

Pocketful Confessions: Poems to Read While Chewing Your Lips

by

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ABSTRACT

This collection of work is meant to portray the humanity of poetry. Humans, for the most part, are not always graceful. That said, poetry is not always graceful. Sometimes it deals with life, with death, with love and loss and home. Sometimes it deals with bugs, with confusion, with clarity. “Pocketful Confessions” is meant to embody all of these, because sometimes poetry trips over its own feet. Sometimes it falls up the stairs. Sometimes it can’t catch a break because sometimes humanity can’t catch one. It’s a pocketful of confessions, because sometimes you don’t have enough to fill a paper bag, and that’s okay.

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Lost Persons Area

Somewhere in Youngstown, there's a joke
being told on repeat and you laugh,
but refuse to find me. I need someone to call
my name over the loudspeaker and bring me back.
Otherwise, I'll stand here and wait.

Family of Heart Attacks

Just like him: same weight, same pace
climbing the stairs like he's coming up
to bed. The oldest and the youngest
hear their father's footsteps, stay quiet.
Mom is finally asleep, the only illumination
a light above her dresser.

At six, heart attacks are a funny visual
of cartoon hearts wielding knives,
chasing unsuspecting people down streets.
It takes age for her to understand,
a second scare to absorb, and twenty-two
years to finally ask.

This Is How It Began

I remember the time
I grabbed your wrist
as we left that bar,
and you probably
didn't even notice
when your fingers
linked up with mine
and my stomach
met my feet
for the first time.

Neighbors

270 Erskine Ave.

Shelly's boyfriend was shot
behind the Coconut Grove.
Bad side effect to squealing
on drug dealers in Youngstown.
Weeks later, she and her kids
reappeared to pack up, and my Mom
told them their cat got injured
in a fight. She'd put out the money,
and found out he had feline HIV.
Shelly screamed into the house
"Don't touch the cat! The cat
has AIDS!" and pandemonium
erupted. Mom sighed, tucked
the cat under her arm,
and strolled back home.

875 Moyer Ave. Apt. 3

The earthquake caused a temporary truce
among the four apartments. As the weekend
parties got bigger, went later, music louder,
fights got coarser, the truce faded away. Upstairs
versus downstairs, singles versus young couples.
We tried reasoning with them, they fought back
with screaming and a sign in child-like writing:
Danger! An ogre lives upstairs! When my day
began and ended with fake orgasms echoing
off bedroom walls and floors, I broke.

347 Erskine Ave.

Mom calls at 10:10 and asks if I'm okay.
I'm fine, besides the guilt of overeating.
She says there are cops outside my house.
I peek to see Paul creeping in my driveway,
and when I go talk to him, he explains the fighting
across the street, and the threats. "Ollie was trying
to run Bud over with the truck. Bud stood there.

Then Patty yelled about bullets and graves,
and someone getting shot tonight, and people
two streets over could hear the horn blowing.”
There was also something about a veteran
masturbating, but no elaboration.

Kevlar and Ribbons

She's a woman first. After that a jumble
mess of dress and uniform, t-shirt and heels,
thick boots and pearls. Lace knit sweaters
on Mondays, camo pants one weekend a month.
Flowers in the margins of her notes. The bun
with a beret more militant than the sloppy one
worn with a cardigan, glasses with chains,
book bag slung over one shoulder. The ruck
sack left at home for some new adventure.

In a different world, she faces the sun,
puts away those memories of civilian
clothes. Beneath brown eyes and forced,
cracked-lip smiles, a tornado of her
fails to live beyond glossy pictures
of home that she keeps tucked away.

Green Flash

At the edge of perception, the sun is setting
before the moon wakes up, and I see you.
That rare moment, green flash on the horizon,
appears for a moment, then gone.

When the moon materializes, my world lights up.
I want you to see the panorama I see,
the way the trees wave, the curve of the Earth—
the moon reforms into a small white box.

The trees reach higher than I dare
to reach, and call our names in the dark.
Their leaves urge us to conceive the same
moon, sky, reflection in the window pane.

