

SILENCE IS A WEAPON

Edition 3

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This is a gift from a mistake maker so please excuse any errors you see in my writing, my judgment, my choices, my actions. The problem is I missed taking because I wanted to be a giver. Words are my gift but my tongue came with edges and if I bite it down any longer my mouth will start bleeding so let this be a warning. If my sword hurt you, I'm sorry, let me earn your forgiveness, but don't tell me to swallow that sword anymore because my biggest regrets aren't the moments I've lived through, or scars I've assembled, or people I've pissed off. In retrospect I regret only my silence.

SILENCE IS A WEAPON

Silence is a weapon, but any tool can be used for evil or good, joy or sorrow, terror or justice depending on what you choose to do with it.

You can use silence to protect yourself from toxic intentions

You can use silence to shield your friends from incarceration

You can use silence to untangle knots of misinformation that gossip about like a viral infection by stopping each rumor before you repeat it because everything we hear has been mistranslated and everything we see is reflected upside-down and everything we think is a little bit wrong so use your ears, your eyes and your mouth in proportion. Everyone is well-intended but the results somehow defy expectation and we're responsible for our actions just the same. You're already performing magic, you may as well pay attention to how it's done. If you want to speak, learn how to listen because words are a weapon. But you can also plant seeds with them.

We can say the things our younger selves needed to hear.

We can ease each other's loneliness, aching and fear.

We can give each other the courage to stand up and share because one broken silence shows the world they are not alone. Silence is the foundation of the violence is used to push each person and culture to surrender their power and resign them to service until choice is just fiction. And I'm whispered that these people who choose to exploit us should suffer and burn and be rendered to rubble in glorious, unveiled justice for the pain that they serve us. I'm told they deserve this. I'm whispered this shit by people who sit silent in front of injustice and do nothing but gawk at the victim because I guess a revolution is worth it but fuck getting a ticket. What good is freedom if you don't have good credit? Jesus will fix this, I need to pay rent.

And my shield drops when you laugh at my thoughts.
And if I could only tell you one more thing,
My blood would thicken to clots,
My stomach would turn into rocks,
I'd tie my tongue up in knots,
Trap the air inside my throat and resign myself to tremble and choke.
But if you're a mirror,
A room full of mirrors,
My echoes could bounce back the words from your glistening walls.
I love you, they'd call,
If you find yourself trapped in a life full of fear,
I'll cut through your demons,
I'll swallow them all!

And the last time I touch you,
I'll come wrapped in linen
To hide the telltale rot of a leprosy victim.
My fingers will shiver, and lock in your grasp,
Then release from the shackles of my barren hand.
But if you're going to leave,
You should take every piece,
Or my palm will miss you and long for your company,
Drop from the wrist and never return to me,
And the rest I would shed
Like moth eaten threads.
I'll unweave the tapestry hanging between,
The most beautiful thing that I've ever seen,
And the part of me that can see it.
And if ashes I should be for looking upon it,
Then burn me.

SENSELESS

If I knew now would be my last chance to see the sun,
I'd stare it down
And leave the ashes of my retinas scattered on the ground.

And if you are a mirror
Then the congruence of light reflecting back
Shines more radiant than when first from the starkness of pre-creation,
Pining splashed into vibration
And sent the darkness writhing.

Your words feel to me like my own breath.
They soothe me from my rest
And if this were my last chance to hear your song,
I'd listen so loud, I left myself deaf.
But if I could just direct that affection back
I could hold myself until I popped
and all my pain came spilling out.
Then I could kiss my own tears
and tell myself I won't ever be alone,
Take all my burdens and cast them to the road
To be buried,
To be forgotten by the winter snow.

Your eyes fuel me full of lustful bliss
But if this were our goodbye kiss,
My yearning would burn my lips to a crisp,
My tongue would crumble to bits
And my teeth would fall out with my spit.
But if I just gave myself back a tenth,
I'd leave myself ravaged and spent,
My diaphragm dying to supply my lungs with some oxygen.
I'd shudder and seize from a feeling I've never felt.
I'd ripen and heal and blossom and peel and then I would melt.

Violence can hurt someone once but silence makes a lineup of future victims.
Violence will scrape off the skin but silence will pick off the scab and prick
you within. Indifference hinges our suffering open with no one to notice so no
one can close it and traumatized people never feel safe again. A missile can
hit a target one time but the survivors give birth-defects to their children when
silence comes to coat that missile in depleted uranium.

