

## Mayflower.

Thomas Aiello

She said, "These things I know are all of me."

She said, "I am the totality of my facts, and my facts are all that is the case."

She said, "And you're right to think it," as she stared up at the gray sky through each wet leaf that made itself a floundering fact in the plasma that she imagined between her eyeballs and her brain, the reds and greens and browns and others only enhanced by the raindrops and the pensive backdrop of the seemingly cloudless afternoon; though it only seemed cloudless because the dark clouds papered the ozone behind it like many of the living rooms on the Thatcher Lanes and Magnolia Drives of the North American continent. "You're right to think it," even as the gray sky that was actually a thorough cover of gray clouds demonstrated distinctly her abject frustration at the ever-living reality that many of her facts weren't facts at all. "You're right to think it, and I'm going to have to be the bad guy on this one. And you'll go back to your friends and family on Magnolia Drive and say, 'She somehow and somehow became analytical, and that's when we drifted off to infinity.' You'll say, 'I lost her somewhere around the totality of her facts and so now I stand here before you and your wallpaper and the ever-living continent and have no reason for this separation of minds and hearts and lives. Because *apparently*,' you'll say, emphasizing, naturally, the apparently, '*apparently* she is not the sum of her constituent mind and heart and life. She is rather a crude compendium of *facts*,' again with the emphasizing, 'which makes *me*,' and this is still you talking, 'which makes *me* an opinion or a lie or a mistake that doesn't fit into said psychotic paradigm.' There will be hugs and, probably, dessert. And your mother will be torn between her memory of me as a darling-of-a-whatever and that cruel and useless being that melted into a bubbling cauldron of facts. A green witch in a black hat stirring it with a boat oar, maybe. You too will feel this dialectic, and you'll develop curvilinear, steering your growth away from that part of you that wants to simultaneously kill and love me. And the only reason I say this now is in aid of stopping that very thing. I am the bad guy on this one. There are things," she said, discreetly noticing the various colored leaves riding their mother branch far and away from the trunk and thinking that everything grows faster than something else, or that everything is closer to death than something else, like people splitting ways and

leaves getting red then dropping to the still-wet grass. “There are things that we can only chalk up to nature, because everything is only nature.”

She said, “I am wet and unable to say more.”

She said, “I am red and waiting to fall.”

That is how Emily came to be alone.

“I got wrapped up a little today,” she wrote on a yellowing notepad, neither fancying herself a poet nor fancying poetry itself, but trusting inherently that one of her collected facts argued that poetry on yellowing notepads was the only proper response to rain-soaked partings. Poetry wasn’t facts. Poetry was the exegesis of pomposity, the great lie of pretty words covering nothing in particular and it was exactly what one did after passing time with the leaves and the cloud-covered lying sky. She wrote this:

I got wrapped up a little today,  
Made it like toffee and the attic.  
“Toffeattica!” I yelled,  
into the nowhere space between my Mayflower and the fold of night.

There was poison in that sound,  
Inching like the marigolds of night.  
I could only hope to yell,  
And make up for the avalanche that missed me in the foregone winter.

I wrote it all on tin foil,  
Answered all his questions in triplicate.  
Sang at the man-iacs/iacles,  
In the résumé storm clouds of my late-nineties-breathing-time.

These nighttimes make me sepia,  
Making toffee at the genesis.  
“Toffegenesis,” I yelled,  
as three more vehicles  
(bastions of the evervescent-because-we’ve-got-evervescence-to-spare America of  
old/and/then/again/now, as well)  
Drove into the Mayflower fold of night.

She turned the yellowing notepad upside down, hoping to see the constitution of the words, their shape and polish, in the spin of the paper and light, but knowing below the plasma she imagined between her eyeballs and her brain that facts were farther from the paper than the

paper was from Attica itself. “Facts in logical space are the world,” she said, as if trying to convince her yellowing notepad of a lesson it should have learned upon initially entering her presence. She named her poem “Toffee.” She wished on the cloud-covered sky that Barthes would come and tell her what it meant, or that Wittgenstein would come and beat her to death for making the effort. She wrote “Toffee” above the first line of her poem then quietly sat down with toffee and Attica transcending the plasma behind her eyes.

That is how Emily came to fall asleep.

