



KNOTTED.

ALYSSA LYNEE

Knotted.

Alyssa Lynee

John Wayne Gacy, Jr. Sufjan Stevens
Hurt Johnny Cash
Running up That Hill Track and Field
Atlantis Ellie Goulding
If You Were Me Frightened Rabbit
Hope There's Someone Antony and the Johnsons
Nitrous Gas Frightened Rabbit
Thrash Unreal Against Me!
Fistful of Love (with Lou Reed) Antony and the Johnsons
Say It to Me Now Glen Hansard
Knockin' on Heaven's Door Antony and the Johnsons
Hitler in My Heart Antony and the Johnsons
Another World Antony and the Johnsons
Gloomy Sunday Billie Holiday
Misery Business Paramore
Your Song Ellie Goulding

[I saw] a gypsy wagon stopped along the road, an emaciated old horse grazing on thin grass, an old clown sitting on the corner of his wagon mending his bright many-colored costume. The contrast between his brilliant and scintillating things made to amuse us and this infinitely sad life, if one looks at it objectively, struck me with great force.... I saw that the 'clown' was myself, ourselves, almost all of us.

George Rouault

8213 W. Summerdale Ave

The house never spoke
until it was screaming.

He started slow & nervous
then talked himself into it

because we don't bare
the wood that holds us

tethered to the dirt freely.
We layer fiberglass & plaster

skin with paint until our limbs
are for anyone to see. Set up home.

Meals were eaten here. Pictures
of days that were real hung

on walls that were made
to be lived in. See, every story

has floorboards & we don't
think enough about our feet

& what it means to stand.
He cooked them fish the night

the house inhaled. Mixed drinks
with painted masks & believed

dead stay dead forever. Unseen
truth a matter of fiction. The house

blinked, so very quietly. I had to
watch it for months, forgetting

about whiskey & night & rope
& all the ways bodies scream.

I saw it, so very quietly, so
I can tell you I use to flirt

with the way he lost control
& dug trenches & bought lime

& made fish & painted faces
on faces & I once looked

at someone I loved with no remorse
as she cried & I once pretended

to be everything I never was
only to learn houses are built

according to scientific fact, trial
& error. They are bound to
adhere to matters of bone & wood
& plaster/flesh & dirt. He placed

trust in the floorboards & paint.
The blueness of his eyes.

The grass never grew back,
house ripped down. Now?

only a pile
of ghosts.

7:46 p.m.
May 18th, 1948

I got dirt
on the knees
of my slacks
today.

Planting
marigolds
in lines
next to the
garage.

Mother
got the
stains out
before they
set

& before
Pop got
home from
work.

Evil Rats on no Star Live.

I was working at Starbucks when a single mother told me she thought her daughter was going to be a serial killer. I laughed and pumped mocha.

Because if it were real, she would never say it aloud.

*I was just in the kitchen
steaming vegetables for dinner
when Mia ran out of the bedroom
holding one of the rats we just bought.*

[screaming]

*She kept yelling 'I think I killed her'
holding her arms out, the rat limp
in hand.*

*I was struggling to understand.
'I was playing with her, squeezing
really tight, then letting her go.
She just stopped moving.'*

“She never cried,” she told me. I stirred the milk.
“I cried all night about it. She never cried.”

To Gregory, with Love

This might be too late
but you take my breath

away. I wanted to touch
you the minute I saw

your body & the way
it rippled when you

worked. Everyone smiled
when you talked & you

smiled all the time &
I smiled when you

laughed. You came
over tonight angry.

You came as angry
as last time. When

your friends were
with you, when you

yelled about the money
you thought I stiffed

you. I tried to soothe
your anger with booze

I gave you some grass
I keep around for boys

who do that kind of stuff.
I just wanted to touch

you after you got high
& your legs fell

apart & you rolled
your neck along the back

of my chair. You were
smiling & I wanted

to feel what it was like
to be you. But you laughed

when I touched you &
pulled away & asked

for your fucking money.
I could have loved you.

We could have moved
together & you could

have smiled & I could
have smiled & we could

have exploded together &
my breath could have caught

in my throat & you could
have twisted your face when

you came & I could have
licked the sweat off your neck.

I could have been so much
more than you ever thought.

Circle the answer most like you!

