

## the White goddess' flytrap

(a collection of my memoirs: censored edition )

*I imagine you, luminous and untouched by these earthly rules, floating free of modesty and restraint, never torn between obedience and desire. Would you understand why I can't reach out to you fully? I hold onto your image, your promise of beauty and freedom, but even then, I know the difference between us is vast, and that gap may never close. I wonder, Venus, if that distance is the trap I'll never escape—the flytrap I willingly step into, longing to be devoured by a version of perfection I can never become.*

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### From The Beginning:

i never prayed to [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] wasn't beautiful  
and maybe that's why it all came to this  
i met Venus for the first time when i was sleeping  
before i even went to school  
maybe before i learned language

Venus i pray to you  
Venus you're eve  
Venus you're the snake  
but oh Venus  
you're so pretty  
you're so pretty and white and feminine  
how could you ever lie  
your skin is pure, not tainted by sin  
Venus i want to be like you when i grow up  
Venus i'll follow you anywhere  
i trust you

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( [REDACTED] )

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Through glassy eyes, I painted dolls  
with flaxen braids, veils of sun-spun thread,  
dreamt of light and softer whispers—  
those tender ghosts I'd never wed.

So, I sewed myself [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED],  
and turned away from roots and kin.

dear Venus,  
should i hide my skin?  
will they know it's tainted?  
can you see the turmeric under my fingernails?

dear Venus,  
do you see me as a bug to consume?  
am i tastier than the other bugs?

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( [REDACTED] )

Humans believe themselves to belong to the norm, but secretly agonize over the prospect of that being a lie and being exposed as a monster. I must phrase it as a universal concept for that exact reason— for my own sanity.

In fifth grade math class, my teacher's phone rang. My posture straightened immediately.

"Fateha, please report to the main office to be picked up for an appointment."

[REDACTED] car pulled up, and I got in. I leaned my head on the window and counted every red car to pass us by.

"I don't think this is the doctor's office? Did I get a new doctor?"

"Oh [REDACTED]... we're actually going to a different kind of doctor this time."

Something was off. Though I wasn't stupid, I was helpless.

We arrived. The room was too cold. There was an ugly pale woman on a gray sofa, and she had ugly gray strands slithering down from her scalp. She addressed [REDACTED] first, asking [REDACTED] what [REDACTED] thought my areas of concern were. I never believed I was an easy child. I never even believed I was a good child. Still, listening to [REDACTED] wish out loud that [REDACTED] [REDACTED] didn't hurt any less.

I stood up to leave. Ow. A hand gripped my arm, leaving reddish marks. [REDACTED] was smiling, but [REDACTED] eyebrows furrowed. It seemed this was a mandatory event, and I was pulled back down to sit. [REDACTED] rambled on about me. The woman's pupils ignored my direction.

Then the woman turned to smile at me. How could she perceive me when I felt like only

an observer? “So we’ve heard [REDACTED] perspective on your behavior. I would really appreciate it if you could provide me with additional details the way you see the situation.”

My eyes went to meet [REDACTED]. My throat was empty of words. Minutes passed in silence, though the woman's clock must have been slow or broken since it barely shifted.

“Well I'm glad I had the opportunity to meet [REDACTED] anyway. It's so great you're already aware of your [REDACTED]. If you bring her back here when she's feeling better, we can get her screened.”

A few weeks later, I was called down to the main office for a dentist appointment. I knocked on the car side window, and [REDACTED] rolled it down.

“You're lying again, aren't you? I'm not going.”

I turned toward my school. The car door flung open. [REDACTED] shoved me the other way. I slapped her. [REDACTED] tried to pin me and I screamed. Where did [REDACTED] go? My legs jerked wildly. I think I got [REDACTED] twice. Then [REDACTED] dragged me by my shirt into the seat and locked the door.

We cried for at least two hours together. [REDACTED] didn't mention the missed appointment.

“I'm sorry.” [REDACTED] eyes quivered. Was [REDACTED] looking at my tears or my bruises?

In the moment, I justified giving silence in return since I was the child in the situation, therefore automatically also the victim. Regardless of the real ethics behind the story, similar exchanges became common in the coming years. The specific wrinkly white woman changed, but they were all of the same breed. Sometimes they tried to fit me under other disorders, but I evaded those too.