Violence can steal your dignity but silence will resign you to misery, silence
will deny you recovery. Violence can shanghai you to slavery but silence is
why there are more slaves here today than any point in human history.

Silence is a weapon. It strikes like an infection. It grows so slow you don't
notice your toes go. You say, "Take my feet, I'll never drop to my knees" and
after those leave you beg just to keep your pelvis. You don't deserve
this--you're entitled to a sternum! It must say so in the Constitution!

But our rights are just privileges so long that we're silent while those born
equal to us are having theirs violated. And the constitution has been toilet
paper for as long as the people who use it have been sitting in jail. And our
silence keeps them there.

Our silence sinks more ships than loose lips when we watch them leave to
never come back here, cross the sea and spill some blood to save our freedom
by leaving other people disempowered. Our silence leaves every victim of
violence without an answer and still we can't find our voices no matter how
clear it becomes that our silence brought down the twin towers.

Silence is a hammer. It slams us in place holding together an engine designed
to spread fear and corruption by dividing us and them, and thrusting us into a
spiraling race to the bottom. But I choose not to let it happen. I refuse to be
divided, I choose a third option. Silence is a weapon and mine will be broken.

CHOKER-HOLD

On July 17th of 2014, Eric Garner was caught in a sting allegedly selling cigarettes. He was met by Officers Daniel Pantaleo and Justin Domico and he resisted arrest so they proceeded to choke him to death. His final words were "Please! Please don't touch me. Don't touch me—I can't breathe! I can't breathe!" Eleven times he screamed, "I can't breathe."

On August 9th of the same year, Michael Brown was gunned down by Officer Darren Wilson. "He came at me like a demon" the officer said in his statement. The evidence calculated that Brown must have charged Wilson like a raging fiend at a whopping speed of three feet per second, with his hands up, and leaving a blood stream. And if that doesn't sound right to you, you're not alone—one of the grand jurors sued. They said the actions of Officer Wilson never made it to trial, instead it was Michael Brown's character they crucified. The jury agreed it didn't matter if Brown was legally murdered so long as he deserved to die.

Darren Wilson received no indictment, and for that the people cried, "Please! Our voice has been stolen, our system is broken, we're riddled with bullets and our wounds are left open by that silence you're holding. We bleed on the streets to free our rights from a choke hold and we can't breathe!"

On July 10th of 2015, Sandra Bland was arrested by state trooper Brian Encinia for refusing to put out a cigarette, marking at least her tenth visit by law enforcement despite being a college graduate with no violence in her recorded history. Encinia first deafened her with a concussion before her arrested her and days later they found her dead in her jail cell from apparent suicide, a plastic bag tied around her head and new wounds on her back never recorded when they beat her the first time.

And in 2011 six Fullerton cops took turns battering Kelly Thomas into a pool of his own blood. Sober, clean and weapon free, Kelly's crime was being homeless. "I can't breathe!" he screamed, "Dad! Help me!" he wailed and shrieked before going comatose. But his dad could not be there to save him. Instead what came for his assistance that night in Fullerton was the deafening blare our silence.

If you let forth what is within and it will save you, but keep it hidden and it will destroy you. Jesus said that. Silence is golden but fuck gold, things aren't valuable just because they shine. I say give me kryptonite, give me dynamite, give me noise and light. I know what I sow will come back to me reaping and I'll feel the edge of the wdors I've been speaking but I'll tell you a secret. We make ripples every waking moment whether we mean to or not. Silence is a current we pretend we don't cause but this river's sending us off a waterfall and we don't have the luxury to pretend we don't control this tide anymore.

Change isn't easy, but so long as our system spirals into a slave state, as long as our children are destined to mudslides and heat waves, what have they left to take? Our dreams are already at stake, and loss is the default result if people like you don't intervene. Our planet will not be saved by an escalation of hate, only by peacemakers. It will not be saved by the gradualists that claim not today, only by earth shakers, only mistake makers, only the chain breakers and those who know a fear worse than failure. Only those who know miracles are an accumulation of the small deeds not just the big ones. Those who record it when the cops stop their black friends. Those who make their trans friends feel safe in the bathroom.

It doesn't cost you a penny to see the homeless as human. Your kindness is already magic. Every act of love is an act of resistance and every act of resistance matters. Even kindness to yourself is an act of rebellion. Our biggest oppressors lives in our heads. The good times can seem sparse, like lonely, distant stars surrounded by an endless fog of pain and misfortune. But the night sky is only made more beautiful by the way it's mostly dark, and you are only made more beautiful by the scars you collect burning yourself from the flames of our heart.

