

University of Nevada, Reno

When My Marriage was a Boxcar without Graffiti

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in
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by

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Abstract

This is a full-length poetry manuscript focused on the speaker's marriage. The lyrical poems are in a sequence to create a narrative. While never stated directly, these poems document the speaker's wife's struggles with rheumatoid arthritis, anxiety, and infertility. In addition, they explore the emotions of a marriage on the brink of divorce. Other poems in the collection touch on family, including poems about the speaker's mother's battle with cancer.

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I

Engagement

Maybe someone
will tell you no,
maybe you
will tell someone no.
I can only speak
of the latter,
a process like ice cubes
once separate,
then melted
and refrozen
together, only
to be picked apart.
Maybe we each get
a two for one coupon
and have to pick
between happiness
for someone else
or happiness
for ourselves.
The only thing I know
after years away
from the table
is it's easier to call
the shots
when you only
have the view
from behind the cue.

Anxiety

Ask me if we can play
the animal word game.

Tell me I cannot
use *black bear*,

brown bear, because
those are too easy.

Ask me what constellations
and planets are in the sky.

How I time travel
with a telescope.

Ask me about the diets
I have researched at 2 a.m.,

after I watched you fight off sleep.
Ask me how exercise reduces stress,

which reduces anxiety.
Ask me why I read

instead of watch television.
Ask me why I spent 60

hours a week at work.
Ask me how many hours it takes

to truly master the valley fold.
Ask me about the water patterns

required for sweet black berries
in July. How each cane will only fruit once.

How you must cut and throw out
what has just rewarded you.

Just once, ask me
if I have anxiety

about your anxiety.
Ask me how long

the basilisks can walk
on water. I don't know,

but I can tell you
when they started.

Stir It and It Burns

When we were no-fuss
20 minute meals,
never ending
slow cooker dishes,
2-ingredient macaroni and cheese,
or even when we were Bar-B-Que chicken
on Mondays, chicken parmesan on Tuesday,
chicken casserole talkers,
chicken soup lovers, I never tasted
stasis, never licked Novocain
instead of honey,
never thought to floss,
but now what we had is dislodged,
so how do I decide
to spit it out or swallow?

Marriage

Just two archaeologists
in the desert,

back to back,
brushing away the sand:

Hopefully they never find
what they are searching for,

just sweat in their eyes,
and the occasional brush

of a gloved hand
across sunburnt skin.

Dear LadyFish,

Last night, after you went to bed,
I started thinking about what you

are doing to me. Here I am watching
tv night after night instead of studying

because you need the noise to fall asleep
and someone to watch over you

making sure you will be okay. But that doesn't
even work. Last night you needed another pill

to keep from checking your pulse every
two minutes. You agreed, you have no idea

what you're checking for but knew what
a raised pulse, and hurting arm felt like.

It's all in your head, I said, just go back to bed.
The pill finally kicked in giving me time

to pour our sodas down the sink and throw out
the burger and French fry wrappers. Can you

believe we had 56 cans of soda? I told you when
we got married I would do anything for you,

so I should be cooking you homemade meals
to keep you from having nightly anxiety attacks.

But let me be honest, I would
much rather watch reruns on Netflix.

Ball-in-Hand

It's Friday, your night of the week
reserved for Cue and Cushion, shooting
eight ball with your Father's old cue,
downing double shots of bourbon, betting
with strangers, so you won't be alone
at the table. And, yet, here you are,
alone, fridge ajar. It reminds you
of the shattered jar of jam, the one
she uses each morning to make her lunch.
So, you slip on basketball shorts,
drive 15 minutes to Walmart, buy
her the blackberry, the kind that always
leaves seeds in your gums. You sweep up the bits
of glass, vacuum under the stove and cabinets.
These are the moments you would miss
if the divorce finalized. This is when you remember
every gym has a man with new Air Jordans
throwing air balls from the free throw line,
searching for another mismatch.

Aerophobia

If I told you the key
to a successful marriage is
to be completely broke,
would you believe me?

Just think of the pain
of packing for trips
every few months, remembering
to buy miniatures of everything
you put on your body,
standing in line for hours
to take off your shoes.

All the Valium you would need
to ease the phobias. The new Beamer
never breaks down, so now you take
four more trips a year to Astoria, shit in
a grease monkey's toilet, see the fatality
accidents. Most importantly,
there would be no fighting
over money. No need to sell
the diamond bracelet, the '39 Lincoln project.

