**The Messed-Up State of the World**

**He’s my Metamodern MUS(e).**

It was during one of those perfect moments when your heart beat finally keeps up with the pace at which the world spins that I made this realization. Together, we live for the feelings, the soft and sweet moments that keep us warm-blooded even if they deepen the bags under our eyes and distract us from the constant movement of the world. Before him, I could never quite understand the heart rush of contemporary America, the moments giving hope to the messed-up state of the world. But now, I understand. I think it’s the moments like this, sitting in his car acting like we belong in a coming-of-age movie, that form metamodernism, the current mold creating the shape of the world, as can be seen in literature, music, and a million other perfect deformed works of art. Because it’s in these moments that we sit resting in the feeling, the moments that we’d be fine never leaving, that the epiphany of the metamodern movement occurs. All that matters are those moments that make us feel, even if the speakers in his car get blown out in the process.

**The Art of Fridge-Standing**

The headlines in the background: ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR RAGES ON. SHIP SAILS INTO FRANCIS SCOTT KEY BRIDGE. CLIMATE CHANGE REACHES AN ALL-TIME HIGH.

Meanwhile, I was exhausted from a long night of fridge-standing.

Fridge-standing (noun): an art. Standing idly in front of an open refrigerator stocked with food but not choosing anything due to dissatisfaction with the options.

The rest of the world (or anything in close proximity to the farmhouse) slept. It was the strange in-between moment of the world when the birds are sleeping and the bats are quiet, but still I engaged in the art of fridge-standing. The only feelings I experienced were the soft and warm fleece hoodie and sweatpants against my skin and the cool contrast of the refrigerator air. The whirr kicked on, inspiring another stream of thoughts. I enjoyed the cold, so I kept the door open, but I began debating the merits of fridge-standing. As a representative art, there was a certain beautiful revealing nature to it. Perhaps it revealed the lack of true enjoyment in privilege, the lack of substance in a gluttonous world. I questioned if perhaps privilege was just a way of deepening the messed-up state of the world, benefitting not even those who receive it. But then, what was the point? There was nothing that could be changed, as that was just the way the earth rotated on its axis. So I’ll just continue fridge-standing.

**TEXTS FROM THE ARCHIVE**HIM: How come sitting next to you makes me work so hard

and sitting on the other side of a glass wall is so distracting?

ME: It’s like a fish tank lol

HIM: If I was still a kid and you were one of the fish in my

doctor’s waiting room fish tank I would watch you instead

of playing with the blocks

ME: Kinda makes sense that your engineering homework is the equivalent of blocks

HIM: Right now I’m trying to play with cars and roads but

this is way harder than the hotwheels I remember

Every little moment is so beyond special. Texts, talking, music, literature: a million little archives of every second spent ignoring the messed-up state of the world. One day, these will be the nostalgic memories, the little college adventures that we bore our grandkids with. We’re stuck in them now, though, as the world inevitably keeps spending even as our time here comes to a close. One day, these will simply be texts from the archive, as lost to the world, buried in little moments, as ancient manuscripts.

**Going Through the Motions**

It was just another day at work. Some days, administrative work as a tutor trapped within four small, uninspiring walls seemed to never end. Editing the biggest project of the year, I ran into the monotony of it all once again. In the writing app, the cycle went:

Help.

Search in M(en)US: Rem

Select Remove Space After Paragraph

Help.

Search in M(en)US: Rem

Select Remove Space After Paragraph.

Help.

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Select Remove Space After Paragraph

Help.

Search in M(en)US: Rem

Select Remove Space After Paragraph.

Paragraph. Paragraph. Remove Space. Rem. REM sleep. Something college students can never seem to get. Awakening in a strange room, unfamiliar from the childhood complexity with all of the nostalgic treasures. A strange room, with three strange others, others who still seem closer than family. All four awaken, messes of pounding hearts and clammy hands, never able to reach the void of being that is REM sleep. But despite the sleep deprivation, they have never felt more alive, free to feel the breeze in a new place on a summer day, to make new relationships that come like a fresh breeze in the springtime, free to engage in 2 AM ceiling-staring and praying and crying and free to experience the melodrama that is college. The bags under my eyes remain, marking my place of being in the messed-up state of the world.

Help.

Search in M(en)US: Rem

Select Remove Space After Paragraph.

Remove the empty spaces in life. Be present.

**The MUS(ic)**

Worship. Skip.

Rap. Skip.

Country. Skip.

Blues. Skip.

Pop. Skip.

Then there is that one song in-between, the one that seems to embody all of my moments, every little aspect of the messed-up state of the world. Do we worship a god or just the emotions that come from the songs, the idea of someone loving us so much to reign or offer us heaven or paint every perfect sunset or die for us? Does the speed of the world and all of the associated emotions sometimes just inspire the want for equally fast words, something of human creation that can keep up? Or do we long for a moment in nature, pretending to be one of the “original” cowboys, those who entered native land with a sense of pride and ownership? Perhaps the blues represent all of the sadness that we so terribly want to be able to feel rather than repressing, so instead of actually feeling the cerulean tide of life’s bittersweetness we just sit in silence and indulge ourselves in another song? Maybe these are all illusions based on symphonies and poetry that just need to be popped.