[REDACTED] for monsters, the norm is monstrous. He labels all freaks as monsters, including those with deviated cognition, not only morality. However, its easier emotionally for freaks to deny the existence of the established normalcy by claiming its a facade. We must believe that everyone relates to us secretly, even if they deny it outwardly, or else life is a cruel joke. Since people only experience the world with one mind, how do they earn the right to dictate the average for us all?

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( [REDACTED] )

I wasn't quite a teenager yet, and [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] I [REDACTED] who used to care for [REDACTED] was gone. After another silent day at school, I came home to the same silence. [REDACTED] would walk past me, [REDACTED] eyes glued to her phone, not noticing mine, trying to intercept [REDACTED]. Months had passed, and though I still waited for [REDACTED] attention, nothing ever changed. [REDACTED] had [REDACTED] distractions, but I had none. Well, I had my imagination and daydreaming, but that was a dangerous game that always led to [REDACTED]. We still [REDACTED], but it didn't feel like it.

At dinner, [REDACTED], and I stared at nothing, wondering if I still knew how to speak and if I would notice if I'd forgotten. When [REDACTED] handed [REDACTED] a new phone, and then turned to me, saying I could have [REDACTED] old one.

I held the small, cracked phone in my hand, feeling tears start to fall. This tiny, stupid object had somehow stolen [REDACTED]. I didn't have anyone's number from [REDACTED]; back then, none of us in elementary school had phones. And here, in this new town, there was no one I'd want to contact. I thought holding this phone might help me understand why [REDACTED] loved it more than me, but it only made me feel worse.

As soon as everyone drifted back to their rooms, an impulse seized me. I raised a kitchen knife and brought it down—hard. Once, twice, then five more times, the blade piercing the screen with a visceral crunch. The glass splintered, tiny shards piercing my skin, sharp and unforgiving, but I didn't feel any relief. I just stood there, holding the mangled, useless thing, and felt emptier than before. Years would pass before [REDACTED]. We would never be [REDACTED] and I would never ask for an explanation.

While parents have a clear duty to care for their children, the responsibility of an older sibling is much harder to define. Siblings occupy a complex space in our lives: they are both companions and competitors, and emotional mirrors, both reflecting and distorting. I [REDACTED]. Is it possible to grow without leaving someone behind, or does self-discovery inherently demand a degree of separation? How do we retain a sense of self in the face of familial bonds that pull us in different directions?

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Her name is [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] But our friendship was torture and I couldn't [REDACTED].

[REDACTED] I felt so much guilt. [REDACTED]

dear Venus,  
are you a lesbian? are you asexual? are you aromantic?

dear Venus,  
are we men? not hu or wo?

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gender: {
  physics: feminine
  physics desire: complex, fem leaning
  dysphoria: breasts
  dysphoria desire: complex
  expression: feminine
  expression desire: fluctuates, fem leaning
  cognition: unknown
  cognition desire: apathetic
  behavior: masculine, feminine performing
  behavior desire: no feminine performing }
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( [REDACTED] )

Sunlight comes in through the curtains, and my eyes have to adjust to the morning brightness. I've always hated the summer heat though. I put on a pair of shorts that I paid for in secret. [REDACTED] grabs a pair of scissors.

"Take them off." Our eyes meet, but I still hesitate to move at all.

[REDACTED] cuts them off forcefully and throws the cloth into the trash. [REDACTED] will not refund me for their theft, because that's not the real sin here.

"Be modest," [REDACTED]. "A Muslim girl can never show off her body."

"Are you ashamed of how I look?"

[REDACTED] claim shame and modesty are different. All I know is that [REDACTED] believes the body [REDACTED] created is a sinful vessel [REDACTED] cursed me with. So why [REDACTED] create it to begin with?

Yet I obey. The next day, I wear leggings to my soccer match, and I pass out from heatstroke. I wake up on the sidelines to water being poured on my face.

"Are you this insecure about your legs?" My teammate frowns. "You shouldn't be, I'd be hella proud if I had those calf muscles." If I were less dehydrated, tears would stream down my face. Instead, dizziness oversets my mind. The girl doesn't understand that my legs were unfortunate gifts from Satan, unlike hers and the ones belonging to the rest of my American peers. I could never be proud even if I tried.

