

On utopia

March 25, 2017

What is utopia?

To me, it is this:

It is talking about the things that matter most to you and maybe, maybe, someone listening to them. The hope that maybe, those things might matter to other people too. It is being able to eat and breathe and sleep in warmth. It is feeling that your life has changed exponentially for the better, even if you have nothing tangible to show for it but the love you feel for everything you've become.

It is building a bathtub out of a few shallow buckets when the hot water in the shower only runs for five minutes. It is washing the feet of someone you love. It is smoking a joint in the shower and holding each other and singing folk songs when no one told you that this is what fun is supposed to look like. That this is what love is supposed to look like. That this is what happiness is supposed to look like. And somehow, having more fun, being more in love, feeling happier than you ever thought you could.

It is dressing up in drag with an eyeliner beard and three sports bras to make your chest look flat, and walking around a grocery store in Orange County with a banana stuffed down your pants. It is driving to a party, where those for whom this isn't dress up share their stories, and the people who have never felt out of home in their gender listen. It is listening. It is the drive home. It is the way it made you feel when you heard he killed himself, the feeling that if there had only been more love, then the world wouldn't hurt so much. It is realizing you didn't know him well, and feeling all the same. It is choosing to feel that love. To give that love. To be that love.

It is arguing with a blonde girl about the objectivity of reality in middle school. It is getting high and going to yoga. It is the time you put on dresses and make-up and tennis shoes and cycled to crash a birthday party and forgot halfway there what you were doing. It is the first time you cried after she killed herself. It is the speech you gave at her funeral. It's the people who listened, and listening to them. It is knowing that you all were there because you loved her, and nothing more. That you feel so much because you loved her, and nothing more. It is the chronic pain of loss. It is the time you tried to too, and after the police in your bedroom, and the hospital gown, and the tampon, and the bandages, it is your sister driving you home hours after you'd screamed at her that you never wanted to see her again. It is telling her you love her. It is thanking her. It is your mother, flying down from Sacramento and holding you and listening and never asking for an explanation.

It is dressing up for no reason other than that it's Thursday. It's eating avocado toast at midnight overlooking the whole city and drinking cocktails with pine needles in them. It's laughing so much you don't remember what you're doing there. It's looking at the bill and knowing you don't have the money and saying Fuck it, let's not deal with that right now. It's walking four miles at four in the morning because you still can't stop laughing. It's sitting down when you get home, taking off your shoes, drinking tea out of a mason jar, and snuggling with your best friend.

It is finding a girl you hardly know crying on the street and telling her to come over. It's listening

to her. It's listening while she cries. It's listening while she laughs. It is getting to know her when she isn't trying to be anything. It is the day you found a broken mirror on the street and painted it with Pink Floyd lyrics. It is knowing you love her so much, that she will be a friend you want to carry for the rest of your life, not because of anything you said, but just because you listened.

It is every moment you felt so much like you. It is us just being us. It is us choosing to be there when we don't have to.

It is a restaurant in Spain where the rich pay extra for lunch so the homeless can eat dinner there for free.

It is an entire subway car of people in New York working together to erase graffitied swastikas.

It is punching a hole through the Dakota Access Pipeline.

It is a counter-protest in Philadelphia blocking a Trump rally, and white people, standing at the front of the protest, saying: if you want to hurt people of color, you must hurt us first. If our privilege can protect us, we will use it to protect us all. If it can't, we will take the hit first. It is people who have no obligation to shirk their comfort, their status, their place at the top of a social hierarchy, choosing to say that this is not the way the world should be. To use that which has been unfairly given for the benefit of everyone. To say, this act does not make things fair, it alone does not fix it, but it is what we have been given, we choose to use it for all of us, and we would not choose to do otherwise.

It is a VPN in China. It is a silent meditation in Tibet. It is the ones who hold each other in Syria and the ones who hold each other in Myanmar and the ones who hold each other in Juarez and the ones who hold each other in prison, in war, in immigrant detention centers. It's the ones who've never set foot in any of those places, but still refuse to look away.

It is tripping on mushrooms and lying in the sun and closing your eyes and thinking: Show me the face of fear. It is seeing yourself in a plane crash. It is seeing your mother's face, screaming while she's tortured. It is seeing the face of your lover, eyes wide, mouth slightly open, staring as they lower your body into a grave. It is lung cancer and a bulimia-related heart attack and a psychotic episode so severe you hurt yourself, you hurt someone else. It is realizing that the thing you fear the most is not any of these things, but that there is nothing you can do. That you aren't in control. That it's out of your hands. It is crying in your lover's arms while he tells you that he loves you, so much, and realizing that maybe, it's in someone else's hands too. That maybe, you're not in it alone.

It is choosing to live when you don't have to.

It is choosing to give when you don't have to.

It is choosing to listen when you don't have to.

It is choosing to love.

It is enough people, all it takes is enough, to make you trust that it's okay for it to be out of your hands. Because it's in their hands too.

It is us, together, choosing not to give in when the world isn't perfect. It is us doing what we can

to make it perfect, if only for a moment.

It is this. Right now. This is utopia.