

## Nine Years

I should start tracking how often I think of you  
the same I do with cigarettes and porn  
and other bad habits  
bringing them into consciousness  
where they can be wrestled with and overborn.  
Nine years in the forgetting of you  
and I can't yet manage it.

I denied you  
—like Peter,  
but only once—  
when you asked me to be your girlfriend.  
Yet I welcomed you home again and again  
four entire seasons  
always smiling  
bathing like a bride before your every arrival  
and never realizing what that meant.  
Assuming safety in distance,  
a box without a label.  
What a fool.

You married the next girl after me.

Who could have been me

and would have

if I was just a little bit better at being a person.

Now she has everything I was too chickenshit to go after

and I still touch myself

to the gold limned light of you.

The gust of your breath

the trace of your veins like roots

the scent of your hair, oddly similar to mine

and how we always ended up sideways on my bed.

You made me safe

a realized being

and not just a thing to cum inside.

I love you, I think

and you're married. So far away you might as well be dead.

And so,

I might as well be.

Inspiration

Inspiration comes like fireworks  
popping at my feet—  
yapping.

I have to pay attention  
The dog only lives so long.

Weight Loss Poem #3: Big Girl Emporium

“What are you here for?”  
A weird way to ask.  
Not, “Looking for anything?”  
Not, “What brings you in?”  
An accusation, like I didn’t belong there.

It made me happy.

## In Objects

An oyster fork in the  
dirt of a crooked mountain  
the tines each struck  
in opposing directions.  
Rescued with a coin  
a single, gummy quarter  
from the oubliette of my cup holder.  
Reborn as a baking fork  
pricking the skin of cakes and quiches.  
The tines don't need to stand in unison  
to know when something's done.

A plastic bowl,  
most assuredly trash  
clasped on either side  
with grasping, witchy fingers  
Its last job was holding pots of Halloween greasepaint.  
It juggles car keys – now – and change  
new coins clanking  
past spidery hands of flaking black paint.  
It guards mundane treasures, yet carefully–  
grateful for its work.

A green tea pot  
chipped.  
A gift from a would-be stepmother  
bankrupted and abandoned  
as so many older women are.  
Ugly and fractured and not sentimental  
yet moved, unused,  
house to house  
like an heirloom.  
Finally freed from its battered box  
put to use every morning.  
Hot water over coffee.  
I don't drink tea.

For Shelby

It shocked me  
how I wept for you.  
More than for my cousin,  
poor thing,  
who shot himself  
on a lonely road.

You were nothing to me  
a coworker  
just a flag of blonde hair.  
But you pierced me with your presence.  
Though we'd barely met  
your smile.  
Though we barely spoke  
your warmth.

My world rolls on like always—  
there's no 'you' shaped hole there—  
but it feels darker anyway  
missing something bright and vital.  
I'm confounded by it  
this cored out, gutted feeling.  
You held the door for me once.  
Once, you took my stuff upstairs.

You walked in the sun with barrettes in your hair,  
I saw that you were smiling.