She knew what she could honestly know, more than likely, and she knew that if she spoke with enough force, then knowledge or truth or facts became roundly unnecessary, her confidence compensating in conversation for certainty. She knew that prison inmates in the Attica Correctional Facility in western New York State took their facility by force in September of 1971. The prisoners, displeased with their treatment, displeased with the facts that comprised the logical space of their world, decided that that they could not and would not develop curvilinear, steering their growth away from that part of them that wanted simultaneously to kill and love themselves. She knew that they submitted Fifteen Practical Proposals for rectifying their prison life and reordering their logical space. “We do not want to develop curvilinear,” they said. Though she did not know each practical proposal, she knew that the prisoners wanted education. She knew that they wanted people in possession of facts to enter the prison and to share. “We’re going to be the bad guys on this one,” they said, staring through the concrete that surrounded them, clouding the moisture and leaves and cloudy canopy that imbued breakup Saturdays with plasma and pertinent meaning. She knew that one of their demands was to be fed less pork. The inmates wanted freedom of religion, of press, of communication and of congregation. She knew that they wanted access to doctors. She knew that negotiations failed, that America killed thirty-three of its prisoners and ten of its employees, that every action caused reaction after reaction after reaction and that the facts just dripped away like raindrops on red leaves, or like red leaves on their mother branch. With all of her, she felt the plasma between her eyeballs and her brain to be the Attica of her ability to congregate with the young men of her outer eye. “The world divides into facts,” she said, understanding her statement to be the great Practical Proposal number 1.2, and understanding that none of it could matter in the world to a prisoner with too much pork and no access to a doctor.

She knew that the Mayflower took a gaggle of white people from Plymouth, England to the future United States in 1620, but prior to that, it had been sailing around to Norway, France, and Spain. In 1620, the Mayflower was used goods, had been used up on travels, carrying the burdens of its passengers through the waters of wars and famine. “I am a crude compendium of facts,” it would have said. “I lost it somewhere around the totality of the facts, and so now I stand here before you and your wallpaper and the ever-living continent.” Sometimes, she thought, the facts press down on the plasma and create entire new worlds—entire round worlds that facilitate ships and prisoners and facts and relationships that melt into the bubbling witch’s cauldron of existence itself, with or without the boat oar. And she knew, or, rather, she was beginning to know, that the only way to navigate the world in its totality of facts was to ride like the Mayflower through the plasma that separated her eyeballs and brain. “There are things that we can only chalk up to nature,” she said, “because everything is only nature.”

That is how Emily came to regret being alone.

She walked on the same sidewalk towards the same tree-spotted park where she spent her deluge of facts upon the one person who had offered her such a convenient notepad on which to spell them out, upon the one person who had encased her totality of facts in a prison of nervous devotion and as she kept time with the rhythm created by the clomp and spackle of her boots on the pavement she noticed the blue sky, naked after shedding the prior evening’s lying gray clouds, wet with the envy of other days and convinced herself between steps that the clear sky itself was an equally unjust lie. Or, rather, that it misrepresented itself in the colloquial jargon of air and environment and color. The blue sky could not recognize the logic that lay beneath it and therefore couldn’t properly depict the function and grammar of its very parade of endeavor. She felt the brick of the building beside her as she moved down the lonely sidewalk and found in its topography a Braille exegesis of everything she had ever been, the rough and subtle up and downs through and between the mortar screaming through her fingers that nothing had ever been properly proper with her facts, even as they divided into worlds upon worlds through her worlds and worlds and worlds. There was a time, the bricks told her, when she woke alone after three and three-quarters years of waking next to a man she assumed to be the man of her dreams, when she spent her time awake destroying his remnants with scissors and fire and tears and even though she knew each act to be a function of melodrama, she knew that melodrama was the

function one performed after such entrances into loneliness. “I will chalk this one up to the poetry category,” she told herself. “Everything is only nature, and one of my collected facts argues forcefully that this is a proper response to seeing the ceiling with only two eyes when the alarm goes buzz in the morning.” She frowned. “Poetry is a great lie of pretty words and this destruction is creating untruths with every cut and burn, but my facts are what they are and as collected, they are my entire world.” Her fingers slipped from the cruel brick as she noticed a rain puddle left from the evening before.

Though the leaves on the trees were dry, they remained as progressively hued and near death as she had left them, though she could not convince herself that the dynamic hadn’t somehow shifted, some drifting from the mother branch and others reddening to the point of collapse, all away from the gaze of human eyes, making them simple poetic lies that presented themselves as autumn world-creating facts. “I will chalk each of you up to poetry,” she told them. “Everything is only nature.” Eventually she wandered up to the scene of yesterday’s parting, empty of a human presence, though full of lying red poems covering the trees and the ground below and she knew that her return was a substantive reddening of her fact of the foregone conversation, a glitch in her possibly, perhaps probably, psychotic paradigm. Her facts were not all that was the case. She moved through the trees, imagining herself as a fallen constituent leaf, imagining herself saying to each, “I am one of you, and though you are, more than likely, and *rightly so*, bewildered by the diatribe I embarked upon the last time I was among you, I assure you I was shaking the entire time, hustling to the end of a branch I thought it was time to fall from. But now, it seems, I might have been premature. So let’s let that be a lesson to each of we leaves below the sky: if ever any of you receive the opportunity to choose when you color and drop, *choose wisely*.” She had already chosen, and as she taught her companions the same, she saw him walking through the trees toward the site of their prior parting, the scene portending in cinemascope as she remembered a similar entrance from her childhood. Her father, days removed from a surgery to fix his heart, moved slowly through swirling leaves in front of what she had always known as The Free Hospital, the long walk from the doors to the car giving her ample time to soak in her father’s cinematic being. She understood, even at her early age, that “fix his heart” was an abstraction and a lie and that her father’s cinematic being was probably equally abstract and untrue, but in the light that pierced the blues and grays of the cloudy sky, she was trumped and bewildered by the power his silhouette exuded as it stole so

much principal space from the dreary day. And she understood, even after his death the following week, that in that Free Hospital moment, the fact of him in her own mind, his silhouetted constitution on the long walk to their family station wagon, was as powerful as the sky itself and that he would remain in that moment. And he would never die. She brought the fact of that power to the fore of the plasma she imagined between her eyeballs and her brain as she maneuvered through her lectured leaves to position herself in the exact place she inhabited during the parting of the evening before.

