

Waiting to Load
A Thesis Presented by
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1st Letter to a Distant Lover

Look up and listen to Angel Olsen's *Unfucktheworld** and think about how her roommate washes his BMW every other day. In the mornings when I smoke on my porch she leaves her house across the street for her run and, like I don't know she's famous, I wave hello.

Who do you wave to?

*

Do this now.

Spring, San Francisco

Because we want to sleep a sleep of winter but cannot we compromise, settle for a nap in Dolores Park. We listen to a sun-bit pit bull down the hill and imagine our families still in North Carolina. Guilford County schools are closed because of ice, and our mothers, in line at Walmart, call us to see how we are doing. Or we call them, because we are bored, because we are lost, because we left our blunts on the kitchen table, and there isn't enough time to go back for them. So we ask our mothers about the weather, try to imagine the three miles home, past the lake, the roads as they may be black and polished and brimming with uncertainty. Our mothers are in their cars with dog food, Slimfast and kerosene, but we must role over onto our chests to keep a slipping sun from our brows.

What language can I reach you
in if not hyperbole? How many
flowers will fit in my mouth?
Tongue and fingers type like the
courting loon at Cape Dorset. Do
I pick them or do they just grow?

Alex 1

I dreamed of having cocktails with this person. He probably drinks cocktails, and I would too, given the circumstance. Though only something like an Angel's Blood. He would appreciate this order, recognize my discomfort and suggest we move to a softer table across the room.

Alex 2

I find this person's phone number online. Or rather, he leaves it there for anyone to find. I text him, asking if it really is him and he says he is wondering the same thing. I think, *do all poets talk this way to strangers? Is every push notification an opportunity? Small and persistent and waiting.*

Alex 3

Months later I will see my text message on his twitter feed, an advertisement for his newest project. A picture of my question, his response, drowned in lavender filters. The caption will read, *February 14th, Every lover is a stranger. Every stranger is a lover.*

Alex 4

Someone once told me, *someone once told me where a sentence enters us and it's the same place as regret.* We pause to consider this, remember who and what has entered us, through which passage ways, and if any of them were sentences. A few of them were. And most were regretful, but other things too.

Alex 5

Does he know how far my laughs of disbelief can't travel. Does he know that my sheets, in the mornings when I turn on my phone, keep almost everything inside. What did escape is the uncertainty of my thumbs and maybe a sentence or two. But how can I trust them to make it as far as I want.

Frank night, as she dangles her purse over the unassuming interstate she spits and laughs and digs her heel into the concrete. She tells him which cars are straight and which ones are not. They laugh and chuck beers at the straightest trucks they see. He holds his head in his hand as she leans over, pointing to the median, says *see that there? that grassy spot? that's where we are. in the middle of things. and you see that over there? that's where we're supposed to be. but ain't nobody stopping. nobody slowing down enough to see us. you can call me Lady Bird and thank me for the daffodils, cause Lord knows we ain't going anywhere soon.*

Tommy

1.

Young hustler, too tired from work to do anything but hold me. In his lofted mat our limbs will be tied. His laptop will out shine our awkward entanglement— of trial and error, yes then no, our finding of places. He will show me his favorite cartoons and how he, in five years time, will be done with sex work— will be set up on Telegraph, selling old ladies and new families hand carved candles. I will fall asleep on this stranger's chest.

2.

In the morning we will be woken by the church goers outside. At the corner of 34th and Market, Seventh Day Adventists will sway in a stream of hats and his hands will raise the hairs in the divot of my chest. We will rock in motion with their shoes, shined and shuffling toward creaking pews and when someone shouts *EY BROS!* through the window he will laugh and I will scream as a fourth finger slips inside.

3.

When the doctor asks how I got the lesion on my foot I will say I stepped on some trash/I will think *what kind of love could you read in my infection? What else could you see besides risky behavior?* Surely not the meeting of our eyes as he knelt naked collecting my blood, not the stain it left in the middle of his floor, nor the candle he slipped in my bag while I sat in the bathroom dressing my wounds.

My Self-summary

—Mostly a boy, and often soft. I'll send you a postcard of Mount Pleasant. If you want—I don't want to come off too strong. Your pictures are really cool. If we weren't so far apart I think we'd be friends. The Midwest seems great. I've always had one window facing the ocean. There's a lot to be grounded by in that, I think. Only one way away—west, or whatever. But not a million. Imagine the possibilities of Iowa. I bet some girls ride their bikes down the street there and never think to expect an ending; I bet some girls sit in a school somewhere and are told for the first time that they are landlocked; I bet some girls lean against their bedroom door even after their parents are in bed and listen for footsteps down the hall, wondering with their fingers if this is the year that their balls will finally drop.

