

Title of Series: **I Hate You, Please Don't Leave Me?**  
*Poems about Trauma and its Sequelae*

Poem #1: **Setting the Stage**

Smitten at fourteen feels more like  
the world dusted in golden glitter:  
hearts racing, hormones raging,  
losing your virginity equated to joining an exclusive club,  
your one way ticket into womanhood.

When I think about losing mine,  
I tend to confuse tragedy and luck.  
But I guess that's what I feel  
when I think about how  
it could have been your basement floor,  
the glow of a stupid comedy on TV,  
your lips brushed against my ear,  
asking if I was okay too many times.

Or it could have been  
at that party I wish I hadn't gone to,  
left asking, "are you sure that was just vodka?"  
as greedy hands that come from nowhere  
rip what little innocence is left right out of my chest,  
thrown over someone's shoulder like a rag doll.

The room spins and the walls collapse  
as the hyenas go in for the kill,  
jeering,  
like my limp body is an indication of my weakness,  
of my promiscuity,  
like they won a trophy from a game they cheated at.

I tried to tell you,  
but I didn't have the words to say it,  
so I told you that I made a mistake,  
as if I bought pistachio ice cream rather than mint chocolate chip,  
instead of "I'm scared."  
Instead of, "the color and texture were stolen from my world."

It somehow feels like  
I'm trapped in a black and white sketch comedy,  
and everyone seems to get the joke but me.  
Help. Me. I'm. Drowning.

I can tell you don't understand  
by the way you seem to hold your composure  
and simultaneously recoil with disgust.  
And suddenly, I feel like the pair of shoes you saved for,

scuffed in a week's wear,  
and returned to the store for a refund,  
knowing they'd be too damaged to ever sell again.

### Poem #2: **Paisley**

Paisley was born out of trauma,  
risen from the ashes  
like a phoenix she never asked to be.  
She's the mask cemented in a smile,  
my marionette strings through the malaise.  
If states of being were horoscopes,  
her sign would be zen,  
but her rising sun—wild.  
In younger years,  
I learned that Paisley could be versatile,  
a neutral spirit  
obscured in any tincture.  
The only problem was  
no one ever knew whether they would get  
sweet or spicy, or ghost pepper fiery,  
and it turns out that  
neither did she.

### Poem #3: **Elektra**

Elektra is Paisley's playful companion.  
Though she has a magnetic force field of her own,  
add chemicals to the pair,  
and out comes recklessness  
akin to a life saver dropped into a coke bottle—  
Now isn't that ironic?

Elektra is slinky like a cat:  
Barely there but somehow  
weaving through your shins,  
Throwing off your balance,  
And then disappearing in thin air.

She is the siren out at sea,  
promising sailors of the oasis  
between her legs,  
tempting them  
with the fake tune of a love battle cry  
luring them with the hope of salvation,  
until finally,  
they crash.

### Poem #4: **Lola**

It's hard to epitomize Lola's character

without sketching the imagery of  
a five-alarm fire in a city neighborhood  
of stunning pre-war brownstones,  
relentless in its destruction,  
threatening to erase whole generations-old foundations  
In one fell swoop.

In these fires,  
one can never assume  
how far they'll spread,  
who might be swept up in her flames,  
Or whether anything  
could be salvaged from the rubble.

But the similarity that Lola embodies most?  
She'd blame you for lighting the match,  
though she's the catalyst  
that let the implosion expand,  
Leaving you in the ashes  
of the remains of your belongings wondering,  
"what did I do to deserve this?"