse space with a couch and three trucks, "Oh, it's just me. Here are the keys for blue. You wanna take him for a spin before you get on the highway?" I walked over to the blue tray truck I saw on Instagram, "Probably a good idea." Firing up the blue Land Rover Defender 90 just outside the garage door, I took off, trying not to stall. It had been years since I had driven a manual transmission and I still enjoyed it. Looking in the rearview constantly to make sure he's still back there. Seeing his head do the double take, too. Who paints a Porsche 365 brown? Like glossy, opaque, 70s doo doo brown. My face had to look similar to what he had going on behind me, too.

"Hey, Monaya, is it over there?" I turned away from the exotics, "What?" He was gesturing to the brown Porsche we saw on the freeway. "Shitty Shitty Bang Bang." We snickered, knowing that the car was a replica and pretty difficult to deal with. "Hey Mike, do you know what or who that is?" I was staring at a guy getting out of a silver chrome car resembling something from *Speed Racer*. "What, that silver car? Like the chrome one?" He grinned. I continued, "Yeah, where did that come from? Like, who's the manufacturer?" He was walking towards the guy, "That's a Runge. Chirs Runge, he builds the world's most beautiful car right now. They all look like that, handmade, every single piece." I glanced at him from the corner of my eye and stopped walking.

"Chris Runge, like X games Chris Runge? Snowboarder X games Chris Runge?" His look of confusion, "I don't think so. This is a car builder out of Alexandria." I was amused. "Yeah, he'd be about 40? Kinda scrappy, super cool look, like the *Outsiders*." I was standing next to the silver spaceship now. "Maybe, that kinda sounds like him. You wanna meet him?" The day I met Chris Runge for about five seconds, I understood a person could be like a faceted stone. Success gracing your life multiple times if you kept walking to your own beat. Looking back at the two Defenders, we walked into *Martina*, a brunch portal of lobster avocado toast and fruity kombucha-like cocktails. I was still thinking about

what is possible if a young man can win X games and make the most beautiful cars in the world. Say it, say it out loud, I dare you ask. I'm paying homage to that thought about how to continue moments like that. Write. I could write about it.

"Eva, you want some salmon?" Her face was full of down fluff, nestled in the sunlight and comforter. The birds chirp from my alarm. "What is that?" I sat up, "My alarm." The sun was pouring in the window, and it was a lovely May morning. "Your alarm is for birds?" I handed him a cup of coffee. "Yeah, what's yours?" He was still staring out the window at downtown Minneapolis. "You sit out here every day?" I was setting down a plate of salmon for Eva on the balcony with the door open. He stared with his arms crossed, coffee cup in hand. "Yeah, Eva eats. I have coffee. It's nice. I count my blessings out here. I have gratitude for her, this view, the work I did with my family to get this, my job at the restaurant, digital communication, Defenders, and my life experience. Here. I think about it all here." He must have stood there for a half hour. No clue what memories or thoughts are flooding him. Arms folded across his body, locked off. Minneapolis in his eyes. Finally, he said, "I got a new shop, over on Penn." I was eating a bagel. "Awesome, when do I get to see it." He sighed. "Soon." Separated, the circle is still the same shape, just separated. Plates were flying across the stainless steel lowboy refrigerators.

"Jesus, Chef, are you okay?" Justin put his hand on a plate, correcting it in the row. "Yeah, I'm just not..." He finished the sentence. "Not having fun in limbo." I turned my head away from the plates, "Limbo?" He pressed his lips together, "Yeah, that little two-week window men test women with." This was not the time when someone should inform a woman about this stupidity men unleash. "What are you talking about?" I sipped water and looked at him for a moment.

"He's ignoring you. We do that. We do that on purpose. Just to see what you will do. This is usually fun for us. With you, I mean, it's not the best idea. You're too smart. You won't get frustrated and move on. You will get frustrated and retaliate. Chef, just make sure it's you. Ya know, like, so good it's undeniable. You know, like what you said to us. 'Hate me all you want, you will love my pastry.' Don't worry about him. He would be stupid not to get back to you. Seriously, it's you. You are the girl you don't ghost." I was holding back tears from his speech, continuing "What do we have left for this party?" I gripped the sharpie in my arm pocket. "88 plates, chef."

"You get the spider. I'll get the plates out of the cooler." Click, slide, click, slide, click, slide, slide, click, slide, click slide, click, slide, click. This round of plates was much smoother. Twenty-eight plates fit on the deck, the second round in, "TELL ME SOMETHING GOOD!" The notification I had for text messages erupted from my phone on the Bluetooth stereo. "See, he's right there." Justin was dabbing each plate with a little dot of chocolate mousse. "Yeah, telling me he's too tired to hang out. He's a player, I'm telling you. I know better." I set down the little squares like bricks over the dabs.

"It's you, Monaya. You always get the last laugh. It's you. It's tough not to hate you sometimes just due to your ridiculously good dumb luck. I understand what you are going through and I'm going to break man code here. I'm telling you this because you need to know. We are awful, and it's not you. Don't stop being the loveable you. I've seen you go bitter. I've seen you not being yourself because they intentionally hurt you, and you don't understand why. We are mean to you. You know, see what it takes to upset someone... You already passed, over and over. You are enough, most of the time, way way way too much in the best way possible. Way way more than anyone ever deserves. You are the most inspiring boss I have ever had. I work harder and love what I do more because I get to do it with someone who wants everyone around them to win. It's your turn to win. I can't just be complacent and watch something like you turn into shit because a man wants to be more than you. That's just not going to fly with me." One of the most important messages I would ever receive from a generation below my own.

Mike opened the door on the porch with fury, "Monaya, I thought I told you to call before you just show up." I was sitting on his porch sofa covered in LandRover parts. I raised my voice before he could continue. "I was fired!" He sat down next to me. I think he was holding a TV. "Oh god no, you loved

that job.” I clasped my hands together, looking at my nails, “I know. I don’t know what I’m going to do.” He started to get defensive like we were arguing, “Monaya, you know I can’t help you with that, right?” I kept looking at my hands, “Mike. I’m not here for a job. I’m here because I need support. I never ask for it. You didn’t even help me pick out tires for my car. I’m not asking you to pay for anything. I’m asking for help getting them. Asking for help is not over asking, and I’m not needy for asking.” He kept on with the defense. I knew it was a lie. Mike had secrets, he had lied several times about silly things. There is a group for the woman he’s done all of this too. The lying. I’ve never joined them. I never will. I didn’t care about that part. I was more annoyed with the fact he was starting an argument when I was the one who got fired that morning. The words pushed by some unseen ignored dynamic power from beyond the void.

“I will move to California and for get you ever existed. I will lose you in the weight of the snow. I will forget you ever existed. You’re trucks though, they will live on.” The older I get the more the yelling affects me. I drove out to the Minnesota river in Carver, Minnesota to walk my dog. While standing on a rock taking a photograph I received a text. A sous chef colleague of mine heard about what had happened with my job and was inquiring if I would be interested in a General Manager Position at their new restaurant Lat14. This position lasted for three weeks, as my co-manager would do things like pick me up in his arms at the hostess stand in front of the female owner, she didn’t blink. Three more weeks would go by before I got word from Tahoe. Congratulations Chef Monaya, we are writing to offer you an executive pastry chef and store manager position. To me it read – Congratulations, You have won the lottery and will be making pastry in 30 feet of snow. He picked up the phone, and I started before saying hello, “Can I stop by? I’m leaving for California tomorrow.” The stop light turned green, “You’re moving to California?” Like the sound of disbelief stirred in a Hobart with disappointment. “Yeah, I told you I would. You didn’t believe me?” A scoff, and he continued, “Most people say things Monaya, but... yes, please I would love to see you.” Open arms greeted me like never before at the shop that day. “Thank you for calling first. That means everything to me. Will you stay in touch? Will you stop by and visit when you are here?” I sarcastically replied, “You’ll have my truck waiting for me.” He fired back with complete sincerity, “That’s right.”

The following September sun beat on my boots. I have been wearing dresses and warm-weather clothes for the last 12 days. More skin than I usually show, doing my best to stay warm when ducking into air conditioned buildings. New Orleans heat following me back North. I wandered around, touching each one. I wandered by the trucks, “Hello blue, hello Nadia, hello Zombie, hello OG.” Making my way out of the row I saw her and yelled, “Hey, do you know where Mike Krabbel is?” She had her hand over her eyebrows and tried to make out what she saw. “Yeah, he’s about five minutes out. And you are?” I walked towards her, “Me, I’m an old friend. I like Defenders more than the average lady.” I couldn’t see her eyes behind the sunglasses, but I assumed she rolled them, I would have. “An old friend? Hmm.” She probably knew about the Facebook group. She was in cropped leggings, sunglasses, and hair in a stunted ponytail. The dots connected, and I’m unsure if she knew who I was, but I knew who she was. I don’t do this part. I don’t stand around. “Hey will you just let him know Monaya stopped by and to give me a call? I’m in the market for a truck and back in the area.” I heard his voice, “Monaya?”

