



# DARKNESS RISING

PROSE AND POETRY

BY ELIJAH KAMPSEN

*"This time, same as before, love you forever"*  
- Franz Ferdinand's "Right Action"

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Elijah Kampsen

[ekampsen@yahoo.com](mailto:ekampsen@yahoo.com)

Visit my website at

<http://www.elijahkampsen.com/> and follow me on Twitter [@Kampsin](https://twitter.com/Kampsin).

First eBook Edition: October 2013

*For M. – As it was in the beginning, is now, ...*

# Darkness Rising

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*Thanks: To the bands that wrote the records that have kept me sane (by my standards): The Airborne Toxic Event, Brand New, Franz Ferdinand, The Neighbourhood, and Senses Fail.*

[Darkness Rising \(mix\)](#) (link opens in Spotify)

1. "Mad World" by Gary Jules & Michael Andrews
2. "Daisy" by Brand New
3. "Sometime Around Midnight" by The Airborne Toxic Event
4. "Numb" by The Airborne Toxic Event
5. "Staying Up" by The Neighbourhood
6. "Changing Of The Seasons" by Two Door Cinema Club
7. "Only" by Nine Inch Nails
8. "Archers" by Brand New
9. "Me, I'm Not" by Nine Inch Nails
10. "This Town Your Grave" by Innerpartysystem
11. "Mile Zero" by Periphery
12. "Very Busy People" by The Limousines
13. "Somewhat Damaged" by Nine Inch Nails
14. "All The Best Cowboys Have Daddy Issues" by Senses Fail
15. "Negative Space" by Senses Fail
16. "The Priest And The Matador" by Senses Fail

# *In Misery*

*“You got to find yourself alone  
Before you’ll find the eyes of God.”*

*– The Airborne Toxic Event’s “It Doesn’t Mean A  
Thing”*

All's Fair When Love Is War by Elijah Kampsen

*"Darkness falls and so do we."  
- Inhale Exhale's "Explosions"*

Your love was like a bullet to the chest,  
So that when it hit me with all that force,  
It tore me up inside, I must confess,  
Love struck me dead [And] have you no  
remorse?

Bleeding out on the stylish battlefield  
I've been so long. I think I'm almost done.  
The only player who could have me healed  
long ago quit. I can't say it's been fun.  
My only consolation in leaving,  
Although I think I've lost all confidence,  
Is of sanctity found in believing,  
In the idea of something beyond sense.  
Not who I've been, but I want to be, so  
This is the end of the me that you know.



In *Sickness And In Hell* by Elijah Kampsen

*“Back in school they never taught us  
What we needed to know.  
Like how to deal with despair  
Or someone breaking your heart.”  
– Brand New’s “Seventy Times 7”*

In truth, your love was to me just a dream,  
But I never thought *you* would wake me up.  
And now as vivid as the dreams may seem,  
Fell asleep, in time I become unstuck.  
Now together bis in my deconstruct,  
Blesséd you can’t take that away from me.  
But when I wake up, the day is just ~~fucked~~.  
A ghost of yesterday, you’re all I see.  
Somewhere along the way, you lost your skin.  
Left me on an island, cut the line taught,  
I’m still waiting, holding tight what could’ve  
been.

Here alone, or so I know I once thought.  
The details of us I remember too intimate.  
Suffice it to say, “we [were] infinite.”

## Prey To Your Lord by Elijah Kampsen

*“[‘Cause] The God I believe in  
Never worked on a campaign trail.”*

*– Brand New’s “Archers”*

You’re easily influenced by guiding light,  
Little bits of schizophriz make decisions [I can’t  
fathom].

Pillaging the lost and weak just isn’t right,  
Actors on a payroll hold you for ransom.

It’s like with you there’s a hundred channels  
But they’re all playing the exact same thing [And  
frankly, nothing’s on].

I’ve seen this episode of 16 Chapels.

I watch it anyway, staying up ‘til dawn.

[So that] When some breaking news reads  
“clergy corrupt”

And the comrades, led astray, do grapple,

Funded by sponsors morally bankrupt,

Televangelists so justly **CANCELED**,

I’ll watch from the edge as madness ensues

And I can be the one to comfort you.

## The Fire by Elijah Kampsen

*"Everybody wants to go to Heaven,  
But nobody wants to die."*

*- Bring Me The Horizon's "Hospital For Souls"*

Patience. Patience, patience, patience.

Patients. Patience, patients.

What's it been, 2? Maybe 3 hours? 2 hours.

Hasta be. Oor 45 minutes, that works too. Wow, okay.

Shit man, I just need to know something - anything. Why won't they tell me anything? I have a right to know. If it's on a need-to-know basis, I think I, of all people, *need* to know.

Maybe I could help. I want to help. I want to do something - anything. Nothing. Nothing I can do but wait, I guess. And why didn't I clip my fingernails?

Because there wasn't any time. Oh, sure there was time.

So much nervous energy right now with no outlet. Why no outlet? I suppose I'm already amped though, huh?

I need something. Anything. Nervous

tendencies, do I have any? No, none that I know of. But I should. A nervous tendency could be of ample use right now I bet.