Your school talks about the recent murders of women in the neighborhood.

(*Such a downer.*) You:

- a) Raise your hand to lead the prayer.
Let your teacher know your church
prayed about this last week.
- b) Snigger, when everyone puts their heads
down, draw your finger across your throat
like a knife to your friends. Stick your tongue
out and pretend to be dead.
- c) Hide your tears in the way you hold your head
as they pray. Wish to go home to your mother.
Pretend to not notice the boys pantomiming your
tears behind you. Do not answer when they ask
if you are really a girl underneath all that fat.
- d) Hold your head down. Don't make any sounds
or movements that attract attention. Wonder if
God really does hear you when you talk to him.
What kind of plan God might have for you.

She is not the type of **girl** who would just

do something

like that

She is not capable of something

like that

I would say three-fourths of this stuff

she brings on

herself

Interview.

Yeah, the neighbors saw me as a real asset. I was happy to dig in the dirt and help plant their flowers every spring. Go ahead, check the facts—I will give you names of people to ask. These people want to pretend they know me. Put all sorts of value judgments on me, call me gay as silk, but I was married. I have children who write to me all the time. Most red-blooded killers can't say that if I'm not mistaken. I can with a smile.

I can tell right now you don't believe me, you're all stiff back and polite smiles. All you want to do is promote the lie. But I will tell you right now, if you want dirt from me you can pack it in and go home. I pride myself on telling the truth not red lies. I believe the best way to instruct children is by example, so I state facts exactly as I see them. I also am a very hard worker, because you can't buy silk with no money. Women love that line. I would say that sometimes when I pretended

I was a police officer at bars. They were always in on the joke though, pretended right along with me. Just a sexual game, you see. Only left them with smiles. I consider myself bisexual yes, but not at all gay. Those queers with their silk shirts and tight-fitting pants. That is not me at all. As a Catholic I know those dirty boys are not doing as nature intended, which is a man and women. This is fact. Sure I have had sex with men as a convenience but I prefer women—especially a red-

head, ya know? I am a liberal and don't judge. People want to paint me a red-faced evil killer but I am a human just like everyone else. People pretend I did no good in my life, never made a difference. As a matter of fact I was voted Jaycee's Man of the Year three times in a row. I still smile whenever I think of that. This is proof I am more than my crawl space dirt and headlines in the paper. You can't just wrap this story with silk

and say I am a monster. If working eighty-hour weeks is evil then call me a slick queer killing boys as a clown. Fact is I, a God-fearing man, have read the Bible, but have you? You know once you cover your body in dirt you can never become clean. No matter how much you pretend

or wash your clothes, everything has a way of seeping up. Fake smiles only get you so far. This case was sensationalized by the media, facts

smearred, unchecked and sometimes just false. It's a joke to even call them facts. My appeal will prove I wasn't in the state during sixteen of the murders—and the silk shirt and nylon ropes found in my room were planted. I was too trusting of smiling faces and sob stories. Some might call me weak but I think it is a red flag if people aren't understanding. Anyone can tell me anything. I don't pretend to be perfect, but I am very open to other people's flaws, you know? I see past dirt.

We all pretend in different ways. We got dirt, you know? But as Pogo, my face red and white, people smiled at me. All silk, all smiles, these facts. I was worth something.

BIO REVIEW

Full Name: Alyssa Davis Date of Birth: 07-12-1987

Age, Height, Weight: 26, 5'6" (I don't weigh myself) Home: Chicago 36

Marital Status: Single Family: Stronger

Wheels: none Brothers: 1 (2?) Sisters: 4 (5?)

Most Treasured Honor:

Perfect woman or man:

I don't know yet

Childhood Hero:

Current Hero:

Favorite TV shows: why

I keep writing you

Favorite movies: over & over

Favorite song:

inside my body

Favorite singers:

Favorite Musicians:

Hobbies:

imagining

Favorite Meals:

Why you wrote JW Gacy:

you felt stuck

Recommended Reading:

inside ~~my~~ a body

Last Book read:

you couldn't

Ideal Evening:

control I want

Every Jan 1st I resolve:

Nobody Knows I'm: to understand

My Biggest regret: evil as a thing

If I Were President I'd: I can see,

My Advice to Children: feel with my fingers & inside my skin

What I don't like about People: pinpoint the moment you jumped

My Biggest Fear: from human with blue eyes

Pet Peeves: to monster with no skin

Superstitions:

Friends like me because: only pictures

Behind my back they say: on paper need to

People in History I'd like to have met: justify my dark

If I were an animals I'd be: because it exists

Personal goals in Life: ~~underneath~~ inside my bones

Personal interests: is it okay? Is it okay? Is it okay?