No make-up sex
because you don't know
the world is crueler than you
could ever be to each other.

II

Hendrix's Fire

Or this is where music history happens,
the 1967 Monterey Pop Festival,
after the originals

“Can You See Me,” “Foxy Lady,”
“The Wind Cries Mary,” “Purple Haze,”
and the cover of “Wild Thing,”

he thinks of sacrifice, of love
of his guitar, but refuses to destroy
his favorite, so instead he swaps,

unknown to the audience, to a white Stratocaster—
he painted red flowers and hearts on
the night before with nail polish, not art

but markers to help him find it
in the dark. At the end of “Fire,”
he lays his guitar on the stage

like a flower on a grave,
squirts the bottle of lighter fluid,
like a priest baptizing a child,

kneels, kisses the fretboard, lights
the guitar on fire. Honey orange, butterscotch

yellow, and electric blue billow
as if he summoned the soul

of rock & roll. At the end
of the night, he sloughs burnt skin

off his hands, watches the pieces
of himself fall to the ground.

Love Letter to Stevie Ray Vaughan

The way you stroke your hand
up and down the neck of a battered
Stratocaster lifts me from the pain
of teaching cover songs to pimply teens.
How I long for you to come
into my studio and run your fingers
over my rosewood fretboard,
and if you did come,
I know you'd play coy at first,
feather my strings into melodies, until
I'd sing harder, faster,
and then you'd trill the licks, scratch
my mahogany back with your belt buckle,
chip my honey burst finish
with the tip of your pick,
pound my strings into submission, leaving
my heart stopping and starting
at the wrong time, because I'm always
in a different time signature than you.
Oh, how you'd teach me
that modest people make poor musicians
and even worse artists.
I like to think you had a sheet music plan
when you detuned school and moved to Austin,
but there is no algorithm for the blues,
just a diminished 5th that separates
blues from pentatonic, you from me.

Blues Boy (Stevie Ray Vaughan)

I love the blues.

My brother, Jimmie, turned me on to Hendrix,
Buddy Guy, Muddy Waters, B.B. King.

I want what he has:
the guitars,
 the chops.

I like to say
the first record I bought
was Lonnie Mack's
 "Wham,"

but I just jacked it
from my brother's collection.

Everyone said it was impossible
to find the licks,
to train my fingers.

Alone in my room
I spun that 45 at 33 1/2 speed,

plucked chord, string, and note
again and again and again.

At times, days would pass
before I could learn
the next bar or riff.

It didn't take long
for my Dad,
bourbon breathed,
to storm my door,

yank the record off the turntable.

and smash it on the floor.
When he left
I hummed the tune,
played the notes I knew,
the ones I didn't.

The Night Judi Met Slash from Row 12 Seat 5

The silhouette guitar and top hat appear on stage when she takes her hand from her husband's and turns towards Slash. She amplifies every note of "Beautiful Dangerous" as visions of Slash's hands run across her body. Her husband doesn't mind watching, he has spent three years learning to mock those hands. Slash's breath still smells of Old No.7 and he can load a syringe one handed, but she shakes her head as her hubby sips Jack and Coke, and sings him "You could be mine."

III

Divorce Origin

Maybe it's not
melancholy,

but a sweatshirt
one size too small.

Maybe it's all ads,
and no show.

Maybe it's a flight
without a cocky pilot

or delay,
without turbulence
induced nausea of children.

Maybe it's the stumble
on the stairs
that doesn't cause injury.

Perhaps it's too much
ecstasy; feasibly

too much knowledge

of when the washrag has dried,
when the tank is empty.

Maybe the best luck
is none at all.

Never a Doc Ellis
no-hitter

under the influence of LSD,
but maybe it's

the apologies
and flowers
and dinners.

What's Left-Over in Our Flowerbeds

Here we are, alone,
in our backyard, chucking rocks
into our waterless pond.
Just a year ago, we were
stocked with koi
or maybe that was the year we didn't leave
the house. Who's to say?
I cannot find anything alive
in this subdivision desert or anything
with a willingness to live,
but what is under the soil.
Patience is the lily bulb,
deep in our front yard,
which will sprout next spring—
patience, together, we don't have,
but still the bulb will bloom.

