

too good

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september 27th, 2018.

i am sixteen years old,

and the hearing of dr. christine blasey for plays on the stereo system of my car
as i drive up to school.

my knuckles are white on the steering wheel.

my friends are silent beside me.

for the rest of the day i am unsettled,
unable to focus on the DBQs and kinematic equations in
my hurricane of busywork,
unconsoled by the rhythm of
my duffel bag brushing alongside my knees,
uncertain about once-instinctual footfalls in
my daily route across campus.

hours later

my friends and i are huddled together in a corner,

sobbing in the way that can't be fixed,

and i find myself asking the question once again:

if it happened to me, would i say something?

should i say something?

could i say something?

i shout about women in power and women's empowerment

but at times like this, i am powerless

and i am guilty of keeping my voice in my pocket until it is safe for me to use it,
like poetry slams and team meetings and midwinter street marches,

because i am too good -

too good at holding my keys in my fist when walking home,

and too good at yelling "fire" instead of "help",

and when a man approaches me at the bus stop,

bottle in his hand, "baby" on his lips,

i am too good at being good:

too good at short responses and tight-lipped smiles,

too good at calculating the angle of my gaze and the stillness of my body
to maximize potential for survival,

too good at melting into the storefront behind me,

too good at forgetting how to exist,

too good at wondering why time is taking longer than usual,

too good at playing the role of prey in this nat geo special,

and when he is close enough that i can see the hunger in his eyes,
teeth bared, summer sweat, clammy palms,
too good at shallow breathing, bunny-rabbit heart beating -
too good at being afraid.

and i guess i will be too good
at teaching my daughter how to play russian roulette with her body
each time she steps outside of the house,
at asking her where she is going so that i will know where she went;
i will be too good at telling her that the things she loves most
are actually the most dangerous of all,
at warning her that night and solitude and her body are victims of entropy -
someday they will be taken from her and never given back;
and i will be too good at apologizing to her
for not finding a cure to this primal fear of woman,
this hereditary disease,
the kind of terror that burns you from the inside
and a guilt you have to exhale out in pieces,
slowly,
slowly,
slowly.

september 27th, 2018.
i am sixteen years old,
and i am tired of being too good.