Favorite color: break Favorite Number: wide open

I view myself as:

What I think of this country:

Political Views: & run
it's all blind

Thoughts on Crime:

to you

Thoughts on Drugs:

with my arms

Thoughts on Sex:

Wide enough

I consider myself: Conservative for Moderate you Liberal to see

What I expect from Friendships:

every mistake

Religious thinking:

I hope

What your thinking now:

will be worth it.

Your artistic interests:

Knotted.

It was because of his legs. They way they bent without snapping.

It was because he wasn't afraid to get dirty.

It was because he looked at me.

It was because he looked at me and smiled.

It was because he opened the door to my car.

It was because he spread his legs as he sat.

It was because we drank whiskey.

It was because he licked his lips.

It was because the handcuffs were on the table.

It was because he was still smiling.

It was because my insides tightened.

It was because I got hard.

It was because I saw him get hard too.

It was because I started sweating.

It was because he laughed.

It was because he could leave.

It was because I couldn't.

It was because his hair felt like silk.

It was because he could talk.

It was because the rope was in my pocket.

It was because he said he wanted to see a trick.

It was because I was in control.

It was because I was high.

It was because I never liked mess.

It was because my heart was racing.

It was because I couldn't breathe.

It was because I came when he fell.

It was because I had to work.

It was because I was tired.

It was because I was shaking.

It was because he was a sissy.

It was because I can't.

Interview with Lynn Troester.

Interviewer: Do you have any reason to believe that uh, that uh uh, that he was digging holes for another reason or that

Lynn: Yes. Now that I know what he did. Yes I do.

I: Tell t-tell me why do you suspect the holes were so weird?

L: Well, because he would *dig* 'em. They weren't actual holes, they were just large spaces. He would dig 'em. Then he would *leave* 'em. For, ya know, quite a bit of time and then, all of a sudden, he would plant. And I, I just, like I said, I just can't, I can't remember ever seeing 'im *do* the planting. I don't know when he did it. If it was, you know, at night, or when we were, gone. But uh, he would dig in completely different, no *pattern*. He would just *dig*...

I: ...mmm hmm...

L: ...and then leave it. And then all of a sudden it would be planted.

I: Were these small holes or big holes?

L: No, they weren't actually holes; they were just big spaces.

I: Like, like trenches er, uh...

L: Yes! At uh, at separate places. There was no, uh, *pattern* of anything, like you know, when you're planting, you do a *pattern*. Well this wasn't. He would dig and leave and dig and, and, it would be empty for quite some while.

I: An-and it wasn't only him that dug 'em but it was kids that were with 'im?

L: [nodding] He would have boys with 'im, yes. Young boys.

While Watching *Rizzoli & Isles*

Video: I'm not afraid of you
[monster leans in] Because you're *like* me
[cuts to black]

[spotlight]

R: He's a freak okay? He gets to everybody.
I: I, I, I did a lot of research in his background, his childhood
Maybe I am a little bit like him.

[I have broken three hair straighteners
leaving bruises on my skin]

R: You are *nothing* like him.
I: I don't know Jane. I, I was a weird kid.
R: Were you killing small animals?

[once I couldn't walk normally for a week
because my leg was so swollen]

I: No, but I dissected a lot of frogs
R: No, that's different

[my best friend told me at a party I looked like an idiot]

I: I just, started to think about things that I never really thought about before.
R: Here it comes—there *are* bodies buried in your basement.

[I always avoid eye contact]

I: I spent a lot of time alone.
I just realized something when I was reading about Hoyt.

[I first used scissors to cut
my skin into ribbons]

There was a lot of benign neglect.

[there was always a wish for someone to see]

It's just that I didn't ask for much.
I don't think I really knew how.

[once my aunt asked what was on my
legs at a rest stop in Indiana]

And the less that I would ask for, the less time they had for me.
They were very, just very involved in their own lives,

[my mom said "Oh, you didn't know
Alyssa is cutting herself
for attention now?"]

