

On Weeknights

On weeknights,
she painstakingly applies lipstick,
a paint-the-numbers exercise where
she does her best to
stay in the lines
and not stain her teeth
with tell-tale red;
she steadies her hand
as the mascara wand,
a fairy godmother in a tube,
plumps
and makes appear
what wasn't there before.
She squeezes her feet into heels and
wobbles like a bell
chiming the appropriate hour
in her knee length skirt.
"Let's go for a walk,"
she tells the dog,
who plays his part well
by always being ready at the door.
She strolls down the street,
summoning her best impersonation
of someone put together,
not falling apart
at the seams.

On weekends,
she stays home in his old clothes,
her knees peeking through
holes worn by time,
and watches movies,
lips whispering lines
that remind her of him,
as the dog waits
for another weeknight.

Slice of Life

Frozen:

a slice of life extracted,
permafrost edging in,
tainting the feigned perfection
of a memory
carefully preserved in microscopic detail
to show what he wanted
and not what was.

Burn Me Clean

I poke at the bloody hole,
ragged edges stinging,
feel around the space where you were-
the way you filled me up
and still left me wanting,
the way you ripped me open
so I could never be whole again.

It's funny now-
in that soul-crushing way
which is never actually funny
but we say "funny"
because who really wants to think
about the pain we're obscuring-
funny how
you were a security blanket,
a safe haven for my worried heart,
for my mind that never stopped
firing on all cylinders,
until it did,
and now it just fires on one:
you.
Funny how you were,
and then in one decisive moment,
you decided you weren't,
and who was I to say that
you'd gotten it wrong?
That you'd always be,
even when you were no longer.

You were
your favorite shirt,
the one I'll never return,
because dammit,
it looks good on me,
and every time I wear it
I catch that sweet scent
and my head is filled with you,
buttoned up in the softest flannel
as you lift another box
higher than I can reach,
always willing to do those little things
that made my life easier,
until you weren't.

I'm not sure how so much of you
fit in that hole,
how I packed away
even the tiniest pieces-
your smirk, the crinkle of your eye,
your general nonchalance,
your affinity towards devil's advocacy-
but unpacking it has been even harder.

I light the match,
my flicker of hope,
press it to the flesh,
cauterize and sear,
burn myself clean
so I can move forward without you.

Melody

The way we danced-
leaves on a breeze,
a whirlwind of autumn,
taken by the song
only we could hear-
failed to wake the dead,
and they remained
beneath our feet,
tucked safely
in their graves.

I Am

I am my mother when,
exhausted at the end of the night,
I scrub with all my might
to scrape the dredges of the evening meal
from the bottom of the flame-licked pot,
unable to sleep
while it sits in the sink.

I am my father when,
wishing to be alone with a book
and a candle
at a dinner party,
I manage to spin tales
of past exploits
that paint a different picture
than the one in my mind.

I am myself when,
eyes closed, sitting on the couch,
I contemplate the things
I like and dislike
about the person I've become
and weigh them against
the notion of the person
I'd like to be and
the person I once was,
wondering why the tally
never seems to come out quite right.