

### **Battery chemistry**

We spent frigid nights charting courses  
through a dream multiverse. Tiptoeing  
through the entropy that emerges  
when love is confessed after a study break.  
Late night cramming—in the most platonic way.  
We taught each other the way ions separate  
across porous membranes. There are currents  
that flow between them, electricity.

I couldn't cross the barriers you erected.  
I tried to alter crucial elements of me.  
Slough them off then burrow into your arms.  
There are reasons serpents aren't allowed  
to wrestle with gardenias or sample the sweet  
juices of wild berries.

You are still trying to reach this place  
I stumbled into. And I am here. Listening  
to tales of human suffering. Chronicling journeys  
of loneliness and failure. There are people  
who spend their lives in dark rooms,  
waiting for the phone to ring. I wonder.  
How are you?

**Better than she can**

I can love your tiny hands resting on my chest.

Your hair blocking my face like Sarah Bellum

from *Powerpuff Girls*. Your breath smothered by whirring  
from the ceiling fan—cord yanked twice— and the 747s

diving into the clouds above. We try to ignore the neighbors  
across the courtyard. Someone is either being murdered

or they are auditioning for casting couch—she deserves that job.

My imagination wanders like a puppy on a retractable leash.

But there are places minds should not go. Memories and feelings

That are better off repressed. Mental Slocumb Streets

where shots are always fired and love comes up missing.

But I'm learning to grip the leash and yank it taut.

Just enough to apply pressure to the collar

and bring it to a heel. I promise I can love you.

## Defusion

God, I can't shake them. Those words  
played on repeat like the game winning  
touchdown or Michael Jordan's buzzer beaters.  
Over. And over. And over again. Until I start  
to feel like maybe I am them. Over. And over again.  
Until I only see her through lenses darker  
than the tints on a celebrity's Caddy. *Over again,*  
I think. But that was years ago. Now I think  
*Don't check social media. Don't text her.*  
*Forget her words.* Wise mind can only do  
so much. Her words are a baby elephant  
with a dagger for a tusk. The other tusk  
is a leech. I named her Elle. She has ears like Dumbo,  
maroon-colored skin, and an expression like those  
yellow, smiley face stickers attached to the sides  
of back alley dumpsters and stop signs.  
I sing her words slow, cool, and dramatic  
like the Weeknd on "Adaption". I drop a beat  
on the table then throw them into a freestyle.  
I'm a drill rapper today. I ain't got time  
for metaphors, double entendres or punchlines.  
Fuck wordplay. Then I repeat her words  
over. And over. And over again.  
Until they sound like gibberish.

**I don't go outside**

I've spent years crafting statues to security.

Exalting their feet as age chips away

at their demeanor and their backsides fade.

Their faces are unrecognizable.

Weather stripped them of definition.

Their triumphant smiles less so now.

A bit more arrogant. Much more defiant.

I'll be damned.

I can't ghost you.

The unknown would haunt me. Your memories  
already follow me to the depths of my panic.

Even now, as a mob tosses you off your pedestal

I stay beside you. I'm out front with a rifle  
strapped across my shoulders and no bullets  
chambered. You break apart before my eyes.

My shelter crumbles with you.

**Of nothing**

Bits and pieces of me  
fall out of pocket like lint  
after a hot water rinse.  
I admit, it eluded me until now.

When the whole is infinite  
small loses are null. It's a currency  
that holds no value and functions only  
to take up space. I know this now.

Pieces fall often. When I grab my wallet  
or reach for my phone. Each site I visit  
and message I send. Pieces scatter  
to remote places. I feel their longing.

When the hole is infinite, small losses  
are a currency I struggle to manipulate.  
And pieces of me fall out of pocket  
like dirty nickels when searching for change.