

Spring

I yawn cozy here
old mattress, soft sheets
Sunlight carries sounds of birds
through lace in the open window
Ceiling fan clicking slowly

This room a peaceful sanctuary
scents of clean laundry, cut grass
Her drama, his guns, their lies
shall not invade this space
I welcome only books, juice, colorful pens

Perhaps winter has gone at last
betrayal, migraines, endings
All somehow evaporated
by calm warm air
Time to breath again

It feels strange to leave her body here
A petite ivory box in dirt mixed with frost and fall leaves
Tombstones of strangers our grandparents age surround her
A koala carved beside her name

Too bewildered to look her mother in the eyes
Lost in the horrifying question of what comes next
How do we just let her lay here, alone, outside?
What happens to her if it rains?

How does school go on without her?
I mean seriously, it's not just a rhetorical question
You and I are peacefully tied for second
Which one of us claims her rightful place?

Or *was* it her rightful place? Ok, I'm not really saying this, but...
Her GPA is- or was- higher because she couldn't take gym
The only advantage her tiny legs and tired heart ever afforded her
And you and I are way too dorky to ever get A's in basketball

...Maybe I'm evil for even thinking about that. Sorry...

How do we get through school lunches without her Cheez Wiz sculptures?
How will the band get the flag onto the field without her wheelchair?
Where do I put the chemistry notes I borrowed?
What am I supposed to do with her Christmas present?

How does a 17 year old Barbra Streisand fan
the brightest and best of all 251 of us
just stop being?
Why couldn't it have been the kid nobody knows?

That Phrase

I always hated saying
Empty words
Just a hollow concept that meant
“I’m not as annoyed by you as I am by the others”
Or, if it went well,
“You’re okay, I don’t mind if you stay for a bit”
It was shallow how people threw that phrase around
Making fools of their lives

But then
Then I met her

And electricity exploded in my core
My ears addicted to her sound waves
My eyes hyperfocused on her smile
My brain preoccupied with clocks and texts
How soon would I see her again
Spend time with her ideas
Feel the charge in her eyes
Bathe in her static glow

That phrase
The most perfect thing humans ever crafted

Answer

Because

Because I know my hair looks gross
Uneven and stringy and greasy knots
Because no one bothered to teach me how to wash it

Because

Because I know my jeans fit weird
Threadbare and smudged and too short for my sprouting legs
Because I'm afraid they smell of my father's sins

Because I didn't get my homework done

But I did get lots of housework done- plunged a toilet even
Because if I don't walk my brother to scouts, no one will, and he needs friends

Because I didn't sleep much last night

Panic attacks I cannot yet name and red itch between my legs
Because when she finally passes out, he slips in for company

Because I know what happens when kids say too much

What I don't know is why I'm crying, except someone finally noticed
Because the unknown scares me more than home, I just shrug and answer
Because

Confession

I talk to you
sometimes at night
when you sleep far away
and I remain
awake.

I know my prayers don't
reach your ears
but a girl can try.

Monday feels
inconceivably distant
such a turbulent river
between you, there,
and the empty pain
of me, here.

So I talk to you
sometimes at night
a bridge built of thoughts
memories of the future.

A way to stay afloat
until The Great Then.