

In my new life, I must learn everything again.

My friends are patient. They gather my coat and bag and say, *let's get something to eat.*

More and more, I manage on my own, lift my arms to wash my hair, thread my legs through underwear and pants, then let in wind, and speak a bit when spoken to.

Nights

Are each the same.

I roam the bounds of my tiny room, opening drawer after drawer,

Hoping to find something

That belonged to him.

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I take the long, dumb walk to work,

Bring my bad attitude and forget my keys and wallet. My new uniform is a gray sweater that doubles as sleepwear. I smoke with my hair down so the smell stays.

Performing the required movements to remain employed, I lob needless lies at coworkers who dare come my way. I put a stapler in my purse.

At lunchtime my work-husband claims he no longer likes the salad place we've stood in line for every day for six months. *suck a dick*, I type in the company chat, and watch the cursor blink.

Back home, I crawl under the covers. My apartment is small enough that I can both shut the door and turn the knob on the stove without removing myself from bed.

This is helpful for my new lifestyle.

Shrines of his photographs, trinkets, and scraps of his  
handwriting form on my windowsills and dressers like  
birds' nests.

I lie in bed and stare into the messy monuments in search  
of signs from the beyond.

I dream I am  
a woman under water, wordless and unmoving.

Sometimes, he is there. He holds his face and cries.

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I am not a New Yorker and will not praise this scaffolding-covered city we keep building forever and ever, amen.

Only occasionally do I still see him, like when someone on a Citi Bike swerves playfully or shakes a mass of curly hair.

Walking the streets takes extreme effort, but even my bare-minimum life requires it.

When my phone dies, I am instantly and desperately lost.

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I know I am embarrassing myself.

I try to calibrate the distances. Art requires careful theatrics.

Yes, be more cold.

Be ventriloquizer. Quoter.

Don't make a feast of cutlery.

Help. Is a beautiful thing to say.

Surrender.

When I had butterflies I couldn't shake he'd scoop me up and  
lie on top and Squeeze Those Nerves Right Out.

So

what now?

I empty my pockets of odd little flyers and tear-off numbers for pest solutions and local handymen. I save them; some may prove critical at the end of the world.

The bravest friends still drop by. Today, their quest is laundry and to separate me from my sweater.

Alas, I am victorious.

I lie to my friends about laundered clothes, to my boss about work completed. I lie to myself that I wash my hands after I use the bathroom.

But sometimes I am honest.

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The man I love

Jumped off a bridge on September 30<sup>th</sup> at 4 in the afternoon.

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The man I love

taught poetry

to college students and kids at the Y.

He left a storage unit filled with duffel bags of paint, a city-wide scavenger hunt of bad graffiti, broken-hearted parents, a sister, and me.

He loved to sing and eat Kind bars and pet me when I'd sleep. Tall, still he liked to wear my clothes. His eyes made little crinkly noises when he smiled.

Light on his feet so when the music started, he'd be wiggling like electricity.

He sank

like a man

of stone.

The sun, I

think,

wa

s in his

ey

es.

What happens to a body thrown?

Some believe numbers govern splashes:

A high Reynolds number makes them tall; a high Weber number makes them messy.

I appreciate attempts to lasso a slippery world, to number, measure, and taxonomize.

My own complex systems of ordering his belongings and memorizing minutia are for putting myself through punishing mental tests of recalling exact details of his poems, drawings and letters, of his feet, palms, and the curve of his back.

I transcribe his words into notebooks and save them to hard drives, inboxes, and every other place I know about on the internet. Tangible Items are arranged and rearranged in various safekeeping spots. Still nothing is ever safe.

When you possess a brain like cheese, things go missing quickly.

My mother grows accustomed to my panicked calls:

*—I promise, it's not lost. You'll find it when you're ready to find it again.*

I am pitiful at my sole pursuit:

Nothing must disappear.