That is how Emily came to find her resolve.

She said, “There are things I thought were all of me.”

She said, “My facts culminate in you and you are all that is the case.”

She said, “And you’re right to think it,” as she stared up at the blue sky through each now-dry leaf, wishing the conversations presented palpably to her outer eye could somehow parallel the pace and rhythm of their plasmatic inner form and understanding with every drop of that space between her eyeballs and her brain that the smooth prose of her mind could never translate properly to the outer effect of the spoken word, its logic correspondent but her vernacular unable to sustain the heavy, weighted framework of all she could possibly mean. “You’re right to think it,” even as the blue sky lied with its own imposed framework as it sat comfortably on the trees and her speech, making itself felt through the falling red leaves and the plasma that rested between her eyeballs and his brain. “You’re right to think it and I know that I’m the bad guy on this one. My facts have conspired against me and so I have somehow tunneled into solipsism through your gaze and the leaves and the sky, all of them—and yes, I know, it’s hard to say *all of them*, because how could I ever really know, but I will say it nonetheless—*all of them* are appearances, and yes we’re back to *appearances*, appearances that I could somehow use as replacements for you. Or, for your appearance. And that is no excuse, and you’re right to think it, but I can stand here before you now and tell you with every piece of logic I know to be firmly in line with all of my spoken words that any compendium of facts I claim to possess is roundly incomplete without your palpable presence as one of them. I will not wrongly steer your growth. You will develop through me, through everything I use for development of my own and we will grow together, straight and true and far and away from the curvilinear lies of all I’ve learned to guard against. And I cannot take back anything I cannot grasp, but I can

offer you this: I can make you Fifteen Practical Proposals. I can propose to you that these flurries and fluctuations of all my stumbling blocks of logic will stop at the water's edge of our shared experience. It can be Practical Proposal number one and I will come up with more whenever you feel you need them. I am used goods. I have been carrying the burdens of my passengers through the waters of wars and famine. There are things," she said, staring straight into his eyes, even through their dartings and slips, as she noticed him losing his focus of vision at the cognition engendered through the plasma she imagined between his eyeballs and his brain. "There are things I cannot define without knowing this park is here for our shared use and even though everything is only nature, you are *constituent*, necessary for anything I could ever do or be. And I am so very sorry."

She said, "I am sorry and unable to say more."

She said, "I am red and waiting to fall."

That is how Emily came to reorder her facts.

She moved through the trees and the leaves and the environment and the air to the sidewalk that originally led her along, and she moved the fingers of her opposite hand along the same brick that guided her to memories of waking alone. Her memories, she thought, made her exactly who she was, enveloped her in a prison of logical failings and structured her being to the necessity of learning to accept the consequences of her actions. She felt herself to be the green witch in the black hat. "And the only reason I say this now," she told herself, "is in aid of stopping that very thing". When she arrived home, she collected the things that bore association to the source of her very need and she spent her time awake destroying his remnants with scissors and fire and tears. Even though she knew each act to be a function of melodrama, she knew that melodrama was the function one performed after such entrances into loneliness. "I am in the nowhere space between my Mayflower and the fold of night," she said. "There is poison in these sounds, and these nighttimes make me sepia." There are certain functions of grammar and logic that, once posited, cannot be taken back, she thought. I have bemoaned and bemoaned my place in this constituency and ended back at the world, all by itself and all that is the case. I function as the weapon of my Practical Proposals. The feeling of the world as a limited whole is the mystical feeling (great Practical Proposal number 6.45). There is indeed the inexpressible. This *shows* itself: it is the mystical (great Practical Proposal number 6.522). She must, so to

she speak, throw away the ladder, after she has climbed up on it. She must surmount these propositions; then she sees the world rightly (great Practical Proposal number 6.54). And so she resolved to throw away the ladder, to collect her facts and her deductive ends and spend her time awake destroying the remnants with scissors and fire and tears. She would throw away the ladder, throw away the leaves and rain-swept sky, throw away the former lover who stared in response to her request for forgiveness then slowly walked away, silently, with only dislocated sadness spreading from the plasma she imagined between his eyeballs and the world outside. The things she knew were all of her and so she resolved to learn new things, to ride like the Mayflower through a Practical Proposal for proper education. And she would remain on her best behavior as she drifted off to infinity.

That is how Emily came to be alone.