I am a mistake maker. I can't change the past and I'll surely fuck up the future, but I am here to do better. Between our regrets and the debts we owe time, love is all that we are. There's no point in trying to be anything else. So be naked, be stark, because love is a weapon. As Rumi said, the world can only break your heart until it learns to stay open.

It's not easy being transgender but your skin is only momentary, your personality's imaginary and your conditioning is voluntary. A human being is not computer code. You think gender is binary because you've been taught to believe in things that divide and conquer you. Truth is what you choose. If you don't like the rules then stop playing by them. It's not easy. It's not fun every moment but you can either be yourself or be less than that.

It's not easy being transient but this system is monetary to scare you from throwing out your batteries, taking off your training wheels and stepping out of boundaries to find where your true power lies. It doesn't matter what the facts describe. Your attitude is a weapon, not a result of the situation. We're not units in an institution. We're human. We're here to love, and hope and pray and breathe and eat and sing and everything else is just luggage.

Let go of what does not serve you and by the laws of space and time you cause a vacuum to fill what you leave behind. Change will not happen overnight, but every release will increase your buoyancy. Every fear you face shows everybody else how to face their own. So show me. Please. Freedom comes with a price I still hesitate paying. Show me I have nothing to be afraid of. Give me an example how to stand on my feet when the nightmares come crawling and want me to cower to plead. Show me how to refuse them. Show me how to live so free they call it rebellion. Show me. You don't have to make it look easy.

The injustice system chooses its victims to incite division and strip our adhesion until the bricks fall to bits that make this country what it is. Don't believe for an instant that police brutality does not affect you just because you're not a victim yet. The marginalized are targeted to pull your focus to the bottom rung of this three-tiered justice system so you won't see the top one. People are targeted, depicted without humanity so the majority will cheer for each strategy devised to limit our liberty as long as it's used for the enemy. The police become the first line of defense to absorb the people's resistance to tyranny. They don't deter crime in the first place, they just profit off it. If they want respect then they need a better job than this.

They signed up to be part of an emergency response team, not glorified meter maids with six months of training and janitor wages, armed to the teeth with military equipment and set free on their beat to engage with civilians like they're playstation gaming so the state can impose violence on traffic violations, collect its regressive taxation and blur the definition of a slavery system. Only a handful of cops abuse the defenseless and cause half their misconduct offenses but the blue line of silence shields them within the system no matter how deep the corruption. Silence sets them against their own citizens because it says no sin their colleagues commit can be worse than the act of leaking it. I agree with the opposite, to allow violence is to participate in the worst of it.

Silence is a weapon, and each time you use it, you lose a bit more of what makes you human. As your emptiness deepens, a stranger steals your reflection until you just go through the motions and your whole occupation turns into virtual killing. But I treat it as real as if I were bleeding. Because I am Eric Garner pleading to be left alone. I'm Michael Brown trying to run and I'm Tamir Rice with the airsoft gun. I'm Freddie Gray and Sandra Bland and Kelly Thomas and every name I have no room for—say it—and we may not be perfect but we don't deserve to be put on trial for our own murders.

Please! His voice was stolen. His hands were up but it wasn't enough, they need to see our spirit broken. They won't stop until fear has us locking ourselves in a choke-hold. But I'm afraid I have breathing to do. I'll need air in these lungs if I'm ever going to see the day when that name I'm shouting is the last name I gotta say.

STAR-SPANGLED BANNER

I have an explanation for why I don't stand for the National Anthem. My grandfather was born in Belgium. When the Nazis invaded, he refused to surrender so they put him in prison. On his way to execution, he escaped along with some other men, but so far as he knew, the rottweilers got to the rest of them. He proceeded to become a liaison between the French Underground and the Allies until the U.S. invaded and freed them from German occupation.

Today we're taught the French owe us a favor but our soldiers knew then that we were just getting even. Upon their arrival on Normandy's beaches, they declared, "Lafayette, we are here!" giving admiration to the French Admiral who fought for us in the Revolution.

You may think you know our founders' intentions but honestly, this country was founded from compromise between two ideologies that could barely stop screaming at each other long enough to defend themselves from their former masters. And when Francis Scott Key wrote the national anthem about how no bombs dropped by the British could burn our star-spangled banner, the third verse of his song emphasized the triumph of the white man over escaped slaves that joined the British ranks for a chance to slay their former masters.

