

AT FIRST SIGHT

When she stops kissing you
with her mouth open,
find the screw driver.

Buy a newly cut shank of beef.
Leave so much blood in the kitchen
she has to ask what happened.

When she no longer calls you *baby*,
hide all the silverware
between the couch cushions.

Send her there to sleep.
If she does not complain,
let the sinks in the bathroom overflow.

Bake the wedding photos
in the dryer. Stand in
the middle of your flood.

Call her name backwards, forwards.
Wave your arms like your chest is a runway.
She is the plane you are crashing.

When she does not reach
for you, pretend
it is the first time

you've met.

MISPLACING THEIR RING FINGERS

The summer my parents lost their marriage like so many magnets kicked under the refrigerator, my cousin and I named trees after babysitters we never had. We lived in our bathing suits, washed our hair in pond water and sunburned.

(Once, my mother slammed the screen door so hard, I comforted the hinges.) I taught my cousin how to make face paint out of spit and dirt. She taught me to swim underwater.

(Once, I found my father weeping on the bed they did not share anymore.) On the green carpet of summer, we played until the cicadas, dressed in dusk, called us to dinner. We kissed goodnight and I ran home barefoot in the dark.

(Once, I sat between my parents and placed their hands in my lap like a seatbelt. I do not remember this.) To this day, walking at night on that creaking road still reminds me of wolves.

FOR MY EXES

1
on the little league
field we traded virginities
like baseball cards.

2 & 3
I do not regret
leaving you, but there are things
we still don't speak of.

4
still masturbate while
thinking about you. feel used
in an empty room.

4
the first day we met,
I told you I missed you
already. I still do.

5
you kissed me so hard
my lips bruised. I still look for
you in the mirror.

6
If I wrote you a
love poem, it would smell like
ash. I burned many.

SILT

in this town, you don't buy new
things before October, not until after
the back-to-school clothing has gone on sale.

you only shower twice a week, only go to school
when you have to: when you can't find a dollar
in your mother's purse to spend at the arcade.

you go to parties where the sweating necks
of beer bottles stumble through corn fields.
a handle of cheap vodka, a lip swollen with chew.

here, you don't go to college.
at home, your father speaks only to the wallpaper,
tells it what debt feels like soaked in bourbon.

you tack pictures of naked women
and 12-point bucks above your pillow.
you dream of floods.

SOME LIKE IT HOT

*“Hollywood’s a place where
they’ll pay you a thousand dollars for a kiss,
and fifty cents for your soul.”*

—Marilyn Monroe

It took the embalmer three days to prepare your body.

He removed a half moon of flesh from the base
of your hairline; sutured it as tight as your corset
to reduce the postmortem swelling of your pretty little neck.
Those infamous breasts deflated as a result of the autopsy.
Under your favorite chartreuse dress, you were stuffed
like a doll with scraps of cotton.

Marilyn, you were our first wet dream, our first taste of sweat.
Your lips pursed like two virgins shivering in anticipation.
We knew you were a good kisser just by looking at you –
the kind of woman who made wives dig their nails
into the forearms of their husbands.

When did you start believing you looked better in photographs?

You were found naked in bed, clutching a telephone,
flat-line dial tone singing you to sleep.
We all pretended you were trying to call us.