

EPIPHANY (or, a short inquiry into language)
By Rachael Powles

I once tried to read the dictionary cover to cover
Thinking I could learn every word.
It didn't work.
But lots of words still live inside me.

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I know words like
Serendipity...and...quintessence...and...
Hamartia...
.....and...epiphany.....

Words words words.
They pile up and I can't keep them all straight
And the only way to quiet them
Is to just scream them
Scream them from the rooftops

SERENDIPITY QUINTESSENCE HAMARTIA EPIPHANY

How are we lucky enough to live in a world
With so so SOOOO many words
That we can't possibly learn them all before we die.
Words words words I feel like Adam and Eve
Naming every beautiful thing I can see
With a word so perfect you can almost hold it in your hands.
Serendipity: the most happy of coincidences.
Quintessence: the most perfect quality of a thing.
Hamartia: when you aim for the bullseye and miss.
Epiphany: the sudden realization of the secrets of the universe.
All of it?

Mine.
When I know words I know the secrets of everything
I am ***EVERYTHING AT ONE TIME.***

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But then the boys come.
I think it scares them
Knowing I have so many words piled up inside me
That I can decide to use whenever I want.
What would they do if I said a word like

Limerence

Or

Temerity

When they were climbing into bed with me.
What would they think if I said
I adore the *ephemerality* of the April air
Or
The *mellifluous* sounds of the birdsongs.

They'd revolt.
They'd rip me to pieces
They'd sigh and sneer and snicker
And I'd be all alone in the world again.

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Boys like the word yes.
Even when you don't.
They ask you questions
Do you like Wes Anderson movies
Are you going to finish your hamburger
Did you buy that sweater just for me
Can I rip it off your perfect body
Does that feel good babygirl
And if yes isn't the first word out of your mouth
That's it.

And you wonder what it would be like to say no.
What a word that is.

No.
It curls around my tongue
In the cavern of my mouth
It tastes like power and fear and bravery and cowardice
Bold italicized all caps ***NO***.

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But I never say it.
It's always yes.

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All the words in the world at my disposal.
And all I ever say is yes.

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And they...
...the boys...
They keep coming back.
And the feeling of their skin touching mine

Is just too good to resist.
The pounding
The pulsing
The sounds the smells
It fills up this big gaping space inside of me
And for minutes at a time
I am a universe of exploding stars
And who needs words in those minutes
When you have someone
Something
Breathing
Breathing
Breathing
Alive I come *ALIVE*
I can make a body convulse beneath me
I am creator
I am God breathing life into the dust
For those few
Glorious minutes.

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And then they use their words.
Aren't you a naughty little thing.
My sexy sexy girl.
My little slut.
Gonna have to punish you for that, my dirty girl.

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And just like that.
It's broken.
And the stars inside me are all black holes.
I should like those words.
They should fill in all those empty spaces.
Instead they make me want to shower for days at a time
And stand with my face in the stream
So you can't tell what's tears and what's water.
Cuz how are those the only words you think of after what we've just done
How are you not thinking about
Serendipity
And
Quintessence
And
Hamartia
And

...

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Epiphany.

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Every once and a while I let myself dream up something different.

One day there will be a boy who isn't scared of big words.

And maybe he won't always want to talk about books with me.

And maybe we'll watch TV in separate rooms

And maybe I'll ruin dinner some nights

And every few years we'd fight so much we'd shake the walls

But maybe.....

But maybe he'd just want to hold my hand.

And maybe he wouldn't call me

Dirty girl

Or naughty

Or sexy

Or slutty

Or his little whore

Maybe he'd call me *lovely*.

Maybe he'd call me *beautiful*.

Maybe he'd call me his *darling*.

Maybe I could be *good*.

...

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I've been every word in the world.

But no one ever let me be good.

God,

Please,

Let me be good.