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The Fear that Left Me // It Was Your Fault

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The Fear that Left Me

i've started picking wildflowers every time i go to the bar. three tequila sunrises at sundown while crocodile-eyed townies watch. blackout & legs crumpled to the floor, i'll dream of a sandy motel far away. gag under a splintered smile when strangers call me a walking receipt—three more green tea shots for my rosy cheeks & never ending conversation:

"tell us about yourself!"

i don't remember any september before this. i don't even remember this one. i am a rotting crab apple stuck to the bottom of a shoe. overcooked marshmallow rot. my love is stuck on concrete & in between smokers teeth—i don't want to tell you why. i want to smoke cigars & play pianos & sink into quicksand.

"tell us about yourself."

once i vowed no other love was better than the one that killed. twenty not so hard to swallow pills rushing in—the sperm of a skeleton, like the tadpoles little boys catch in nets—love was pumped out of my stomach into a plastic bag. the sensation was tender but the emotion was cruel. nurses with picket fences mutter:

"what a shame"

like some dumpster diver who finds a broken CD. comforting your family while they cry in the lobby. waiting for your breath to spin (as if dusty records were even worth a listen) the skies were drained. to jump out of the car would be both too easy and too hard, a man with a coffee rim blouse told me:

"do you want to kill yourself?"

maybe. my brother couldn't stop staring at the chemtrails (like a fucking phoebe bridgers song) constant thunder surrounded our haunted house. a reminder from some higher source that the boys on tricycles should cross the street if they want to stay boys.

“do you remember where you were a year ago?”

no. my bedside table reeks of beer. neighbors praise with tylenol-coated authenticity when I'm healthy. this college town is a trial prescription—doctor since birth thinks it will reinvent bones. i'd like to do coke in the bathroom of some crummy dive bar but instead i will read brochure about suicide prevention month.

“what of affection, then?”

new kind of love is caught in the telephone lines above. a tree grows from a stump and i am smiling. stare out my apartment window screen, watch the flies creep in. only act disgusted when my roommates scream. new kind of love does not kill & instead is placed lightly on my tongue. invites her over to do homework—actually does the homework. leaves dying and new relationships cracking autumn skies (like a brick to glass) make an instagram account for new cat: love will kiss my nose.

“and what of me?”

you are the fear that has left me. i wear lemon perfume and kiss glassy lips. become a moonflower, the most romantic of plants. i am not graffiti under a bridge. i will hang in the louvre. i will become a still-life clementine. seal my eyes shut for collarbones and shoulders and spine. laugh under pink midnight sheets and kiss best friends—you will become the shadow. i will become the wildflowers, picked from main street every time i go to the bars.

JENNA MURRAY

It Was Your Fault

boys with pocket knives used to carve
their initials into the bark of trees; now they cut
into your flesh. pins sticking in,
a little plush tomato no one can eat;

your grandmother fixed the stitches
after a dare ripped your tube top off & stuffed it
into a bottle, sent out to sea—looking
for the razor in your candy, you forgot
your red solo cup & suddenly

you are an empty plate:
did you put on your coconut cream?
there is no seasoning
in the cupboards of sexual greed,
an oasis of free roofie where you forget
to count your drinks.

your legs were a fabric so silky
they couldn't resist threading their bones in between.
thank your skeleton for hiding
beneath an ugly coat of paint
this weekend when the varsity swim team
decides you are not worth a \$100 fee.

the pixie dust you loved at age five
was laced with a kiss & a sniff

sold your vulva to a group of lucky men.
their guns aimed straight for your head
as the sunlight washed in, all over your face:

you questioned the taste
of their holy communion, confirmed into the religion of pinned down
ecstasy, when broken eyelashes & irresistible drool scabbed your cheeks,
I heard you had to watch their brothers baptize at the sight of your shrunken torso, bent
over a composite of hairy legs & unkempt beards & lighthearted sin.