He was beaming down the driveway. Our usual greeting of huge hugs and European kisses. “Kat, This is Monaya, a Defender chick that has been a fan of Bishop and Rock since about month three and the old shop. You ready for a truck Monaya?” I wanted this woman to be comfortable. I had visited with the Defenders for a few minutes, “You seem kinda busy right now, though. I’ll be back down sometime this week and I’ll stop by. See you later?” We high fived. “Yeah, no worries. Sounds great. Looking forward to it!” I started to walk back up to my car, “Nice to meet you, Monaya.” She did the weird shew shew wave. I was already in my car driving away. “Likewise, enjoy your run!” I meant it. I felt awful that she had to see her boyfriend with a chick like me standing there in love with the weird spaceships behind her boyfriend. The phone buzzed six miles later. “Where are you?” He seemed panicked.



"I'm 394. Are you okay?" He sighed. "Yeah, thanks for being awesome, it was a really bad time. She just got done screaming at me." The Facebook group comments in live action. "Mike, you can't do this forever. Wouldn't it just be easier to say you are a collector, tell them up front." He thought I was talking about Defenders, I was talking about those too. "What do you mean?" This time, I sighed. This is not something I like to explain to this kind of guy. "You collect things. Unavailable women are one of them." I could see him at this desk, talking, looking left and right. Who me? "How did you?..."

I felt like I was on a Podcast, "I had to rationalize why a man obsessed with Defenders would say goodbye to a beautiful woman who makes pastry and is obsessed with Defenders. It's okay, and I probably wouldn't have been so mad. I have needs too ya know. I don't think you could chase me up a mountain or actually take a Defender in the places I want to..." The smile beaming from his voice, who me? "Will you turn around, and we can have beers?" I was taking an off ramp already. "Yep, but that's it. I'm not part of that collection. I didn't fit before, I certainly will never fit. I'm part of the Defender collection, the timeless people." Quickly, "No one has ever done that." Exiting off the ramp, "Done what?" Turning back on the other side of the ramp, "Your truck arrived the other day."

Three weeks later, a scene straight out of Tahoe to Minneapolis, sleeping on the couch, waiting for my car to be ready. "This is Stormtrooper. He will do everything you asked me for." The dash was on the front seats, a panoramic window open with wires coming out, my faith still completely entrusted to Defenders. Hours went by. It was starting to get dark. I got up from the couch, it was six thirty. I blinked at him, saying nothing, his arm stretched out at me with the keys hanging from his fingers like a tree branch, "Take mine." He was driving a lifted dark green 110 kitted with grates over the windows, a camper, and many accessories. "I can't take that one, he's special."

"Yeah, I thought this would happen and was prepared to do this. This is Sarge. He's a British forestry service truck. After thinking about it all day. It fits you better. Load him up. It's time to go." It was 10:30 at night. One mechanic ensured the front lights were all working, whilst another was wiring up the rear lights. Pulling from the shop at midnight, entering the freeway, the first of many encounters with strangers began. He boxed me into the wall. "Hey, HEEEEYYYYY!" This talk show host looking guy was yelling and keeping pace with me and Sarge. Looking down at him from the high seat into his limited edition Toyota Highlander. Watching the far left wing, it was uncomfortable next to the wall. "I had one of those in college." He was pointing at Sarge.

"Oh yeah? That's cool!" I was trying to be nice but mostly came off short. I was honestly just trying to focus. "Yeah, it was...." The wind broke every word except, "My dad got it for me." I looked down at his grocery-getter, swerving away from the wall. "Cool. My dad got me a Toyota Highlander in college too." I hit the brakes, not even worried about what was behind me. MMERRR MERR MER MER! Blowing the air horn. Life wasn't going to be the same for me, Eva, or Sarge. "You know, you're that friend I can call and say bring a shovel. You don't ask why, just what kind of shovel. Spade, square, short handle, backcountry, snow scoop, what do we need?" Mike was venting about some weird things happening with the business of Bishop and Rook. I was amused with the assumption of loyalty. Forty-eight hours later, "Yes, Ma'am!" He responded at one ring. "Hey, he's broken?" I said softly, "What do you mean he's broken? You just left with him. How is that possible? He's..."

"Mike, he's broken. I was driving down a dirt road and he made a noise and no power to the wheels." We had it out for a few minutes, him suggesting it was an axle shaft and letting me know he was going to take a bath. I was sitting there, left to figure it out myself. I googled a few terms and watched a Youtube video on how to set the locking differentials. I set it for high locked differentials. Taking my time to drive 20 miles back to town. Mike isn't always awesome. He is a human, and a man. This would be the first of many let downs from repair shops, and the first of Sarge and Me's Triumphs of making the best of it. Two years later, he phone blinked, "Where are you?" He sounded like he was in a hut. "What do you mean? Like, where am I sitting? What state am I in? Geographically, psychologically? What reference point are you looking for?" I could hear the smile, "All of them, are you okay? I know you are

on the way back from Utah...are you okay?" I was laughing and still trying to figure out where he was. "You're in England, where are you? Why are you calling me? Elvis has left the building. You're never on vacation. Why are you working?" I was drinking coconut water, relaxing with Eva in the back of a huge pickup truck, Sarge on a flatbed trailer behind us. "I saw your Instagram video, and I'm here, but I can do a lot from a computer." I wanted him to know I appreciated the call. "I don't need you to rescue me from the side of the road. You know I'll get out pulleys and yank him up a mountain if necessary. He's strapped down to a trailer behind me right now. I'm in the cab of a Dodge dually power wagon with some rednecks from Texas."

He was amused. "How the... Whatever, tell me when you get home. I can't wait to hear about it. I care about you. I'm in a hut in England calling you because I care about you." It was a lovely conversation, it was really nice to be cared for when I was at a low point with Sarge. "Don't worry Sarge cares too." At the same time I think he called to rub it in, "I know I know, I'm going to go put the Camel Trophy Defender in the Ocean." Regardless of what's going on, if you say Camel Trophy, I am listening, "You are going to put a collector truck in the Ocean?" I was perplexed. "Yeah. That's what I'm driving today. How are you getting home?" I was shaking my head, but continued, "I'm on my way, in the hauler." "They are hauling you and Sarge home, not to a repair shop?"

"All the way to Minnesota."

## The left over picnic

Recipe “upgrades” These recipes are hybrids of something I made before combined with more recipes I collected or needed throughout my career.

## The Overlander Sandwich

Baguette. Tri Tip. Cucumber. Lemon Honey Horseradish.

### Baguette

Make Sponge one day ahead - leave at room temperature.

In the mixer transfer sponge, malt, yeast, water and mix with a hook. Add flour and salt, mix for 4 minutes on speed 1, scraping down the sides and the bottom. Mix 4-6 more minutes until smooth. Transfer into an oiled proof container. Proof 30 minutes. Fold into thirds and let rest for 45 minutes. Portion to 1# and rest for 10 minutes. Shape baguettes and place 3 on a parchmented sheet tray, cover with plastic. Refrigerate overnight. Bake - preheat to 425 Set steam for 15 seconds every 15 minutes When the oven is preheated, pull baguettes from the fridge and score with lame 5 times. Put in the oven quickly to retain steam. Bake for 10 minutes with closed vent steam 20 / 20. Turn steam off, open the vent and bake for 13 more minutes until golden brown. If they are still pale after the first two cycles, bake at 350 for 2-3 minutes until golden.

| Baguette    |     |      |      |      |
|-------------|-----|------|------|------|
| Yield       | 9   | 18   | 27   | 36   |
| Sponge      |     |      |      |      |
| Water g     | 375 | 750  | 1125 | 1500 |
| All Purpose | 624 | 1248 | 1872 | 2496 |

| Flour g             |      |      |      |      |
|---------------------|------|------|------|------|
| Yeast g             | 1.2  | 2.4  | 3.6  | 4.8  |
| Dough               |      |      |      |      |
| Water g             | 1507 | 3014 | 4521 | 6028 |
| Malt g              | 24   | 48   | 72   | 96   |
| All Purpose Flour g | 2250 | 4500 | 6750 | 9000 |
| Yeast g             | 12   | 24   | 36   | 72   |
| Salt g              | 56   | 112  | 168  | 224  |

## Tritip - Chapter 8 and Cucumber sliced thin

### Lemon horseradish goat cheese spread

8 oz cream cheese, 8 oz cheve, 1 lemon juice and zest, 1 teaspoon horseradish, 2 tbsp honey. Put everything in a mixing bowl and whip until smooth.