Pthalo Blue

If you could hear pthalo blue,
it would be the sound
of a glass beer bottle
that doesn't transform into diamonds
when it thwacks concrete.
Or, maybe, it's the crack
of a broken wooden bat.
Potential robbed or saved
for another day. The feel?
Not brush strokes or velvet
but the frothy foam
created when a lover
washes your hair. Pthalo blue
is a beached sailboat, all the keys
you keep for unknown locks.
It's the gift
of a 55" flat screen TV
on a ten-year wedding anniversary.

The Museum of Loneliness Attendant

When the museum closes
for the night, you restock
the miniature liquors—Captain Morgan,
Jack Daniel’s, Maker’s Mark, Jim Beam, Patrón—
spacewalk the Grey Poupon back to the cooler,
idle talk the exhibit of unmatched shoes
found on freeways. People forget
the merry-go-around of abandonment,
and no one has thanked you
for the hundreds of missed connections
postings you have typed and tacked
on the bulletin boards, or the single pillow
on a king size bed you placed in the lobby
so parents can remember what it was
like before they had kids.
You wonder when the Cassini spacecraft
display should come down
since the million-mile mission is over
and it’s no longer silently photographing
Saturn’s empty parking lot. You’re ready,
to resign that is. Your main responsibility:
The third floor living room installation
requires too much patience
or pathos. Stargazing into
screens, reporting time apart, pretending
these moments aren’t the kindling
of loneliness, requires you
to recognize isolation
is the accidental brush of your
spouse’s hand on your bare thigh.

Mechanical Marriage

Because my marriage was a convenience store
when I needed overpriced-greased love, because

we only had one car, because you were my bilge pump,
the flash drive of boredom, the polar bear of famine,

because I was the TV remote of grief,
the enthusiasm of a mechanical pencil,

the guitar pick of idleness, because we were
both the platinum card of excess,

the orange cone of caution, the turntable
of delight, because our marriage

was the interview of redemption,
the thermonuclear weapon

of fulfillment, the superfood of memory,
because we intermingled

our Blu-rays, because we hoped
to be the jaw-dropping fountains of charity,

the bracket pools of romance, the beginner's garden
of loyalty, and our marriage was

until it wasn't, until we rescued it
with laziness and forgetfulness.

Ode to the Handrail

When I was ten,
you were never
a walking stick
or tug rope
or power lines,
not even a '59 Cadillac
Coupe Deville fin
maybe you were just
a way for me to refuse authority
when I rode you
like a single roller coaster track.
In my twenties,
you were my pole vault
or wall guard, occasionally,
the street lamp
next to the icy road.
On most nights
you were a BMX grind,
a way to glide
above concrete steps
until my back peg missed
your steel handshake
in my moment of confusion
I tried to save myself
only to have my meniscus
contorted from sofa cushion
to bike seat. Now, 33,
we have reunited.
On good days,
you are no more
than the sunflower's stem.
On bad, I cling to you
knowing you cannot save me
from myself or the dangers
of this world.

How was Work Today

I thought you would never ask. Jennifer got engaged over the weekend and you should see her ring. To pay for it, he must have sold republican t-shirts after the debate to people waiting in line for their free rides back to their cars, holding a cup marked "I don't take handouts. I just need to build a new road." But it was worth, every hour in the sun and every drop of plasma. I wonder if he went to Jared? The way it shined under those new 100 watt bulbs, had every woman in the building fizzling. No longer was Jennifer's fiancé the weird computer gamer, in a clan with prepubescent boys, going on guilds planned every night starting at 6:00 p.m. eastern time that cannot be missed unless there is a death in the family with documented proof. Now the women are asking him what Red Bull tastes like without the Vodka in it, because he is smooth as a male swimmer that is ready for the Olympics, with an endorsement from Wheaties because he is going to be a winner. Mr. Perkins is my father. Just call me Bartholomew, and no I don't have time to have it drilled and filled now. Maybe we can reschedule? Mondays are my busy days.

A Day Inside the Amazon.com Warehouse in Fernley, Nevada

We stowed books ten minutes away from your reservation
but still everyone asked if you were Mexican,

like you belonged in a bookshelf sectioned off from the world
but they couldn't figure out if you were poetry, fiction, or non-fiction.

I could never understand what went through your mind
when they asked, because I could never be confused

with anything but Caucasian. For some reason,
no one seemed to care if I was Irish, Italian, Dutch, or German,

yet they always had to know about you. Maybe,
it was the color of your skin that made them ask.

