

# This is no way to live

## I.

The happiest I've ever been was when I was watching five boys eat twelve tacos each as fast as they could. We all picked teams, trash-talking the others. The boys ended up with stomachaches. We all sat around and drank cheap beer while they moaned and groaned and regretted what they'd done.

Tear composition varies by tear type. This means that tears caused by sadness are chemically different than tears caused by some irritant. Tears of emotion release hormones, one being leucine enkephalin, which is a natural painkiller. Crying, therefore, is supposed to make you feel better.

College is the time you're supposed to find yourself, but I found you instead, and I was okay with that, because it was better somehow.

I remember going to a party and wondering why red cups over other colors. What was wrong with blue cups or green cups or black cups? You said it didn't matter what color the cup was, so long as there was alcohol in it, and I thought it was sad that people just continued in the name of tradition. You laughed at me, because you were always laughing at me, and I'm sorry to say I don't go to parties anymore, but I occasionally buy red cups anyway.

I heard a story once. It goes like this. In beginning of the universe, before the big bang or before creation or whatever your religion tells you happened before, there existed three friends: Life, Fate, and Death. Life and Death fell in love, and for a while, they were happy. But Fate was a jealous person, so she separated them for all of eternity. Life and Death can no longer interact without causing destruction. Fate wrote it into the laws of nature. But every so often, Life will send Death a gift that he gets to keep for all of eternity. When someone dies, that's Life sending Death a gift.

I am sad because sometimes I want to die, and I've never known a love like this.

## II.

I asked you if I could put my coat somewhere. This is how our friendship began. You were drunk and couldn't hear me over the music, so I held my coat up, shaking it out, rainwater sprinkling on my bare legs. You nodded. You showed me your room to put it in, and we didn't speak for the rest of the night.

The day we put you in the ground, it rained and rained and rained, like the earth was crying for you, and as I drove home, I wondered what the chemical makeup of the raindrops on my windshield would look like.

I was sitting by a campfire with my dad. He was drinking a Bloody Mary even though it was ten o'clock at night, and I was getting eaten alive by mosquitoes, but I didn't care. And he was saying to me, "When I was your age, a friend of mine got into a bad car accident. Had to be on ventilators for the rest of his life. That's no way to live. It's better this way."

III.

There's a Chinese proverb that says everyone you will ever meet—whether you know them for a brief moment or for years—is connected to you by a red string. And the string will never break.

I never thought I'd end up this way.

You once told me that no one looked attractive when they cried. You said I should never cry. And, God, I am so sorry about how awful I must have looked driving home in that rainstorm.

My doctor gave me Xanax to help with the times I lie in bed shaking and gasping for air and cannot find a way to make it stop. It makes me tired and blank, and my Mother says this is no way to live.

When I was little, I used to think flowers could come from anything buried in the ground. So I'd take all the pebbles I found in our gravel drive, and I'd plant them outside my bedroom window. They never bloomed. Then I grew up and realized not everything becomes beautiful when you bury it.

IV.

The Chinese never said what becomes of the red string when someone dies.