Maybe I'll bite my nails. Yes, perfect.

Okay, no. No, those are much tougher than I expected. How do people do that?

I wonder if eating a specific diet makes your nails tougher. I could look it up. Yeah, I'll look it up.

Looking up, I see the sign reading "PLEASE TURN OFF ALL CELL PHONES."

Does that mean my iPhone? Where is my iPhone? It's not in my pocket. Where is my pocket? Relax man, you're losing it. Think.

Patients. Patients, patience, patience.

Can someone turn the TV up? Here, I'll turn it up. Ah, the 10'clock news. Only 10 o'clock? Which means I got here at what, 9:15? But I already knew that.

Wow, there's already a story about it on the news. But they don't have the *whole* story. Couldn't possibly - I haven't told anyone yet. Might not ever.

But they have pictures. No, no pictures. I don't want to see those. It's the pictures I was trying to get rid of. Okay, turn it down.

Pictures. Off, turn it off!

Magazines. Magazines – I'll read a magazine.

Let's see here... the September 2007 issue of National Geographic. 2007? How timely. Seems about right, I guess.

More hidden cell phone towers are popping up around the country, I think I read. I skim further, but end up merely daydreaming as I so often do when attention is critical.

Right now I remember being a kid and taking pictures of houses, cities I wanted to watch burn. So that when my dad left for work in the morning, I'd lay the prints I'd saved my allowance for out in the ashtray on the dining room table and then, with a flick Andrew stole from the convenience store by the lake, I'd watch in feigned satisfaction as they melted away. Or maybe it wasn't feigned at the time. But now I can't really even fathom such satisfaction.

I never truly considered acting on these impulses, to light up bigger and brighter things, but God knows I had them. I just wanted things to burn – I guess it didn't really matter what, either. Just things.

But buildings mostly.

I bet it stemmed from some deep-seeded hatred for the permanency of such institutions. Like, nothing stays the same, so why should they? I'd honed this basic knowledge: "everything changes eventually," but I wanted to work it out somehow for myself. Maybe even *needed* to help speed up the process for some things.

Hey, I'm not gonna be here forever, right? I just wanted to see how things'd turn out.

I first began noticing these changes in my own self after we'd moved. Mostly just minor stuff, like movie or music taste. And the arson crap was probably just me wanting to act out these changes I was experiencing within.

Wow. Maybe I shoulda been a psychiatrist? I can diagnose this nonsense for myself. Why

couldn't I do it for someone else?

Maybe though it's 'cause I know myself better than anyone else. I've kept a lot of those changes and feelings to myself. For fear of, or... not really fear, but recognition at least, of the consequences of, well, you know... threatening to light stuff on fire. Just seemed like too much trouble.

All of that being said, I don't think it's right though, that keeping this to myself should've cost me the possibility of lifelong friendships. Maybe it's that people are supposed to change, and people didn't see me changing. But lack of change shouldn't cause us to grow apart, should it?

Seriously though. Top story? "Breaking news"? Pretty cool, huh? You know, I could've tipped those reporters off ahead of time. Maybe they'd have gotten some Pulitzer footage instead of just the classic aftermath.

Yeah, okay, I could've tipped them off and then maybe they could've prevented me. That would've been the responsible thing to do, huh?

Suppose then I would've been caught. I'd just be locked up somewhere *else*, instead of here.

But I'm not really locked up, am I? I could just get up and walk out. But what if while I'm gone the doctors arrive at some sudden revelation? What then? I don't want to miss something. Even if it's nothing, I don't want to miss it. So I'll just be here. Reminiscing.

Of being 15 and lighting up a Marlboro Andrew stole from the convenience store by the lake with the flame from the pile of pictures in the ashtray - an entire roll of film's worth by then.

"Beautiful pictures," the girl behind the counter at the convenience store by the lake had said, handing me the freshly developed stack. At least, I think that's what she said. It was hard to make out between the smacks of her bubblegum, which I realize is a bit cliché of her, but I wasn't gonna be the one to tell her that.

Besides, she was right. They *were* beautiful pictures. I suppose I had a sort of talent for landscapes like those. I think it was the potential



I saw within each frame. Potential for destruction, sure. But potential is potential. Well, potentially...

The skies behind the high-rises in the photos were painted pale pink or blazing orange, the two running into each other at times, but always bouncing back.

I think I saw in those sunsets the brushstrokes of God himself.

And I think I was lucky enough to witness them again in Helena.

We were 15 when we met “and if *we* couldn’t be permanent, why should anything else be?” the old me would’ve said. But she helped me to stop thinking like that.

To see the beauty in the temporary as much, if not moreso than in the permanent. I guess you never really can tell what will be permanent, so the sooner you figure that out, the better. We spent, what was it, like 5 years together? Yeah, *like 5*. *Like* I haven’t counted out the exact number of days again and again.

But back to *right* now. I’m still trying to

figure things out. What happened? When will I know something about it?

Hopefully this anxiety is *temporary*.

Where's the beauty in *this*, Helena?