At night when I would look at myself in the mirror
I wondered if my skin seeped the secrets of my great grandfather.

History books might not show my great grandfather
or the people he hurt, but they showed how he spent his weekends

running people out of town or hanging people from trees,
while his wife baked him oatmeal cookies and waited for his return.

I imagine if my arms could speak they would do so
in the shade of your skin, so I save for tattoos to cover my history.

Brass Boys

It starts with a roundup—campground trash:
beer bottles, milk jugs, tin and aluminum
cans, playing cards, paper plates.
Maybe it's the boy's
dad or an uncle who teaches him,
it doesn't matter. He says to the boy,
"Watch and learn." *Pop. Pop. PopPopPop.*
The boy thinks this is art: how one explosion
causes another. How the pressure
of a mouse click can dethrone
a king. When he hands the boy
the pistol, the boy's surprised
by the weight. The boy will realize nothing
he touches—not his college degree, not his
first born, not even his grandfather's ashes—
imprints his palms so well. He'll depress
and depress, miss the mark
he made with the fat red marker.
Soon he'll take to birds: turkeys,
quail, doves, ducks, chukar.
Anything his pump-action
shotgun can reach
out and touch. During meals, he'll learn
to chew slowly, cheek the BBs, spit them
into a cup, as if hatchlings wait, mouths open
ready for the heated gifts. In his last moments,
he'll wonder if he'll hear the brass
shell casing ring against the tile floor,
how he'll wear the wings.

This Tastes Gamey, You're Not a Hunter, Are You?

I am a hunter but not one of those TV hunters.
I still remember the day I took this buck.
First day of the season I loaded my 7mm
Remington into the window rack of Karen.
I know Karen ain't no proper name for a '86
Chevy Suburban 4x4, ¾ ton, with a manual transmission
and granny first, but it was the name of my ex.
She said she would be with me forever,
but that all changed the day I brought home four skinned
bobcats. There were no carcasses with broken feet
and small holes in their skulls. They rest on the edge
of the dirt road with tire marks from where I ran Karen
over them to skin them. But still the pellets hanging
in the garage reminded her of our little cat Emmy
that would play fetch and everything. And she was right,
they looked all the same. So back to this buck.
I sat in my ground blind that I built from chain
link fencing that I took down from one of our job sites,
covered in Hunter's Specialties Primetime Pure Natural
Doe Urine. You can't go cheap on the deer piss.
It was two hours after dawn when I spotted him
walking to the watering hole. I waited until he
ducked his head for a drink then remembered
what my dad taught me "Don't pull the trigger,
squeeze the trigger straight back."
I know what you're thinking, how could I do something
like this. I can see that the only blood you're
willing to draw comes from that steak knife.
But me, I like to look my dinner in the eye and know
that it had the opportunity to raise its young
and run free, even if it is just dinner.

Last Night at My In-Laws

We sat around the table, talked,
as I suppose most families do.
I sat across from my wife's niece
and could not help but notice
my dried and cracked hands
compared to her sixteen-year-old
skin. I would give anything
to be her age again: to have stayed
in school, worked hard, gone
to college young. Instead, I fixed boats
all season long, then took winters off
to snowboard all day
drink all night,
to forget that I was going nowhere
but downhill. My wife's niece broke the silence,
"A women couldn't be successful as President.
If a man can't do a decent job,
how can a women?" This seemed like a joke,
until I saw her father nod in agreement.
It hit me then she is only echoing
what she hears at home and the time I spent
slipping downhill was how I learned
to avoid those people who would bring me down.

To See Beyond it

Because of his stories
I have always wanted to cut
down a perfectly good tree.
The pine scented forest
mixed with 2 stroke oil.
Things, he said,
every man should claim.
Better, to do it with cowhide
covering my hands, holding
his axe. With each strike
the slivers of life will be
removed, until there is nothing
left. My dad showed me how
to sharpen the axe and drink
Whiskey out of the bottle,
through the long nights in our
mobile home, talking of the tress
he cut down. Me just a boy
who never believed he would fall.
Still hearing his voice tell me,
important messages need
to be printed. Not that anyone
remembered them in six months.
Once he trimmed a tree for
the owner just to see behind it.
It's not the same, he said,
if you can't see the blue water
beyond the pine needles.

