

WHITE PRAYER PAGES

By Callie Miller

I. THIS IS MY CHILDISH MOUTH

Married to Jesus.

Gross

but we love, trust,

care for each other.

Never hurt each other.

Jesus was superior to all boys.

Do I have to marry

a Christian boy?

Sebastian kissed a girl on the playground.

Kevin wanted to play chase.

I hid inside to draw.

Jesus looked out for me.

Kevin found a new girl on the swing set.

I returned to the playground

but it got cold and snowy.

Mom and Dad divorced six years later—

doesn't hurt me to say it.

II. IT WAS ALL I KNEW

Christina complains.

No shark week,

hasn't seen her lady doctor—uterus aches—contraception.

She ignores it.

I've never understood that pain,

but Christina likes it.

A new boy every week.

And I refuse to look boys in the eyes,

eyes say everything.

But I wish I spent time

outside quadratic formulas

five paragraph essays.

But it's nauseating. Painful.

I still don't understand.

III. SHE WAS PRETTIER THAN I

Kathryn's pissed about what she calls *my attitude*.

But boys are stupid.

Kathryn doesn't communicate.

She'd never admit it and I shouldn't either.

I'm the cliché *nobody understands me* girl.

I feel overplayed.

I roll my eyes at the obvious.

It's all I know.

Kathryn and her boyfriend will break up today.

He never listens to her silence, eyes,

drooping brunette frame.

I can speak my own mind

I can speak hers even better.

IV. SPEAK ABOUT ME, PLEASE

Girls have boys year-round.

I see Kathryn has a new blonde one

in the palm of her hand, movie theater date.

It's cold outside.

My breaths fog inside car windows and I wait for Mom to return.

Kathryn in her short maroon skirt,

showered and shaved.

The chill replaces the prickly mess.

By this I mean the blonde will need a second date.

By this I mean a warmer, softer date.

Shrug.

By this I mean I don't want to talk about my "romantic life."

I know how to be alone.

V. SLEEP IS PROBABLY MY FAVORITE

I don't wake with the sun,

I stay up with it.

4am moon-dew sparkles on my face,

I sit on the roof.

My succulents are dead

and my breakfast tea is frozen.

Now 6am. Aubades are beautiful,

my bruised knees are hideous.

My neighbor keeps her windows open too.

Her grandfather clock chimes every hour.

She takes trashcans to the curb

in a black, cat ear headband.

Inspired here:

I try to write something pretty.

VI. WHO I'VE BECOME IS BORING

I finished reading a book today.

Girls scream outside.

Close my window?

I can't tell if these girls need help
or if they're just drunk.

My roommate is sleeping.

There's a blinking light on the bottom of our humidifier.

I want to turn it off.

The pitchy screams are far away now.

I miss them, recognized them.

It's foolish for a Thursday night.

Maybe those girls scare me as

they keep me up.

VII. AND I MISS MY MOTHER

This morning I'm an eyesore.

Last night I felt like the beautiful girls.

Kat needed the room,

I had the night, air, streets, people
to myself.

I went in one house, left another.

I time-hopped through a solo cup in my hand.

I came to a house I did not know.

Harry walked me there,

was already inside.

I took off my shoes and

felt the frozen gravel

I called Kat.

I felt empty.

VIII. I TOOK A SLEEPLESS NAP

I told Tina not to bother me as

I handed back the halter from her closet.

Tina asked if I had fun in it.

Said she could tell I slept in it.

I didn't answer, didn't apologize, ignored her smile.

Left, bare-necked and

ready for the female slaughter.

But Tina does not pounce,

will fall asleep

in that halter,

believing it smells like cologne from last night.

It's just my own back sweat and

faded bronzer

staining her clean, white sheets.

IX. BELIEVING MYSELF

You tell him *yes*,

I believe in something.

Grab the old Bible from your bedside table

wipe off bits of dust.

The book is heavy.

It's annoying when

he raises his eyebrows,

God? Surprised.

It could be. There's something more.

You fall asleep on his shoulder.

You want him to leave but

sleep so peacefully.

You want to believe in him like everything else.

X. SO I FEEL LESS ALONE

I get drunk and

I can't feel the wind pick up outside.

Crawled through my window again

for the first time in several years.

People look at me like I think I can fly.

I kind of can.

I like to look down rooftops and

imagine what the neighbors are doing.

Sleeping.

I am myself up here,

can see everything

all these people, and

they can't see me.

XI. THERE ARE THINGS I TELL MYSELF

I press a limp body pillow against my back
to fit my exact curves.

Press my shoulder blades together,
my bed is three feet narrower and slept-in.

The sheets don't smell familiar.
My head doesn't smell like my head.

2am. The night is dead.
My last time out, Sami said *keep up*.
But girls' night is never for the girls.
Girls have fun without me.

Sami is just getting home
on the other side of town.
The streets continue to be dark.
I continue to lie awake.

XII. HATE THIS ALONE

White sheets,

red roses,

no fight.

Too dizzy to start one. Drunken.

James pours his own red,

staring at hideous curtains,

a view of backstreet dumpsters and stray cats.

He's mad and

I put my pajamas on

like always at 10pm.

Time to sleep.

I'm wearing the black, silk pajamas

he bought me that one afternoon for my birthday

at least.

XIII. I DON'T THINK I WAS EVER ACTUALLY
YOUNG

Years gets faster:

When I was five, it was one-fifth the life I'd known.

This year is one twenty-fourth of the life I know.

Think about this often.

Years are small now.

One day I won't remember what the longer years felt like.

I still don't know where all my years have gone.

XIV. BUT I AM NOT A SINNER

My high school boyfriend was smoother
than a fucking peach.

My prickly legs were more masculine
and frightened him.

Yet he was too safe with me.

He was afraid of the locker room.

We all were.

We all still are.

There are beard shavings in my sink tonight,
and not just my hair clogging the shower.

My feet feel chalky,
my fingers swollen,
I cannot get my rings off.

I'd like to sit here
on my bathroom counter,
hot box in my own sweat,
wait for the mirror to fog over.

The person I left in my bedroom won't leave.
I miss smooth backs and oily cheeks.