The flag is a symbol and it represents what was given to us to by the blood of our ancestors but for Native Americans it may as well be a swastika. Ideas may be bulletproof but they aren't real. Human beings are real. The people perceived as our enemies wouldn't be so upset, but fear has them looped in a cycle, trapped in a defensive posture so nothing gets in unless it fits their preconceived bias. And if you presume this type of denial will exclude you because you've been victimized, too, welcome to the spiral because evil perpetuates in our blind-spots. It remains hidden in our generalizations until we can no longer see the distinction between a war criminal and their citizens, or a terrorist and all Muslims, or a bigot and the privileged.

I know it isn't easy being one of nature's experiments, but you're not a mutant and your experiment can only fail if you let fear conform you until you've grown identical to the control group. I know I can hide in wool clothing and pretend I don't suffer with you but I won't abandon the lantern and leave you with no one to show you--I don't even know you but I know that happiness is nowhere to be found from lying to yourself.

I'm not perfect, I never will be but you can't judge me more than I judged myself. I stole my own joy deceiving myself into believing that face blinking back from the mirror was supposed to be growing a beard and broad shoulders and look hard and rough and all scarred up. I live the regret knowing I built barriers with black magic to protect the part of me I couldn't love yet while a testosterone brush coated the fertile earth of my body with a parking lot crust because I couldn't find my courage early enough. But I'm calling my bluff. My goal is happiness and I'll send my fear screaming. The cement is giving to self-respect seeds, the concrete is splitting and beautiful things are spilling from me.

I may not be a real man like you, but that's because to you manhood's a prop to make you finally feel powerful. There's nothing superior about having testicles. You use it to hide yourself from your cowardice so you look down on women and call them a bitch because that way at least you can subjugate something. I call last night my bitch because it tried to destroy me and I still woke up under that bridge. It doesn't matter how, I woke up. I carry a lantern called manhood, my father gave me the tools in my attitude to protect what I love from being misused or disposed of, from being caught in the cold and the wet. Fear may be breathing your words and stealing your air but I'm still here and I'm not giving up yet.

And if I'm not a real woman like you, I won't be offended. Maybe you can't stand it knowing this poser is prettier than you. If your judgment defined me, that'd make me your object and no real woman allows others to assign her own value. You don't have to be perfect, just respect yourself enough not to project your own self contempt or I'll be required to call you an "it" because real women take no shit. If you want to be judged by your character instead of your figure then start with each other. Maybe boys think your butt looks better, maybe they call you a light-skinned N-word. It doesn't matter.

You can hate me but I swear you can't hate me more than I dared to the night I finally understood why it only feels like I'm in a costume after the time comes to resume wearing male apparel. Maybe no one else cared but I felt greater fear than I knew how to bear so I buried the feeling that I was living in error. I carried more fear of wearing mascara than spraying a payload of mace at the tweakers that told me to walk away so they could scar lessons on my friend's face. I refused them. I pulled out my mace, I aimed for their eyes, they took in stride and pulled out their knives and you must be wondering how running from two monsters fueled by methamphetamine for so long your body's been reduced to adrenaline is less frightening than presenting as a woman but there's a distinction between putting on polka dots and realizing everything you thought you believed in was false. They could only kill my body. I had to release a fictitious identity.

So I fought back the tears. I shrugged off the pressure, and no weapon you brandish could hurt any worse than the club I erected with my own self rejection to batter and beat myself in my sleep. I hit harder than those skinhead thugs did the night they broke my nose and chipped my teeth and tore out my hair and told me to get on my knees. They told me to grovel and plead. But I refused them. I told them if I'm going to die tonight, I die on my feet. The truth is you can't scare me more than I dare to. I bring my own terror. My nightmare's alive and breathing my air repeating a curse to convince me I don't deserve to be here.

My mother says I'm incorrigible. To vacate feeling responsible because I wouldn't let her control me she concluded that I'm simply not correctable but if I were incapable of improving I wouldn't be breathing because it's a lie that life gives nothing you can't handle. The truth is to live through this bullshit that floods through existence we must evolve into unrecognition. I used to be an arachnophobe. By the third time I caught lice, I found spiders adorable but I still won't cut my fucking hair.

Does this make me stubborn? Am I incorrigible? Maybe. Maybe my mastery is alchemy and I'll transform right in front of you. Maybe I have to because some younger version of myself is sitting somewhere licking a pistol lollipop wondering how many licks it'll take before things finally taste sweeter.

Pain cannot be mutually experienced and suffering is like a gas in that any amount is enough to fill the room. All pain hurts. That's why the size of your fart doesn't matter, I still smell it from here. That doesn't make our problems equivalent, but it does mean your enemies are hurting, too, and no one has any excuse to give into fear. You can be hate's captive or love's instrument so choose.