And what am I so anxious about, anyway? What do I care? It makes no difference to me how soon the doctors infer what I already know. I could help them determine, but why should I?

Oh, aren't you're so cool, Elliot? All apathetic in your possession of all the answers. Impressive.

What? Gimme a break. This isn't just a façade. I really just don't care anymore. Didn't I make that excruciatingly clear several hours ago?

"Do you care?" I ask.

"Piss off," says the man trying to nap a few feet away from me.

"You know, more hidden cell phone towers are popping up around the world. I read that."

Guy acts like he knows me. You don't know me. How could you know me if *I* don't know me? I should've asked *her* that. 'Cause it

seemed she truly did know me.

Must've been why she decided to cut and run. She had me figured out and she didn't like the solution.

I guess I'm trying to "cut and run" now too, 'cause I'm scared of what I've found.

But first I need to know for sure.

So now I'm 20 and sitting here in the bedroom with an old photo album, labeled "Summer 2011" by my most feminine handwriting that I'm more than a bit ashamed of. Be a man, Elliot.

This, a picture of her smiling and playfully pushing the camera away, lying in the worn hammock. Glasses she's had since middle school wrap her youthfully aging face. Lengthy, blonde hair pulled back by the humidity. I can see it and it's like I'm back in the moment now. Can I stay?

Please?

No, not a care in the world for this innocent little girl.

Throw it in the pile.

Or how about this one? Snuggled up

against my bleached blonde hair (even in one of my more showing displays of low self-esteem, I was still so sure of *us*). Her shorter, effervescent hair wraps her flawless skin (maybe it's just the film masking the blemishes or maybe it really was flawless). I of course remember it as the latter, but memories can get twisted. I know that.

And around her neck is that bronze necklace, a heart hanging below another heart. I bought it in Orlando when I couldn't stop thinking about her, even whilst in the arms of another sweetheart.

Throw it in the pile.

Oh, here's a *great* one. The one in which she told me I'd never looked cuter than. But I was more focused on her. *She* was the beautiful one. Or, in one of my more confident moments, we were the beautiful ones. Wish I'd gotten to keep the green hoodie she'd loaned me.

But it was beginning to smell more like *me* anyway.

God, that beautiful blonde hair – she was never so sure of it. But I'm sure I'd never seen

anything brighter. Except maybe her teeth, small and straight. So preci-okay Elliot. We're heading down the path of despair again, wherein you can't think a single bad thing about her.

I never could.

And behind those thin glasses I could've sworn she was content too. I would've bet all the money in the world on it.

Which is to say, I would now be in debt that same amount.

Throw it in the fucking pile, Elliot. Come on. Get ahold of yourself. Stop putting her on a pedestal. Kick it out from under her, let her hang. I can't. Get up there yourself. I won't. You're better than this.

Sure. This is me. Being better:

You know, maybe I oughta drag this trash can outside, or maybe I'll just take the batteries out of the smoke alarm. Close all the windows, lock all the doors, shut all the vents and choke on the memories? Oh Elliot!, arms wrapped around me. What a poetic way to go!

And here's our selection of dishes I'm

smashing to pieces along with all my wishes, and now the “hope chest” is empty, just like me! I toss the great pile of pictures in, now filling the space perfectly and I add some kindling from my tinder heart, now dried out. You know, just in case I want to feel warm and alive one more time before I go.

So tell me Elliot, do you feel alive now? God, why is it so stuffy in here? You think you could open a window? Well why the hell not? I’m dying in here.

I tug on my shirt collar to demonstrate, but the orderly is unimpressed. She must be one cold-hearted bitch, to be comfortable in this heat.

Or maybe it’s just me. Is it hot in here or is it just me?

Nobody answers.

Well you know what? Screw ya’ll, I’m fine. It’s not *that* hot. I can handle it. Shit, have you seen the heat I’ve dealt with?

“That was me up there on the TV screen.”

Family next to me bury their heads in their hands or each other’s shoulders, in an effort to

block out the dark world around them.

But I've brought fear and misery into our sweet little corner.

I mean, *they've* got it worse than I do. So, I got dumped? People get dumped. It happens all the time, Elliot. Get over it. I mean, she didn't *die* for god's sake! Come on, get ahold of yourself.

And I've always been a bit of a firebug, so what? I mean, who doesn't love a good fire? And it's not like I ever carried out my ideals. 'Cause just when I felt I could resist no longer, just when it was all getting to be too much for me, just before I struck the match, Helena arrived.

She showed me nothing could ever burn as bright as love.

But that won't stop me from trying.

Besides, "this isn't me," I tell myself, looking in the mirror at the charred remains of what was once "such a beautiful face." This isn't me.

But that's just bullshit. Because everything *I do* is *me*.

I guess I just used to be so different...

Now, I need to know doctor. Am I gonna  
make it?

Someone tell me. Am I gonna make it?  
Because I'm so sick of being kept in the dark.  
So I lit a light.



