

## It'll pass

I'm just trying to finish up some work so I can take a nap because it's been such an exhausting day with the constant emails and slack messages, all the notifications just droning on and on, so I think sometimes I'd be happier if I didn't have this sort of job, like that part from Max's story last week about how the 20-hour work week is a special kind of hell, but I can't let myself think that sort of stuff because I really hated that part of his story, it sounded so vain and out of touch, although

—another email, I just hope it's the Amazon package because I really need razor cartridges so I can stop feeling so gross, like I always get when I don't shave for a couple days, like I'm stuck between being a boy and a man, I can't stand that shadow in the mirror, but, no, it's just a writing group submission, probably Dez's because he always sends his stuff a few days early, which I should really start doing but I inevitably end up submitting it with 20 minutes to spare, tops, because the group is the only thing motivating me to actually finish any writing these days, even though I'm thinking about it constantly I can't stop wasting my time on Grindr and Sniffies, but

it's not Dez, it's Thomas again, even though he said he doesn't write, he keeps submitting this, I don't even know what to call it, unintelligible prose poetry? it's precisely the kind of thing everybody hates reading, except liars, but I do get where he's coming from, I guess, and maybe I'm just projecting but I have this sense that he's like me, I mean—

I was so lonely, I wanted friends so bad I could've died, that's probably why I latched onto Joseph even though he was doomed to be straight, unshakably, inexorably straight, and I've never said this out loud because it's so boring, but I want to tell Thomas that I get it, I want to tell him that I was on my own from fifteen, that I had to go because I didn't believe anybody in Texas could love me after even my little brother called me *faggot*, his voice lined with love on the same christmas eve that my dad kicked me out of the house and into the dusk, so that Mom drove hours, past all the apocalyptic empty fields and windmills of central Texas, just to pick me up and bring me to that gay church, the *Cathedral of Hope*, where she tried to kiss the pastor on the lips during communion because she was copying the man in front of her, but actually that was his husband, the pastor's I mean, the rest of the congregation took communion just like everybody else, no lips involved, but it's okay because she laughed it off and she always loved to tell that story because she really did love me, so much more than I could ever know, and she still does even though I snuck onto that amtrak and didn't get off for four days, the Texas Eagle line from Dallas to LA, plus a nine hour greyhound that crossed the golden gate bridge in the pitch-black fog even though I was coming

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from the South, thinking the whole time, it'll pass, it'll pass, but I don't know why I thought it'd be any different here, I didn't belong in the Castro with all the older fags staring at me like I was fresh meat, and even now that I'm almost thirty it feels like they're still leering, except it's worse now because I have *history* with some of them, and I'm never looking back but I can still feel their eyes on me like lasers, even now, and then again I should ask Thomas why all of his fucking stories are about love, there's no sex in his world, even in his fantasies, so it's no wonder he's so bad in bed, he's always trying to do weird shit for the sake of it but he can't commit because he just wants to be cool, which is maybe why I see myself in him, but doesn't he know that it's all been done before, there's nothing left to try, **there's nothing left to do**, he needs to stop reading poetry, stop reading literature: Thomas, listen to me, just focus on writing an interesting story because even this is just a copy of *Hopscotch*, Cortazar, Faulkner, *Mrs. Dalloway*, etc., but that's not the sort of thing you can just say to some fresh 21-year-old, still a teenager in spirit, the best I can do is give him a Bernhard book as a gift and hope he gets it, I know that he'll read it but the question is whether or not he'll *get* it, but by this point I'm just scanning his story and trying to formulate softer, gentler criticisms, I'm just passing over the text, I'm not actually reading, I'm really seeing Joseph, we're fifteen again, it's his brown hair, those hazel eyes in that long face that never loved me back, saying *it'll pass*, again just *it'll pass*, after I confessed because I just couldn't hold it in anymore, and I didn't even tell him I was going West, so maybe he never found out where I went, maybe for him I just disappeared one day and he didn't even notice, who knows, anyway I couldn't tell him because of that look he gave me, I was so afraid of the gleam in those pupils that I decided right then and there I would never see him again, but God I wish I'd told him, I need to see him, I need to meet those eyes again, I'm not scared anymore.