They sent me to boarding school when I was ten. I actually think I sent away for
the brochure myself.

[I didn't wear shorts for six years]

I just just was really lost.

R: No matter what happened to you. You are *nothing* like that monster okay?

[I still don't know how to be touched]

Yeah, you're a little antisocial maybe.

HUMAN/monster/pervert/SAINT

There is no known treatment for psychopaths

memories

impulses

obsessions

fathers

thoughts

hope

Inquiry.

I found out twenty-five people are writing about him
after I sent a poem to try and be published.

I got rejected but *how weird that so many
submissions were about Gacy right?*

All these words can be arranged
better I get that. But this apartment
is so quiet and no one has called me
today and yesterday I watched a
documentary about a woman the world
forgot. Her bones found four years later,
sunk into a rotting couch,
tv still on and bowls in the sink.

I wonder about their names
their intentions:

Did Sufjan Stevens have any bearing in your decision of subject?

If so, what line in particular stood out to you?

What interests you the most about John Wayne Gacy, Jr.?

What is poem attempting to *say*?

Do you feel he is *speaking* to you at all?

[would you do that?]

Fur & Silk

[I am here]

Pal's eyes
are frozen
open, tongue
stuck on
bits of ice
& dirt.
Stroking
his fur
I almost
forget
about silk
& how
it feels
against
my body
& how
I like it

& how
I want it
& I need
to bury
his body
so Pop
won't look
for him,
dig far
enough
in the dirt
so he can
play because
he loved the
dirt & we
used to play
together
my hands &
his paws
covered in
dirt. Pal
won't have
to remember
Pop's eyes,
the way they
burned, the
shotgun echo
in the yard.
The blood
everywhere
in the yard.
The blood
trapped
in the snow

slowly
seeping
into the
knees of
my pants.

The flowers
were meant
for someone's
funeral later
today. I need
them to be
here, planted
in dirt.

The Names Have Been Changed to Gacy's Victims Because We Are All Part Monster Part Victim.

The man I call my father's name is Rick. Chosen slow love he arrived just as I was pressing back into myself. Fighting nightmares and the expectation of wholeness. I kept thinking about Tommy, the babysitter's boy who was six like me. He had two older sisters who convinced us to show each other our bodies, taught us how to kiss and showed us a video so we could learn how to have sex. They would lay in the top bunk giggling as Tommy and I laid naked under the covers, scared to touch and making the noises we heard on the tape. They asked if I wanted to see his man on the moon and I didn't know he could reach so far. When they pulled down his pants and pressed his head open I couldn't understand why it didn't look like my stepdad John's. This was all soft play dough unmade. When I didn't scream the girls told me I owed him so I pulled my pants down. Tommy asked me where my things went. I told him I didn't know—I never remembered having them at all.

In middle school I lost my baby fat but kept eating while all the girls had crushes. Matthew and Michael the twins, Jon the green-eyed younger brother of a high schooler with a car, Kenneth his best friend who smoked cigarettes and snuck beer on the ski club bus, Robert the wrestler who was towering and thick and made the best jokes in class. My best friend grew three inches that year and started wearing lacy bras she stole from her mom. John, the brown-skinned, blue-eyed captain of the football team asked her out, so the cool girls said we could sit at their table with the boys. I was soft and rounded. Bright orange swooshy pants with performance fleece vest to cover but announce. The boys were yelling and the girls were giggling then John yelled towards me, "Alyssa you have something on your chin." A sea of slim wrists and eyes. "No, your other chin."

A rat too slow for the trap. Gray body open-wide. By high school I stopped speaking and wearing color. A new school with uniforms my mom wanted me to have a fresh start, a white morning. Run by the pure ladies of God, Mary with her stone face, her arms frozen on the hill. I had rejected the all-girls school with its gardens because I wanted a place with boys. Just girls is weird and some girls looked like lesbians. The boys here were taller and had grown sure of their voices, the girls meadowed, and shortened their skirts. Gregory was the boy my new best friend mooned over so I picked Randel, the hockey player, so I could say I liked someone too. When my mom told me she would buy me a dress if I had a date to the dance I asked Darrell, the kind eyes from theatre who didn't go to my school. I was waxing, until William asked if Darrell's pimples blinded him from my face. Gray body. Keloid arms.

