

4am

I stayed up till 4am drafting a health and safety statement, working backwards from “this is why I taste like extra virgin coconut oil,” to “I have eczema, not an STI.” I added the dependent clause “because it is good for dermatitis” but I am struggling with eloquence. I could lean on adjectives and say, “because it is awfully good for red dermatitis.” But I doubt this remedy is horribly effective. In fact, I do not find it helpful at all.

Once I dreamt that I woke up to find the devil using the telephone outside my parent’s bedroom. It was a Sabbatic goat, hunched down on the couch, pressing a dial up phone against its hairy ear. The cream sofa was too small for its size, which incited an eerie sense of horror. When I rose from bed—back to my waking life—it was 4am. I still remember the lingering feeling of terror that pervaded throughout the day. I never saw the devil again.

I opened my eyes and you were asleep, next to me. I was holding your hip and felt amused by the soft certainty of my grip. “I like this person,” I thought to myself. Then I checked the time on my phone, and it was 4am. I did not get a chance to tell you that I have feelings for you. We broke up a few months later. I never felt closer to you than the night we said hello, and the day we said goodbye.

The Argentine rock band Babasónicos has a song called 4am. It is about someone who runs away from home, because they do not belong. Today I want to do the inverse, and run back home. But I know it would not solve anything. I wish I knew what I needed, so I could give it to myself. Unfortunately, what I need may be in other people.

I want to make beautiful things but I am prone to ugliness. When I read words with a tender touch, or hear the melodies of a whistle, I feel the fullness that I lack. The tragedy is that I desperately want to say something pretty—one magical sentence—to bring the world closer to me. It is 4am and there is nothing I can do but admire our distance. I miss the polite mystery of discovering each other.

When I was 8 years old I fell on the soccer field and the grass cut my knee. I looked at the small wound and felt pain. I began to sense an onset of tears and repeated to myself, “don’t cry, don’t cry, don’t cry.” It worked and I did not cry for the next 9 years. The tears coming out of my eyes at 17 did not stop till 4am. They hurt like the pain I felt, that time at the soccer field.

It is 4am and I am tired of antagonising. Cynicism, apathy, and scorn haunt me but they are not a reflection of me. Therefore, I keep these negative thoughts (mostly) to myself. What can I say? I am human.