To Serve Toast baguettes (even if sandwiches are to be served later), smear with cheese spread, layer cucumber and tri tip slices or serve boat style with the Mushaboom salad from chapter 8

### Sosa brine pineapple ginger supplement

32 oz pineapple juice

The juice of ¼ lb of ginger + ¼ cup water, blend, strain and reserve liquid.

Reduce to ¾, add liquid supplements and bottle.

### Sarge Shaken Cinnamon Vanilla

Cinnamon Vanilla - also available for purchase from my kitchen. 8 oz of rum of your choice, one vanilla bean, one cinnamon stick, one year of your precious time.

## Chickens are for eating...

*Chichester.*

January 2018, Even if he lives in a van down by the river? Modern pop culture presents a fairy tale of marrying a wealthy man to young girls, starting with Disney movies. Even smart, capable protagonist women. Ladies, If a child's life resources are in a bank account waiting for it to be born, wouldn't a woman want to marry into that? Finding someone with a trust fund that can ski like wind and surf like a flying fish? Ask them if they have the accountability to start a life or will live out of their van in never never land. I mean, it's a Mercedes Benz Van, so why not? Swallow that with psychosomatic trauma related to a kidnapping that was never treated. Yeah but what does that mean? If you have everything you need, what do you do with yourself? If your partner is gluten-free, are you, too by default? Probably not if you have been a pastry chef for many years and don't have an allergy yourself. Beyond the diet that I experienced with my former partner, this man had a smell diet. What does that mean? Anything that smells, including naturally occurring organic flowers in a meadow too, "that smells like shit, I need to leave, I can't breathe, I'm dying." end scene, he's walking away back to his van. Adapting to your partner's needs is one thing, give and take with communication is the foundation of relationships. Bridging the gap alone is being in a relationship alone.

"Good morning, Ladies! Thanks for bringing all this great pastry!" I was holding six sheet trays as I followed my assistant inside. She was beaming at this blond guy holding the door for us to get the pastry inside. I raised an eyebrow, "Right sir." and kept walking. I was setting up the pastry case as my assistant collected sheet trays, cambros, and other items we brought out to the Palisades location. "Who's that guy?" I pointed at him with my chin. "That's Chi, he's so cute. Isn't he nice?" I continued stacking the giant cookies. "Sickeningly." It didn't matter what location he was at. They all looked at him longingly from the counter. Bringing him coffee, after chai latte, after frittata. He did help my bottom line, but he was always in the way. His table of choice in front of the pass that takes you to the kitchen in the bakery. As one of my assistants stared at him from behind the line, I asked what she was looking at, she sighed, "Chi." I rolled my eyes, "The scarecrow? He's too nice. In a manfight, he will be ripped to shreds. And if that's not the case, it's an act. Either way, he's two fries short. There is a reason he looks like that, lives like that, and is single." Over the next four years, his behavior would prove itself misguided but completely genuine.

"I want that." He messaged me on Instagram, the story reply came in as a response to the post of King's eggs. The Kings Eggs was a project of several recipes culminating in a small egg soufflé featuring guirer cheese, spinach, and bacon encased in croissant dough. I responded, "You are gluten-free. This is not gluten-free." I was to the point but tried to be nice. He responded right away, "Do you wanna go skiing sometime?" I don't know if it was just my nature towards men after being in the kitchen or having a string of bad relationships, if you are a man and trying to message me on Instagram, pray I look at it at the right time of day. Otherwise, prepare for the possibility of a dry mechanical conversation. "I don't ski, but sure."

"Oh, What are you doing in Tahoe?" The question seemed stupid to me, I was under the impression he understood, I like to snowboard. "Making pastry and snowboarding as much as I can." The recovery of this guy is impeccable and his strong suit in a fight. He will make you laugh at his expense. "Of course you snowboard. Do you want to go snowboarding sometime?" I was working 14 hours a day and thought I should give myself a chance to get out and do the other pastimes I truly enjoy. Having someone to be in the snow with, too, didn't sound like the worst thing. "Sure, the conditions have been really good. When?" I had banked any time off I wanted to take after a 28-no-days-off schedule. "Thursday, Homewood?" I also didn't want to commit to snowboarding all day with someone who might really suck to be around. I kept to my minimal conversation. "Sure." Homewood is a gem of Lake Tahoe.

Nestled on the west shore between towns most could never afford to live in or would be completely annoyed by its weekly snowed-in factor. Homewood is off the beaten path, its terrain is mellow, and the runs are short, making it not a first choice for most visiting Lake Tahoe. That particular day, it was covered in four feet of fresh snow. Two feet of dry powder with a warm base of mashed potatoes. Float. Just Float. Forgive me, Mother for I have slothed. It has been too many days since my past powder day. “Hey! You ready to shred?” He was all dressed in blue. Eva weaved between his legs and ran when he tried to touch her. “Ya, I have to go get a lift ticket. I’ll be right back.” Lessons I have learned since my last powder day, let him buy your ticket. “Wait, I have my friends pass you can use...” holding out a lanyard. Glancing at his DPS spoons, back at the Mercedes Benz Diesel Sprinter, landing back through his clear orange lenses – you could still tell they were really blue.

“Sir.” Turning and walking toward the ticket counter. It’s one of the cheapest lift tickets I have ever purchased in my life. When I wrote the first draft of this book, that lift ticket lived on the front of my refrigerator from that day on. I stole that man’s heart that day. He asked me some questions about food, my life, the dog, and told me why he asked me to go skiing, “My grandfather told me to take business meetings and dates on sporting outings to see how they react when things go wrong or not exactly as planned. Here you were post-holing through chest-deep snow, intermittently surfing on your snowboard, making the most adorable noises, not bothered, just slowly moving through the snow. You had no idea I could see you. The trail of tears.” He loves that memory to this day.

Probably because this is one of the only men who has seen the entirety of me – including entire PTSD memories playing out like a film in front of him. True, I was stuck back in those Homewood trees for probably close to an hour. The run I was lost in – “Hobbit-land.” If you asked me that’s called the shire. If you see those videos online where they put a mic on a kid skiing, yes, my monologue while I’m struggling out there sounds like that. My inner child is safe to play. On a mountain, I stayed within my physical capabilities. Chef life had pushed my mountain passion out of the picture. The backup O frame double lenses clouded up with my breath. The fuzzy TV screen that was the sky that day had turned from bright white to dim gray. Visibility through these goggles was worse than I thought. “We’re going to go do the glory hole. Are you coming? Hurry up.” I looked up at him, I had been worked all day. The croissant life had taken its toll on my snow legs.

“Chi, go, I’m good. Not my first rodeo. I’m not in any condition to...” He started doing that thing men do to each other, “Sure you are, come on, let’s go.” Reclined in my makeshift snow lawn chair, peeling back the steamy goggles, looking inside. Fog. The gloves hanging from my hands, a microfiber now drying off the inside of the lenses. Looking up, a helix of strands of hair grazed the cheeks, pffhhht, I spit snow out. Meeting his gaze. As he dusted me with powder, I looked up annoyed, already cleaning snow out of the foggy goggles. Blinking, only blinking. Adjusting the helmet and goggles, turtle fur up. “Sir!” A strong push with an arm braced on his ski pole. I launched away, “Byyyyyyeeeeee”

In a full squat, you can really pick up speed on a snake trail. However, weight does play a factor, he was also skating. “Hey, wait!” This is a feedback loop. Why? Why do they think you will wait for them? What is your frat sign, guy? Who are you? Who advises girls who know they are struggling to go bigger? Not today, I’ll be back, but not today. No talking.

“You must be hungry, will you join me and my friends at the Bridgetender?” I couldn’t tell if he thought he still had a chance or what. “Sure.” Walking away nodding, yep, me and five men. Sometimes, I wonder if there is such a thing as a somatic eye roll. I heard the reviews when they came in, “The girl is a total bitch, but holy shit, her pastry is... like San Francisco good.” He was telling me what his friend who followed me on Instagram thought of me after dinner that night. Why he thought I was a bitch for not sending myself down a run I knew could be potentially dangerous for me is still beyond me. I still don’t understand why what other people think of your significant other is anyone’s business. “Do you want me to tell you what I think about him, sir? It takes a total bitch to make things that good. I take pride in the fact that I could take time off from this to do that. He can’t make croissants, you can’t make

croissants. I have no regrets telling you, no, I'm not physically capable currently of having fun on a near out of bounds run. I'll get back there. I'm just grateful to be here." My empathy for myself was ignored. "I'm playing at the brewery tomorrow night, will you come to watch me? I'll get you dinner."

