Silly Goose Chapbook
Overview/Excerpt
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after Siken I

All of this must be part of loving:
The rise, the fall,
The blood on my lower lip.
What is love is there’s nothing physical left behind?
I realize I’m in love with you in a car on the way to Indianapolis. I’m wearing pajamas and it’s 10 in the morning and I’m eating Cheez-It’s in the backseat and the radio is talking about the election again. We’re texting and I say, “I’m sick of doing math” and you say “buy a calculator” and I say “what if I lose it” and you say “just tape it to the wall” and I start laughing my ass off. My mother asks me what’s so funny and I can’t even answer her. It’s June and the buildings are casting shadows on my ankles as I speed past them and we’re both laughing, I can feel it, I know you’re laughing with me, and then my stomach drops and I think, oh. okay.

I’m not a pessimist normally.

But then it’s two weeks later and I tell you I love you and you don’t reply and then it’s July and I tell you I miss you and you hang up the phone and then it’s September and you tell me how you wish you were anywhere except in the same city as me and I say I’m sorry and you walk away. It doesn’t have anything to do with me but it feels like it does. You would apologize if I asked but I don’t want to ask, don’t think I’m allowed to, don’t think I should need to even if I am. I go home to do my math homework and I can’t find my calculator and my brother says I should just tape it to my desk if I’m going to be an airhead. I want to laugh but it’s not funny anymore. Or maybe it’s only funny with you.

Whichever. What’s the difference.

All of this is just a memory now.
-Is that what you wanted to hear?

Okay, you caught me.  
I fell in love with being underwater.  
The boats came looking for survivors and I held my breath and hid, 
    tried to staunch the bleeding  
    before something hungry smelled me through the trees.  
I heard the howls but didn’t know the dogs would send me sprawling.  
I didn’t know their teeth would be that sharp.  
I’ve never been one to heed warnings-  
    always leaving my flashlights at home and drinking water from strange pools.  
I thought that I was thirsty but it’s probably the boredom.  
It’s just that I convinced myself you’d have a lantern.  
It’s just that I asked you ten times if you wanted me to leave and you said “no” in every way except with words  
    and it really does feel like what you wanted to say was “yes”.
the third time someone says I sound like a battered wife

it starts raining at 10 am and doesn’t stop. i take four tylenol, then two more. put down the bottle. pick it up and slip it in my purse. reorganize the tupperware. throw out all the old fruit. take out the trash and leave it by the curb. drink a liter of water. tell my mother i’m dehydrated. feel empty in more places than my mouth. reread all our messages. delete your number. take a thirty-minute shower. add it back in. watch the irons on the toaster turn red. realize we don’t have any butter. eat it dry instead. watch the shadows spread across the kitchen. pretend you are in it. talk about you in the future tense. convince myself you want me to stay.
Gag

I am trying too hard to wash
the taste of you out of my mouth
and i end up gagging on my toothbrush,
coughing up blood and bile,
yesterdays lunch,
sugar pills,
diet coke,
three sticks of plain celery.
but never you.

There is too much of you in me
to come out the way you went in.
A love letter about a dream I once had

I keep writing you letters that sound like love poems and feel like suicide notes. Wanting to die and wanting to be loved by you have the same hurt. It is easier to fill a bathtub than to lie down in one. It is easier to write poems than to tell you how often I think about your hands.

I had a dream once about us baking cakes together. You didn’t want to get flour on your new skirt so you sat at the table and painted your nails while I read off ingredients. The counter was a mess of blue frosting. We both blew out the candles even though it wasn’t anyone’s birthday. I woke with a pounding heart and the taste of buttercream on my lips.

It comes back to me in flashes. My eyes unfocus and you are at my kitchen counter again, blowing on wet polish and drawing pictures in spilt sugar. I said I stopped loving you because I realized it would never work. I lied. I know it wouldn’t work but it didn’t stop me from loving you. Didn’t stop me from hurting, from crying into my cake batter, from burning my hands on hot pans. I hear your laugh in the beep of my oven timer. Ghosts of your handprints stain my cookbooks. It’s strange to miss someone who was never really there.
Calmer Thoughts

It has been a month since I last spoke to you
but you are still the only thing I want to write poetry about.
It’s like my hands only know how to write out your name.
But I don’t use names in these poems, do I?
It’s just You and Me.
Electrons. Bad Habits.

I’m learning how to phrase things in a way that doesn’t imply
some kind of death at the end of the poem.
I’m still gasping for air, but the adrenaline is gone.
Instead I’m working on my backstroke.
I’m rubbing saltwater on my gills to make them grow faster.

Me and my drowning metaphors.
Me and my obsession with water.
Me and You. Me and You. Me and You.
Tuesdays

It is not dawn or dusk. I wake up with my sheets crumpled around my knees.  
Downstairs, there are no packages at my doorstep.  
I don’t feel the urge to cook breakfast,  
don’t wish someone was there to cook one for me.  
I eat an orange without thinking about the juice on my hands.  
It’s Tuesday. Nothing reminds me of anything else.  
There is no mourning, no yearning, no loss,  
just me and my laundry, me and my cold kitchen floor.  
I keep trying to turn everything into a poem,  
but sometimes the body just acts.  
Not every moment holds a revelation.