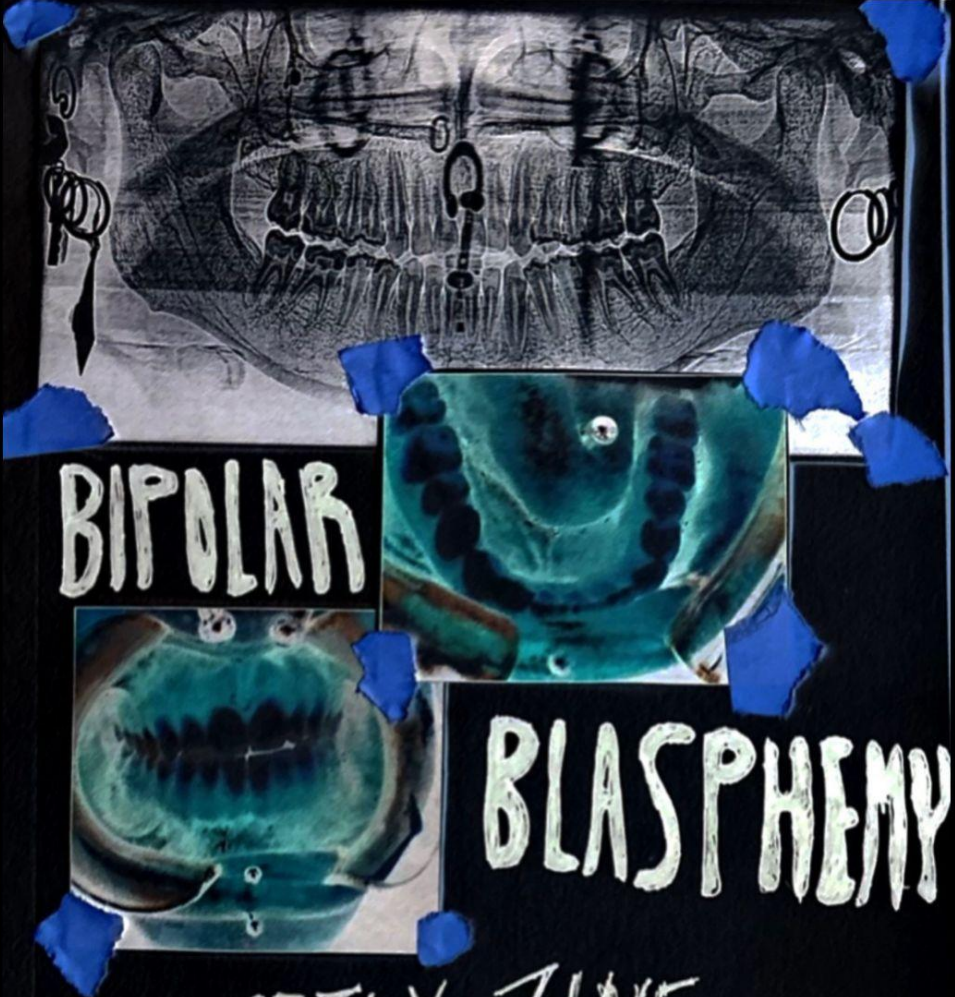




BIPOLAR

BLASPHEMY

A POETRY ZINE BY
KYLE JULIAN

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GASOLINE

There are certain things I will never understand. How traffic starts without an accident. How the airplanes in the sky look so close to the stars.

These are the things we talk about while laying in the grass. When things are good. When my eyes are clear and my head is so heavy that it keeps me here on Earth.

The others I try not to speak of. The thin and fragile barrier that separates me from the people around me. I see it in the air, like in summer when the asphalt gets so hot that you can see the heat waves rising up from it. Rippling, obscuring your view, a mirage that will burn you if you touch it.

I run through it but my feet are burning. No one has waited for me to lace up my boots. My legs grow weary before the others. The gasoline burning off affects me in a way they don't quite understand.

“Don't you want to come with us?”

I do. I do.

THERAPY EXCERPT

"Has the thought crossed your mind lately?" My mechanical pencil taps back and forth nervously. Eraser. Led. Eraser. Led. He stares at me through his bifocals. I scoff. Smirk. Tear at a hangnail with my teeth.