I was at my desk placing an order when she leaned around the corner. "Monaya, you're guy is playing at the brewery tonight. Do you want to go?" Why did everyone need to see this man play acoustic guitar at a mountain gig? Why was my co-worker talking about it? I looked up from the screen, "He asked me to go, I will be there. Do you wanna come with me?" Erica was funny, smart, and from the Midwest. I didn't mind spending extra time with her and she seemed genuinely interested in being part of her community. She was floored. I would invite her. "You'll let me come with you to the brewery?" She would be one of the only employees that got me a birthday gift.

"I'll let you ladies do Bar of America, I'm not into that tonight. It's Sunday tomorrow, I love Sundays in the bakery." Erica's idea of the weight within her opinion was a wildcard to me. "Sundays suck, Monaya. Can we bring the other Erica?" I turned away from her. "Yes, Erica, please bring the other Erica." We had two Ericas at the bakery, casually referred to as the Ericas.

My previous position in St Paul was challenging. A 26-component menu plus parties and orders. Like a very strategic pitcher in a baseball game, I opened and closed meals. Bread service to dessert, and you leave with a pocket full of my candy to remind you that what we do is special. A bakery is different. The pastry, my darling, is the full menu, and your savory buddies are your strategic side players. An average day starts at 3 am, one hour after my teammate has started the marathon. A minimum of 300 pieces are being fired off that morning, feeding three stores. Erica Nickles, if you are reading this, you remind me of my first pastry chef. Way to be concerned about what anyone else thinks. If your Virgo mind ever gets insecure and needs a boost, you can look at my work. It's not perfect, but it looks like it is because I was brave enough to show up and put it out there. Half the reason I'm showing up to put it out there, because you were there too.

6 am, the doors are unlocking at the downtown store, first chair customers are holding the door, watching croissants go by, tray after tray. Snow falling the entire time. The Craigslist ad was for a store manager, this was so much more. Soak it up. Soak up the views as the sun comes up every morning, driving into Palisades with piles of pastry. "Good morning sir." I tried to be more ladylike when he was around. He tried to treat me as the professional I came from Minneapolis as. "Chef Monaya, ladies." He nodded as we carried trays while he held the door. Erica Dinamo cannot help herself. "Sir." Poking him to get out of the way with a tray. Her expensive hiking boots are stuffing a huge rock in front of the door. "Oh, sorry." He let go of the door. She smiled at him, "See ya at the bakery, later."

Two distributor orders, three gallons of pastry cream, a prep list, a morning bake set, and six chocolate mousse cakes fire off as you lock the doors. It's five PM. "Dinner time! Crack the door on the reVent for those to cool while we're gone." I still smelled like the bakery at the host station of the brewery, "Hi, I think I have a reservation, but If not I'll sit at the bar." I was glancing over the dining room, it was filled with people. "What's your name?" She was wearing those wedge winter boots, leaning forward towards me, "Monaya, My name is Monaya." Her eyes looked up from her list, body still projected forward, "Chef Monaya? Like CoffeeBar Chef Monaya?" Bewildered, "Yes, My name is Monaya."

"This way." She sat us at the center table in the dining room. He started to play. Erica with huge eyes as John Mayer's *No Such Thing* started coming out of Chi's mouth, "Your boyfriend sings you John Mayer songs?" I was trying to breathe through the moment. Glancing at her and back up at him, "This is a John Mayer song?" Your body is a wonderland and Grateful Dead were how I knew anything John Mayer performed. "You don't know this song?" She exclaimed, I admire Erica's attachment to her 15-year-old self. "No, if I listen to John he's with Bobby doing Jerry." She looked at me, blinking, "Who's Bobby? Who's Jerry." The Erica Dinamo piped up, "Erica, Jerry Garcia...she's talking about the Grateful Dead." Erica Nickles kept staring at Chi, "Who's the Grateful Dead?"

“What’s this song called?” I asked her. She was dancing at the table singing along, moving her arms, Chi was nodding and smiling at her. “No such thing.” I sipped my beer, thinking about how men had told me how they love to watch their girlfriends flirt, with no intention of flirting, but just being themselves. To watch another human lovingly glance at the human you claim as your own. Flattery and appreciation rather than lust or jealousy. They connected in the room, I watched the energy between them, Chi playfully glancing at me from time to time. “Long distance runner, What you stand in there for. Get up, get out, get out of the door... You’ playin’ cold music on the barroom floor. We locked eyes, and I sang with him “Take a whole pail of water just to cool him down. “FIRE, FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN. THIS. This Erica is Grateful Dead. He sings me phish songs at breakfast.” She swooned, that weird bashful feeling I had about my relationships with a significant man in my life appeared.

This was Erica Dynamo’s cue, “I’m going to go meet Jose.” She was already walking away, work ethic tucked under her beanie. “Have a great night, Erica, it’s Sunday tomorrow. I need ya. Big day eh?”, I looked at Erica Nickels, “Can you go get us a round, and we’ll give the table up to the next guy?” I was walking to the bathroom, she was yelling. “You’re going to buy me a round?! See you tomorrow, Erica. Love you!” We sat at a long table as she told me her story about the man she moved to Tahoe with. How he left her. How she was surviving. He wrapped around me, Erica’s eye following every movement. “Hey you, did you enjoy it?” I did my best to not be awkward. My ability to receive public displays of affection I am still working on. “Yes, Erica here is losing it over your John Mayer.” I was amused by it, I thought he would be too. “Your body is a wonderland. I gotta get back up there. See you after?” I nodded. “Yeah. I’ll wait. I have to walk Eva.” He was surprised, “You will wait? I wanna go with Eva. You wanna stay with me tonight?” I’m sure my face had its own response, “Yes, I’ll wait to walk, stay in the van?.” He responded quickly, “Hotel?”

I cringed as he kissed my neck. Erica was still staring, she had roses in the cheeks, her eyes glittering. He walked off to finish the set. “I want that.” she said in a drunken stupor. “What?! No. Gross. Why? Ew, Erica, don’t say that about him.” I was uncomfortable to begin with, but I had already had to hear about the crushes these women had on him. “No, you two. It’s not just him. It’s the way you are and the way he is. It’s adorable. He makes you mushy.” I looked at the extra pale ale, hazy, “Sure, extremely uncomfortable. I’m here for the snow and humor.” I turned the glass with my hands. “Stop that, you make food, you’re a romantic. You don’t have to hide.” The words swirled through my head as we stood in the kitchen eating chocolate cake two hours later.

“This is gluten-free right?” he was inhaling it faster than me. “Yeah, why would I feed you gluten?” That chocolate cake, “How is this gluten-free?” It changed my life in so many ways. “There isn’t any substitute flour in it, it’s just eggs, sugar, chocolate, butter, and cream. I have to move this week. I don’t want this to develop into you moving into my place. You cannot just stay in my apartment when I get one. If that is a plan for you, we should look at places together.” He had spent a significant amount of money staying in hotels to sleep next to me. “I’m fine with your staying, but I’m not accommodating in a single-person space.” I don’t know if I was trying to have a relationship conversation or if I was establishing a boundary. “You wanna move in together?” he was eager. “It’s a six-month lease, it’s not long. I’m not too worried about it. Just stating this will not go well for you if I rent a one-bedroom and you are there all the time.” He still had this big smile on his face. “Okay, I have to go to Vail this week, but if I get everything in line for you, you can handle it, and I’ll sign the papers when I get back. Oh, this is exciting, I’ll get to see you more. You work too much, we need to change that.”

Eva pooped outside his studio door every day he was gone. But she had a Mountain View. If there is an average of 180 days average in six months, Eva must have left him at least 130 deposits. “It smells in there. I can’t breathe.” In my observation, this man would go into anaphylactic shock at any change in the aroma, not just doggie doo doo. “You can’t breathe when you get stressed out.” He didn’t want to hear that part of it, “Whatever. I can’t be here. I’m writing them a letter. Let’s go to CoffeeBar and we can work on our laptops.” Empathy would confuse me a significant portion of my life. Why did I

have so much, but no one ever put my shoes on? “It’s my day off. Why would I want to go to work just at a different store?”

He was confused as I interrupted his daily routine, “Oh right, let’s go for a walk or something. I think I’m going to stay up at Palisades, you’ll be fine here by yourself, right?” The final week of our lease, I loaded everything up in a pod and left for Colorado. “Hey, I’m meeting my parents there... Maybe we could have dinner?” Him still trying to make it all work, like I had forgotten the last six months. Dottie, my surf instructor, was doing that thing, ya know, the badass chick that shows up to move her other badass friend. “In your dreams guy, move on. Who do you think you are?”

