

Regret in X Parts

I.

When I break it off with you to see someone else, you don't plead
but instead tell me what we both deserve: telescope
aimed at a full moon on a summer night, far away from the city,
no clouds. I sit here on the park bench, look you in the teeth,

II.

& silently make predictions
about my predictable behavior:
how I will misremember this moment
to make it hurt less, blame it on a year
of rain, commitment issues,
Cancer season. That we hadn't
even slept together yet: irrelevant.
Everything is suddenly
& unbearably permanent, footprint,
not in the sand, in the concrete,
unweathered despite the weather.
I could come just from kissing you. I know

III.

from our walks together
the three bay windows
framing the kitchen of the apartment
you're moving into next week,

that I want to press you into them
until we've popped everything
out of place & ruined it,
until we're rolling around
in the front yard, on display & feral
as anything we could find
at the edge of this city,
until we don't know our bodies
from the dirt, our fingers from the earth,
& how many

IV.

hours of our lives
we've spent asking
is it too late?
You tell me we cannot be friends

V.

right now. *Conflict
of interest.* Tell me
that if I call you up
months from now, maybe
years, & tell you
this was the best thing
I ever did for myself,
that I'm so in love,
or, if I tell you this is the worst
mistake of my life,

VI.

your response would be the same:
I support you & respect you.
I want to paint your walls
& mop your floors, unpack
your boxes to touch every single thing
you've ever touched in your whole life,

touch you by proximity,
luggage, literal baggage, I want it,
your hands beautiful & I've told you that, so

VII.

when I walk you to your car we don't
hug & I know it is because
we cannot stand our bodies,
our desire pumping
& deflating. I put on my sunglasses
so you can't see my eyes,
but you know me by now,
know I am about

VIII.

to cry.
Stare at something long enough
& soon you won't see it.
Last month

IX.

you got out of bed,
middle of the night
& came over just to kiss me,
said, *do you feel special?*
Yes. We kissed for hours
until our lips chapped & swelled,
until my breath shot from my nose
like a race, until our bodies

X.

could not get any closer.
For every time you ran your fingers
gently through my hair, you pulled it.

When I spend the night, first time

you don't ask me to stay, you tell me, have this way
 of demanding things—I flip the light switch
 & take off my clothes. In bed, you climb
 on top of me, your hips in my hands
 a sudden harvest & I say grace. Next morning,
 first thing you say: *I'm gonna need you
 to make out with me.* I want to kiss you
 but have no toothbrush, go to the bathroom
 & use my fingers to smear toothpaste all over my teeth.
 Gargle, spit. I come back to you & you smile, tell me
 I'm thorough, could hear me through the wall.
 I kiss you long & hard until I have to go to work,
 the minutes whole days & hardly seconds.
 When we walk to your car, the sun is an asterisk.
 I am indebted to making corrections—
 something is always omitted
 & for this I am always sorry.
 You drive me home & I tell you the truth—
I feel myself pulling back.
 Dating in my 30s: almost, almost, almost.
 I went to a reading last month & the writers all agreed
 there are two kinds of gays: sad gays & horny gays.
 They are the same. The last woman I loved,
 I left. Most women, I've left. My therapist says
patterns. Most days I cannot
 understand my sadness. But you understand,
say it's okay, we should take some space.

You understand & because of this,
when I get out of your car, we cannot touch.
The sun is an asterisk & so is the morning
& so is the gravel kicked up
when your wheels spin, when you leave
because I've asked you to.

At My Grandma's Funeral I Think Only of My Grandfather

When my mother carries her ashes up the church's aisle
he is hitting her. *On Eagle's Wings* & he is hitting her.
My sister reads Ecclesiastes, *there is*
an appointed time for everything. No. He is hitting her.
A time to love & a time to hate, he is hitting her.
The Lord is kind & merciful & he is hitting her.
I watch a candle burn & he is hitting her.
Whatever the gospel reading, he is hitting her.
The priest offers no protection. My uncle, the petitions,
may she rest in peace, but he is hitting her. He is hitting her
in the kitchens & bedrooms of houses I've never been in.
He is hitting her in basements I never found the steps to
that contain decades of family pets:
cats, bunnies. He is hitting them too.
He is hitting all five of his kids,
especially my mother. There was a time
when they were small enough
to fit under the beds, when safety was knowing
how to contort your body.
Be not afraid but he is hitting her.
His eyes triggers, his hands the finger, yes,
& the gun & the bullet & the shot
but not the recoil. My aunts bearing gifts
he is hitting her. *Taste & see* & he
is hitting her. My father giving me a look
for not taking communion & he is hitting her.
He is looking at her sewing clothes

& he is hitting her. Looking at her making dinner,
hitting her. He is raping her, must've been, & that's how
my family was made. I am having flashbacks
that don't even belong to me. My mother refused
to pass this on, had four kids
she didn't know what to do with, so she stayed
away from us, afraid of what could happen
if she got mad. Trauma hanging in the air
of my life by proxy, the heavy hand he hit her with.
In Ohio & Indiana, he is hitting her. He is hitting her
on a boat up on the Great Lakes. He is out in California
with my uncle & he wants to hit her. He comes back
from the west coast, wants to hit her, but she is nowhere,
her last few decades spent without him, the only relief
in the this morning. My mother takes her ashes,
last time, & he is hitting her. *Here I am,*
Lord & he is hitting her.