"We've been over this. The thought has always been there. This is normal for me." I think I may be able to change the subject with another endearing story about my recent dating escapades.

"It doesn't have to be," he says, "It doesn't have to be that way. I know it has been for most of your life at this point, but it doesn't have to stay that way." I pluck at a loose thread in my jeans. Suddenly I'm sick of being here. I'm sick of people like him. How utterly rehearsed and stupid and boring. As if I can fall for some catch-all line, like, "It doesn't have to be this way." How many years of school do you think it took for him to think that one up?

"Yeah, you're right," I say. I pluck a particularly long cat hair off of my shirt and drop it on his carpet.

"Did you read that book your coworker gave you?" My heel stops bouncing and I push myself up on the chair with my palms.

"No, I didn't. I left it in my car. It's piled under a heap of shit in there. I really have a hard time with cleaning." I go into detail about the mass of eclectic items in my car. We talk about executive dysfunction until the session is over.

On the walk home I see a pile of dog shit on the sidewalk with the imprint of a tennis shoe mashed into it. I feel sorry for the poor guy who stepped in it. I hope he didn't have someone walking next to him when it happened. Or even worse, I hope someone didn't try to warn him about it when his foot was already on its way down. I jump over a crack in the sidewalk. I'm sure that I've accidentally stepped on a crack so many times that my mother's back is already broken. But I jump over it anyway.

I think of what my old friend said when I called him up and told him what happened. "You are an optimist. You play the pessimist on occasion, but I have always thought of you as an optimistic person. The worm will turn and you will find someone you deserve. As long as you aren't looking back."



LIKE THE ACHILLEANS BEFORE US

We laughed and shoved each other gently, with shyness, like the achilleans before us. Like the achilleans before us, we had nowhere to go but the Motel 6. Like the achilleans before us, they threatened to call the cops if we weren't out by 11:15.

We meet at the rest stop two towns over, like the achilleans before us. We have an ongoing joke that we may be the next George Michael. Followed into the restroom by a plain-clothes police officer, and arrested when he accepted the cop's proposition. Like the achilleans before us, we sit in a restaurant and take note of the exits.

Like the achilleans before us, we smile even with the car windows rolled three-quarters of the way up. Trying to dodge the rain drops landing on our faces. Our laughter isn't too genuine here, our joy not suspiciously derived from the other's presence. We smile, especially with the car windows rolled three-quarters of the way up.

When the sun is up, we meet in cheap diners, like the achilleans before us. We sit too close. Our voices too cheerful for a place like this. We are careful not to "talk with our hands." I laugh, and say, "I can't stop! I'm so happy you talk like I do!" Like the achilleans before us, I am careful where I hold your hand.

INCOHERENT RAMBLINGS #1

They say your brain is fully developed by the age of 25.

When you hit twenty-five you learned that there are many rules that you have to follow if you want to keep breaking the rules.

Showing emotion is good, it shows vulnerability. But people like happy people. Remember that. When you were in college you wrote it 50 times over as if you were punishing yourself.

Remain calm when everything gets chaotic. Don't freak out all the time. There's nothing more people like to discuss than the guy who freaks out all the time. People like happy people. Remember that.

Say, "Don't worry, I've dealt with this many times." But put some expression on your face when you do it, you look like a sociopath.

You learned in 9th grade that destruction of property is cool. But the graveyard is off limits. Remember that.

They treat the dead better than the living. Remember that.

Nitrogen and nitrous oxide are different. You were never very good at chemistry. Remember that.

We all love you. Everyone loves you. Remember that.

Insecurity is an unattractive quality. Leave when you feel the need to ask for reassurance. Insecurity is an unattractive quality. Remember that.

People like happy people. When you were in college you wrote it 50 times over as if you were punishing yourself.

INCOHERENT RAMBLINGS #2

Sometimes bottling up your painful emotions is good! People like you a lot more that way. People find you a lot funnier that way. People smile at you a lot more that way. You're making them smile. They're laughing in a good way this time. They love you. They all love you.

