

*Modern
Marriage*

**DREAMS
OF A
BEAUTIFUL
UNION**



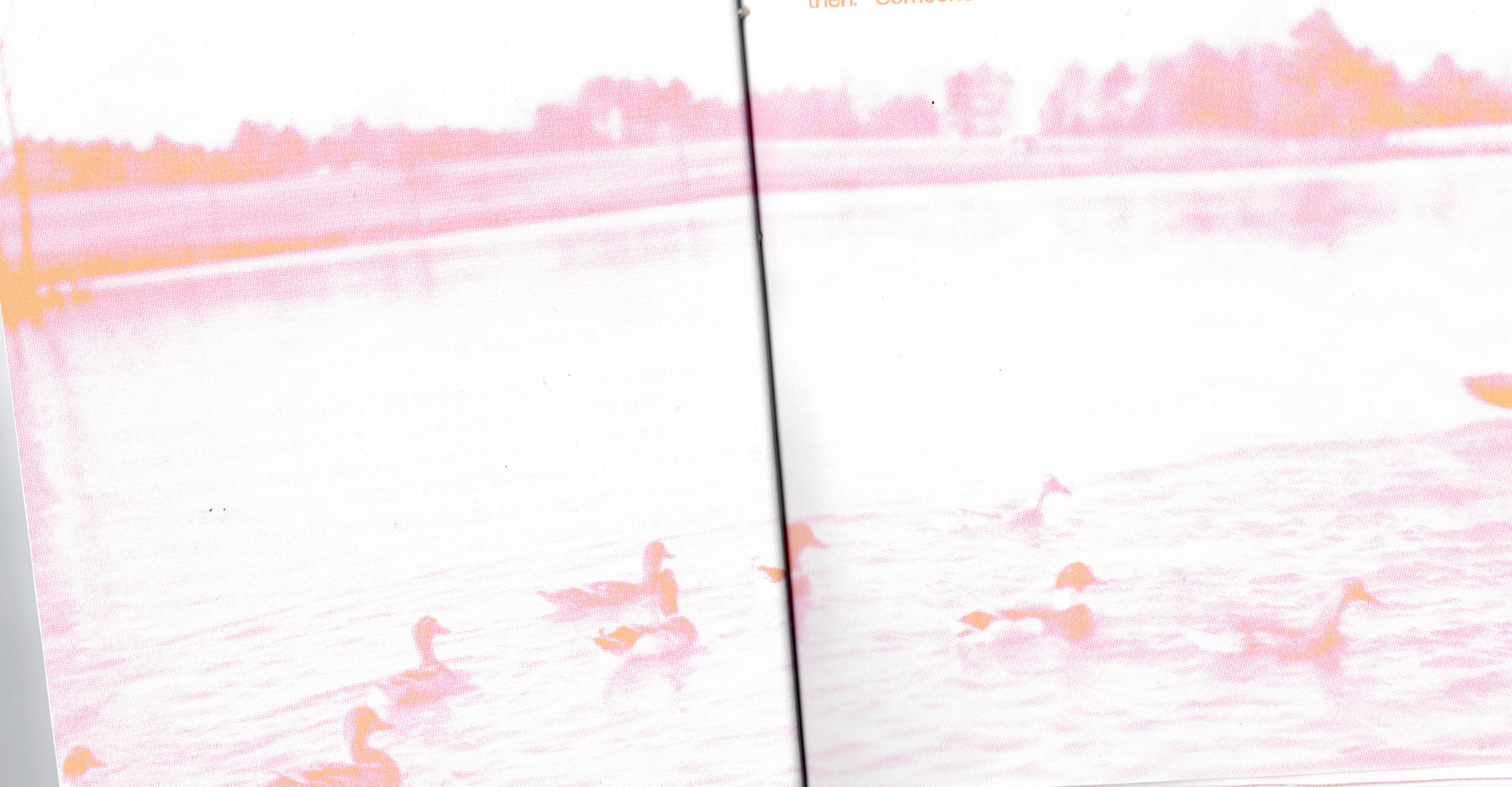
MODERN MARRIAGE

When we were younger I dreamt that you and I were getting married. It was an outdoor affair—the sounds of our loved ones blurring off in some distance. I remember walking down a veranda and you called my name as if I had never heard it before. I turned around and there you were, dressed in all black—adorned, gleaming—backlit by the sunset, and you smiled. Somewhere in the distance, someone rang a bell. Somewhere closer, your hands reached out to fix the collar of my jacket, inadvertently brushing my throat. Yes, for once, the air was impossibly gentle to us. It's a nice day for a black wedding.

