

Dear Ra,

It smells like someone's painting my apartment. I like to smoke cigarettes when it's raining and when my brain is breaking. My dad is fat like one of those animals that live in mud! I don't like to be alone but this is ridiculous. Some people write with their fingers. I liked going to school but I couldn't stand cutting up animals. The only thing I learned was the smell of formaldehyde. The only friend I made was a nervous disorder. His hands shook like gasoline. My room is a circus. Don't run off with the zebras! Their hooves are made of cotton. You'll count the hours on your ribs. Before I was a circus director I was a museum. You can still feel the scars! Before I became the devil I fixed cars. My eyes were machine guns. Now they just squeak! I used to catch wildebeests. That's how I fed hell. That's how I tried to talk to you, but you don't like meat. You didn't think this poem was going to be about you, did you? You thought I was finished with your cigarettes. You thought I was just going to be writing about lice from now on. Nobody can fool me. I drowned already as a child. I wanted to ride straight out of hell with you. I drew up the plans when I was a kid. I drew them in the sand with my little stiff pecker. I've never used the word "pecker" before in my life! I wanted the wheels to hurt. I wanted the bags to be plastic. I wanted the animals to struggle. I wanted your thighs around my head. Cars don't work like that anymore. Cars are clean. Cities are empty. I'm the devil! I understand formaldehyde! I thought I could pick your arms, but sometimes even the circus gets eaten alive.

Dear Ra,

The man who invented iron owns this apartment. He has disinfected every room and crevice, but cockroaches survive in my muscles. Today they're chewing on you. You're driving a car in a distant town. I'm driving a ship of jackals. Mayakovsky once said that you can't write a love poem until you're out of love. My favorite theory posits that the rodeo disaster represents our need for closure. Everyone likes a good kick in the head once in a while. Everyone needs a night carved out of a medicine chest. Everyone needs a German friend named Klaus who's come here to study the mating rituals of insects. Once you showed me your butterfly collection and it was lame because most of them were moths and bugs, and there are no butterflies named "Japan" or "Storage."

Another word for muffle is to smother.

Remember when the crazed lady outside the pet store yelled that I would never stand still because my biological father was a fake? Or did she say a famous actor with a violent past? What was wrong with the swimming pool? Who was the kid who had trouble breathing? Didn't we eat really bad hot dogs?

Today I'm drunk on birds. Unless this is a train wreck, which I doubt because I can't see any trains. I'm listening to a tape you made for me. The songs sound thin and pretty. You don't understand the beauty of a horse struggling to get out of a mudslide. You want porcelain; I want to thrash around in your cabinet. The Church of Food Poisoning is rebuilding their statues and they want me to pose for their heroic representation of purging. The altar smells like piss and I walked in on one of the cheerleaders convulsing in the bathroom. She was getting into the holiday spirit. I was getting the rabies out of my eyes.

Tantrums are scarier than effigies, even ones with chewed fingernails.