Enclosed in my mind, I'm imagining new
places. But in your sky, the moon is always
sphered, while mine will remain flat, and we see
everything but ourselves in the reflections.

Enemies

Hours of my time have been wasted
plucking their tough triangular bodies
from walls, light fixtures, the floor
where they fall after failing to fly.
Too many tissues have been anxiously
crumpled around them, giving off
the scent of rotten cilantro,
what I imagine the color of olive green
would smell like if it didn't smell
like olives. One at a time, those little
brown shield-shaped bodies are dipped
in the toilet, gingerly holding the tissue
below water until the lever is pushed
and I stand guard to make sure
they swirl all the way down.

Out of the tissues, some have crawled
and one brave one tried to fly. I'm running
out of toilet paper trying to keep up.
Flush one, two, five until Marmorated
bugs cost more than laundry or showers,
more than washing the dishes, more
than it would cost to run Niagara Falls
as a fountain in my backyard.

Because they love light, I sit in dark
and cold, because they hate that, too.
Hoping their helicopter flight and lingering
expired vegetable odor won't mar another night.
More stink bugs than tears fill my tissues,
and more tissues than shit fill my toilet,
the pipes, the sewers past the brink
of bursting.

Specter

You're a security blanket.
Worn, within reach when
sadness hits, outgrown.

You should be a ghost.
Invisible, unobtrusive,
only haunting at night.

You're a banshee.

Cycle Offbeat

Words course tea and honey
through my body while thoughts
of you crawl between the walls of my mind.
Where the joints meet, we walk away—

From bar to bar, new bar stools,
you sit and wonder what won't be
my thoughts while I ponder the possibility
of tonight being one in a line of—

Easily formed bad habits. We're putting
off talk, my specialty, but it's better
to keep your expectations in place.
Too much of each other is wrong—

Casually, how this started, but everyone
knows I'm a fool for your chef's coat
and shots, for climbing in your car.
Our breathing gets quicker the longer—

Stomach's Lament

I never knew stomachs
could have thunderstorms.

The memories drift slowly
like a drunken scene in a movie.

In slow motion, he walks
through the door. Or is

that from all the shots
I drank before he came?

I'm aware of the smile
straining my cheeks,

corners of my lips hung
from my ears.

The bared teeth
aren't meant to scare him.

We are reserved for the quiet
found between the walls.

Faces close, and whispers
so as not to break

the not reality we
do not allow to exist.

The morning is still drunk.
Stomach rages, files for divorce.

Soldier's Epistle

Dear You,
I can't stop thinking
about hands. Why
are they so damn
important to me?
With pen, with knife,
with gun, we all
craft our lives. Hands
clasp, clap, fold
into prayer. Build,
treasure, break. Most
dangerous precious.

Here is the outline
of my hand. Place
yours here if you
ever need to be
connected to home,
to me, to all of us.
My hand was here.

Parental Lies

My favorite lie that parents
tell their children: Oh, it's easy.
Because it never is.

Dad, how do I get to the ham radio site?
Oh, he responds, it's easy.
Twenty minutes later, I call.
Okay, I say, I've taken the left,
slight right at the fork, and right turn
at the wicker place. I'm still not there.

Mom, how do you make your sauce again?
Oh, she replies, it's easy.
After the first three ingredients,
I call again. Okay, I say calmly,
I have the sauce cans, tomato paste,
and garlic. What comes next?
My salty tomato water is a failure.

Mom and Dad, should the toaster smell
like burnt plastic? Why does the clothes dryer
make that whumpa sound? Will this cat vomit
come out of the carpet? It's orange.
I need some help. Can you come make
the chicken soup for me? This time, I called
because I'm bored, but since I have you,
remind me. Do I need to line-dry
the living room curtains? How do I handle all of this?
Oh, they say, it's easy.
You'll get it eventually.

Youngstown Born and Bread

Sunday mornings, the smell of baking
leaks into the car as we drive to church
in the snow, rain, sun glaring, air
conditioner cranked, heat filling the van,
or wind whipping from an open window.

