

## COMMUNION

I know a boy who called his girlfriend's body a "crime scene." Dad, my body *is* a crime scene. My body is lint and gasoline and matchstick. My body is a brush fire. It's ticking, Dad, a slow alarm. I have rain boots. Lots of them. It isn't raining anymore. The words are coming back, Dad. The way they fit and jump in the mouth. I want ice cream and long letters. I want to read long love letters but I don't think he loves me. I think I'm used up. I think I'm the grit under his nails, the girl who looks good in pictures. I don't think he loves me. I think they broke me, Dad. I think I drink too much and it's because they broke me. I heard about two girls recently, two women crushed like cherries in a boy's jaw. It opened me, Dad. My body is melted wax, it is ripe and stink and bent. It is a mistake. I walk like an apology. I don't hate men, Dad, I don't. I want a washing machine. I want someone else to do the dishes, someone to walk the dog. I have a hornet in my head, Dad. A hornet. She's an angry bitch. She hurls herself against my skull. She stings. And stings. I know I don't make sense, Dad. This is the problem. I'm a sick girl, a crazy wishbone. I have razors under my tongue. I'm sorry I cut you, Dad, I'm so—so sorry. I gave you a card for Father's Day once, it said you were my hero. You are. Your laugh is a thunderclap, you love like surgery. I think they broke me, Dad. I can't erase their faces. I want to swim, Dad. Remember when I used to hopscotch? I used to make you laugh. My feet are hot. The bottoms of my feet are scorched sand, August asphalt. My body is a slug, a mob of sticky wet rot. No one touches me anymore because I'm rot. Because my body is a spill no one wants to clean up. They cracked me open, Dad, I know you don't want to hear about it. You don't want to hear how they scissored me, how they gnawed me like raw meat. No one wants to hear how they made me drink lemon juice, how they kicked the dog, how they upturned the furniture, no one wants to hear how my skin turned to a dark thick of purple and black and lead. I watch the homeless a lot, Dad. I watched a man with a cup of coins and chips of skin carved out of his face. He had freckles. He needs medicine, Dad. He

needs to stop the hornet. My body is a hive. I am red ants and jellyfish.  
A yellow sickness. My body is a used condom in an alley in Jersey City.  
I don't think he loves me, Dad. My body is a fetus in a biohazard tank.  
A Polaroid pinned to a corkboard in Brooklyn. I think I'm hurt, Dad. I  
think I was the tough girl for too long. My body is a wafer, a thin, soft  
melt on a choir boy's tongue.

## THE TELLING

She is a tornado.

He is a man. He is solid and humble.

She tells the story three times, convinced  
he does not understand. He is trying.

The story is about an elephant and a mermaid.

No, the story is about a millipede in a thicket of roses,  
a prized buckskin horse and fifty lashes.

She is talking gibberish. He is trying to understand but she  
is thunderbolt. Her tongue, a spear.

The dog is hiding in the back corner of a dark room.

The man wants to sit with the dog. She is melting.

Her face pools in her lap. Freckles pile at her feet.

There is nothing in the room that has not been hurled.

She is science like this. An atom, separating.

Finally, the story comes, like flood. Its mud seeps in  
from under the doorjamb, rising. They are standing  
ankle deep in water and sludge. He understands now.

He is a spiced wound. He wants firearms. Hit-men. A brutal justice.

All the while, the window is sitting with its mouth open,  
spilling their hot storm into the courtyard,

where the neighbors have come to their sills,  
elbows propped, hungry

like vultures.

## 40 LOVE LETTERS

Dear Dennis,  
I still think of you.

Dear Andre,  
I saw you kiss her.  
I haven't looked back.

Dear Patrick,  
You're just too young.

Dear Eric,  
I said horrible things about you.  
Your teeth are fine,  
it's the rest of you I don't like.

Dear Greg,  
Thank you for the poem, for every single scar.

Dear William,  
I love you, simple.  
I like that we will never be *we*.

Dear Jay,  
The bruises fell off eventually.

Dear Michael,  
I'll never be enough to fill the shoes  
that will one day stand at your side.

Dear Ben,  
I did read your letters.  
All of them.

Dear Freeman,  
I'll never stop looking over my shoulder,  
boots laced, ready to run.

Dear Jon,  
I'll always love you.  
You are all there ever was.

Dear Derek,  
There was no one thing,  
your everything is impossible.

Dear Eddie,  
We are refracting magnets.  
We will battle this to the end.

Dear Dennis,  
I still think of you.

Dear Ryan,  
Sex under the streetlight was a delicious accident.

Dear Kevin,  
Your kiss came too late.  
My lips were already dancing in the other room with Jon.

Dear Ethan,  
No.

Dear Joseph,  
I said you were too pretty.  
They said to try it anyway.  
They are fools.

Dear Avery,  
You are the definition of *unrequited*.

Dear Skippy,  
I'm sorry about the whiskey  
and the tampon.  
I'm sorry I never called you.

Dear Nate,  
Until you mocked my smile, I was yours.

Dear Marc,  
I like your wife too much.  
Is your brother still single?

Dear Mitch,  
You were my biggest mistake.  
I'm sure that only makes your smile more sinister.

Dear Allen,  
While you poured Guinness for Patrick,  
I pictured you bending me over the bar.

Dear Graham,  
I'd have swallowed that bullet.

Dear Miguel,  
You said a man never forgets his first redhead.  
What color are my eyes?

Dear Dennis,  
I still think of you.

Dear Francis,  
I'd have broken you in half.

Dear Chris,  
I'm sorry I stalked you.  
I'd try to forget me, too.

Dear Dex,  
I can't be with you again.  
Just accept it.

Dear Dr. Matthews,  
No.  
I'll have you fired.  
Again.

Dear Aiden,  
I wrote a poem about you.  
It's everyone's favorite.  
I find it trite.

Dear Logan,  
I think I finally stopped wanting you.

Dear Cynthia,  
I was drunk.  
I thought you were, too.

Dear Ricky,  
Maybe it was the red dress  
or because I was fifteen.  
Your brother married my mother  
on the same day I first touched your cock.  
Maybe you're still a pervert.  
Call me.

Dear Jeff,  
I was your biggest mistake.

Dear Robert,  
You are more than beer and vomit.  
You are more than I could ever put into a poem.

Dear Dennis,  
I still think of you.

Dear Dennis,  
I keep your photos in a box.  
Each one, still in its frame.