

THE KISS

Dear Nicole

For some reason this morning

Sorry

For some reason this morning

(When I started typing I don't know why but the keyboard was on "French")

For some reason this morning I woke up singing

Five Hundred Miles

This old Peter Paul and Mary song I haven't heard since I was oh

Twelve. I used to sing all the time but music has largely

Departed from me. From Five

Hundred Miles I slid to listening: Schlomo

Carlebach, "Lord Get Me High"

At which point I started weeping

"Like a sentimental concentration camp guard"

As I sometimes say to myself

When in one of my unkinde moods

Weeping and bleeding, not a good look

Drawing and Sweating, I know the feeling

To be frank I've been weeping all morning

The somewhat satisfied tears of a person imagining

Herself as one not alone with her culture for once

Not alone with her ancestors stacked

On top of her like the raccoon and the eagle

And the big black bug that they are and then some

Like the invisible totem pole that they are

But instead for once this morning I cried the sentimental tears of one

Whose story (I allowed myself to imagine, as I rarely

Do) was part of one larger than me and my invisible

Totem pole & which, (& now I'm getting closer)

Includes you, who are So Alive, Baruch Hashem,

Which is a thing for the record I DO NOT SAY.

Baruch Hashem. Ya Ali as Tiffany's

Mom says. This was the morning,

Insha'Allah, I was going to devote to your art

It turned out to be a somewhat Judaic

Or rather a maternal

Morning as anyone could tell

By its music alone and I wanted to say

The Cracked Afikomen.

And I wanted to say

The Kiss.

And I wanted to say The Cracked Afikomen / The Kiss.

The Delivery From Bondage

What Carlebach called in a rather maudlin song

Which nevertheless made me sob a little, "The Great Shabbos"

Um, pause. Please accept this letter

As placeholder

For the better thing

That I shall write one

Day after today.

Take it from me, Alice
To Alice in Wonderland
Jew to Jew, take it from me
With a little nectar of secrecy
I am making this humble
Request, parrot to parrot, mirror
To mirror, Thomas
To Thomas, Alice to Alice
In Wonderland. Uhhhhh
This is one of the most sentimental
Things I've ever written. Which is teaching
Me that sentimentality has to do
With the emotion you express when you know
Or assume or presume you will
Be understood, and it also has something
To do with predigested emotion, mass
Emotion, but also with even the thought
Of shared experience and a certain tiny
Amount of trust. Of simplicity.
The fact is I miss my dead
Grandmother this morning. I miss
Her livid, mismatched eyes. I miss
Her voice. Sometimes
She gazes at me out from the eyes of my cat
I admit that too. And weirdly when I'm being
Made love to by a woman at times I feel far far
Above me in a strange change of air
Her pleasure.

I miss my mom too. I mean the person
She might have been and the thought
Of getting to know her, the knowledge
That I will never know my parents as adult
People with souls and minds, as people
I could look at not as a diagnostician
Or with the eyes of a graduate
Of the very severe private
Yeshiva called, and here I must apologize
To everyone again, Poetry, which I sent myself to
On a really shitty work-study scholarship
But instead look at her woman to woman or
At my father, woman to man, experience them
As persons and not as stinging
Facts. I mean,
I can't look at them without my poetry helmet on.
I can't look at them *with feeling*.
I can look at them with feeling but only
With feeling beside me, like a little dog,
Looking at your paintings
I am plunged into feeling. To be honest
The sound of your voice did something
To my veins when we were talking
About your new show and Elvis and Trinidad
And the parrot that says Holocaust.
There is something extremely strong and clear
In the sound of your voice, which my blood hears.
I didn't grow up with much visual
Culture. "As a Jew," I was going to write, "I didn't

Grow up with visual culture.” I grew
Up with music. I grew
Up in it. I wore an eyepatch as a little girl
And not, since you asked, but you didn’t,
By choice. This letter is going on
Too long but I have this weird feeling
I won’t be able to write anything better unless
I get to the other side of this letter.
Point being, as my friend Erika would say,
I have this attraction to the crack
In the Afikomen which like the crack
In quote unquote Everything
Is the slit in ourselves
Is The Kiss. Among the Neoplatonists
There was one, I forget who it was right now, Pico
Della Mirandola? Who wrote a rather lovely
Treatise on what it was The Kiss was.
It wasn’t Pico it was Castiglione.
I haven’t read it in years but I agree
With everything he says. I think your paintings
Do too. I love how you tend to swell noses
Into sore, socially realist (though they are
also surrealist)
Knobs. Even pleasure knobs. Tender & overused
Knobs of sense, of sorrow & joy. Turning up
The radio, turning up the volume with the knobs
On my five
Senses I’m feeling now my appetite

To touch what is *behind* things, behind
As they say, The Veil. What the Word
Looked like when you lifted her tasseled
Dress. Poesy falls from me as honey
Falls from the honeycomb that’s fallen
From the tree that just got kicked.
Thar she blows.
What is in the vivid feeling
That rings like a tuning fork when you are speaking?
Perhaps it was a little bit the song
Of your dead lovebird and World War
Three, my dead lovebird, or this vague
Sensation in me I sometimes name “Islands”
Or this sly feeling in me I sometimes call “Caribbean
Queen” which is a perfume only Diasporic people
Wear and which does not exist. I feel
That though one of the great virtues in your painting
Is that it is unbesmirched by nostalgia, that its
presence
And aliveness are so rare and refreshing,
That you are of the Old World.
You come from the Old World, like me.
And that’s how come I can see you and you
Can see me. That’s how come we can see
Each other somehow, I just know it.
I can feel it. And that is also how come
This letter is private, even if we share it.
Because, who needs to read this? Serious
Question. Possibly Everybody.

There are literally a million, six million lol
Other reasons (sorry that was completely inane)
Why you are the greatest painter alive and one
Of those is that to be around you it's like you know
And it doesn't even matter or rather you Will Not
Go There which is why I feel
It's an insult to your greatness even to mention it
But I mean, your gallery is paying me to explain
To OTHER people why you are so great and not say
I love her because she's from the Old World, like me
-

Anyway my tears are dry now and I'm a little
embarrassed

But not that much.

Whatever, I'm gonna reread this once

Then hit send.

-Ariana Reines, 19-21 August 2015