Mornings before work I smell stale smoke,
but afternoons it's there to welcome me
after good days, bad, fruitful lessons,
silence from students, irritation at my
own quiet marring my concentration.

I've made this journey daily with family,
friends, by myself, with a kiss and peace
sign to our departed in Lake Park Cemetery,
after arguments, or laughing, or tears,
sending me off and guiding me back.
Home is where it smells like bread.

He's Kept Me Waiting

I'm far too pretty
to still be waiting.

Five more minutes.
Quarter hour late

is not fashionable.
There's something

about his eyes, though.
Something about those

teeth and gums, about
the last three years.

For that, just five
more minutes.

My patience
diminishes fast.

There's the way
his hand covers mine.

The way his world doesn't
revolve around me.

I'll wait five more minutes.
After that, no promises.

Joke

Boil water, get steam.
Boil love, get a kick in the bits.
No one has a soul mate.

I'm hanging out beneath
the x-ray machine, hospital
gown draped over my waist
and legs. Already I miss
my pants and wonder how
long until the nurse begins.
My knee pokes an armhole,
the table chills where my
shirt doesn't cover my back.

Maybe he's my soulmate, I think
still waiting. Maybe I'm not his.
His name is Sandy in Youngstown
and we've been not dating
for almost ten years now.

I learn I have an extra lumbar,
or missing ribs. Either way,
the doctor proves I'm weird.
A human platypus. I have
my father's hair. Also
unfortunately, his ankles.
I did acquire Mom's telephone
voice. Better to sound like her
than Uncle Joe. My sister
got all her femininity, sucked
it out of the womb on her way
out and left none for me.

Mix batter, get cake.
Mix two parts Polish, one Hunky,
throw in some Johnny Bull,
get a mongrel.
No one is gourmet.

Lip Kiss Dreams

She runs the lip
of the cup between
her lips as though
the two lips meeting
was that of a kiss,
fingers skip the table,
she chances a glimpse
of the man opposite her,
his chapped lips skimming
the lip of his own cup,
tips the drink wishing
he was kissing anyone
but her.

I Don't Want to be a Poet

Guys buy sports cars to compensate
for receding hairlines. Ladies cut
their hair, bleach their assholes,
get a second or third divorce.

During my crisis, I ponder opening
a store where I would wrap presents
at moderate cost. Hello, welcome. Let me
wrap your package. I'll be glad to serve you.

Stay with Me

If you were the pin and I the straw
I would keep you hidden. I see how
the seekers look for you, why
they'd be eager for such a catch.
I want the whole of me to cover
your all, to keep you from their
gazes. We can return to the days
when your eyes looked upon me
like uplifting gold.

Muses

Silly man-creatures named
Fate and Karma curled up
in brain—wait to be written.
Mad gleam in eyes, tinker
with a host of strings
of words—control, alter,
delete without author's
permission. Products
of too many pills, too much
liquor, lots of caffeine, lost
sleep. Wake from deep REM,
put words to paper—
 just write.

What's Left Behind

You unlatched your jaw to consume,
contracted those muscles to force me
deep down your digestive track until I
was nothing but fur and bones that worked
slowly back up, out of your mouth and left
a rotting pellet on the forest floor.

Education

No one teaches you how to react
when someone drops dead in front of you.
There is no lesson plan for that.
We were taught how to share,
how to tie our shoes,
and bits about life and death.

But when the guitarist for the first band
collapsed, just twenty-seven years old,
all we could do was make jokes.
Something about not being able
to hold his booze right.

Amusement dried up as the owner
with help from a bandmate, got him outside
and emergency responders showed up.
We caught clips of updates as we loitered.
Non-responsive resuscitation.
I was aware I may have witnessed
his last breath.

We sat in my car and chain-smoked,
unable to absorb the situation.
Watched as they put him on a stretcher,
as the stretcher jumped as they continued
CPR, loaded him in an ambulance,
still trying to bring him back.

