Sunscreen

The Water Buffalo

We throw beach towels into the breeze
Ease our backs into the sand
Close our eyes and
Ask the sun to stay out just a little bit longer
And we don't run when the heat gets stronger
We just lather our skin with sunscreen
Close our eyes again
And drift off into a silent sleep
Knowing we're protected from whatever else the day might bring
This protection is beautiful
She asks me if she's beautiful
Every Friday night
Standing at the foot of the stairs
She asks me if she looks alright
And if only she could see what I see through my eyes
How the flowers turn their face to her stride
How the rainbow of her smile is enough to overcast the skies
I tell her she's beautiful
And I mean it
Because she's been flipping through magazines again so
It's gonna be hard for her to see it but I see it
I know it
The same way I know the metal still shines behind the rust
I know her beauty lingers
Like the band of skin still holding her natural skin tone
Behind the diamond ring on her finger
I know her beauty lingers
Behind stilettos and name brand clothes
Salon haircuts and make-up
I ask her
Do you know why they call it make-up?
Because too much of it
Makes you make-up lies about who you really are
And you already shine brighter than any star
You can see it if the city would just turn its light off for once
But it seems the world has forgotten where the shine should really come from
We're thinking outside in instead of inside out
Baby
Dabble some of that lipstick off your mouth

It makes my cheeks feel greasy
Some days she doesn't believe me
Those days when she's at her worst
When nothing else hurts more than her reflection staring back at her
Every tear drips like Chinese torture
Facedown in the aftermath
Her confidence shattered into a pile of broken mortar
She is left defenseless
While we make battlefields out of skin
Silicon and collagen being buried beneath like landmines
Recruiting girls as young as nine
Putting them through boot-camps of crash diets and bulimia
Using Revlon for war paint
Gucci for body armor
Coach purses as weapons of mass distribution
Beauty vs. vanity
And vanity is slicing beauty up her sternum
To expose her flaws for the rest of the world to
Gawk and laugh at
(If you think I'm taking this metaphor to the extreme, ask yourself how many times we've cut down others for not meeting our superficial expectations)
Yesterday I saw a 14 year-old girl wearing a skirt shorter than my father's ambition
I can almost imagine
While she powders her face in the bathroom
Downstairs on the TV
Pedophiles are getting caught staring stupid into the hidden cameras of Dateline NBC
I wish I could tell her I'm sorry
Sorry we let you down I promise you can return to
Slumber parties and gossiping about boys when the world decides to finally come around
I am not self-proclaimed righteous
In fact I've stared at more cleavage than I can count
But if there's any glimpse of any honesty left in me
Then let this poem be the way that honesty should sound
You're beautiful
You're beautiful
And I'll repeat it until it saves you
Until you learn you can spend an entire lifetime in the bathroom
But it'll never compare to how perfect you already are exactly the way God made you
So let the flowers turn their face to your radiance
Let your heartbeat pulsate to your skin
Marvel at your magnificence in the mirror
Spin then do it again
Beauty is nothing more than confidence
Vanity is nothing more than shackles
And love will never equal a man who's knees are scraped with carpet burns

From trying to run out your door with his pants around his ankles
Wear your smile like a sundress
Wear your mystique like sunscreen
To protect yourself from being burned by the sheer ugliness of beauty magazines
Because the sun is shining
And the sunscreen will help you see
That the protection will always be beautiful
Just as you will always be beautiful
You will always be beautiful
To me

Lyrics submitted by Olivia Sandiford.

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