Remodel

My wife sits at our desk and staples
money order stubs to bill stubs.
She asks why we do it this way.
I tell her it is the only way I know how.
Putting each bill in their respected folder
and filing them away, she wants to know why
this is now her responsibility. It is better
if we both know how everything is done
around here, I say. But she is doing the bills
because she is innocent. My wife still
sees my mother as the woman who built
an add-on to her house without the help
of a husband or professional. The woman
who searched longshoremen for U.S. Customs
by herself in the middle of the night
while her partner sat in his squad car looking
at the dead end of an alley because he didn't
have the skills to back the car out.
But I don't just remember her this way
anymore. I remember the day I drove
from Reno to Fernley because it was the first
time my mother asked me for help. I sat
at the heart pine table she was unable to refinish
making a list of what bills needed to be paid,
wondering what a sternum eaten away by cancer
looked like, or a femur, or lungs, or why her body
created masses in delicate sections of her.
She took breaks between endorsing checks
telling me she was worn out and I was too.
Five years later my wife's body starts to fail,
not from cells dividing uncontrollably, but instead
from a simple mistake, like an army firing blindly
into the night at friend and foe to stay alive.
Today she squirms in bed, searching for relief
from inflammation in her lower joints,
and admits she is worn out.

The First and Last Time I Went to My Mother's Chemo Treatment

I watch black ants carry abandoned greens
through the cracks in my house.
They have been here for days, if not months,
more likely years, hidden just out of sight.
Blind to their surrounding they trust invisible lines
to guide them from their populated dens
into any section of my home void of them.
Foggy fumes of professionals have rummaged
my economic pools, every time they come out
with a new plan of action or round of treatment.
As I watch the poison drip into her,
I wonder if cancer has a queen that directs it to attack
or if it blindly moves inside my mother.
How many drips can her body take before she wilts
like a flower sprayed with weed killer, like the lady
in the next seat over who will not be here next week?
I tell my mother that I will be here for her,
but the truth is, I would rather sit in my empty home
then watch one be unpacked.

V

Before Divorce

There will be a day
when everything I love
will close for winter,

but until that day,

I want another flat
room temperature Coke,

another disagreement
over the thermostat,

another night when Beyoncé
ends our silence.

May our electronic devices drown
in the flood. May our power

never be restored,
until we learn to speak

with thawed sentences.

Show me how to be-
come a snow angel,

how to light the fireplace
with my tongue,

how to sweep and mop the floor,
where to hang the sign.

Then we will be ready
for our final gift to each other:

a basket of small soaps and lotions
to use on our next peril.

Our First and Final Conversations

When the mind refuses
to accept kindness for pity,
we replace one broken ankle for another.

Why stop for the fatigued
motorist, the wrecked runner?
If we were to assist,

what would be accomplished?
Surely, a friendship
built on deceit.

Maybe deceit is too strong,
let's just call it an artificial flower,
cubic zirconia, or aspartame.

Surely, we can airbrush
our future any shade,
but what is left
when the Caddy's candy flake flakes?

Rust reversed would allow
the disintegrated to rejuvenate,
but would still be of no value.

What comes of the ship
leaving port unloaded?
And does the overloaded ship
have the same fate?

Euphoria

When our marriage was bankrupt, jobless,
holding a sign for donations, when our marriage was

a paper plane ablaze, an oil spot, a two dollar bill,
when our marriage was a two and six off suit, a house of cards

above the fault line, sheets folded in the spare bedroom,
when our marriage was an offset victory, frost on the apricot tree buds,

when our marriage was the blue screen of death, the bear market,
the autonomous vehicle, when our marriage was a horse

without a saddle or bit, a zebra with a lion on its back,
when our marriage was decaf coffee, club soda,

a candle without a wick, when our marriage was B.B. King
without the blues, Hendrix without a Stratocaster,

an electric guitar without pickups, when our marriage was a no vote
bill, autumn without the dead leaves, when our marriage was a torn ACL,

a swollen ankle without RICE (rest, ice, compression, and elevation),
braces in a toothless mouth,

when our marriage was a boxcar without graffiti, a lowrider
without hydraulics, a billboard without a DUI lawyer,

when our marriage was a ski resort with man-made snow,
the mafia without the dons, when our marriage was a corn maze,

skid marks, colorblind, when our marriage was diseased,
infected, septic, when our marriage was a mechanic without tools,

a sentence without punctuation, a playground without swings,
when our marriage was a failed space exploration

