

Reassurance

You're okay. *You're okay.*

Love is sneaky.

Sometimes you think it's there when it's not.

Sometimes it comes in disguise, surprising you in ways you wouldn't imagine.

And sometimes, it comes, and it goes.

When it does this, let it in and let it leave.

And then

Wait patiently for it to return.

Because when it does, it will reward you.

It will thank you and

It will wrap flowers around your bones and replace your eyes with the brightest stars.

But for now, as you wait, know that

You're okay. *You're okay.*

Fools

- I. When we were 14, we fell in love
Over skype.
After the first call, when you were in Texas and I in Virginia,
I felt something I hadn't felt before...
Comfortable.
- II. And that's when the late nights and long conversations,
The deep secrets and the ambitious desires,
The silly rituals and movie syncing,
The love,
All the love,
That's when it started.
We were 14,
Young,
Crazy,
And in love.
- III. You were there when I told you about my first track meet.
I was there when you moved to Florida.
You were there when my mom came back.
I was there when you became depressed.
You were there when I got injured.
I was there when you made your first friend.
Around you, I could be totally and utterly and completely and wholeheartedly
And absolutely and fully and perfectly, for the first time,
myself.
After 2 months, you told me you loved me.
After 5, we talked about marriage.
After 12, you visited me for the first time.
After 24, you told me you loved someone else.
- IV. *Someone else.*
But, how?
How could you love someone else when
You held the beating flesh
That kept me alive in your palm.
The one that called your name
Through 12 hour talks and 808 miles between us.
How could you
When all your greatest and biggest,
Your most exciting and most invigorating desires,
Involved *us.*
How when
You spoon fed me promises,
That I now see are empty and hollow,
Corrupted with someone else's name.
But this is no sad love poem.

- He was my first love,
And as we all know,
The first hurts the most.
I cried and yelled and screamed.
I looked up to the sky and begged
Please make me un-love him.
But, as time went on,
My shattered heart regrew.
- V. You have a new girlfriend now,
And you tell me she's a jealous one.
She tells you to stop talking to me.
"Don't worry," you say,
"You're my best friend."
- VI. College season comes around,
And you tell me you are moving in with her.
Obviously out of place, I tell you,
"No, that's a bad idea."
You say you think it'll be fun.
The next day, you ask me how college applications are going.
I say good, and ask you the same.
There is no response.
There is no response for days,
Weeks,
Months,
A year.
I am blocked on everything,
Unable to see how you are with her,
Or to congratulate you on your dream school.
Unable to ask *why*.
But you have forgotten.
This is what this poem is about.
- VII. You have forgotten the times of advice at 3 in the morning.
You have forgotten the tissues I used to wipe your tears.
You have forgotten the talks about sadness,
And death.
You have forgotten the day long drive I took to see you,
Or the flights you booked.
You have forgotten the excitement of our first kiss.
You have forgotten the times of anticipation at airports so strong,
That you threw up before seeing me.
You have forgotten the vows we made to *prove them wrong*.
You have forgotten the secrets we shared,
The love we shared,
The boredom we shared,
And the beautiful friendship after.
- VIII. **You have forgotten.**
Like a fool, you traded away a lifetime of happiness,

For a day in the sun.
And like a fool,
I let you break my heart twice.

For me, life is

Full of almosts.

How I dedicated my life to a sport and almost made it, tricking my legs into thinking they'd won but had to whisper "no, almost."

How I interview for something that lights a fire in my heart, telling myself that *there's no doubt you'll get this!* But had to stay up the night after the phone call that fizzles the fire, thinking to myself, *almost*.

How lovers pass by, flagging me down like a hitchhiker making me think that this couldn't almost be it because it *is it*.

But it almost was.

Meaning it never was.

But almost.

They whisper that they are almost falling when I've already hit the ground, almost pulling the parachute but almost always pulling it too late; blood seeping into the ground that is them and them almost jumping but, instead, driving the plane elsewhere.

"No," I whisper to my broken heart. "Almost."

It's me, almost keeping a friend close, me almost remembering my wallet, me almost coming to work on time, me almost catching love at the right time, but learning that time is not full of almosts. It is always and never and yes and no. And it's almost always never a yes.

But almost.

It's me, almost tripping over the sidewalk because I'm laughing too hard, me almost choking on my food because you, somehow, lost your shoe last night, me almost turning my being into a canopy for you and you only, me almost calling you and confessing every single feeling in my bones. Confessing that "I've always loved you, and I'll never stop loving you."

Not almost always.

Not almost never.

Just always, and never.

But almost.

Because I've learned that a life full of almosts can save and destroy. It can mend and it can break.

And, it's me, almost destroying myself, almost breaking.

But almost, always, not.

The Answer

The thermostat is the battleground for my father and I.
Rarely do we speak to each other-
We've learned that when our mouths open,
Rarely do we speak good things-
So, we don't speak.
Instead, we use the thermostat to communicate.
When I come home, the temperature is at 76.
He is sitting at the dining room table,
Chewing on a banana.
I quickly lower it down to 74
And walk into my room.
The roar of the AC signals the first attack.
There's no *sigh*
Or words under the breath.
Just the sound of a chair sliding,
A creak of a footstep,
The subtle beeping on the device,
And the abrupt stop of the cool air from the vent above.
Sometimes I'll let it go,
Leaving the thermostat at his temperature,
Raising my white flag.
Others, the light from the device will stay lit
Because it hasn't been untouched in hours.
We rally up our troops and prepare for a long night of
Rising from chairs and
Sliding out of beds.
Recently, I've gone in the middle of the night;
Before I finally lay to sleep, I shimmy out of the covers
And creep to the thermostat.
76 degrees.
I drop it down to 73.
When I wake up,
I'm sweating.
I roll my eyes even before they open.
I step outside after brushing my teeth and take a look at the thermostat.
78 degrees.
My father sits in his LazyBoy,
Feet propped and face emotionless,
I change it to 74 before I pour myself cereal.
He gets up to use the bathroom and glances at the thermostat
Right as the rumbling from the AC signals the change in temperature.
His shuffle doesn't stutter.
He doesn't make a sound.
He just changes the temperature back.

Each *beep* replaces
A shout from across the room.
Each number changed robs
My mother of another sad prayer.

Each roar from the AC substitutes
Tears that would have fallen.
Each creak of the floor supersedes
Another word that we didn't mean to say but
Flew out of our dirty mouths anyways.

It's a solution;
It's a saint, a miracle,
The answer.
And so our battle continues.
The chairs slide, and the wooden floors creak beneath us.
And our mouths remained closed,
Allowing the roaring AC to yell the curse words for us.