I don't care if some indentured servants were white and some slave owners were black. Do you identify with the hand that holds the whip or the back it breaks against? You're not a victim of the people who have less power than you. The White Supremacists are the ones killing the white race by revising our history so we can't learn from our own mistakes. The knife pulled to the white throat is the lie told to the white folk there's nothing to fight for because our founding fathers said "All Lives Matter" and the bombs bursting in air proved it, when that flag was still there. My flag is the star-spangled banner because I'm part of a Union that says we're all in this together but I won't stand for your fucking anthem anymore because our fight isn't over.

My father was drafted into Vietnam. For this country he sacrificed half his intestines to a bullet wound and lost more than half his platoon, including his best friend, but if you claim he protected your freedom you might find him in disagreement. He'll tell you that freedom was nowhere to be found in Vietnam, it wouldn't be until later that he would come to his country's defense when a cop smashed his camera with a billy club while he was working for a newspaper photographing the civil rights movement.

I choose the star-spangled banner despite the bloodstains accrued because I am part of a dream, and you tried it to take it away but our dream is still here so you can shove that ugly blue X up your inferiority complex. Through each generation we've been beaten and battered and told to let go of that lantern but our dream is still here. And if you want to control the narrative of what it means to be an American then I have a different story to share. And if you say I ain't a patriot, I say you've mistaken your country for a myth made of borders, colors and creeds. I say you aren't fighting for this country if you aren't fighting for its rivers and its trees, its mountains and valleys and its motherfucking bees.

And if you say I hate capitalism, I say you don't even practice it. The philosophy is based off market velocity not just extracting wealth. You live in a colonial system that ran out of space and started eating itself.

And if you say I hate the constitution, I say you should read it because it was written that this nation would be one people with divided power not divided people under one debt machine. I say when the wealth disparity between executive and employee is the same as a slave and the owner of a plantation then it's time once again for us to declare our emancipation.

And if you say I hate freedom, I say this isn't the first time greed and division seized our vision and squeezed it as if the dream would retreat through intimidation but our ancestors never let the fire deplete and right now they're all watching. And they say listen, for we are the people who built this country and the people whose graves it was built upon. We are the captives who came here stripped of freedom and the refugees who sought it through Ellis Island and the Rio Grande. We are the soldiers who fought against Fascist persecution and we survived the camp on Angel Island.

We are both sides of history and we beg you not to repeat it. Our silence regarding the military industrial complex has thrust Europe into a refugee crisis, and as terrorist acts threaten the liberty of countries like Belgium and France, they call out once again for that nation that fought for their freedom the last time. I am my Grand Papa's grandson and to the children of Lafayette, I declare: We Are Still Here.

TRANS TRANSIENT TRANSCENDENCE

It's not easy being a transgender transient. It takes work to have style on the streets, and even then the most I can accomplish is a sort of hobo chic but if you have a problem with me you can dere-lick my balls.

It's not easy knowing I could hide in wasp's clothing, hold an occupation serving in glorious serfdom, shut my mouth regarding the pain and corruption targeting minorities who can't hide like me in a hive caked not in honey but in silence. I can pretend I am just the same as all of them, receive a certified assurance of security for the all time low price of my liberty, 50% off today only.

It's not easy feeling too ashamed sometimes to admit I woke up under a bridge today, thankful to God to be there because I've been caught in the rain, the snow and the cold before, not sure if I'd make it to morning or give in to exposure. But if I tell you, you'll ask me why, why do you do this to yourself? Clean up, get a job and an apartment so you can barely afford rent on a box that sits vacant. Why do you do this to yourself? Get some bills, get a debt, pay some taxes, there's a war happening and we can't terrorize civilians without your help. Don't do this to yourself! Have some self-respect. Serve some fast food, the industry's striking so they're sure to hire you. Seek treatment, find a program, you must be insane and on drugs to sleep in the rain. Why do you do this to yourself?

What do I say? No, I'm not on drugs, I just smoke weed but you better be crazy to survive a day here. There's nothing rational about the spiritual castle I erect out of magic to cancel the cold and the wet, the lonely and dark, frozen near dead with miles ahead--I'll get there even if my carbon can't make it because I'm crazy enough. I bring safety with me when I travel and I place it wherever I sit like a paperweight lantern whether I'll get fucked with or not. I don't give a shit. I know my rights and they weren't given to me, they aren't written like laminated privileges, my ancestors stole my freedom, they turned themselves into citizens.