My Melodramatic Imagination by Elijah  
Kampsen

*“And I find it kind of funny  
And I find it kind of sad;  
The dreams in which I’m dying  
Are the best I’ve ever had.”*  
– Tears For Fears’ “Mad World”

Wishing for nightmares, things that couldn’t be,  
Instead of all these could’ve, should’ve beens  
Which command all my dreams when I can’t  
sleep,  
Never knowing where my being begins.  
My want to create, no matter the cost,  
Still plagiarizing the heartbroken lines  
Of every hopeless romantic so lost,  
[But] The state of being brokenhearted confines.  
That possibility of happiness,  
been there all along, I just couldn’t see.  
We shouldn’t waste our time in reminisce  
When a future so great is guaranteed.  
So that in my newfound freedom, I thought  
Of the happy ending I never got.

An Exorcise In Remembrance by Elijah Kampsen

*"I don't love you,  
But I always will."*

*- The Civil Wars' "Poison & Wine"*

It's time to let go. It's time to move on.  
Shit, you really think I don't realize that?  
Like I don't recognize that it's all wrong.  
That that's not just what I'm getting at?  
[And] Maybe you're tired of reading the lienes.  
But you've got to realize, I'm tired too.  
Of all these memories which undermine  
All the things that I've been trying to do.  
[And] You'd think I'd've run out of words by  
    now,  
Of different ways of saying the same thing.  
But no, see: I float down a river vow  
Of remorse between shores of blank key rings.  
[And] By now it's been so long since she walked  
    out,  
I don't even know what I'm talking about.

The Killer Is Dying by Elijah Kampsen

*"In the night I hear him talk,  
The coldest story ever told –  
Somewhere far along this road  
He lost his soul to a woman so heartless."  
– Kanye West*

I feel so fragile this late September.  
Somewhat damaged, and in some sad way torn.  
My spirit has been reduced to ember –  
[And] I know that this has all been said before.  
Haven't I had enough time to move on?  
Is there not something else I can attain?  
Than feelings which by now should've foregone?  
It's just the same shit, again and again.  
What I really want most now from writing  
[Is] To advocate for a higher purpose.  
But not by arguing, or by fighting.  
[Just] Something to make my words feel, you  
know, a little less worthless.  
And this is who I am now, can't you see?  
But this isn't who I wanted to be.

My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy, or Soul  
Mates Become Soulless<sup>1</sup>  
by Elijah Kampsen

*“Drop the dagger  
And lather the blood on your hands, Romeo.”  
– My Chemical Romance’s “The Sharpest Lives”*

“I just don’t think we should see each other anymore.”

Yes, like all “great” break-up stories, this one starts with someone being dumped. Me, in particular.

“It’s just not working.

“It’s not you, it’s me.

“I’m in love with another man.”

I don’t quite remember how she phrased it, but the specifics of that dialogue are of minimal importance. Because no matter what was said, the end-result was the same.

Here, just imagine a lot of begging on my part.

<sup>1</sup>Alluding to Kanye West’s 2010 album of the same name, or his 2013 song “Hold My Liquor”

Sure, it's a tale told a hundred thousand times. But every story *is* different – different levels of commitment, at different times feeling committed. Soft skin wrapping you in a prison made of the one you love.

Now I'm not saying I believe my story to be any more compelling than say, literally *anyone* else's.

But it *is*, to me at least – I mean, it's *my* story.

So I'm sitting here alone thinking, why does this all seem so foreign? I mean, I've been dumped before, by this *same* girl even. But we always get back together; our time apart only making us stronger.

And so this time around, again I'm hanging on to something I'm not even sure even exists any longer, remnants of past love, and finding relativity in every song. Like Mark Foster sings<sup>2</sup> “You know, it's funny how freedom can make us feel contained. Yeah, when the muscles in our legs aren't used to all the walking.”

<sup>2</sup>In 2011's “Waste” by Foster The People.

And I'm always nervous, though about what, I'm not so sure. I've got nothing left to fear. My worst nightmare has already realized itself, and that is, I guess, why I'm sitting here telling you this – just your average ghost story.

But the demons are real. I feel like I can't open the windows. Like the blinds are weighted and I haven't even the strength to pull the cord. Like my limbs have been sedated.

Maybe it's from lying on them so long.

But I still go out. Just when I do it's like the world's constantly closing in around me, like I'm "under the dome" for lack of a better phrase.

And I've been reading into the realm of fantasy, because I respect what the dreamers know to be true: that in order to truly be happy, we must create something beyond practicality.

In the meantime, God's hiding the masterpieces, and only once we're dead will we truly see. Reality is simply patronizing.

So I queue up another series on Netflix. A pop-up pops up on the screen.

It says "Dude. That's three full seasons of

‘Breaking Bad’ without a ‘break’ from the ‘bad.’  
Are you okay?”

Fuck off, Netflix. That’s a damn good show, and it’s not like I have anywhere to be. So you can just fuck right off.

But also, please play my show. Thank you.

Lying in bed, wrapped tightly in a “comforter” though the thermostat sits at a comfy 90°, Hershey’s wrappers (Cookies & Cream, to be specific) form a trail between the bed and the bathroom. I wad up another and unenthusiastically toss it in the trash, the trash which, mind you, has recently been relocated to my one nightstand for convenience. Why doesn’t everybody do this?

