

**poetry reading 08/12/2023**

**hacks opening and benefit**

**hacks (huntington, wv)**

**kyrsten hodge**

- 1. i don't want to save her**
- 2. when you fall in love with me**
- 3. in my memories, i remember that**
- 4. the person i used to love**
- 5. but i am due for a good cry**
- 6. i don't prefer her, i actually am her**
- 7. gender is an imitation without an original**
- 8. that's between you and god**
- 9. girl, it's never too late**

**i don't want to save her**  
i want to make her worse  
because i want to average  
the ghosts of our past  
against the ghosts of my future

and i kinda like this  
feeling that i'm feeling  
it feels like i'm hiding  
but underneath our skin

well, except that everyone can see you  
everyone everywhere except for you  
because you can only miss him  
and i'm just not,                      him

**when you fall in love with me**

you'll know that i love you

because i will send you

a heart-shaped coffin

scented with my perfume

and when you peak inside

you'll see a porcelain doll of me

holding a bouquet of three dead roses

and a miniature teacup set

and underneath this doll

i've put a poem just for you

written exclusively in our love language

that no one else can even read or understand

and it's a note with instructions

to come dig me up

and pull me close

and big ugly cry into me

and finally give me

my rest and relaxation

**in my memories, i remember that**

i'm just how i'm always imagined i was  
my body, confusing emptiness for nothingness  
and my heart, confusing your sympathy for empathy

but either way, i'm going to feel something tonight  
because i want to lay prone and powerless  
and finally feel  
and finally feel  
and finally  
feel —  
finally.

**the person i used to love**

stashed her condoms in  
a 1992 mcwitch bucket  
and was always herself  
for halloween  
every, single, year.

the person i used to love

spoke these sentences  
with sudden sinkholes  
that always surfaced with these  
"scare quote" echoes  
and god, she has a great laugh

the person i used to love

loved me not a long time ago  
and maybe one day  
i will love her too  
maybe one day  
i will love

this girl i've named kyrsten

**but i am due for a good cry**

because the way i cry

when i really really cry

is pretty fucking weird

because when i really really cry

i wipe my tears on my fingertips

and inspect them like they're covered in blood

and then start deep breathing and hyperventilating

*i just can't. i just can't. not tonight. not tonight.i just. can't.*

so when this happens, please pull me close

and let me bury my head under your chin

and cry away these gendery gender tears

while i'll mumble my little mumble

just love me until i'm me again

just love me

until i'm me

**i don't prefer her, i actually am her**  
and tonight i'm going to just finally just love her  
and vaguebook and post one hundred  
different status updates all about her

because...

because gender...

**gender is an imitation without an original**  
gender replaces reality with its representation  
gender is just a copy of a copy of a copy of a copy  
gender is baudrillard's sweatiest wet dream

and honestly, i'm okay with that  
because gender is the perfect crime  
and all genders are bastards  
and my gender tonight is... this

and holy shit i needed this



that's between you and god  
and me and my teenage mutant ninja turtles  
because what you did to me  
i forced them to learn  
smashing plastic together  
donatello wrestling raphael  
leonardo french kissing both bebop and rocksteady  
and me confused from figuring out why  
their cowabunga sneers suddenly felt so sad to me  
and why their frozen faces revealed  
a pain that even the turtle wagon can't fix

**girl, it's never too late**

i took my first estradiol pill  
in the cvs parking lot  
on september first  
two thousand and twenty two  
i was thirty six years old  
and those little blue pills  
tasted so surprisingly sweet  
and i held them under my tongue  
until they completely melted away  
just like the girls on reddit told me to

and when nothing magical happened  
i realized a week later, i was the magic happening  
the first change i felt were my hands  
they had become soft and then softer  
and then my fingernails became shiny and brittle  
and the feeling i felt surprised me  
because i had never liked my nails before  
but i kinda love my nails now

and then a few weeks later i cried  
my first big ugly estrogen cry  
and it felt better than anything i've ever felt before  
because even my feeling bad feels good now  
because it's become tolerable  
a whisper among the fireworks

and girl, it's worth it.  
because i'm slowly seeing

the woman smiling in the mirror  
and the woman smiling is me

and i can just finally be me