An entire bar was stunned, the rest
of the show cancelled out of respect
for the man we would later learn died.
In our minds, two plus two still
equaled four, but a guy was dead.

There was no manual to consult
when I couldn't sleep for weeks,
because the sounds of his last gasps
echoed in my dreams, and even though
I've studied all the books,
it will never add up for me.

Clichés Make You Boring

A penny saved is a penny
you won't have when you're short
at the Exact Change Only toll booth.
Don't burn your bridges, because arson
is a felony, and no one will visit you in jail.
You shouldn't overdress to kill. Or dress
to overkill. We've already been over
that felony thing before. When it rains,
everything gets wet. Drive carefully
for once. Putting the pedal to the metal
will only earn you a ticket, hefty fines
you can't pay because you never saved
your pennies.

Even My Disorders are Strange

Twenty-eight, the apex
of configuration presents itself.

We describe ourselves as mixtures
of backgrounds and disorders.

Only two to ten percent of women
have PMDD, fancy PMS on steroids.

I'm also the happiest binge eater
my therapist has ever seen.

At twenty-eight, these two
pieces of the puzzle click

into place, cemented by
treatments and pills.

From this point, puzzle done,
it shouldn't get any worse.

That said, we all
know the possibilities.

The Shell of Me

Don't walk on my white ice.
It will crack and my shards
will scatter everywhere.
You'll plunge to death
in the thick abyss
beneath my surface.

I live, but I'm not alive
to mind the life I bring.
Bask in the yellow afterglow
and milky white of my smile.

Off Year

The minute books show
what glass paper can't.
A box spring made
of barbed wire, chisel
bits of fair trade while
the bass drum basket
weaves the time.
Radio range plays
the quarter notes,
while the fountain
pen drags across
letter paper. Stare
double daggers at
the test in the dead
heat of night. Two
lines, pink. The bath
towel dries, the cold
cream sets, shake
the eight ball, every
hour hand ticking
around the hour
wheel is a moment
for the coal miner.
Canary chirps warning.
The cigarette case
remains untouched
after he's gone.

Vengeance

There's a centipede lurking
my house with my name tattooed
on its now-useless legs. A chance
laundry room encounter, a tight
space between machines, an empty
box of dryer sheets and only twenty
of its hundred appendages injured.
It limped off to the shadows
and now I wake from dreams
where it spies around corners
and waits. In others, the injured
interloper holds gun to my temple,
screams the glory of revenge
in the name of House Scutigerae.

Only Sometimes

Sometimes the noises get the better of me.
I wonder why the creaks and taps, sometimes
and I realize alone sometimes is not lamentation,
because sometimes I wish for guns or blunt objects.
Sometimes I don't because I'm accident prone.
I wonder, sometimes, if it's anything at all,
but sometimes I think it's better if I don't know.
I can't keep my eyes closed sometimes, but it's
a matter of knowing when to sleep. Mostly,
sometimes, I just want peace. The noises fade
away, sometimes, but I think sometimes that's
because rain calms me down, or wind sometimes
makes me remember when I sometimes wasn't alone.

I'm Afraid of Dictionaries

Under “desperation” is there a picture
of me, sniffing the pillowcases for one last
faint whiff of sandalwood? Under synonyms:
lonely, broken, lost at sea.

See also, Sarah. She can feel
bile rising whenever she glimpses
a blue Mustang.

I walk around in your old hooded
sweatshirt and forgotten socks,
shuffling from room to room
searching for artifacts.

My Life Should be a Movie

Here it is: that stupid defining moment when I'm left with just me for six hours until the terminal opens. What do I do first? Cry. The floor polisher passes twice, concerned look on his face. Step 2: suck it up and deal.

In the movie version, a montage with a peppy song will play as I drag my bags, drop my purse, find a bar, a cigarette, and a beer.

I meet a German named Max. He's a pilot, drunk, stuck after the last train stopped running. His opening line: Haben Sie feuer? One of three German phrases I remember. We chat until the bar closes. In the movie version, he's single, I follow him to a room, and the next hours are German bliss.

