

OLLY OLLY

Alexa Smith

*I am the only one
searching for you—and if I get caught,
then the search is through.*

– “Frontwards,” *Quarantine the Past*

Here's what I remember:

We kind of galloped? Fast fast

badump badump down the long silver living room

rug. *Heigh-ho.* Hey, what

did you think
of my dinosaur
collection?

I had a whole big mixing bowl of them
to show you: tiny plastic personalities
like a mass grave in a crater.

I think we played hide and seek, too.

Did you find me? Or

give up?

Hey Josh,

What was your street like?

Who was your favorite band?

(Was it a shitty band?) Would I think

your jokes were funny? Did you

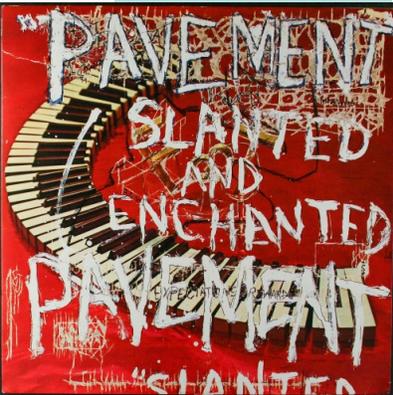
have a girlfriend? Did you

think nice things about her?

Did she know it? (He?) Hey, what

was your ferret's name? Did you love it? What happened to it when you died? Did it die first? Were you a good dad to your ferret? Was it named Rufus, or did I make that up?

(Why would I make that up?)



Pavement

“Frontwards”

Slanted and Enchanted

04/1992

Matador

I remember finding
 your spray cans in the trash, no
 or maybe I remember hearing my parents
 (half your parents) talking about finding
 your spray cans in the trash, no, or:

the gold-white glare of you
 and your friend on my building's
 lip of driveway in the sun, unknowable
 teens. Did you like to draw too? Did you
 ever use the cans to draw before you
 huffed them? Paint, or cream? What's it
 smell like? After the car, were you broken

into air? Into
 fuel exhaust? Into

a 90s grunge firmament,

ozone and oil spill and Pavement
 on the radio? Are you a lyric

on the highway now? A crackle
 on Grandma's landline? Are you

the weather on the night news?

Hey Josh, where are you? I mean
 where are you buried? Where are
 the people who knew you in school and
 do they still visit you now? Did anyone
 know you at school? Who knew you
 cutting class fucking around by some
 creek full of trash? Why do I assume

there was a creek full of trash, a *crick*
in the neck of a wood and a splintered
 pole, *antique homes, plastic cones,*
 twist of bones and whiplashed

metal, *heigh-ho, silver,*
alloy or chrome?

What's it like being dead in Virginia?

Hey what color was your favorite? Hey what color
 was the shirt your body wore the day they hid it
 underground? What color was the tie

our father wore, the only tie
 he ever wore in his silver
 apple-cheeked mythology?

Hey Josh I'm looking for you on Dad's YouTube

He wrote about you once
 but only once and I remember
 the line I found it once but I can't find it
 again, I think it was a video, he said
 about the car he said

"There is some reason to believe
 he was trying to miss a deer"

so you died for a deer kind of, hey, did you ever
 hunt? Did you ever kill an animal? Did you ever touch
 the warmth of someone else's blood? Were you scared
 or proud? Did you cry when you watched
Bambi, when the mom died at the start?
 Did you remember your mom before
 she left? Was she high? Was she
 nice to you? What color
 was her hair?

Hey Josh,
 were you ever
 mad at Dad? I hope
 not. Did you hate that
 he was my neighbor and
 never yours? You were just
 two boys, but he was older.
 Did you brood as much as
 we do? Did you have
 the same gap in
 your teeth?
 I hope so.

I only remember one
 photo of you—murky gray
 class portrait background, baby *quasar*
in the mist and a velvet-backed frame.
 You look a lot like him but weasely
 (or ferrety), I guess you haven't grown
 into your ears yet. Same color
 eyes. You're so small,
 a little myth in my
 mom's closet.

(Why hers?)

Hey, did you read about myths
in grade school? Did you read?

Did you have a favorite god?
Mine were the demis, sons

of mortal lovers who got
fucked by big Olympus

and turned into gold,
into birds, into echoes,

into *heigh-ho, silver, ride*
into trees, olly olly into

oxen roaming free but
fettered by a cloud of flies,

thighs split
by lightning,

by fathers,
by sons.

Did you believe in one,

Josh, in a god or a father?

Did you find them, hey, what

are you hiding down there?

Were you ready?

Are you ready?

Or not?

Here I come.