I will not speak of it. If I remove the last bit of scabbing so they can see inside, it doesn't promote healing. Or wrap it up in a nice little bow. Even if the wound underneath is healed. I will find one piece of dead skin and I will pick at it. I will tear at it until it is worse than it ever was before. In a desperate attempt to be seen. Seen but never understood. Understood to the best of their ability, but never showing any sign of improvement.

I like the notebook I made. I could tell you how I did it. I could tell you everything about it. I could talk for hours. What a narcissist! If I don't show it to anyone I don't have to worry about anyone thinking that. I don't have to look up and see that they didn't find it all that interesting either. Or that they did, and oh man, now I have to keep this up and answer their questions. I like the notebook I made. As long as I don't have to worry about someone else not liking it, I'll still like it. So I won't let that be a possibility by showing anyone. It's safe this way.

Oh wow, two of his pens have run out of ink already and he's had to switch twice. He's always writing but doesn't have any decent pens. How endearing. Let's buy him a pack of pens. Well yeah, actually, I would love that. But how many packs of pens can you buy me before you realize I'll lose them or break them all. And how long can you do that for until you start thinking that I just don't care. Or that I don't appreciate it. I do. I always have. I am only good in small doses. The ratio of happiness and pain has to be worth sticking around for.

You'd hope it was 50/50. Back to back, I think it's about 80/20.

It's better this way.
It's safe this way. It's safe this way.
It's safe this way. It's safe this way.
It's safe this way. It's safe this way.
Shut up, Mr. Wilson.

OVER BEFORE IT STARTED

I never got to tuck you into bed.
I never got to wipe your sticky hands clean.
You never got to laugh at me
because you could do it yourself.
I never got to tell you I like to do it anyway.
I never got to tell you to be careful.
That I worry about you getting hurt.
That people hurt people all the time.
Or ask you if you look behind you
when you go into those hotel lobbies.
Remember to look behind you.
Remember to lock your car.
Even when you're sitting
inside of it in a parking lot.
You never got to help me beat
that level in the video game.
The character still sits there.
He's stuck.
I never got to pull the sweater over your head.
Pull your hands through each sleeve.
There are so many things I never got to tell you.
So many things I never got to ask you.
I'm glad I never got to know any more.
It would've hurt so much more
to know all that I was missing out on.

PINK TRIANGLE

In a room full of people
You find yourself surrounded
There are those that can see you
And those that can't stand it
There's an endless longing
For a bruise to the face
Proof that someone saw you
And stuck in one place
If you leave a mark I'll get on my knees
Thank you profusely for your time with me
What a fool I would be if I start to believe
That someone could kiss me without using their teeth
With something to prove
And nothing to lose
You cling to your fear
And call it your muse

As if it ever made
Such a pretty picture
This sickness you brazen
And speak of like scripture
There's a gnashing of teeth
But no sound comes out
What's the worst that could happen?
Was there ever a doubt?
That this ground is not strong enough
To support the weight
Of all that has happened
Over this past decade
You cling onto that dread
As long as you're here
Let it slip your teeth
And you try not to sneer

If I say, "Can I trust you?"
Will you lie to my face
We'll repeat this process
In so many ways
Promise when you hit me
You'll strike just as fast
That things won't be different
Since you battered me last
That we wouldn't have done this
All just for nothing
Just for you to leave me here
With my blood still pumping
With something to prove
And so much to lose
You cling to your fear
And call it your muse

HELD LEPERS AND FED BULIMICS

I placed all my hope into your hands
Forcing it into your fists and clamping them shut
That wretched hope was burning a hole in my pocket
And I've always been a detrimental giver
I feed the bulimics and cradle the lepers
Repeating that someday this love will be understood
Rather than spat up behind bushes on the drunken walk home
Or decaying my body with the fast-spreading rot
It was all in the name of togetherness
I gave my soul to the most careless
Those with open hands and closed hearts
Loving eyes and wet bleeding smiles
When I taste blood all I can feel is the warmth
When I see it in your teeth it's a passionate red
The shade of that artery I tried to cut into bite sized pieces
So you might swallow it and try to keep it down