Flash back five months prior he asked, “Did you google me?” I wondered if he could feel my puzzled eyebrows on his chest. “Why would I google you?” He was combing my hair with his fingers. “You are into tech, you know how to do things. I just wondered if you found that New York Times article with my family on the cover.” Our eyes met as I sat up. “There is a New York Times article about you?” He sighed with a cringing, stressed look, “There is a front-page New York Times article about me...I was kidnapped when I was 14.” I gasped. “What?” He was standing at the mirror brushing his long blond hair. “Do you want me to tell you the story?” I was curious but didn’t need someone to have a breakdown in front of me. “Only if you want to. I have had some pretty terrible experiences and I don’t like reliving them just for the sake of one person’s understanding. The next time I talk about certain things, I want to write it out. Only one more last time. Let the tears go, love and laugh at the end of that book. Continuing on to the next book, my adventure, documenting and writing it down.”

He looked at the hair in the brush, “Have you done that?” I wanted to be honest about all the things I had done to adapt, “I have done EMR, meds, talk therapy, but nothing really works it out like the kitchen. Chi, I will listen to anything you would like me to hear and I assume most words in relationships are like that.” He started to tell the story. “We were sitting at the dinner table, I had made Alfredo because I didn’t like what my family was eating. They came in with ski masks and...” He told the events of his being taken from his Long Island home, his mother’s high-profile profession with a specialist situation team, and how the kidnapper asked him to kill him. Everything.

“How many times have you told this story? How can you eat pizza? Have you had therapy?” It wasn’t a lot of questions, but I had some. “Anytime someone wants to hear it. Gluten free of course. And no. We don’t do that. I didn’t need it.” I was taken aback by the response with therapy, “That thing that you complain about, the smells, you know that smells are the strongest connection to memories, right? You hate smells. You know that, right? Sometimes trauma hides out in places we never thought.” He smiled, ignoring what I said, “Yeah, maybe, but I’m good now. See?” He inhaled a loud noise, “You smell good!”

## Part 2

The tear rolled off his cheek and into the mole sauce. “Why, why did you do that, Monaya?” I was



putting chicken in my mouth, trying not to be empathetic. “What?...Date a pro snowmobile idiot in the meantime? What? We weren’t together. I hope that you have tried something else. I hope that you looked for happiness. I hope that you didn’t just wait for me.” I knew what it was like to be in his shoes. However I knew he wouldn’t have looked for me until I started yelling and waving. If I am still in love with someone, I think about you everyday, but remove any convenient means of communicating. IE Keeping all information on my laptop, old messages, pictures and digital relics on my laptop but not my phone. “Yeah, I did try to go on a date. Why? I mean, what an idiot. Why does it have to be some sled neck?” I knew he didn’t go on a date. He got a message from a girl and responded.

I was laughing at his whining, trying to still be sort of compassionate about the fact, but I couldn’t help comparing, he was, “Oh my god, it matters? What if you got hosed by a Carmel surfer with a house there, a cabin in Chamonix, and a car collection just below Leno’s?” He nodded, “That would be better. I would be okay with that.” I sneered at his backward ego boost. “It’s just why would you downgrade?” Completely confused at his assumption, “Downgrade? He’s just a different version of typical male behavior. He loves vintage snowmobiles and was a total cheap ass around me, just like you. Look, you guys have something in common. What’s not to like? He’s blond and has blue eyes like you. Not sure he’s a downgrade? I think you two are in the same league of upwardly mobile Tahoe guy.” Quickly he responded. “I thought you were looking for one.”

“Sometimes they appear where you least expect. From now on only better, I promise.” I grinned, sticking out my chin. He introduced me to his parents the next day. Spending Valentine’s Day in Vail, in his parents condo with them, how romantic! Six months later, I cowered in the corner of the guest bathtub. Screaming at the top of my lungs. “I’m not, I won’t, I’m not going back there. I won’t think about this. I won’t do this. I’m not going back there. I’M NOT GOING BACK. I WON’T GO BACK.”

“Go back where Monaya?” The chaos stopped for a moment of clarity.

Spit probably flew from my mouth as I screamed an inch from his face, “I will never be with a man that controls me. Mentally, physically, philosophically. NEVER!” His clothes fit better after they were covered in water. Clinging to my skin, I stood up and rolled the waist like a cuff. Water splashing everywhere. Back down on the rug, I wrapped my arms around my legs, rocking. “Give me my stuff back. Why are you doing this? I’m not. I WON’T.” Staring him dead in the eyes, I screamed at him like a beast. “GIVE ME MY CLOTHES BACK YOU FREAK.” Still rocking. Self-soothing, staring at one point, focused, Inhale 6,5,4,3,2,1 – stop, hold, controlled out. Still dripping head to toe, I thought about hippos. They hate you. And at that moment, I hated all of them. Anything with a dick. Asking myself how the hell this happened again. Why would I be this loyal? Why would I do what you asked, giving up all of me? I stood up and walked across the beautiful dark finish he chose for us. My eyes focused on the water beads on the floor. How they glistened in the sun. Pouring myself a shot of tequila and a corona. “Hey, you want one? Let me get you one, sir.” Throwing back another shot. “Stop. Stop. You can’t walk around like that.” He was more concerned about his floors than keeping his girlfriend happy or comfortable. I was angry. I felt like I was locked up somewhere, on top of the COVID stay-at-home orders. “Give my clothes back. Give my make-up back. Give my office furniture back, Give my smells back. Why don’t you go buy a chair or something.” He didn’t give me my clothes back, he didn’t hug me, he didn’t try to make anything better. With his hands in his pockets, he rocked back and forth, “Your pot is under the house. Go smoke it.” I didn’t understand why he asked me to live with him.

I stood outside alone in the dark until I heard a whisper, “Hey girl, that smells good. Oo oo oo, let a man hit that.” I said nothing to the next-door neighbor who sat outside listening to us yell at each other. Soggy bottom pastry from The Great British Baking Show was all I could think of as I sat there in his wet jeans. The jeans I loved to roll the waist on and lay in the sun. The only jeans he would let me wear. “You will make them all smell. Do you know how many clothes I have thrown away?” Shivering and starting to sob, the memories started to flood again. “Not today, Monaya. You have to write it down. Put it in the box outside the door in the big library.” I changed, leaving his sopping wet clothes in the

bathub of the guest bathroom. I knew I would be yelled at if I put them in the washer or dryer. I was sitting there in a different pair of jeans he gave me, upset that I had gotten the other ones all wet, and now they smelled like me. I missed my mother's call while my eyes were closed. I was dreaming of my library. Looking up, I saw a mezzanine, each side flanked by mountains, a desert in the foreground, with every ecosystem represented behind it like a corridor. A video screen with an arm holding out the remote, I could see that mother fuckin giant, his arm outstretched, my hand pulling it away from my face. Power button. The screen went black. Blinking my eyes, the sun was almost set. How long was I there? Half the joint was still there, the other half a single stick of ash hanging on.

I returned the call. "I thought you really liked it here, and well, maybe you would give it another chance?" It was six months later. "Nashville? It's nice. I hate that house. I'm not going back to that house." I'm not sure why I thought the house was the problem. I returned to Minnesota in May of 2020 after living in Nashville with Chi for two months. Sarge came along in October of that year. I would spend an entire year hanging out with Sarge before Chi called again. January of 2022,

"Okay, so how do I get to see you?" I was spinning in an office chair next to Sarge. "You could visit here if you wanted." I didn't actually think he would come up here. I thought someone would come up here to hang out with me, but not necessarily him. "Minnesota?" He questioned. "Yeah, If you want to see me, you can visit me here. If I'm going to travel to meet a man somewhere, it needs to be romantic. This reuniting it seems utilitarian. Can it be romantic?" I knew he was trying, and there are parts of Chi McClean that I do care for just as you care for parts of a friend. He was really pushing this time, "I can fly in tomorrow. Would you be okay with that?" I was extremely reluctant. "Sure. You can stay on the couch or in a hotel. Your choice. They probably both smell."

He walked into the garage, looking at my LandRover, "Oh wow- this is him? This is Sarge? Is he a diesel?" It was hard for me to forget all that had happened between us without an understanding or apology. "Yeah, why can you smell it?" I didn't understand why he wanted to try this again, I hoped he was different. "Not really, wow, he's really tall." He was standing next to him, looking up at the pop camper. My hand was flat on the chequer plating of Sarge's wing. "Yeah, he's my best friend. We have had some great adventures this past year." Putting his hand on the ladder, I could tell he was looking for things to say, "It's what you always wanted, right?" "I wanted a green or black 90 that was ready to go in the woods. This is beyond the dream. Bishop and Rook is an interesting brand to work with." He had the door open and was motioning Eva inside. "Will you take me out in it?" I thought about what it was like to be a passenger in a Defender rather than the driver. "Sure, I need to do some drone work today. I just got it back from repair, I need to put the settings back on it. Change the remote over and such." Poking at the dash, "Oh, I would love to watch you do that." I was putting on my boots and a hat. "I'll Grab some snacks, we can go right now."