This is not to say I could see, or they had eyes. Rather a collection of sand in each hand. I was old rock and they were wind, each forgetting how the other was made.

The first unknown asked for a blow job behind his garage, after I had condensed into dirt. I kept choking until I was crying and he told me I was doing it right.

Tim called me a whore after he texted to see if I was drunk and then told me I was beautiful while ripping the buttons off my shirt. This was the second time he had driven me home while I was drunk and told me he had wanted to fuck me for such a long time. When I told him he should leave, after he came, he threw change on the ground and walked out.

Frank was the boy who fucked four of my friends after he peed on my car. He told me once that I was almost pretty.

Russell, the hipster, had a dirty charm about him. Ironic shyness and side smiles. On Halloween he gave me his red sweatshirt that said 'Uff Da' on it right before he went to go sleep in my friend's bed, and I slept as always on the couch.

He was one of the agreed-upon idols. Other dirty thin boys in skinny jeans, no underwear and artist hands made their rounds.

Samuel, the gloomy glass artist, who dated my friend for two years, would forget I was there and invite everyone to hang out, but said it was cool if I "tagged along."

James, the boy who wrote songs about girls he wanted to fuck, and invited them to his impromptu show with his band Legendary Seagulls and festivals he made up for other local bands. He overdosed once with my roommate eating a plant they heard got you high.

Billy, the one who went to jail, and wrote love letters to a girl with dinosaur tattoos, only to start sleeping with the lost girl running from everything when he got out.

Sweet John, who I met after he had broken up with Tim, the firework drunk, and had started hanging out with Robert, the shy, smart runner who had just come out. There was too much

drinking and too many drugs for anyone to be sure what was love. Robert had stepped away and was clearing his head when they found John hanging in the basement, a week before school began.

Seven unknowns got me to go upstairs with them when they told me I could do coke.

Billy told me he was sorry but he really only liked skinny girls.

Robert was a boy I brought back from the bar, because he smiled at me, but when I took him inside my friend told him if he didn't leave she would cut his balls off.

David, my friend, who cried when I told him how many times boys had hurt me, kissed the scars on my arms to remind me I was real. That I wasn't eroding away.

The other night a boy John told me he wanted to be best friends with me. I could be his wingman and I could show him how to eat pussy and damn was I ever hot. After three shots of whiskey I started to lean. He kept scooping me up, kept buying me beer, high-fiving me at the bar. I let him touch me because I was lonely. I let him back to my house.

John, please—I can't breathe.

Hi Ho Alyssa,

Thank you for the letter I received on July 20th. I was very interested to read that you are a poet. I, myself read a lot of poetry as I have a lot of free time at the moment. Also, please call me John or JW. When you say Mr. Gacy I think you are talking to my father.

One of the things you should know about me, is that I am open minded, outspoken, not very tactful, nonjudgemental, liberal, BI [bisexual] and I say what I mean. The only thing I ask is don't assume anything of me. If you are not sure than ask. Nothing offends me and nothing is too personal. No subject is off limits as long as you are willing to be open and honest with me. I dislike phony people. 80% of what is known about me in the media is fantasy. So don't assume, just ask. If you want my opinion on something or point of view that's what you will get as I am not into stroking you as you have your own hand for that when you get the daily urge. Ha Ha.

In your questionnaire you said you weren't sure when you answered the question ideal man or woman. Is that because you are unsure if you like women? Do not be afraid to be honest with me as I have already been honest with you. I prefer men mostly due to connivence. Before this whole mess I had my own construction company and worked usually over 70 hours a week. You can imagine how much easier it was with someone who knew what they were doing.

I got the sense you do not open up much when I read your answer to why you wrote me. Relax about who will see what you write as I don't share my letters with anyone. You could tell me you are a stripper and I would not judge. I know what it's like to feel like no one knows the real you, which is why I think you wrote me. Do not be afraid of me. I can be your friend and I will help you as much as I can. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Your pal,
John

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Alyssa Lynee teaches and lives in Chicago. Her work can be found in *PANK* magazine and forthcoming in *Bloom*.

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HUMAN/monster/pervert/SAINT

There is no known treatment