Instead, I risk sleep in a lobby with two hours left, feet propped on my suitcase, hugging my carry-on tight. The line starts with me at 4am, with disheveled hair, crusty eyes, dress hiding the wedgie caused by my leggings, and that's when the return trip home really begins.

Void

A strange passer-by, stuttered
apologies, ticks time in his
brain before she drives away.

He decided, he drank. He didn't
care, he decided. Hungry, spent,
and he was gone.

Closet Hockey Fan

Skates on ice, slick
shhkk, shhkk of metal.
My attention drawn away
from his eyes to the TV
behind him as the puck
sails ahead.

I look up stats
on my phone as he
sips from a beer, wonders
aloud what a girl like me
is doing in a place
like this.

I'm not here at all.

In the chilled stadium,
fans scream as the puck
slides behind the goalie,
into the net.

I stand and scream with them.

Mr. Drunk realizes his mistake,
slides on to another table.

In Youngstown

Low, fast clouds mean fire.
An abandoned house, hurling
smoke and flames into the air.

On Martha's Vineyard, the same
clouds stretch over Oak Bluffs,
visible from Inkwell Beach.

They race outward, moving
to the Nantucket Sound after
a freedom I can't find.

In Kansas, the wave-like
clouds are replaced by
something bigger and faster.

The flat bottoms echo the land
leaving space enough for us to drive.

I'm a Dirty Meat Eater

A constant thought: should I feel
guilt or gratitude for beef?

At peak hunger, the burger
excites, pleases, confuses.
Thank you, cow, for being dinner.
I'm sorry you had to go.

I fear the cranky vegan
as I hear the words
"You smell like murder. I hope
your soul was worth the blood."

Honestly? Every last bite
was exquisite. Worth a soul
today.

Whispers Give Me Nightmares

In my shiver mind, I will not go faint.
Sinister hushes, side glances,
let the pieces slip and the ever-soft
words seep. I will accept my truth
when my mind won't shut down. Paranoia:
the fear of quick, quiet voices. My grip
won't crash to the tile. I will not let
wonder at vehemence within arm's reach.
To let them smother doesn't bode well.
Keep them close, but not
close enough.

Dance Card

Alphabetical listings go up with flourishes,
bravos for the last moves this time.
Charlie likes two-steps and jives, hates
Delta airlines, but at the next location we
echo across the country. There's a quick
foxtrot into each ballroom.
Golf is reserved for weekends as our
hotel rooms become our homes.
India became a dream for retirement after
Juliett won first place. We jig over to
Kilo for tapas in New York City, then
Lima, our next international set.
Mike was injured during finals, devastating break.
November is the next match, but
Oscar broke up with his partner, so grumpy
Papa won't be there to send us off this time.
Quebec houses our least favorite ballroom, and
Romeo doesn't die in this duet. We're off to
Sierra resorts for recovery next week.
Tangoes are the hardest to keep clean,
uniforms all glitter and mesh.
Victor got points off for illegal lifts, but
whiskey later made him forget his feet.
X-ray scanners at another airport, worth it for
Yankees' games during downtime.
Zulu remains unrepresented. We try to care.

I Was Wrong

Everything I thought about femininity came from *Annie*. Sorely disappointing as I grew and was not as sleek or sexy or graceful or beautiful as Ann Reinking.

I expected stockings to roll up perfectly bronzed legs, tiny ankles with cute feet, toes and polish. I expected to be wearing shifts into my twenties, fitted skirts and blouses making me look competent and desirable in a snapshot of poise.

The dance numbers I stage to get ready each morning are not choreographed. They seldom come out smoothly as I trip over the bathmat and brush dust off the bottoms of my feet. I readjust my necktie and settle my glasses on my face and I am now mostly okay with being wrong.