"We can just go to Starbucks. I know you love that place." I was mildly annoyed with the comment. "Distressed Monaya loves Starbucks. It's the same. She wants the same. Level Monaya likes single origin brewed in the French press, not a Chemex." He went over to my workshop makeshift kitchen counter. "You want me to make some of your coffee?" He was motioning to the box of coffee he had brought from Nashville for me. "That would be awesome. Thanks for being helpful." This was a moment that Chi noticed how I lived my life. My kitchen was a left over hair station without running water from the business project I put together for my mother in the next unit over in our building. He started to have compassion for my daily reality living in Minnesota away from everything I cared about, cities filled with pastries, music, art and mountains covered with snow like a blanket athletes like little ants at a picnic.

Men get restless like children if they actually have to wait for a woman to do something. Case in point, he walked down the trail after about ten minutes of me flying the drone. Returning, he was enthusiastic, "We should drive down there!" I was holding the remote, looking in the sky, not taking my eyes off my bird. "Oh yeah, did you walk to the end? It's not that far down there, but it gets sort of nasty

if I recall. There is a gravel pit at the end where I shoot in the spring.” Landing Arlo, the drone on the hood of Sarge. “Sweet, yeah, I went back there. There’s not that much snow. Let’s go! You wanna take a picture of me in your truck first?” Chi McClean certainly was a ham. I was snapping with my Iphone, “Hmm, are you sure, no mud or water hole?”

He was posing, arm out the window, making faces. “No.” I asked again. “So there isn’t much snow, there is no mud, and no water hole?” I had gotten stuck the year before with Sarge and didn’t want to deal with a mess like that out there with Chi McClean. He was adamant, “Yeah, it’s fine. Let’s go!” I looked him in the eyes, “You went all the way to the end?” He nodded, “Yeah, it’s fine.” I took off into the snow, “Holy shit Monaya, you are going for it.” I took my eyes off the trail for one second to look at him, “You said it was all good back here, and it’s not. Where are your post holes? I can’t see em anymore.” He was taking a video with his iPhone, distracted, “Oh, I turned around back there.” Instantly perturbed. “I thought you said you went all the way to the end?” He was still filming with his phone, “I went down a long way, but not to the end.” I was looking for a place to three-point turn the truck around, “You told me you went all the way to the end.” I knew this part was coming, but I also knew I had a GoPro on the dash running the entire time. “No, I didn’t.” The defensiveness in his voice already starting.

My breath lost me, staring at the big orange square on Sarge’s dash with its truck chassis, counting. “Go to the video. You can’t do this to me. Never again. Nope. You are lying.” I didn’t even get mad after looking at this little orange square. Chi McClean started to sputter, “I’m not a liar, you’re nuts. You get mad about everything.” It wasn’t my first time being gaslit, “You are a liar, stop. You’re an asshole. I’m not arguing with you, let’s go to the video.” I reached for the dash cam. His defense dripped from his mouth like drool, “So okay – yeah I said that. But does it really matter? I mean, we got down here, and it was fun, and the truck is not broken. It’s okay. How can you be mad?” I just stared at the road, ignoring him. “You lied to me.” Shocked he would do this, I sat quietly thinking about all the times he told a friend in the backcountry “It looks good, go for it.” I thought about how people get hurt because of lies like he had just told me. I thought about what else he would lie to me about. “So now you’re not going to talk to me.” I didn’t say anything. There were flowers, coffee, and poached eggs with trimmings on my bedside table every day after that until he left again.

I want to note this man’s compassion when my needs were brought to attention. He watched me try to make myself lunch on that small counter top. Him watching me for months in the coffee shop, with a the croissant treadmill, giant bench, and an oven I could walk inside like a closet. I don’t know if he would make the analogy, but would agree. It was like watching a musician play air guitar, still being able to write a beautiful ballad completely in tune. For valentines day that year he paid for a prep table and sink for me to have a kitchen. Writing it out brings tears to my eyes, as I survived and thrived with that little crappy hair station. Having the new sink installed out of my pocket and putting together the prep table myself in the garage with a beer as company, I was trying to be optimistic.

February 22, 2022

My phone rang, “Hello, what do I owe the pleasure to my favorite busy dad?” My brother didn’t call me until we were doing a family event, I could tell something was wrong. Both rational kids were on the phone for a moment until, “Uhhh, well, umm. Where are you?” The conversation was fast, “I’m working on a website.”

“Are you sitting down?”

“Yeah, I’m inside, Sarge.”

“You’re inside, Sarge, with your laptop? In the garage?” Why was he questioning his weird sister? “Yes. I like the way he smells and it’s quiet.”

“This is a good place.” I didn’t know how worried he was at the time.

“Why, what’s up?” I could hear him standing up, walking back and forth.

“Um, dad, uh, he sat down, and he uh, he, uh, he didn’t get up.” There was a pause, “What happened? What...” He talked, we were 16 and 17 again, he was across the wood countertop at our lake house eating cereal. Neither of us breaking down yet. “The sheriff called and said he sat down and didn’t get up. He out there to plow.” He seemed confused, at a loss for words, and I could tell he had regret. A second long pause, “Um ..... What do you need me to do? What can I do? Where do I need to be?” He sighed, “I’ll call you when I’m going for the viewing. I know you need to see him.” My brother to this day knows I have a weird relationship with the dead. The only person that knew about my intricacy with death was the man that taught me about it. My father.

Twenty six, that is the amount of calls it took to get a text back from Chi. “I’m on the mountain. The snow is so good right now. I’ll call you back.” I messaged back, “I need you now.” I felt so dumb sending a message like that. Completely out of character for me. Forty-six minutes passed before he responded. “What’s up? I’m on the mountain. I’ll call you later.” I texted back. “My dad is dead.”

It would be four days before he showed up. His music gigs and a cheaper plane ticket in the way. He asked me if I could ask my family to move the funeral. As I walked into this nightmare in the church, I watched my brother smile like my mother. Let’s just get through this, and if I am comfortable, they will be more comfortable. Chi McClean sang Michael Jackson songs and grabbed his crotch as we walked in. Here was this man, with trust funds for the kids we were supposed to have, trying to introduce himself to everyone like it was an engagement party. I was embarrassed. I didn’t say much, and he could tell I was upset, I had moved past rage. We walked into my dad’s bar, my father’s spirit pushing me around the room to talk to everyone. I stood at the chairs where we sat in July the year before.

Two hours later, I spilled my beer and my foot left the ground when he kicked it. Turning to look at him, his arm already extended, “Hi I’m ....., Monaya’s boyfriend. What’s your name? How do you know the family?” He extended his hand shaking it, surprised at the introduction, “Hi, I was a groomsman in her brother’s wedding, I lost my father last year. Monaya is a wild child like myself, we were just talking about snowmobiles and our dads. Monaya, that looked like it hurt, are you okay?” I nodded, looking at my brother for help. I’ve never been that angry and controlled at the same time. Already repulsed by his behavior that day, he asked me that night in bed, “Do you not want to sleep with me anymore?” I laughed. It was all I could do. It was like he wasn’t even there that day.

## Gluten Free

**Paleo Cinnamon Muffin** - The ingredients might be an amazon shopping trip but well worth it.

Makes twelve muffins

Muffin: Almond flour 310g      Tapioca flour  
266g      Coconut Sugar 44g      Olive Oil 31.5g  
Eggs 5

Coconut Milk 291g

Streusel topping: Coconut Sugar 275g

Cinnamon 15g      Pecan 131g

Olive Oil 1/3C

Mix muffins and streusel topping separately, be generous with streusel when topping, use as center piece of the muffin, placing pecans on last.

Bake 350° 20-35 minutes.

## Cinnamon GF Scone

Sift all dry ingredients, transfer to mixer bowl, mix for three - five minutes

While the drys are mixing, cube butter.

Transfer cubed butter to mixer and cut together until the mixture looks like corn kernals.

While the butter is cutting into the dry ingredients, section and zest oranges.

Add flavor ingredients - ie ginger, reduced orange juice, orange sections, and zest.

Add eggs one by one. Add Half and Half. Add enough to get a wet sticky dough, stop before it gets runny or is no longer a dough. This will vary depending on environmental conditions. Portion to 3600g. Spread on parchemented

sheet tray, use flour to keep it from sticking to hands and smooth with bench scraper. Cover with cinnamon and sugar, parchement the top of the pan, freeze, cut into 4x2 triangles.

