

Lessons I've Learned
from losing the guy who made me feel
like no guy has ever made me feel.

One:

It comes in waves,
the sadness soaks into me
like brine, my broken body
bound by ropes of seaweed,
as I float in the frigid sea,
numbed of the warmth of the sun,
but the tide always shrinks,
leaves me dry on the beach,
like grains of sand, loose, free
tossed in the breeze,
and for a moment it feels like
everything will be alright.
It comes in waves--electric brain waves,
lost in an endless synapse, misplaced
from a cell that no longer exists,
remnants of a memory under apoptosis,
crying out like a squawking pelican
asking where he went and when he'll return,
and when he can't, bursting
in a miniature explosion,
suicide bombing a part of who I used to be,
killing me from the inside out.
It comes in waves,
and even when he's taken everything I have,
he will still.
keep.
taking.

Two:

Masturbating helps.
When I lie to myself
that our boners are synced
like two cups tied by string--
every time he tugs I feel it,
every time he's hot I hear it
like a whisper and his breath
on my neck,
when I lie to myself
that we're both masturbatory fantasies

in each other's heads,
he becomes an object of sex, not love,
a hand to stroke and not hold,
and it becomes easier to forget him.
When I was 13
and all the boys talked about "the stranger"
I never once thought sitting on your hand
to turn masturbation into hand job
would be a cure for a broken heart.
But it is, because when I lie in bed, and reach that climax,
and lie to myself that it was just sex,
loveless, he becomes the stranger,
and for a moment I don't have to know him.
Yes, masturbating helps...
until it doesn't, because it comes in waves,
and no matter how much I deplete the maelstrom
he birthed into my mind,
it will always reappear, more furious than before.

Three:

No matter how much I hope
when I go to bed, that I will wake up
in the alternate universe where he still loves me,
I will not. I will awaken cradling a pillow
to a phone devoid of notifications.
No matter how much I hope
when I fall asleep
that this was all an insidious nightmare,
from which I will awaken
three months ago
in the heat of his naked chest
and the warmth of eyes that still care for me,
I will not. I will awaken now,
one side of the bed cold and empty.
But that will never stop me from hoping.

Four:

We are so mean to each other.
Him to me, and I to he, and she, and they, and us,
we've become ensnared in fear and forgotten empathy.
Stuck behind our smart phone screens
we treat each other like machines, not humans,
kindness has disappeared from us, like a ghost,
that is why it's called ghosting:

because by doing it you are casting your death
on another person's soul.

He ghosted me, disappeared in the middle of an argument,
ignored me for nine days when he knew it would destroy me,
and in return, I tried to destroy him. Filled his phone with speeches,
monologues that questioned his character,
that used threats as a bargaining chip,
and our story is only the factory version of modern dating.

We are so mean to each other.
We put up our walls one by one,
until we're surrounded on all sides,
and above, and suddenly, we are all imprisoned,
isolated, yearning for connection,
we refuse to accept apologies; or to make peace,
so how can we ever live in peace?
We wear our grudges like medals of honor,
we hurl insults like cannonballs
in retaliation of already having been hit,
we are all on battleships, lost in the fog of gunpowder
and roaring seas, unable to think
among the constant screams and the echo
of shots fired from every direction,
yet we still keep shooting, afraid if we don't
it will be our blood that soaks into the water,
and we ignore the pleas of the others drowning, but
by ignoring, we are building a language of silence.

There has to be a better way.
We have to speak less, and listen more.
We have to forgive, because we want to be forgiven.
We have to stop fucking ghosting each other,
even if it's hard, and instead
show each other some life-affirming empathy and respect.
We have to be willing to work through conflict, because
when you fall halfway down the stairs, you don't
throw yourself the rest of the way down,
you climb the fuck back up.
And we have to open our hearts,
and be vulnerable,
because the pain of being betrayed once
is worth avoiding a lifetime of never letting anyone in.

Five:

He is only afraid.

When he lashes out at me,
he is fighting something unseen,
his indignant silence is a kind of...
scream.

We are only afraid, of each other,
the each other we came to know
in nightmares that kept us awake
and lurked on our hardest days,
afraid of the monsters under our bed
that we slept together to protect each other from,
we are cavemen, me trying to grasp a flame
that only burns me, and him hollering at the rustling bushes outside the cave,
we are kings, tyrants, heads trapped under the guillotine,
and when he cuts my rope I know it's not out of hate,
it's because no one wants to be headless.
So I'll accept my bloody fate. Because he's weak,
and the kingdom we built will still stand past our execution day.

Six:

I will never get over this.

This pain will never leave me.

And that's okay.

There will be days

I feel so fragile

the wind could knock me over,

there will be days

my bones clatter together,

my entire anatomy threatened

by earthquake-sobs,

memories of him threatening

to spill out in every direction

and wedge themselves, lost,

in the cracks of the bathroom tiles

I'm crouched on crying.

But even if broken in a billion places,

there is still me.

There was still us.

Maybe every memory of us stands just as well

on its own,

because sometimes it's more beautiful

to feel a grain of sand between your fingers

than it is to walk down the beach.

I will never get over this,
I will never move on,
but I will move away.
I was broken before him,
yet he made me naive all over again:
he sutured every wound,
healed every scar,
and held my bones still.
Without him I am unstable man,
but one day there will come another
him who will calm my raging waters,
one day I will make the same mistakes for another
him who makes me the same fool in love,
and for that day I can't fucking wait.

Seven:
There is no finite number of
lessons I will learn from losing him.
Our love was a kaleidoscope,
every time I look in it,
turn the glass,
I see him in different colors,
our days together as different shapes,
merging and dividing,
refracting and unifying,
a different picture worth a different thousand words.
The biggest lesson I've learned
is that the eternity
I thought would be occupied by our love
will instead be spent trying to understand
what went wrong with it,
and yet, there will always be
a fragment, a memory, a story,
a picture of us that lingers, eternally:

We were kids once.
Building sandcastles on the beach
planning kingdoms we knew would
wash away with the tide,
but thrilled to soak up the sun,
together. We were kids once.
Hidden under a blanket
past our bedtimes, talking
through cups tied by string, playing battleship

unaware of the damage we were really inflicting,
and giggling to each other about masturbation techniques
we heard about on the playground,
we were kids once,
looking at each other through kaleidoscopes,
marveling at the enigma of each other's faces
innocently exploring the curiosities of each others bodies,
we were kids once...
hiding under the bedsheets,
lingering in the glow of an upturned flashlight,
two souls safe from the surrounding darkness.
Only fun, only this moment, only each other.