A text. “Wanna chill tonight?”

“Can’t.” Thank goodness he doesn’t ask why.

Instead, he says “I’d say tomorrow but I’ve got plans with the bitch. Ya know, sometimes I wish I was single.”

“Oh, sometimes you wish you were single? That’s cool, ‘cause I always wish I wasn’t.”

I don't send that, of course. That's not how you keep friends. Rather, just ignore their blatant misogyny. There's your first takeaway lesson.

"If she's making sandwiches, how 'bout she drop one off for me?" Participate even. Fit in.

I reach for another Hershey's, but the damn box is empty. I do a quick Amazon search to see how much it would cost to, you know, just ship me another full box. \$38 for a pack of 48? Plus shipping! That's like a dollar a bar!

I gotta get a job. Which reminds meshit! What time is it?! I frantically search for a clock, apparently ignoring the one on my phone, in my hand.

2:55. Shit, shit, shit. I have a job interview at 3. At Northside Market. Or was it Southside? Shit, shit, shit.

I throw the covers across the bed, nearly launching my laptop across the room, but catch it and silently praise God for blessing me with the reflexes of someone who might put on pants before 3pm. I win the race to my car, but it takes a moment to catch my breath after coughing up a



fine cloud of Doritos dust. Don't snort that, by the way (second lesson).

Not that I've tried and would know, of course. I'm not a psycho.

*Visionary*, maybe.

And of course the gas light's on!, because why wouldn't it be? So, Northside or Southside, Eli?... Heads, tails? Northside it is!

The interview seems to be going off without a hitch. That is, of course, until there's a hitch: "Is there someone who can vouch for your ability to use a cash register?"

Wow, that's a tough one. Maybe just the fact that I'm not a complete and total bonehead?

"No, unfortunately. But I can assure you, I'll have no trouble picking up the craft." And *craft* is a florid term for the work.

"Alright, it looks like you have a very open and flexible schedule and a genuine interest in the work. How long do you anticipate holding the job?"

"At least the next two years, while I'm still in school."

“Excellent. Okay, okay.” She’s flipping through her notes. “Now, are you sure there’s no one who can vouch for you on the cash register?”

“No, but like I said, it really shouldn’t be a problem.”

Regardless, I don’t hear back in 2-3 days.

Locked back in my room in my room now, blinds drawn, a new Mountain Dew on the coast-what happened to the coaster?

Oh, who cares?

I hit the space bar beginning season 3 episode 7 I think.

But then a short while later I’m sure I hear a familiar voice in the entryway outside my bedroom door and suddenly I forget how to breathe.

Because it’s the same voice that whispered sweet nothings in my ear for five years – I simply couldn’t mistake it. “We are infinite,” she’d say. She read it in a book somewhere, or saw it in a movie. I don’t remember which – but she loved the line and kept it in her repertoire forevermore. “We are infinite...” Always seemed especially

hopeful to me - but then, I was always the especially hopeful type.

I instinctively and unconsciously pause the show in favor of what's sure to become a show of it's own. I'm sitting straight up now.

"And this down here is Elliot's room."

A knock.

Why. Why is this happening.

"Come in."

Why. Why did I say that.

The door slowly slides open - in slow-motion, I'm sure - and there she is. Cuter than I remember her because, you know, *of course she fucking is.*

"Hey."

"Hey."

"I'll leave you two to talk," my roommate says.

"No, I-" but the door's already shut.

"Tyler was just showing me around. I ran into him at church and we got to talking."

"Why are you here?"

"Tyler was just showing me a-"

“Why are you here? In my house? In my room?”

“Elliot, I thought we could talk.”

I scoff. “Thought we could tal- I haven’t been able to talk in mont- it’s been months you know.”

“Yes, I know.” Silence. For a long, fucking time, just silence.

“I read what you wrote for me.”

“I didn’t write it *for* you.

“Look, I really think you should go, I’m very bu-” I’m going to open the door for her on her way out it, but she stops me.

Easily. “Easy, E.” Sharply, she stops me.

“Sit down, Elliot.” I stumble back, surprised and gripping my side.

And I’m ready to wake up now! This is really a terrible dream, and I’m ready to wake up now!

“Let’s talk.

“Ellie,” she adds, calculating the syllables for maximum impact – the word, my name seemingly bitter on her tongue as she spits it out.

“I was always hoping you’d come back for me,” I say, very calmly now. Sincerity in painful clarity.

“I read what you wrote for me.” Her lips, thin and pink and soft I bet, just as I remember them.

“I read what you wrote for me and I thought it was heartbreaking, and beautiful.” Her eyes, deep ocean green, sincere. Just as I remember them.

“I guess that’s what I was going for heart/breaking and beautiful.” The words developing, swelling in my throat like a pill I can’t swallow or spit out.

“And I want to help you see the light,” she says.

“I want to make your dreams come true,” she says.

My dreams? How could she possibly know what I’ve been drea-

“Because I’ve been having them too. For months.”

