

Snow in Madrid

Before the feeling
of this last heartbreak,
I knew you as a
boy who was eighteen
but looked thirty. Like

you smoked cigarettes,
or at least knew more than
you did. Your real age showed in
blue jeans, torn shoes, and
ignoring your check

engine light until
we broke down in a
library parking lot.
I know I should have
touched your cheek, or

said something besides
your name, but no
other words came to
me, except "you." I
remember, in our

haze of Triple A
phone calls, how you told
me you loved me in
Spanish, even though I
do not speak Spanish.

I picked out words like
“luz,” “vida,” “amor.”
I stole meanings from
the bank of my distant
childhood memories—

from my father, who
was born in Spain and
never really left.
He told me that I
should learn to speak his

post-Iberian
romance language. I
thought he might have said
this so we could talk
in a secret code,

like the one he and
his brother created
on an army base in Germany—
the made-up language of
their shared loneliness.

I thought of our own
language, made up of
near-kisses and
expressions of love
without ever loving.

Shivering in the
parking lot that night,
as snow fell and your
panic began to
set in at the sub-

zero temperature
of late December,
I felt your hands pull
away, leaving my face
bare and cold. I

wanted nothing more
than to ask you what
you meant— how “love” fit
into the air around us.
I wondered what it had

to do with anything
at all. I hoped my
father saw snow in
Madrid— a January happiness.
I considered how much

longer I and other
men would find ways
to say I love you
that not even we
could understand.

For Patrick, After A Party¹

Here is where it starts:

I watched you blow chunks
on the floor, in your trash can,

after you tried and failed
three different times to
dignify your hangover with

a finale in the bathroom,
where not twelve hours ago
we were kissing

(not having sex,
like everyone thought).

Or: days before the vomit, when

you showed me that poem
and lent me your worn-down
favorite book the evening after.

Maybe before that,
when you asked me to drink
with your friends that first night.

Or maybe earlier that same day,
when you wordlessly
demonstrated how to smoke

a bowl, lighting me up
and craning my head to
exhale to the ex-cop next door.

¹ Title derived from Frank O' Hara's *For Grace, After A Party*.

Maybe that night when me
and Lizzie saw you in that play.
I was painfully, stoically sober

when I fell in love
with your body in a corset
and went home trying

to find your name
so I could ask around
and see if there was anyone

you could say you loved.
You say I'm perceptive
but I think I just notice

you.

Eat

i.

In the kitchen,
I cut open:
a mango,
a quart of strawberries,
a difficult bag of flour.
I lay the dough to rest,
simmer the strawberries,
and slice the mango into
two strong halves.
Setting the pie away,
I shed the skin
from the yellow fruit
and eat it hungrily.

ii.

I watched two men play
tennis from the balcony
of an old ex-boyfriend's house.
I shed my skin for a moment
and let only my eyes
watch the motion
of their arms
back and forth.
Two eyes floating
back and forth.

iii.

My face disappeared
into the mountain
of your shoulders.
I wondered
when your hair would turn gray,
if love or hate would change
the fine details of my face.
I let you pass through me,
your laugh a pleasant pain
in the valley of my ribs.
I bit the back of your hand until
I tasted blood,
until I swallowed you whole.

iv.

We made dinner,
measuring cups passed
back and forth
between us,
little glass points where
our fingers brushed.
We ate.
We made love.
We shared a cigarette.
You did not see
the shape that I took,
though your hands
stilled around me.

v.

I thought this might
be all love is—
our consuming.