

1/31/23 Patricia's Green Hayes Valley
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I got a library card today. It's got a cat on it. I was able to choose the design and I picked the one with the little black cat. I was surprised that I was given a choice about something as nothing as a library card. A piece of plastic that will reside inside my wallet only to be used maybe once a month...if that.

I took a beat to examine the images the librarian directed me towards, almost choosing the first one I looked at for the sake of... well... I don't know. Just to quickly say something? Get myself out of the hot seat? To save time? I'm not quite sure why, but I glanced for a few extra seconds and spotted the black cat on the blood orange background. I felt my insides pick it before I even registered what it was in my brain. My dog ears perked up and I excitedly said "The cat one!" and within a few seconds, I was holding my new cat library card.

It didn't really feel like anything special at the moment. But now, as I'm in the sun on a bench in the little green space between city streets watching and sitting and breathing and reflecting, I realize how much power is in every little thing.

I've been working on reclaiming and maintaining control over myself and my energy. Unfortunately, it seems I'm fighting the laws of nature over this. Swimming against the current.

Like the forces of the world and the people I meet are actively trying to minimize me down to a ball and chain, a petal in the wind, a stomped out cigarette butt, a runaway train.

It's frustrating because as much as I'm not those things, I'm all of them. And more. All at once.

I have so much more to say about this and I hate to be influenced by external forces, but the shade is creeping up gradually. It's on my toes and soon it will crawl up my leg and take hold of all of me.

And the thing is, I've already moved once. From the shade to the sun. Twenty minutes ago, I picked myself and my things up and took the spot that opened up across the grass. Maybe that's life. Maybe I'll keep an eye out for another chance in the sun.

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I just almost went home but as I was leaving, I found a lone bench illuminated and calling to me.

So what was I saying? Oh yes, I'm nothing and everything.

I'm just so tired of fighting to be seen and understood. Tired of wanting to have a say and never being given one. Tired of people—no—tired of me—no. Tired of people, *including* myself, telling me what I am or am not. What I can or can't do. What I do or don't mean. In my mind, I'm as simple as a cat on an orange background. As simple as a preference.

F*ck, I'm losing my grip on the point of all this. Okay let me try this.

I saw—before I started writing and when I was still in the shade—a couple walking so so so slowly. And they were walking so slowly and eating ice cream and it just looked like the most “at peace” thing I'd seen in a while. It made me think about how I'm always going a mile a minute. Constantly running and rushing and jumping and flying. I thought about the last time I was on a date with someone and I felt like a circus performer. A puppy beside them running in circles and nipping at their fingers and humping their leg and yapping in their face. All the while waiting for them to snap “NO” and reprimand me for being a bad dog. I felt constantly on the verge of exploding on them and cowering at their impending scold. I didn't feel at peace. I felt the need to move all my cells at once. Too uncomfortable to just walk and eat ice cream slowly.

Now, I mean, I love puppy-ing out. I have a lot of energy and I can get excited and I like that about myself. I don't want to change it. But seeing two people float like clouds across the street with cold sweet cream and toppings made me want to slow down. Made me want to cry my heavy wet gray away so I could float higher and lighter and whiter and slower.

I'm sure I'm over assuming how “at peace” that couple was. I'm currently watching 10 other people exist in slow motion—walking their shitty little dogs on hot pink leashes, hunching over their phones on stone seats, strolling by with shopping bags in the crooks of their elbows.

So, no, I'm not sure exactly what everything is. All I know is how it makes me feel. Right now, I know I feel chilly sitting on the last bench in the sun before it goes behind the buildings. I know I feel calm in this moment engulfed in headphone acoustics and slow-motion people.

And I know I love my library card.