“For months... Four months. You’ve been

having them, too." I'm starting to feel a little drowsy. Though I guess that's nothing new – the Remeron and the Lexapro I take each morning have left me in a sort of perpetual fog. I could be dreaming this all for all I know.

"Wake up, Ellie. You're alive. Follow the light." She shakes me softly, smiling gently through perfect straight, white teeth. Just as I remember them. I'm lying in her lap, looking up at her and the glow around her hair is unmistakable. And so what if it's just the floor lamp behind her?

And she pulls me up against her, softly grazing my cheek with her kiss and I involuntarily gasp when I feel the sudden movement, but I'm not broken-hearted as the serrated silver edge slides smoothly and deeply into my chest now, splitting cavities evenly perfectly.

A tear of joy.

I strain to whisper, "thank you," as the scarlet runs from the edge of my mouth and I spend a bit of my final moments praying for the

forgiveness of my one true love.

And I don't feel sorry for myself as the memories slip away and the reality of the pain is all that remains.

I try to console her as she breaks down. For do not persecute the woman who did what you couldn't.

And did I just make that up or did I hear it somewhere...?

"it's alright it's ok" I whisper, trying to console the inconsolable. I know the emotional pain and determination that must have accompanied her process of decision. I have no doubt it rivals my own physical pain.

But in the end I'm also thankful, for she has given me the greatest gift of all, blessed release from this eternal fight.

and finally, the nightmare is overrrrr

# *Rebirth*

*“Forever we are bound to this burial ground,  
Unless we let the light shine through.”  
– Senses Fail’s “Renacer”*



Bitter (Spit It Out) by Elijah Kampsen

*"[And] I'm sick and tired  
Of writing songs about you.  
This is it, this is the end..."*

*- All Time Low's "The Girl's A Straight-Up Hustler"*

Rolling cigarettes from old love letters,  
Oh tell me, don't I look so fucking cool?  
Honestly, I may have never looked better.  
But of course you didn't hear that from me  
[Hearsay rule].

[Because] I saw an old friend on my way today.  
I should've told her to tell you hello.  
Or just not to say that I look okay.  
Or how I am? Please, don't think you know.  
The struggle is real, and it's killing me.  
A mess of life, tragedy does render.  
I just want to tell you that we could be  
[So] Much better than you ever remember.  
[Oh] How can I stop this downward  
momentum?

She tells me: *God* is the antivenom.

*The Guiding Light* by Elijah Kampsen

*"I see how they run through the tall grass,  
Such thoughtless minds...  
I wish I was thoughtless too."  
- The Airborne Toxic Event's "Timeless"*

Looking for a higher meaning in all,  
I'm just so sick of cheap entertainment.  
Blind faith seems to be all the rage this fall,  
But I've been taught to never be content.  
But please don't think I look down on you now.  
Hey, religion's not for everyone, wait...  
That's not right. Though I can't quite tell you  
how,  
There exists One who can free you from hate.  
[And] When you feel all alone, He will listen  
Just invite Him in, He's a gracious guest.  
There's no "conditions," in any condition  
He is there for you, I promise. You're blessed.  
[Just] Please don't let your darkness define you.  
For when it rises, it's what's left that's true.

## The Great Awakening by Elijah Kampsen

*"No one here is innocent,  
Because we can't forgive."*

*- Innerpartysystem's "This Town Your Grave"*

The church should bring us closer together.  
It really wasn't meant to tear us apart.  
Or an argument to be won, not either.  
Tolerance for the tolerant's a lost art.  
It's serving others which should bring us joy.  
Religion isn't doing something for yourself.  
Salvation in saving another poor boy  
[And] We all have the key to unlock our cells.  
And if I were again to meet my dove,  
Maybe we'd make a deeper connection.  
By loving the one who made us to love  
And bonding over the resurrection.  
Religion is a decision each [And every] day -  
To lead by example, to give love away.

## The Motions by Elijah Kampsen

*“And it starts*

*Sometime around midnight.”*

*– The Airborne Toxic Event*

I guess I must've first seen her in the chapel. Oh, who am I kidding? – I *know* I first saw her in the chapel at 6 o'clock on a Saturday. I *guess* she first saw me a few weeks later when I “accidentally” bumped into her in line at Taco Bell.

Because, you know, that's how *all* great romances start. In line at Taco Bell.

And I'm a bit of a romantic.

I suppose it was a bit creepy too, sure. But then, I suppose I'm also a bit of a creep.

But, to be fair, it was hard *not* to notice her perfectly, naturally (I assume)-curled, long, shiny brunette hair cascading over the pew in front of mine that first week.

I just wanted to talk to her, because I'm sure she'd have something interesting to say. Well, okay, maybe that's not right. She's absolutely gorgeous by my book, which as a

general rule would lead me to believe she was sort of... well, slighted, in the brains department.

What a shame.

But no, I have a feeling about this one. 'Cause whether what she has to say ends up being interesting or not, I'm sure *I'll* be interested.

So "uh, excuse me," I say, brushing past the black North Face jacket on my way to pick up my burritos.

Yes, that *was* the sound of me absolutely nailing it.