CITY BOY

It was my first fall ever when we first spent time together. He took me to a bench next to the river. We watched ducks float by and the water moved in its slow, endless way. His coat smelled of tobacco and maybe too much cologne. When he wasn't looking I sneakily lifted the collar to my nose and inhaled it. I wanted to ask him what he was thinking but he was never the type to share. Our knees met—by accident, I think—and though he didn't move, I was the one who pulled away. When he told me that he wanted to leave this town I didn't realize he meant alone.

He was a city boy. Me, I don't quite know what I was back then. Someone who wanted to be seen, if nothing else.



THESE DAYS

We don't get on well anymore, and now I can't get off. I can't get it up these days, so we don't get down. If that's the reason, who am I to blame you?

I'm thinking about my bad habits again. I promised that I'd drop smoking since you always winced at the taste but it's been five packs since we last saw each other. I buy the fancy Chinese import ones now because I at least deserve that luxury. I've noticed that the ashes never quite settle right with them.

You're in my eyes—just like before—but I could never tell you that.

I wish I could lick
All the sugar and the pain
From your fingertips

FILMSTAR

When I got diagnosed with bipolar disorder I swapped my dreams of a movie life for one filled every three months with mood stabilizers, antipsychotics, and as-needed anxiety pills that kill sex drives.

I thought that intimacy meant someone memorizing my body; but now it's more about someone remembering my dosages when I'm too fragile to. And romantic films promised me ceaseless, promised passion but all I've got now is psychiatry's assurance that I'll make it to some end credits.

I've always hated nonlinear narratives.
I think I ought to get into directing.

WHAT SHE TOLD ME LAST WEDNESDAY (WAS TRUE)

"I
just don't get you.
One minute you're fine, the
next you're losing your shit. There's
no winning with you—none! You twist
everything I say until it's a fucking riddle.
You've changed. God, you have. I don't even
know why I'm saying this. You'll just stare at
me, quiet, like you're above it all. Come on, say
something! Or are you just going to stand
there with that fucking look on your face?
You know what? Go ahead, take this,
shove it up one of your poems, your
prose, whatever. At least now
you've got something real
to write about..!"





PET NAME

You called me "Bunny," chopping my last name into something that fits better in your mouth. I am no rabbit but a hare: wild wild wild, tameless.

MAN'S WORLD

When I was a kid, my dream husband was just a boy who'd be good and kind to me. My young life revolved around conceptions of being the wife*** of a good kind beautiful man, because this sort of love was the role I was promised. I promised that I'd be good to him, too. I still don't know any beauty like that of a man's.

WAYS OF BEING:

Throw your white lighter in the river.

Read "30 Ways to Drive Him Wild in Bed."

Give your friend a call not out of obligation but just because you felt like it.

Hyphenate your last names.

Graduate with no honors whatsoever.

Do something nice for someone without expecting anything in return for once, you selfish prick.

Kiss a handsome girl. And a pretty boy while you're at it.

Write a letter. And another.

Steal a flyer off a telephone pole.

Engage in light sin.

Wash your darks and lights together.

Grow out your facial hair and don't care when your friends make fun of you for it.

Buy flowers and lie about who they're from.

Say no and mean it. Say yes and figure it out later.

Be soft and drink hard liquor.

Wear something inappropriate to a family gathering.

Stay true.

Say "please."

When that one song about them comes on, and they're right there in the passenger seat, let it play.

Clap at the end of a movie and get other people to join in.

Get your oil changed.

Go to a karaoke bar but not the ones with the soundproof rooms.

Say "I love you" not because you mean it right now but to memorize how those words feel in the mouth.

Be pure at heart and accept everything that follows.

**SHARE YOUR DREAM
OF A BEAUTIFUL UNION:**



"Modern Marriage" is a collection of prose about beautiful unions and the memory of love.

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