It was always just better to experience all of the emotion through the music. When I felt lonely, I would drown all of the feeling in lyrics that made it sound much more beautiful than it really was. It was always better to play the music loud, to give myself a headache and make myself cry, than to live in the emotionless void of human experience. But that was all before I found my sunlight: the one who brings memories to the music, little moments tied with a red string to each word. The messed-up state of the world never feels so messy anymore.

Rock. Rock my world. Please stay.

**Night Drives.**

In high school, I was too terrified to drive to ever get my license. I was comfortable where I was, happy with scrolling and creating alternate lives in video games that were a great substitute for the real experiences I missed out on, a distraction from the messed-up state of the world. I could never tell that boy from sophomore year, the one I spent the summer on the phone with, how I felt about him, so I sat for three years in denial about the fact that I was undeniably friendzoned. There were no night drives, save the time that a few friends dragged me out of my house to watch a slasher film. Perhaps that was the moment leading to the present, here when my past life is dead, slashed like one of the poor, screaming victims.

Now I get taken on night drives all the time. There is a certain magic in living license-less, in being subjected to the passenger seats of others.They drive, revealing every sensitivity and weakness, every thrill and and strength through each back road and highway, each turn. Their reactions to traffic, trains, and detours all form a connection, all show their level of patience. I refrain from taking the aux cord so that I can drink in every lyric and chord of all of their favorite songs. When they roll down their windows, I feel more free than ever before, able to take in everything about another person without caring about the wild strands of hair that are so terribly out of place. I have no license, no phone, no video games to distract me in those moments, only the ever-stretching road illuminated by the stars, as infinite as the beautiful soul in the driver’s seat.

**A Million Little Moments**

It is so terribly messed up to think that the world revolves around my little moments and only those. The complexity of the earth and its inhabitants means that there are always infinite little moments, a million of the best memories of a lifetime made, oceans of tears shed, alcohol consumed to drown heartbreak, drugs prescribed to conceal “messed up” brain chemistry, lifelong friendships made, couples married. As we scroll through TikTok, magic happens somewhere in the world, creating memories. An engaged couple cries together as the young man prepares to leave for the army, basking in the warmth of each other’s presence for the last time. Two friends exist together, resting heads and shoulders in a beautiful connection as they sit backstage at a play. An artist yawns as they work, hands covered in paint, grimacing at the feel because they ran out of inspiration for the day (even though it will all be worth it to see the work completed). Another tired soul cheers and tears up watching their younger sister become the starting pitching spot on her softball team as one of the youngest players (look at her succeeding in the game of life!). College students soak in the last moments together before they enter boring adulthood, taking a break from studying and eating in a Dairy Queen parking lot and embracing the deep conversation that naturally comes with the territory or sharing favorite films from childhoods that seem to be long past. Souls stuck between childhood and adulthood are truthfully the freest, embracing all of the little moments, playing Yu-Gi-Oh in coffee shops and not caring about the baristas watching from behind the counter. To end the night, the restless young adults wander alone, chasing a feeling, unaware of what that feeling is. A million little moments always leave us wanting more.

**Guys, I’m his Metamodern MUS(e) too!**

I’m such a hideous human being, a creation that only God and my mother would ever love. I’m obsessive, clinging to my phone for another text, hanging onto every last word of validation, incessantly checking my grades, fearing that I will never be good enough to finish the year with my 4.0 intact. I’m stalkerish, scrolling through his Instagram until I know every little detail without having to ask. I’m jealous. I’ll never have the perfect body, the perfect connection with my family, the perfect wardrobe, the perfect personality, the perfect life. I’ll never be one of those flawless girls who flows seamlessly into every conversation, whose curves turn heads the second they walk into a room, overflowing with sunlight.

He calls me his moon. Every step I take captivates him, and the second we meet eyes I know once again that I may never be perfect but that I am perfect for him. He says perfection is relative, that his favorite color is brown and he’d prefer the eyes I’d always seen as boring to the vibrant blue eyes of others. He says it’s cute that I’m obsessive, stalkerish, and ever-so-slightly jealous of every girl he greets. Even though I’m a bit messed-up, much like the state of the world, he sees so much Hope in that.

He has bow ties in his cargo pockets, a rather extensive collection of old hats, and a beautiful old music box his grandma gifted to a slightly chubbier-cheeked version of him. He gifts me things too, cookies with little notes attached, shared drinks on shared road trips, song recommendations, time spent studying in academic buildings where we like to pretend we’re the only ones who exist. Of course, perfection is relative, the state of the world is still messed up, and we’re not the only ones who live for the late nights in each other’s presence. When he plays a song for me like our favorite public place belongs to only us, another couple also walks by, and they’re playing music, too. Although I cherish every little moment we have alone, it feels much less lonely when there are other people just like us trying to survive on this rapidly spinning planet. Time goes by too quickly, but it’s alright because our little imperfect (perhaps relatively perfect?) existences are all just part of this little thing called life altered by the messed-up state of the world.