I'm being sarcastic of course. Or else I thought I was, because as it turns out, she actually does recognize me the next week sitting at a table in the corner of the union cafeteria ~~watching her~~ eating lunch.

"Hey, you're the *jerk* who ran into me at Taco Bell the other day." I pull my headphones out, though I could hear her clearly through them.

"Uh, excuse me?" She couldn't possibly be talking to me, but then that's a pretty specific

description I happen to match and she's standing directly in front of me and facing me and looking at me.

But why would she be so inclined as to speak to *me*?

"Yes! That's exactly what you said. 'Uh, excuse me?'" Her impression makes me sound like a complete asshole. So, in other words, it's spot on.

"I was just kidding about you being a jerk by the way. I mean, an 'excuse me' is much more than most people would offer. I'm Kathryn by the way." What the hell is going on? How am I supposed to respond to this? Just stare, Elliot. Good. Good...

"And you are?" ... Shit.

"Uh... Elliot."

"Well, Uh... Elliot, that's a unique name. How's it spelled?"

"Elliot. Just Elliot." My face is burning, like I licked a cinnamon gum wrapper and stuck it to my forehead, which yes, just checking, I didn't.

"So uh... you come here often, Elliot?" Did

she just wink at me? What the hell is going on?!

“Elliot?”

“Uh, yes. Every day at, uh... for lunch.”

“Funny, I haven’t seen you around.”

“Well, I haven’t seen you either.” I’ve *watched* you.

Damn, Elliot, you creepy as fuck. Knock it off.

Maybe try a bit of your clever charm?

“Sorry, uh... you’ll have to excuse me. I was lost in those big, brown eyes... I could drown in them.” And just what the hell does that mean?! What did I just say?!

“Well,” as she raises her hand to her flushed chest, “I’m flattered,” in mock flattery.

“Sorry, you must get that a lot. That was lame.”

“Drown in my eyes? No, that’s actually a new one. Most guys don’t comment on my *killer* looks so early in conversation.”

I choke on a chuckle, actually saying “heh. Would you care to sit down?” I stand up to pull the chair out for her and end up tripping over

my bookbag.

“Sure.” She chuckles, easily, “easy there.”

I regain my composure as she pulls out a sandwich from the brown bag which she is either unironically or ironically carrying and judging by her style which seems to be a bit of the hipster variety with the long, feathery haircut and hairband to keep it in check, I’d say ironically.

“So, Elliot. Me and some of my girls are having a sort of social Saturday night if you’re interested.”

“Huh?” Focus, Elliot. She is what you were focusing on to begin with, so why can’t you just focus and relax dude, you’re freaking me out!

“Yeah, sure. I’ll try to make it.”

“Great! 7:30, 1801 Bertrand. See you there, Elliot.”

Okay, *that* was definitely a wink. And a hand on my shoulder. I wave a confused goodbye before retreating back into my headphones and the easing anxiety of The Last Royals’ “Crystal Vases.”



I spot her from across the room – she stands out, though as to why, I’m not sure. Could it be the radiant smile? No, no more radiant than her girlfriend’s next to her. And much quieter, that’s for damn sure. I feel drawn to her. Like The Artist painting the scene has placed us opposite each other with the intention of bringing us together.

The room is crowded.

I close my eyes and open them again and in that split-second everyone around her has disappeared and we’re the only two left in the room, so far as I can tell. The shadows around her no longer have faces or names – it’s like when I first saw her and I forgot everything I knew about the world. Everything I’d learned about the world.

The Artist erases the noise around us.

After navigating the ocean of drunks who must’ve drunk an ocean, I finally stammer out “hello,” possibly the only word left in my generally expansive vocabulary.

The Artist hangs on her unchecked

response before penning the next line.

“Hey,” she says. Well *I* could’ve predicted that. I do believe it was the only logical response. Now what did you have for me?, I ask The Artist.

I reach out my arm, possibly on purpose, possibly as an accidental means of maintaining my balance, though I don’t necessarily remember drinking enough alcohol to warrant this level of intoxication I seem to be experiencing, but you never really do, huh? She takes my hand in hers and I shake, slightly less lucidly.

I’m... “I’m... drunk. Elliot. Drunk Elliot. I’m Elliot and I’m drunk.”

“Hahaha,” she’s laughing. “Kathryn. I know your name, Elliot.” Kathryn. Kathryn Kathryn Kathryn. I refuse to forget her name.

Her name. Shit, what was it? Shit, shit, shit. Maybe she’ll say it again. Maybe I can lure her into saying her own name. How does one go about doing so?

But now I’ve stumbled and I’m falling down and this all seems slightly more pressing,

but maybe she'll catch me as I'm falling down and when I find out who pulled the carpet out from under me I'm going to kill them, and no, that's hardwood. No carpet. What the hell?

I'm lying on the hardwood floor now probably I think. Kathryn's standing over me. Kathryn? How did I - she's giggling. She's giggling. A good sign? Yeah, probably a good sign. Hey Kathryn, what do you say we go somewhere more pri-hey Elliot, what do you say we try talking *out loud*.