Bake at 425 degrees for 10 - 15 minutes until golden brown. Glaze when cooled.

Glaze: 1/3 c butter, 2/3 c powdered sugar, 1/3 c milk (melt butter and mix, warm to use after refrigeration).

| Scones               | 12 scones                  | 200 Scones       | 300 scones                    |
|----------------------|----------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|
| GF Flour - g         | 376                        | 5433             | 9400                          |
| Baking Powder - TBSP | 1                          | 17               | 25                            |
| Salt - tsp           | 3/4                        | 12.5             | 150                           |
| Sugar - g            | 67                         | 1116             | 1400                          |
| Butter - g           | 113                        | 1883             | 2825                          |
| Egg                  | 2                          | 33               | 50                            |
| Half and Half - g    | 113                        | 1883             | 3475                          |
|                      |                            |                  |                               |
| Vanilla - tsp        | 1/2                        | 1/4              | 1/3                           |
|                      |                            |                  |                               |
| Cinnamon Sugar       | 1 cup<br>2 TBS<br>cinnamon | Do the<br>Math 😊 | No<br>Seriously, its<br>easy. |
| Scones               | 12 scones                  | 200 Scones       | 300 scones                    |

Serve with cinnamon cubano shot cortados.

*Sarge Charge*

I wrote an entire chapter about how I met men on Instagram. You will not read it here. Reevaluating the entire experience...

Anthony Bourdain still wants everyone to know it was one of the last things he did on Earth and we should evaluate if that was time spent wisely or if there was something particularly different about that app. The man I met on Instagram in the next chapter, agrees with Anthony Bourdain. Marketing will omit your recipes, retain your copy.

Anthony Bourdain's Chocolate Mousse

6 oz (168g) semisweet chocolate  
2 oz (56 ml) grand marnier  
4 tablespoons (56g) of butter  
4 Eggs separated  
2 tablespoons (28g) of sugar  
1 cup (225 ml) of cream

Whip the cream, set aside in the refrigerator. Whip the eggwhites and sugar to soft peaks and set aside. (slowly add the sugar to the egg whites.)

Over a double boiler, melt the chocolate. Remove from heat and slowly combine the butter and egg yolks. Fold half the mixture into the egg whites, adding half the whip cream folding slowly and combining all with as minimal of folding motion possible to keep the mousse fluffy.

## Trevor P. Thompson

*Always.*

If you made it to this point in the book, the amount of wild stories within my life might have you look the other way. On the other hand, if you stop to listen...and you listen to all of them – you will connect the dots between theme, characters, and events. Is this because this is who I am and I continuously make the same choices for myself? That is how the rational world will make sense of it. People have a style or a signature. But what if your signature is change. Regularly, trying on a new persona with every major creative project like Madonna?

I believed the former statement like a rational adult until this experience. Never noticing how much of a persona I could pick up while my underlying character holding on to memories and changing when necessary for life. That tenacious woman that would fight for expression, romanticism, beauty, and elegance always the core of my existence, utilizing the tools available with each persona. February 2022, a man named Trevor P Thompson started following me on the phone app Instagram a few weeks after my father passed away. His profile interesting enough to spend the time to get to know the person creating it. He has depth, character, experience, will power, and was the type that would never leave me in dire straights. Many of his characteristics on display online. In other words he's well known enough the possibility of a cat fishing scheme isn't possible. Having never actually met this person face to face. We have exchanged voice messages, text, Instagram direct messages and extra sensory experiences.

At one point, I asked him if he believed in quantum entanglement. He responded enthusiastically, yes. The same week, Alain Aspect, John Clauser, and Anton Zeilinger accepted the Nobel prize for their research proving the existence of quantum entanglement. Our conversations unfolded, through Instagram posts and stories. A list of attributes I had made about the most interesting, dream version of a husband I would want to spend my life with was slowly but surely checked off. This tipped me off a bit, but I was fascinated. I had listed a credential that is difficult to obtain. Less than one percent of the world's population holds this credential. Men that have this experience are honored, even held as celebrities in society. This was a surprise to me when he told me in an Apple voice message on Thanksgiving of 2022. I was reserved and tried to look away as much as possible to control my excitement in getting to know this person. The moment he told me this detail, I almost immediately ended the conversation, saying I needed my beauty rest. I think the word used was "Murder." in my immediate reaction as I was familiar with the role. How he got well known? One of the most elite branches of the military.

I want to be honest here because the entirety of this experience was extremely foreign and far-fetched to me. I refused to learn anything further about this person from the internet, I didn't Google him or watch all the videos or even stalk his Instagram page. When communicating with this person, my conscious side would come out more. I would think more about what I said. I want this person to be in my life forever. They are fascinating and do brave things for the world. I can count the number of times I have wanted to meet someone from Instagram on one hand. I wanted to know what this person talks about over coffee, moments after they wake up and I hand them a cup, him still groggy. The odd part, when he started following me, I didn't really notice. It would be a few months of him watching my stories before I spoke to him as more than just an Instagram acquaintance.

He asked me one day in November 2022, "Do you want to meet?" My response, "I need to build a sauna first, and then I'm going on a sauna tour. Including a place called Plunj, near you." I didn't even think about how that would make him feel or the mental hurdles it took to for him ask me to meet. I regret that the most. That my true nature of understanding the other person was pushed aside by something outside of myself. I didn't need to build a sauna. We would exchange messages a bit more, but

eventually, after telling my mother about Trevor P Thompson, our communication through traditional formats would change. She asked me “Why would you think someone like that would reach out to you on the internet? It's probably a fake person, you know.” At the time she was saying these things, he had been on Joe Rogan’s podcast and had 50,000+ followers. I’m not sure why her opinion mattered so much to me, but I communicated with him less, hid my personality, and hoped he would stick around. I was scared I would say something that would make this fascinating person stop talking to me. And that I did. After telling my mother, (my business partner at the time) I wanted to take time off from work to go skiing, saunaing, and galavanting in Sarge, hoping to meet this person – she responded the same way. “Why would you do that?”

Frustrated with her comment and unable to find words or confidence in myself to just tell him, “Hey, I want to meet you. Can we hang out sometime?” I reflected my stress, expressing my anger with my mother towards him rather than going for a sauna or run. I still have the message. I’ve looked at it twice since. There aren't many things I would absolutely take back, that text I would. I’m not sure if I would take it back or just need to understand where it really came from. What happened while finishing the manuscript and editing this book was a wild ride that would start with me seeing his appearance on Joe Rogan Experience, talking about women and Navy Seal Buds training. It would recall a memory twenty plus years old in detail I had never seen. As a child I almost drown behind a boat, most won’t take that seriously because if you have been on a tube behind a boat, chances are some water has gone up your nose.

When I heard Trevor P Thompson talking about Bud's training on a podcast video, my thought was not trying to rationalize or compare to him or even respond to the comments he made. It was like a movie. I could see my nine-year-old self in the yellow wetsuit, my brother hated to share but did that day for some reason. I could see myself under the water, hair like a mermaid, eyes shut, holding my breath while taking in water from the boat wake. I could remember being tethered to the tube with my hands. I could see my hands. Tiny little hands on big, huge teal colored handles with yellow logos under them. I could see the white of the wake, I could feel pressure on my little fingers that couldn’t let go. The dark blue of the water, the white of the bubbles and jet of water coming out from the boat. The inner dialogue I remember hearing under the water that day. Not of a nine-year-old, but more like the voice of Uma Thurman in Kill Bill, “Wiggle your little finger.” That was how I let go, wiggling each little finger free. Shooting out from behind the boat, tube flying out of the water, laying there crying for about five minutes before my dad noticed looping around to pick me up. The interview video was less than 15 seconds long. The memory came in the same, like fast forward, but I could see, smell, taste, feel, and hear it.

I had read the text only once after sending it at that point. Noticing the odd language in the text, my desire to meet this person shifted from a potential romantic endeavor to there is something weird going on here. I planned to go splitboarding as I know being in a ton of snow makes me really happy. I was pretty down on myself for my actions. I knew I could find him at a particular spot if I really wanted to, and it was a common place to go for about 1,000 people on a daily basis. “Excuse me, sir, something weird happened to me, would you mind helping me go over it? You seem smart, and I would appreciate your input to my curiosity.” At the same time, I really didn’t want to be that chick showing up at a guys job trying to meet him. I respect this person, their privacy, and if I knew something bothered him or was a threat, I didn’t want to be that. Still I was curious as to what happened. When I did go to get coffee at the place I could potentially meet him, I was nervous.