When her babysitter told her the reason he's moving is that he's out grown this town her hands forgot to form fists and instead disappeared into her overalls, pulled at his belly button. He imagined his babysitter's body, now ballooned, squeezing through parking lots, his enormous hands too thick to fit through windows. She looked up at his chest and spoke to something past it. *but this town hasn't shrunk and you're still the same size so I don't understand. will anywhere else make you smaller?*

Duck, NC. The Near Future.

In the summers there are people here but we stay year round. In the off seasons we learn how to avoid the sand, how to unfold our bones, wedge a credit card in our sternums and open up what could only be welcome in the salted cold. From sun up to sun down, left to our own devices, we forget the meanings of things 'cross the bridge, forget what stands behind the water besides marsh lands and chicken farms. It's too far to Rocky Mount, and too far from there to anywhere else.



What oceans are brought to bed. Clean sheets under a window unit swaddle miles of salt. Coaxed into a his room, one league at a time. Another, with each click of his mouse pad, each *next*. Cross Indian and Atlantic. *Next*. Next, he will swim the length of the Mississippi, keyboard on his back, *wave to the passing barges*, he will tell it. Leave a trail to find your way home. But others will erase it, as he does theirs.

Staunch Faggot

(from El Greco's *Nobleman With his Hand on his Chest*)

standing golden sword erect, soft on your
stomach, warm as someone else's. Frilled
and coiffed in black and white. You raise
your hand— a sign of your own self worth.
Priceless, as I feel. No prince worthy of
pulling back lace cuffs, biting at your collar.
Staunch Faggot standing tall, the kind of
man only a brush can touch.

Like a thigh and the way it spreads
when clasped to its partner, when a
beard stands up to the naïve audacity
of pubic hairs; I told them I'd be back
by nine. Where did I say I was going.
All knees and elbows, he told me, *don't
act surprised*. Half way to my car,
between the garbage cans I get another
message. The flash of a phone in blue
and orange, the black skull whispers,
*do you remember how it tastes to
be caught by something soft?*

Last night from the neck down, on a three by three inch screen, I came with a boy in Lithuania. What did he see in me. I saw in, behind him, sitting at a kitchen table, the corner of a stove and a crying pink wallpaper. Did he know his microphone was turned on. Did he know I could hear footsteps somewhere off screen, walking with all the intention of a mother or a lover or a neighbor's sneaking suspicion.



Sitting in the back row of the Joan Rivers Show, Angel, how could you have known? Your friends in sequins and pearls, Micheal and James and Amanda somewhere backstage? Were you already gone? In white, with tiara and wings. Did Michael cut those off too? Stuff them in the same box as your limbs and head, left for the Hudson? Supposed to be swallowed by that filthy river, but instead spat up on shore, found alone and silent in red? Or were those hollow bones the ones he used to fill your body with Drano? Needles pulled from your own back— where did he put them? The coroners wondered if you were forced to swallow or if he even bothered to take the time to talk, say *it's okay, just this once, I promise*. Or did he keep them? Use them to paint the walls in the living room where it happened, where you sat for days. Did he dip them in paint and forget to clean them— leave them in the broom closet when James came over for special k and cartoons? Angel, Andre, could you have known when you put on your wings for the very first time the ways they would pull at the air in the lime light?

OkCupid 1

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HOT AND WAITING FOR YOUR CALL!

1-800-340-4FUCK

1-900-246-BUFF

1-888-WET-BONER

1-900-FIND-FAGS

1-800-GUD-TIME

1-900-ANY-TIME

1-900-AFTR-DRK

1-888-IAM-ANY1

1-900-PLS-ANSR

1-800-NOT-ACOP

1-800-NEVR-WAS

1-888-WHO-RYOU

1-900-666-HUNK

1-900-ILL-CALL

1-888-CALL-NOW

1-900-HANG-UPS

1-900-NVR-CALL

Have you ever been to a rave? Thighs clutched in the fold of my waist, making a crooked letter, the kind of pipes you keep in the crawl space for company's sake. Well who's to say who's a kandi kid? I live with goats and they get it more than anyone. But the problem is, not enough knuckles. Give me your hand. Here, wait. First, Peace, he makes a v for victory and shows his patience in silence as he waits for me to follow suit. Love. Unity, he grabs my hand and locks our fingers together and he laughs because he did this with a goat. Respect, and he slides a bracelet from his wrist to mine. A pale strand of rainbow of beads with white block letters, made to spell a child's name, but didn't.