"Pride is one of the deadly sins," [REDACTED]. I have to guess whether pride and modesty are antonyms, but to a certain extent I already understood the two traits' exclusivity.

I watched the LGBT+ pride movement from the last decade gain momentum from the safe distance of my laptop screen. During quarantine, I observed my friends explore labeling their gender identities and sexualities like a pet coming with their owner to look at zoo animals. I could never tell they dealt with the same homophobia and sexism that bred my own self shame.

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]. My sexuality had to be hidden from view just the same way

as my shoulders, my stomach, and my legs.

I attempted a balancing act between the two opposing ideals of being proud and modest for sixteen years and ultimately I collapsed from mental exhaustion. But I am picking myself up again. I hope to become proud of everything I am: both my body and my heart.

[REDACTED]

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dear Venus,  
math and science made me cry when i answered wrong  
[REDACTED]  
so i learned to answer right  
and i didn't have to cry again  
reading and history made me cry when i answered wrong  
the white woman corrected me  
i was stupid, embarrassed  
so i answered right  
and it still made me cry  
because of what i was learning about humans  
now i'm becoming a stem major  
and i haven't read a story in years

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( [REDACTED] )

The second I got a notification of a package delivery, I ran out of lecture.

I tried on all the clothes in my dorm and adrenaline rushed through my head. This was amazing. I felt as if I was cosplaying an American. I could be the girl in any of the television shows or advertisements.

Until I stepped out of my room. I couldn't stop tugging at the fabric, trying to convince myself that this was normal, that this was what everyone else did. "Am I doing this right?" I kept asking myself. "Does it show how uncomfortable I am?" The tank top straps dug into my shoulders, reminding me of their presence with every step, every movement. I'd finally escaped the confines of modesty, but it didn't feel liberating.

Maybe the issue was me. I mean, [REDACTED] aren't here anymore so everything should be fine, but it still doesn't feel fine. So I need to fix something else.

And then came the comparisons. I couldn't help it—I kept looking at the other girls, the ones who seemed to wear their clothes effortlessly. Their skin looked smooth, their bodies fit, and they walked with a confidence I couldn't fake. I wondered if anyone noticed how different I looked. Maybe if I were thinner, maybe if I had a body like theirs, this wouldn't feel so wrong.

I would catch myself staring, not with admiration, but with a strange mix of envy and

guilt. Their bodies were free in a way mine wasn't, and I was painfully aware of the difference. My attraction to women made it worse. Every glance felt like a betrayal of my modesty, a reminder that I was gross for even looking. I hated myself for it, but I couldn't stop. The guilt sat heavy in my stomach, curling into a knot that never seemed to loosen.

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dear Venus,  
i punched [REDACTED]  
because i trusted the [REDACTED]  
that told me my legs were neutral  
then i went outside  
and the men told me [REDACTED]  
and so i [REDACTED]  
because how stupid was i  
to show them in public when i knew  
that's what people really believed  
and how [REDACTED] were my legs  
and how right was [REDACTED]  
and i think i always secretly knew  
i just resented the fact the other girls  
the other girls never thought about it  
the other girls said i was silly  
so i wanted [REDACTED] to be wrong  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
and they won't go away  
now what????????????????????????????

( [REDACTED] )

Through the mirror, I see the penny-sized hyperpigmentation near my belly button from when I [REDACTED] (AAAB: All Adults Are Bastards). I see the [REDACTED]s. I see the ugly stick n poke crescent moon tattoo I gave myself years ago next to a bunch of stretchmarks. It looks like a banana.

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Then I dissasociate. I accidentally come back to reality for a second [REDACTED] and suddenly I'm a child volunteering at the nursing home and the elderly man I'm supposed to be helping is jerking off to me but I need the community service hours [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

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Venus, tell me how to mend  
this body I broke, this flesh I swore  
was mine alone, yet marked and torn—  
how to wear my skin once more.

dear Venus,  
i don't think being ugly is a sin  
does it really hurt them to look at ugly people  
or is it just not as much fun  
they're all addicted and entitled to visual pleasure  
but i don't think i care about their pleasure anymore  
the crow swimming inside clogs my arteries with gems  
im stuck in your flytrap  
do you know where i can find [REDACTED]