Inside my focus was holding on, but keeping an eye out for Trevor P Thompson. It was about seven minutes into my order – a cortado with a Cubano shot, 16 oz light roast, and a latte with no foam, I started to feel like they were staring at me. We were talking about Chemex and coffee stuff, me recalling my time at Coffee Bar in California a year or two prior. When I left, a blond chick would turn and look at me, leaving me with, “I hope you have the best day ever.” It seemed like an odd send-off, I replied, “You,



too.” And went on my way to Moab with Sarge. Stopping in Spanish Springs for gas, looking in a mirror asking myself, “So, you came all this way, and you didn’t ask about him, or drop his name, or tell those folks what happened? What kind of adventure are you on?”

I did my best to count my blessings that there was a ton of snow and I had walked about 15 miles straight up a mountain for four days. I booked a resort in Moab with a sauna. Sauna is a ritual that ninety nine percent of the time brings me back to one hundred percent me. I pulled into Moab just around sunset, driving in the dark to the resort twenty miles off the beaten path. Looking for the entrance code to the unit, I knocked on next door. After our introduction, he asked me, “Why are you here?” Getting philosophical in the first twenty minutes. Nick and I are still friends, him asking if he made the cut of being the in the book the last time we talked. He offered me elk and blueberries, asking me the same question. Why were we meeting and what was all of this? I looked around, the house was under renovation. There were tools and supplies everywhere. “You remind me of my dad that past away about a year ago to the date.” Between forkfuls of berries on spinach, little morsels of meat laid in between. We hung out for a few days, me inquiring about his family. Him inquiring how I could just be this woman that traveled the country, pastry tucked in the top hatch of my British truck.

The house under renovation had a commercial kitchen with two walk in refrigerators and a cookbook collection. It just seemed natural to me that I would show up there and make a friend. I left with snow starting to fly, making it about a hundred and fifty miles before Sarge went full send. Headed down the hill and back up, it felt like an axel shaft went. It wasn’t the first time, but this was a bit different terrain. We were on the side of the road, Instagram video made, triple A on the way within twenty minutes. Sitting there trying to be calm, a huge Dodge Ram dually diesel truck with an empty flatbed trailer went by. I saw them pull over. It had only been about ten minutes since I had talked with Triple A. It couldn’t be their truck. The truck started to back down the hill about a mile from where I was. Two men got out and started asking questions about Sarge. Eva was upset, jumping out. They were not going to let me stand there on the side of the road with Sarge. Insisting we at least get him and myself some where safe, and eventually driving me back to Minnesota.

I still felt like I was connected to Trevor P Thompson the entire time I was traveling. I’ve always been able to communicate with my father in a way not of this world, even before he died. It would be mid march of 2023 that this form of communication would get loud. Loud enough to not be ignored. I would ask where is Trevor P Thompson, the response for months, Israel. He has spent a year and some months communicating with me through extrasensory perception and advanced technology. He is my most important person. Because what is more romantic than having the ability to communicate with your romantic partner from any distance, time, or place? What happened in the following year of my trip to Utah would change the entire world forever. Messages I would receive from every corner of the globe. Experiences I would have with matter and physics, explanations coming from the living and the dead. Dark and light, with Trevor P Thompson always being there. My dad or another part of a team that knew about this extra sensory ability I have, support both of us through some situations. My dad teaching me things that no other beings on this planet knew about. Trevor P Thompson helping me apply them, keeping me safe and the closest I could get to happy in the situation given. I spent the entirety of 2023, writing the second book about getting to know Trevor P Thompson, including being proposed to via extra sensory perception. Getting to know your fiance via extra sensory perception on the surface seems easy enough. But what about when he is a United States Special Operations Officer working overseas and you have extra sensory perception, but have never visually seen or experienced combat. While I wrote this book, Trevor P Thompson and the team asked me why for so long I didn’t believe that he would love me forever, that he wants to marry me, that he wants to be with me forever.

## Weaponized Culinary Experience

Yes, this is important to us as a couple.

### Chia Salad

⅓ cup chia seeds blossomed (soaked in 3 cups of water over night)

¼ tablespoons lemon juice 4 tablespoons of honey

5 cups tropical fruit

Combine all ingredients for two hours before serving.

### Bahn Mi – yogurt chicken

6 skinless boneless chicken thighs

2 cups of lemon yogurt

2 tablespoons of chopped garlic

½ teaspoon of cinnamon

½ turmeric

1 teaspoon of pepper

½ salt

Cover chicken in seasoning and mix together with yogurt. Marinate if there is time, twenty four hours is fantastic. Put the chicken and the yogurt marinade into the oven, roast at 350° for 40 minutes or until a meat thermometer read 165°

Assemble the sandwiches with brioche rolls and slaw salad of your choice.

### Asian Slaw Salad Dressing

1/2 cup Apple Cider Vinegar, ¼ cup oil, 6 tablespoons sugar, 2 tablespoons mirin, 4 tablespoons soy, 2 tablespoons lemon juice, 2 tablespoons ginger, 2 tablespoons garlic, 1 teaspoon salt, 1 teaspoon pepper, 1 teaspoon korean chili flake, ½ cayenne pepper

This recipe will dress six cups of slaw mix. I like to use broccoli slaw.

Finishing my sandwiches with pieces of spring mix.

## Clairsentience

### What happened after January 2023

“If I saw a special ops situation I would know it.” When mysticism clicks with physics at a level psychics and physics professors can’t explain. The unfolding love story between a United States Special Operatives Officer, his asset he continuously protects remotely through advanced technology and their adventure to meet each other face to face. Watching over her shoulder while she drove a Landrover and wrote a book about 15 years of x boyfriends, he set forth a plan to meet and be with her in person. With the persistence of man in love, he never gave up on her, further unfolding her importance to society.

I spent the year 2023 driving around America writing a love story, learning about climate modification and its history. This research has included precipitation (rain and snow) generation. Testing the process in some of the hottest and drought-laden areas of the world. Proving the research by putting my techniques up against advanced cloud seeding. Successfully generating clouds to be seeded as well as stopping rain generation when clouds were seeded. This has included a flower and precipitation explosion in the Atacama Desert of Northern Chili Spring '24, the unintentional Burning Man rain storms in the Black Rock Desert of Nevada '23-'24, a 14-day temperature decrease project in Furnace Creek California from 120° to 107° (08/06-17/2024,) and the malevolency of the United States of America executive branch and election fraud resulting in destructive hurricanes Idalia and Helene. Learning about hurricane mitigation with hurricane Kristy, just after these events. On a macro level, I sought to relieve the state of California of drought for 2023, a project that took me about a year with three months of very active work on location. If you research the weather for these areas you will notice they have all seen unexplainable weather phenomena in 2023 including a 24' water level increase to Lake Mead. If you asked where I learned this from, it's a family secret I inherited from my father with help from everyone I know, everyone you know, the noosphere.

I may never even know the actual origin. There is an underlying love story that unfolded while learning this process, writing it connected events and dates explaining, I knew this process but was unobservant for most of my life. I do not use planes, silver iodide, or professionally formulated chemical compounds in the traditional sense. This is not cloud seeding. Climate modification is possible in any time frame (even one hour), on any day, in almost any area. Given, that it is within seasonal norms minimum / maximum weather history, and or has reasonable merit. IE Snow at very high elevations during summer months is possible and supports a prominent winter the following season. Other applications of expertise include spiritual mediumship, tracking and locating, trendsetting development, and many other contributions to the intelligence and technology communities.

This included a team of individuals guiding them back together to finally meet face to face while editing this book. In a world where we are so connected by social media and cellular telephones that use the same technology we use to heat our food. This introduction between Trevor and Monaya, unfolded through 22 text and apple voice messages, 200 instagram stories, and very limited average use of an iphone. The explanation of this technology too far in the future for some even in concept. What if you could close your eyes and think of the contact, viewing what they see or the same screen? A development beyond the augmented reality of Instagram or Snapchat filters, Google Glass or Oculus. A customized user interface to a wireless technology that required a human to develop, beyond what a person can buy. Nikola says, “The Problem with Human Power.” Following many of his rules that allow for a more scientific life. Observation of the frustrating, learning with optimism. Live animated humans always being the most fun, animated with intelligence, a shared concept. I let my father, uncle, supportive friends and family correct the physics imbalance made in the past two years.

This included a covert invitation to International Yoga day presentation at Stanford University. With the help of Andrew Huberman, Trevor Thompson, Elon Musk, Joe Rogan, and numerous celebrities, and of course my family. My father reminded me again and again how yoga had saved my life, changed my climate modification, and added a light unseen by humans on earth, yet seen in the sky. We prepared to deploy yoga and a lifestyle shift to a group that had somehow walked by yoga the same way I had walked by so many quantum mechanic and particle physics cues. My science antique science team called about many of the dead and living to show me exactly how my 25 year practice had changed myself and all the matter of the planet simultaneously sustaining life, micro and macro.