

an anxiety all my own

This morning I took an Uber Pool home at 6:04 AM. A few minutes into the ride, I received one notification indicating that my driver had accepted another rider, Carol, and then another one saying that my own ride was cancelled. I alerted Jordan— "You cancelled me." He said he meant to cancel on Carol because, he muttered (this was definitely nervous muttering), she "lived too far." Likely story. I laid down the law and said I would order it again if only he would pull over. He reneged, saying he could e-mail Uber letting them know the times he picked me up and dropped me off and I would be asked to confirm. Little did Jordan know, the only thing I would confirm was a kidnapping.

The beautiful thing about you, A, and about having you by my side and inside of my lady guts all the time is that I get special, VIP revelations and fun warnings the pros could never get their hands on. It's like being a psychic superhero all the time and your power is that nobody can hurt you (ever). Jordan thought he was going to drive me to his home. I knew this. He looked so smug, in his chartreuse polo, with his mini Twix and Snickers assortment and hanging rosary. He was not planning on going Uptown like I had asked. Tonight, he was taking me wherever he pleased. It was 6 AM after all, and he deserved to treat himself at the end of his shift. I shouldn't have initiated small talk; too sexual. But not so fast, Jordan! I monitored the map and kept my finger on the lock.

As you know, at dawn I used the restroom at a sort-of-stranger's apartment and, staring down at the Jurassic Period themed bath mat, as I squatted over the seat to avoid the probable grime, I checked to see if there was a tiny camera nearby, perhaps lurking next to the tissues or under the mat. I couldn't find it. He was good.

When I was little-me, before I was sure whether I knew you or not, I waited 2 hours for mom to pick me up from 1st grade. The after school teachers sat and watched us. I opened my Composition Notebook that had Math written on it in Sharpie and cried. "47-19? YOU WANT ME TO DO WHAT!?" I couldn't carry the 1 like my classmates could. At a very young age, was already aware that other kids just knew things I couldn't. We were not the same and yet they expected me to do as much. On these afternoons, the austere lit cafeteria in Miami was a cold place. They brought me a bag of Famous Amos. Unlike my monstrous teachers, Amos understood me.

Sixteen years down the road with you, everything is "terrifying." People with no emotion behind their eyes will use me as they please and I won't even notice. Men will betray my non-trust in every way, developing a digital archive over the weeks and months of images and video of me in moments I didn't know would remain (not that all of their male friends will familiarize themselves with the records). My friends and family are Narcissists and probably sociopaths— if I pay attention. A spoonful of the white rice that was slyly brought with my Wok Ginger Shrimp will make my strong thighs flabby, my hard belly muffin-topped, and the world will laugh at the sad mistake of a shape I refer to as my body (note that this has nothing to do with the fact that at age 12 I was taught that I needed to have a "buen cuerpo.") Rushing to the subway, a car 3 yards away honks— I jump. I've been hit. If I've had 2 cups of cortisol-spiking coffee already, guess what. I'm dead.

I want to tell you that I didn't study for my Computer Architecture midterm last week even though I woke up when it was still dark and spent nine hours and 38 minutes with the appropriate book, changing floors in the library ever 90 minutes because the acoustic or lighting was not always adequate. I want to tell you that I meant to go to bed long ago but felt the need to clean the kitchen counter we hardly use 3 times so I didn't have to fall asleep feeling painfully inadequate. And you need to know that I urinated five to seven times in the hour preceding my decided bed time just so I don't rise at 5 AM having to pee. I will have to anyway.

When I mistakenly think I don't love you, I decide that I'll ingest something relaxing and let you go, but then quickly become afraid it will make me go crazy. I would even drink a measured 8-oz glass of red wine but I just know I would become the saddest alcoholic. I could even be willing to accommodate benzodiazepine if it were not for the verifiable knowledge that it would both irreparably alter my personality and make me fall asleep in line at Trader Joe's later today, thusly officiating my lifelong dependency before I get to pay for my zucchini.

And lastly, you need to know that a lot of my worst fears have, in fact come true. And this is the scariest part about letting you go. But most of them have not. I want to watch you go tonight but I am afraid I will miss something big in the process. Like a shark attack in the Upper West Side, or a "Uber Driver Chauffeurs Millennial Pooler to Her Death: Unattractive Twenty-Something Found in Papaya King" headline.