"Want to go... somewhere more private?" I ask as she lifts me up. God, her hands are soft. "Your hands are..." No, keep it in your head! But now you should probably at least finish the sentence you started. Shit. "Soft. Your hands are soft."

"Well thank you." More giggling.

Across the room I make eye contact with... Andy! Yes, my best friend Andy. My wingman, Andy. He's giving me the thumbs up. Am I supposed to know what that means? Now he's pointing to... Kathryn. And giving me the

thumbs up. Kathryn. Thumbs up. Wow, I am drunk.

Don't worry about me Andy! I'm fine. So long as I don't have to talk. Or move. Or anything at all. Breathing. Breathe. Manual breathing. Now I can't breathe without thinking about it and this is too many things on my mind at once.

"Would you like to go someplace my privates?"

"You're silly, Elliot. Someplace more private?"

"Someplace more private? Sure." That's right, keep your cooholy shit, we're going someplace more private? Did I suggest that? No, she did. What the hell is wrong with you? I'm, I don't know... Distracted? She's beautiful!

She pulls me by the hand as we climb the stairs to Eric's room? At least I think this is, yes, it says "Eric" on the door. Probably Eric's room.

But now something doesn't feel right. And it's not my stomach. I'm awake and alert and not blackout drunk and not dizzy and the clarity is

returning and it feels like I'm sobering up at an alarming rate.

"What is it, Elliot?" She's laying on the bed now, pulling her finger toward herself and maybe she's sensed my distress.

Or maybe she's also drunk enough not to notice or care. But she said "what is it, Elliot?" which would lead me to believe she's noticed something's wrong, but I don't know what it is, so what can I tell her?

"I don't know... Just something."

She looks offended. "Look, I'm not saying there's anything wrong. I'm just... uncomfortable." And why would you be uncomfortable? Is this not what you've been dreaming of for three days? Maybe longer. Maybe much longer.

"What's wrooong, Ellie?" She's curled up under my arm, staring into my eyes in feigned pleading. She's beginning to get frustrated. I can read it in her movements, as she then recoils herself from under my arm and sits straight up on the bed.

“I think I...” I think I have to go. This is all wrong.

“I’m going to be sick.”

I make it down the stairs and out the front door without drawing any attention which I could bother to pay attention to, leaving Kathryn longing and more than slightly lucid herself, I’m sure.

But that doesn’t matter, because I’m out in the cool night air of mid-October now and alone, and not in Kathryn’s arms which shouldn’t have been anyone else’s but Helena’s arms, because wait, you’re still hung up on Helena? You had her, Elliot! Kathryn was yours! If only for tonight, she was yours.

I know that, I know that.

But I'm not hers.

Wishing, Wanting, Praying by Elijah Kampsen

*"The path to Heaven  
Runs through miles of clouded hell."  
- Imagine Dragons' "It's Time"*

Pretend we're lost [And] let's get existential.  
Let's question everything we think we know.  
Light in the darkness is quintessential  
[And] Through search and seizure of love, we  
    can *glow*.  
[Or] Maybe this gravity's a fatal dream,  
[And] Weighed down by depression, we're here  
    to stay.  
[But] Maybe if we just let it out, and *scream*  
Loud enough, maybe then we'll float away.  
[Then] Praying to the radio evangelist  
[Who] Sadly missed the mark with I, the skeptic,  
Finding nothing like answers in the midst  
Of a crackling, mono faith so *electric*.  
The only thing at all like truth we find  
Is what remains when we leave wit behind.

## Follow The Leader by Elijah Kampsen

*“Keep your prayers to yourselves,  
Because any fool can pray  
Just to get recognized by someone else.”  
– Sleeping Giant’s “Eyes Wide Open”*

Don’t follow because you want to be followed,  
No, follow because you truly believe.  
That way your divine text won’t seem hollow,  
If you instead share just what He’s helped *you*  
achieve.

And don’t be selfish and pray you may leave.  
Instead you should pray for the strength to stay.  
Though it’s only human nature to grieve,  
But please, spread the word when He swings  
your way.

Faith in the One is the key to *Numbers*,  
But if you stay the way, the path, the road,  
You *can* aspire to be saving others  
If you tend to the weeds of doubt overgrown.  
Faith’s not a worn paperback to be tossed,  
But a first ed. hardcover, costly if lost.



Manhattan, I Love You But You're Bringing Me  
Down by Elijah Kampsen

*"I'm clear as glass, but I can't seem  
To ever clean the fingerprints you left on me."  
– Senses Fail's "New Year's Eve"*

I'd love to leave, no forwarding address,  
But I fear it's not the city that's haunted.  
Delete my Facebook and Twitter, no mess,  
[Or] Would I still be hated and wanted?  
The sadness will never end. Dramatic,  
I know, that's probably why I wrote it.  
Do I believe it or just emphatic?  
Probably more than I'd like to admit.  
But if you're asking yourself, late one night,  
If I'd take you back, despite all this distress,  
If I could ever forget all of the fights,  
Please, just stop right there. The answer's yes.  
Forget every shitty thing I've [Ever] Written,  
[Because] Truly, I still love you.

[And] All is forgiven.

End.