



**ve been feeling pretty
hinged lately, maybe
ven broken by the weight
f things pressing down on**



I can give you dozens of things that provide context to my emotional state, but for some reason I can't get the words out because it's hard to find the place to confront it. Sometimes, I hang out with seemingly friendly people at a party where someone makes a comment that fuels my isolation. What started out as a joke turns into something more confrontational, and I realize more often than not that jokes are actually a passive aggressive way to push stereotypes and insecurities onto others without addressing the problem. That said, I don't want to talk about the joke because I feel that it can be applied to anything on a daily basis - racism, sexism, socio-economic privilege, human injustice, xenophobia, homophobia. The more I'm caught dealing with the backlash of the joke and how it makes me feel, the more of a trigger it is for me to either reject the sender or spend time with them confronting it, which at best turns to ignorance and a dozen ways of skirting around the problem. That it was just a joke, it didn't mean anything - neither of which comes to any real focus. And I too can be culpable in doing that. We have these moments when our words and actions, which seem benign, rhetorical and non-consequential actually have presence. It's in this that I'm writing, in the hopes of breaking through some of the experiences that are swimming in me...

I've been wearing a bright orange hunters cap on my head for over 2 years now. You wear it in the woods as a caution to hunters that you are not prey, but walking around the city, I more often feel like a target. It's funny how meanings change with different places. Some ask me to take it off, wanting to see what's underneath, others physically remove it, usually by force or some sort of coaxing, unable to respect my boundaries; because after all, it's just hair. I usually don't appease their curiosity and it becomes more of a focus. I don't exactly remember when I started wearing the cap, nor the reason for wearing it, but with time it became a way for me to cover my hair, to hide the strange markings that we engender when hair signifies so many different things (of race, gender, class, culture, and social economic privilege) and my attachment to it. It's a strange sensation for me to hide the weight of something that is so much part of myself now. I don't really know why I'm growing out my hair, nor why I've become so attached to it, but it's a part of me now. It has changed me somehow. I've been grooming my hair as much as I've hidden it; collecting and shaping the fallen and pulled strands into tiny balls. Again, I don't know why I do it, it just becomes a ritual act of some sort of self-care. We often don't realize how things affect us, more often than not the daily experiences we have become part of who we are even when we are not conscious of how it affects us. Creatures of habit I suppose, and it's in these habits that I realize I am slowly defining myself through them. Sometimes I think I just do things that aren't planned or important; it's how I cope, or how I find modes of relief that adds brevity instead of consequence, but over time becomes more me than I realize. I guess addictions are like that sorta thing too, and they end up shifting the way we relate. I keep telling myself that we have the power to control our actions, but it takes a lot of work, so give me just a little more time...

And our love will surely grow,
Ethan Shoshan