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Overdose in Thirteen Overtures: an Essay

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Overdose in Thirteen Overtures: an Essay

Abstract

Overture One

I watch a life coach tell a client “you are a fatherless child always trying to get back to daddy.” 100 degrees and rising, back to daddy. You talk to your father on the phone and he hangs up on you (for the last time.) We are back in the moment when on the beach I forget I will wake up on a mattress with sprung coils from a VA hospital in my mother’s basement.

You are on the floor somehow. Quiet with stereo in the corner playing something unrecognizable on repeat. You are covered in a sheet, red hair popping out of the top. I put on your jean shorts that are much too big for me. I loop the belt twice, walk outside and throw up.

Cover Page Footnote

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August 28, 2015

Overdose in Thirteen Overtures: an Essay

Nonfiction by Katie Jean Shinkle

Overture One

I watch a life coach tell a client “you are a fatherless child always trying to get back to daddy.” 100 degrees and rising, back to daddy. You talk to your father on the phone and he hangs up on you (for the last time.) We are back in the moment when on the beach I forget I will wake up on a mattress with sprung coils from a VA hospital in my mother’s basement.

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Overture Two

Where are you now, double rainbow?

Overture Three

There are reasons why I fled. Why in apathy, there is rising. Where there were wings there is only singe. An Icarus, demented. An Icarus, without.

How when I can no longer see you, I see you, anyway.

Overture Four

I stomp around the basement to wake you. There are lawnmowers up against the glass. There are dreams of gang bangs. Pornography in headlines like Cum 4 U 2 in shimmering street lamps the city will not pay to remove, frustrating your parents your whole life. When you were a baby it kept you up at night.

Overture Five

What happens when the body is wrecked and you forget because the coils from the VA mattress is all you have ever known. Menstrual blood underneath nails. What happens in the middle of the day stays in the middle of the day. Even-stroke. What happens in the middle of the night, however.

Overture Six

You crawled through the basement window only once and it was to tell me a boy named Rob wanted to fuck my butt/called me rocket-tits/did I swoon/probably.

Overture Seven

I asked you to hold me why don't you hold me why don't you
why don't you hold me and you did

on the VA hospital bed which almost folded up in the middle underneath the weight of us.

Overture Eight

Sixteen years later,

and it stings a little you didn't say our only real and true summer together was your favorite and it was not the time in your memory you want to go back to, was nostalgic for.

Overture Nine

I worry about people who are exhausted and if the exhaustion will be too much in the end. I worry it is always the people I love the most who will disappear.

Overture Ten

I am sorry you are so tired my sweet double rainbow.

What can I do, what can I even do

Overture Eleven

What is restoration more than figuring out what to do with the old and how to make it new?

Overture Twelve

How long before you were found, double rainbow?

How long before you leave again
and how long before you are found (again)
and how many more exhausted times can this happen.

Overture Thirteen

In this dream scenario, I am not giving up on you.

In this dream scenario, I am here in the unreal with you.

In this dream scenario, you never left my side, not for one minute, not for two.

Katie Jean Shinkle is the author of two books, most recently *The Arson People* (Civil Coping Mechanisms, 2015). Other work can be found in or is forthcoming from *The Collagist*, *The Butter*, *Bone Bouquet*, *Barrow Street*, *FLAUNT Magazine*, and elsewhere. She serves as an assistant creative nonfiction editor of *DIAGRAM*.