BURIED ALIVE

He saved his breath when six feet under
He needed it to tell the tale
He resisted his thrashing and pounding
He needed the strength to ring the bell
He gave it all hell before they turned back 'round
And ripped that rope from his grip
He didn't dare open his mouth
And let the soil cave in
No point in confessing his love
Or revealing his hate
Screaming for his own vengeance
Or defending his name
Nor that of the grave digger
When no ears were listening
Nothing to do but remember
And the memories were sickening
To know at night while he wrote
With his typewriter clicking
Writing words of his wedding vows
She had been out at night digging
Now I ask you this question
With my air depleting
If your empathy can be buried
With your lover's heart beating
Does the empathy exist
Or is it a well-written corpus
Presented with a kiss
To serve her own purpose
He claws his way up
Under the weight of her shovel
And he hates her and loves her
With his rapid heart muscle
And when he reaches the surface
He bathes in the rain
And stumbles to his typewriter
And writes all of his pain

WOMAN UNDER WATER

I fell in love with my reflection in the rippling pond. My skin looked so beautiful when you were wearing it as your own. Narcissus emerges from the water and plunges her fist through my chest. Holding my heart in the air with triumph. Just to pull it back through me and devour it with a smile. Long before this had I allowed her to feast. Offering my wrist, my throat, my Achilles. The feeling of being drained was sickly sweet. After all, I had offered my body up to her on sunken knee.

I have been poisoned and yet still beg for another meal. If only it meant she would feed me. One drop of love would make up for her seething lies. A compassionate look may help me forget all the ones I never caught her in. There I sat, the bumbling fool. The endless turning cheek. Thank you, may I have another. One ring finger in my mouth while all others are crossed behind her back. I uncross them and bandage the paper cuts. Kiss them and place them delicately in her lap. For I could not ignore that my hands carried scars of their own.

I did it all because I wanted to. I expected nothing in return and got just that. Stripped of my identity. Left with no hope but that which remained in a pen quickly running out of ink. She taught me to write for my mouth had been sewn shut. She gathered my pleas and waved them for all to see. Her proof that I was too far gone. Her white flag when all that was left in our garden was decay. To retreat back into the loving arms of the pond.

Many came before me and many will come after. Sailors lost at sea will lose themselves even more. Plunging deeper into freezing waters with outstretched arms. She weaves tales that make them fall to their knees. Wanting nothing more but to wipe her tears. To free her from the endless black waters. They will curse the great Kraken that trapped her underneath it. Her stories ringing inside their ears. They swim deeper. They will promise her vengeance. If only they could hold her for a little bit longer. Slowly the sailor becomes serpent. Growing gills when there's no air left to breathe. Webbed claws when there's nothing left to cling onto. Eyes turning white with blindness. No light can reach this ocean floor.

And when they reach the end, will it have been worth it? To become the Kraken in the name of unconditional love? Will they trudge back to the surface with nothing but a lesson learned? And will anyone believe the tale? Left to mop floors with a gill under their collar? If only they could silence it? She is wonderful, beautiful, something so familiar! The whispers from the deckhands. She reminds me of someone I know. They will fall in love with their reflection in the rippling pond. Not knowing what lies underneath. Because even the most scarred sailor will fall in love with his own skin. When it is being worn by a woman under water.

ME AND HIM TALK LIKE MEN.
HE TELLS ME OF A GIRL AND
UNREQUITED LOVE. I TELL HIM
I UNDERSTAND. I'M KIND OF IN
THE SAME SITUATION. WE LAUGH
ABOUT IT AND HOW MUCH IT SUCKS.
HE ASKS ME IF SHE'S HERE AND
I SAY NO, SHE'S SOMEWHERE ELSE.
I TRY NOT TO LOOK AT HIS
MOUTH WHEN HE SMILES AT ME
LIKE THAT. THIS IS GOOD, ISN'T IT?
THIS IS GOOD FOR NOW.



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Kyle is a poet and antique dealer based in Northern California. When he's not writing he's most likely at Goodwill or the flea market looking for weird old shit to sell. Either that or picking up his meds at the pharmacy. He was diagnosed with bipolar II disorder eleven years ago. His poetry can be a bit of a mood killer because of that. He says, "Sorry."