when our marriage was a pocket full
of pennies, a splintered handrail, when our marriage was

the fifteen minute paid lunch, a faded tattoo,
when our marriage was two sovereign states, an expired passport,

when our marriage was a sailboat without sails, a Ferrari
without red paint, when our marriage was gangster rap

without the gangster, the snowman on the first day of summer, when
our marriage wasn't a lanyard, a floaty,

a MasterCard accepted everywhere,
when our marriage was an Esteem that won't start,

a union on strike, when our marriage was
in beta mode, the concrete without the rocks, rudderless,

rehearsed, when our marriage was a composition of vacancy,
a pickpocket of selfishness, a deployment of sobriety,

when our marriage was snorkeling the hard candy dish,
the king of hearts, hypnotized by vanity, I was euphoric

knowing you would never watch me turn into a lure
without a hook, the axe with a broken wooden handle,

the lost and confused neighbor we watch circle the block
for hours, who steals our garbage cans,

but now, that shot in the arm
is just a track mark.

Lust

Imagine you
step on a nail

or slam your finger
in the front door.

Both dull
in comparison.

Imagine it's not
the cruise ship

but the red eye
to New York.

It's the album
you have on replay.

Imagine a supernova.
It's like that.

Melancholy Ode

Robotic bee, antibacterial soap,
student debt, celebrity death
hoax, mockorange, flat soda,
automated answering system, follicular hair
transplantation, auto-tune,
blood diamond, fatty liver, staycation,
you have saved our marriages
from lust—lust which lingers
in the valley of stasis, invites itself
to dinner parties, slithers
the grocery store aisles
in search of people
who are not married to each other.

Seedless Jam

After the divorce
lawyers abandoned us
in the orchard, we ate
every plum within reach,
our stomachs bulging,
our bodies brilliant
with the seeped juices.
Look, our marriage failed
to end the binges.
We kept the pits. Then
planted them during the drought.
This is not a metaphor.
The orchard is just
a solo tree in our backyard.
and it never produces
enough for us to conserve.

The Ritual

My wife grips the syringe
like a fountain pen, as if she
is about to write a narrative
inside her body. She penetrates
the small vial, draws the liquid, watches it
turn into hundreds of miniature moths.
When she releases them
into her stomach, I wonder
if their flurry echoes
strangers' questions: Why
don't you want kids?
Don't your parents want
grandkids? She wants
to give away her body,
or cut into the tissue, scoop out
her uterus, display it
as our table's center piece.
Says it's not the pain. It's just
one body can only hold
so many bodiless wings.

Undiagnosed

I thought it would happen in a panic
like a swimmer who swallows water,

or in a car accident, mangled metal
pressed through my chest, or in some

sort of self-harm, not in my living room,
on crappy carpet that scratched

like steel wool. I had the flu.
My asthma, undiagnosed, kept me

coughing, so we made the sofa
a second bed for me. You had to work

in the morning. When my wheezing
woke me, I went towards you—but failed

and fell on the floor. Each cough crept
crow after crow. I didn't want to see you,

to know you would blame yourself
because we didn't get me medical care sooner.

I refused—wanted to save
the little money we had.

That's a lie. I was embarrassed.
No health insurance, no credit

cards. I knew the hospital
couldn't refuse service, but the failed

male that I am worried you would
be lectured of the risk factors for asthma-

related death: being poor and from the inner city;
substance abuse. EMTs don't throw

shade when they remove a body.

I know this first hand. Maybe I
didn't want you to see me die,
but it didn't matter. When I awoke

the next morning, face down
in the center of the living room

like a throw rug, I lied to you,
told you the sofa was too soft,

how I preferred the carpet.

Obituary

I died when you retired
the guitar solo. I died before

reading a nutrition label,
before lowering expectations,

before collecting a pile
of neckties, before remembering

where I was born.
I died with an iPhone

under the skin of my palm
and with your name stained

on my ring finger, with the cruise control on
and on heated seats.

On the 22 slot of the roulette wheel,
according to the halved map,

as expected, I died—despite the exit polls.
I died hungry,

without a fishbowl on my desk,
without the Atlantic sea on my face.

After I died, we became closer
and decided where to eat.

Before I died, Bob Ross taught us
the art of bingeing Netflix,

how to make my clumsy hands
happy trees when we fucked.

Unlike a transplant, I died
among your favorite flower—the lily.

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