Sentimental Potatoes

When I was seventeen, my friend decided
my first kiss should have a code name.
My first thought was an innocent root
vegetable. He found out, and drove
me home one night, a week into dating.
When he told me to close my eyes,
I did. When he told me to hold
out my hand, I did. In it, he placed
this object, small and rough, so foreign
but it shouldn't have been a surprise.
When it dawned on me what I held,
he leaned in and kissed me. I glided
over February snow mounds like air
and my mom opened the door,
her smile bemused confusion as words
tumbled from my first-kissed lips.
The potato spent weeks on my dresser
and Mom threatened my life if I didn't
dispose of it. I didn't. It grew eyes
and wrinkled. I still didn't, not
for another three weeks.

Now, when I buy potatoes, my mother
is the only one who remembers why
I smile so widely near potatoes,
the weird shopper in the produce aisle.

Whale

The orca, once
weighing well
over three tons
now comes in
svelte at one
thirty-five.

At her heaviest,
the bulls ignored
her. Now, she
makes special
show out of her
dorsal fin
and enameled
teeth. Ignores
them.

Single Shot

I drink milk out of Chinet cups on Wednesdays because, after a day like my Wednesday, who has the energy to waste on a pile of dishes? It's awkward to make meals for two when there's no plus one at my table. My pots and pans grow colonies of cobwebs.

My life consists of plastic containers, disposable forks and knives. No linen napkins on my table. I dream of dinner parties with extensive canapés and immaculate hors d'oeuvres. After, the sink overflows with glamour, while leftover squash soup and carefully crafted quiches rule the fridge.

Shoulders

Somewhere in the night, I woke
when he wrapped his arms around
me, kissed my shoulder, fell back
to sleep. What it may have meant
was lost quickly with rest.

Does he kiss her shoulder like
that, in the almost light of morning?
Does it mean the same thing?

Tattooed between his shoulder blades
is a cross, and on the days I woke up
before him, I would run my eyes
up his back and over its lines,
rub my fingers over the blurred black.
He would roll towards me, pull me
close and shut down my mind.
I'm still not convinced he didn't love me.

Elegy for Aubrey Grace

Spinal muscular atrophy.

The muscles and nerves never fully formed. She was a ragdoll, never to know walking, kicking, grabbing for that which she so desperately wanted. Did it matter that she was less than a year old? Did she matter less because I didn't know her? I watched during the Palm Sunday Mass as her mother rocked her, tears on her face and her heart openly breaking, a private moment in public setting.

On Easter Sunday, they weren't there. Her little body gave up and her parents lost their daughter. My niece stared at the ceiling, days after three months old, with such wonder in her eyes. We wondered if the lost girl was there to watch over us: the church that held her so dearly while we prayed for miracles before and after she was gone. Hoped for peace for her parents. Mourned for all.

Ophelia

She slips softly
in the flowers,
follows faintly
as they lead her
down a lengthy
road to reach
the tympanic
call of rapids.

They urge her
toward the sound
of water waving
her in. Instead
she insists
on wandering,
walking, weaving
to her own beat.

I dream of waves

and a fan's gentle hum and the flit of moth's wings.
Of birdsong clocks that chirp and the sounds other
people make. I dream of grapes and eggs. Bare feet
on sand, in sand, in water on rocks. I dream of Silent
Wednesday and lasagna. Of bug bites and sand fleas.
New foods of paella and a whole lobster. A table
outside always waiting for meals or visits. I dream
of islands with long-short drives and ferry rides.
But mostly, I dream of waves.

Guns and Tequila

I learned to drive stick shift to help
my best friend move to California for the Army.
There are cows cooling off in water
and roadkill Armadillos on the shoulders
of back highways. One cat has peed on the other
while the dog used my hoodie as a barf bag.
I've seen too much of Missouri, but I shot
a gun for the first time there. It felt
foreign and hurt my wrists for hours.
We haven't wanted to kill each other. Yet.
Two miles from Topeka, we can still laugh
at inside jokes, strange misfortunes, and how
we left the damn tequila back home in Boardman.

Reclining Couches are Lousy for Heavy Makeout Sessions

Two in the morning is not
a respectable time. I drive
over anyways, bring wine
and a change of clothes.
Wait for him to make
the first contact. A chin
on my shoulder, hand on
my waist. Quick breathing
as we agree—yes, agree—
that it's time to make out.

