

## Pocket Pet

Thomas Daniel Valls

I dream of you in daze  
Into nights when I see you  
And I'm reminded of the  
Familiar fear of never worrying –  
I'm used to worry:  
It's a pocket pet I've fed over the years  
With years  
And stamps  
It's a  
A  
Bracketed lapse in living  
Where I see the known ways I could hurt  
You, possible even  
Break you  
End us  
Tear away the familiarity and turn it  
Into shadow.

I worry.

There's many ways I've gone about it  
Before  
Many ways repeated  
Many more ready for another run.

I could sleep with another man.  
Perhaps a friend  
Or worse a foe  
Get you to worry our one on one's got us  
Turned on you, Us  
Knowing more now of the more of you You  
chose to give us  
I've done that.

I could do ayahuasca in a suite in New  
Orleans

Northernmost city of the Caribbean  
Seeing all the alien Gods  
Or the insides of my coffin  
Both the box I'm in but also the body that I  
am  
And see what needs feeding then  
'Not you' 'No you don't supply'  
I'll return to Beachwood and sit in my chair  
And ghost you into phantom yesteryear  
Yeah, I've done that too.

I could love you only when I'm pistol-  
Ready, Bulleit made, foggy-brained  
And say it till it's obvious and  
Predictable  
And text you after that I'm gonna  
Marry you  
And drunken-drive to you with  
Twenty dollars worth of dollar Del Taco  
And make you watch  
Videos of  
Me  
Or  
Stevie and pass out and half cum in the  
Morning  
And slowly over time  
Mistaken hangover for you and  
Decide that I need re-centering and  
Distance (but never from the bottle)  
And worse! –  
That all of it was only what had 'happened in  
the night'  
That's been me.

I could touch you.

Shit that was the other one, no  
You like it when I'm holding onto us –

I could hit you.

Worse, I could say the things a person isn't  
allowed to say

The dagger proclamation  
Of my silver-tongued knife  
Wielded by this  
Monkey on my back I've  
Forgotten about otherwise  
And once it's in you I'll twist  
And  
Let  
It  
Pour  
That's all been me, too.

I could be an executive at a studio  
Sign on your mortal enemy  
The Nemesis  
In spite of you –  
Get him two seasons  
Something  
About how he's misunderstood but  
Still molests at Akbar or the Dome  
Going buddy-buddy with him to dinners  
Or at your favorite spots  
Karaoke singsong, songs about paninis  
Or  
Pre-teen demigods who think  
They're bad guys with daddy's pocketbook of  
checks.  
And I'll play nice with you  
Because it gets you going  
Gets me ahead  
Oh  
Always nice

Nice nice nice  
You hate nice  
'boy, can't that betray a soul?' you say  
Yes sir, I agree –  
Edit: No, I probably wouldn't go that far.  
I don't know that I'm even capable  
Keep it, as they say.

I could keep believing what I fear is true  
The spring of all my doubts that  
I am  
Not good.  
Particularly at being good which is  
Different than just good enough for you  
I worry.

There's a lot of things I wouldn't do  
Anymore.  
A lot of things I'm incapable of  
Maybe even  
Tired of trying? Getting away with.  
Weak-kneed but in the stomach with dry eyes  
Over  
The gallivanting  
And the schmoozing  
I just want home already  
I worry.  
But also  
Maybe there's also something there?  
In that?  
In that  
I dunno  
You know me better sometimes  
You're the one who reads me  
Has to see me I'm just living 'me'  
I  
Just  
Think it, will you

West elm sofas. A loveseat.  
Something local for a coffee table.  
Dinners.  
Dinner in general  
Memberships to Wagville  
Never Disney+  
And  
The movies you've wanted to show me.  
The words I've wanted you to know.  
Maybe the place has a bathtub.  
Two beds.  
Luxury tomb.  
Patio parties and proud soirees and  
Top shelf liquor with that CVS discount  
Cluttered glove compartment stuffed with  
receipt scarves.  
A little less drinking  
Maybe at the start at least until doors  
Close more  
And I'm working when you're watching  
Or I'm watching while you're gone  
And it all goes back to what it used to be  
Before we promised something new  
I worry.

For when it's done and the dog is  
passed and stuffed  
makes a doorstep and you're  
Thinking Hancock Park of Paris and  
I'm thinking New York, Brooklyn or dead  
A love is a lifetime  
I worry.

But

What if something happens  
Something different dare I say  
Something weird that could happen  
Doesn't happen

I don't see

Happening

To me

But just me I haven't thought of us that way –

What if we grow old together?

There go promised memories of your

Hand holding mine

Scratching the back of your head

But now –

A forever-adding flipbook –

Our same hands

But with new spots

Thinner skin.

Closer every day towards our Wither Away

The chances of who will fade from us

First.

For to die alone is to go in peace

But in the arms of a lover, their forever agony.

Is all of that worse?

Is to love to know what will be lost?

Is it to hold it regardless of these

Boundaries in time,

Angelino mountains,

And drown our lungs in the vapor of now

I worry.