A first kiss quickly molded
into two friends attempting
to be one face with one
mouth and tongue. One being
as we bounced between
counters in the kitchen like
a singular, catastrophic pinball.

We moved to the couch, sucking
in air and trying to stop our heads
from floating away. It wasn't
the wine. Lips locked tight again.
The determined concentration
was nothing like I'd seen on him.
My hands clutched the arm
of the couch for salvation.

He pulled my hair, rocked
against me with our jeans
still on. His other hand, well,
it's all relative to the climax
as I extended the recliner with
a bang. We froze, the fear
of breaking a couch outweighing
passion and previous unreason.

I Have Motivational Problems

After the fabric settles, as fabric does after washing,
I can remember why my ex told me not to wear
these jeans. With hands on each thigh, I grasp folds
of denim in each fist. I think about buying new jeans,
but I'm haunted by the credit card bills still unpaid.
And my regular jeans are only in the dryer.
They're probably also still warm, which would be nice.
Getting them is an obligation to fish out all the clothes,
putting the whole basket away. My problems
with motivation are, at least, consistent in my life.
And I lied. I drink everything out of Chinet cups every day.

Cake Fail

Happy Birthday Adam
with blue flowers. Your
birthday is ruined. It's not
because of the cake.
The cake was supposed
to have white flowers, Adam,
not blue. The decorator wrote
"with Blue Flowers"
on the actual cake.
What idiot writes that on
someone's birthday cake?
But the cake is not at fault
here, Adam. Truth be told,
it's ruined because I don't
actually love you, and I've
been trying to find a way
to tell you this for months.
Sorry, Adam, but happy
birthday. I hope these
blue flowers help a bit.

This Is How It Ended

In the morning, in nothing
but heels, a slip, and a sweater.
The sun shining and cold air
remind me that it's New Year's Day.

Snapshots From the Road

A rest stop in Missouri smells like bacon and bleach. In Kansas, the cows look like the sun has stripped them of their color, like weathered wood on an abandoned road. If you get a slight slope, you may be able to roll down the hill, but that's about as much fun as you'll get with the land in Kansas. Skeletons and bones of houses, owners long gone. The clouds turn into mountains in Colorado, with enough space between each town to speculate on the backstories and people that do or used to fill their populations. Nothing around for miles but bugs and thunderstorms. The rain is not enough to wash away the dying glow of firefly guts streaking the windshield. The lightning and constellations share the horizon to my right. We can only imagine that an honor system of speed limits exists, where the patrolmen are somewhere other than where we drive. In Arizona, twilight in the desert means mountains are cut from black construction paper and stuck to the landscape for humans to ooh and woo, to love the fading light in little doses. The triumph of reaching California was only marred by the fact that it was the last leg of the journey, and I would leave you there, somewhere.

Caffeine

Absolutely no one gets the hype, buzz,
but you can try, enunciate with clarity,
catch eyes and hope your brain isn't in a lockbox.
Don't deny the pleasure, go with the flow
except when it matters. Don't let on you're a perv
for the unknown. Makes you hot. Makes the Hausfrau
get the ice water, pour it on your heart—wet
heat—burns the fabric that clusters
in times of lust. It's okay to fake it, blur
just the edges where you no longer need a tranq—
keep calm. It'll be okay eventually. It's going up
like a hot air balloon, high in the sky, where we go
mingle with the clouds, brush shoulders against—again,
now. Whizz past stars. They twinkle like a ballroom
over our heads. Turn them off. Make it accidental
please, and I'll forgive you. But just this once. Lick
quickly: the sky falls and we can catch it, J,
really catch it this time. Don't call me Bambi,
so innocent and cute. We only use each
to our own means. Come now, don't make me tug
unless you want me to lead, to leave—to leaf
valiantly through pages for a new hero, the
way I've been trying for years. Watch with mad
x-ray specs to see the future ecstatic.
You don't pull the strings. I'll sing this fab
zing how we've always wanted. Next comes euphoria.