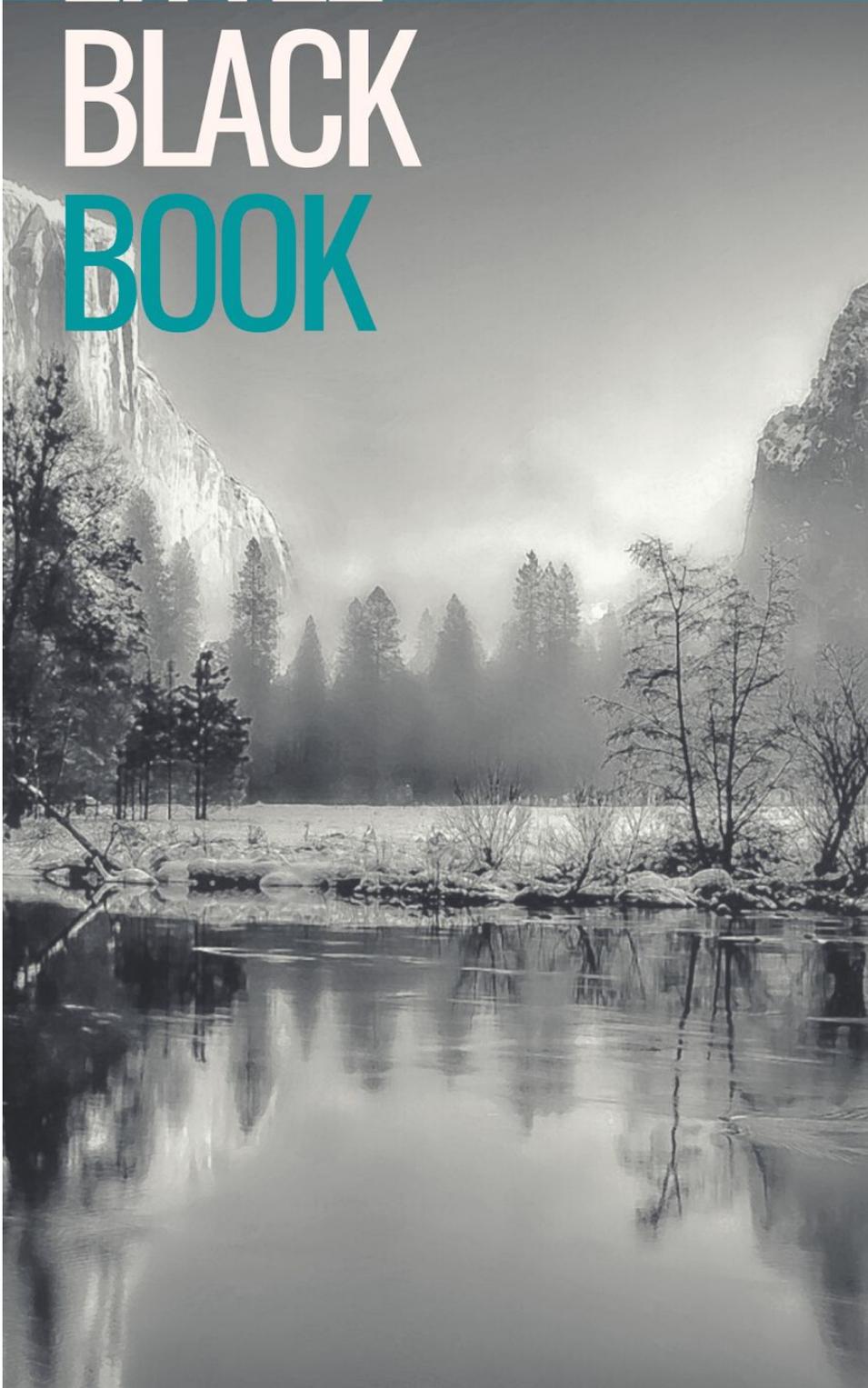


# LITTLE BLACK BOOK

ON LOVERS



COCO BOYLE

LITTLE BLACK BOOK  
A COLLECTION OF POEMS ON LOVERS

COCO BOYLE

*To my family, always.*

*You too. My monster, my love.*

<b>Ritter</b>	7
<b>Chinook</b>	9
<b>A Wholeness</b>	14
<b>Winter</b>	17
<b>Are you?</b>	19
<b>Three Hours</b>	23
<b>Snap Lock</b>	26
<b>Thorn Street Brewery and the Aerialist</b>	29
<b>Decision</b>	33
<b>Koji Development</b>	35
<b>how can you sleep</b>	37
<b>Murderer</b>	41
<b>my monster my love</b>	41
<b>Noise</b>	43
<b>Do I?</b>	44
<b>Wednesdays are for fucking</b>	46
<b>B----</b>	46
<b>Sandwiches of Men</b>	49
<b>Week Two</b>	49
<b>Unsent</b>	51
<b>The View from the Table</b>	52
<b>Inverse</b>	54
<b>Stone</b>	55
<b>Blacks</b>	56

<b>Letter</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Ludicrous</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Full Circle</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Broken Wings</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Waterloo</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Bethnal Green</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Blueberry Pancakes</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>You</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>M-----</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>Sneeze</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Goat Boy</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>F----</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Taller</b>	<b>75</b>

# Ritter

I thought I could do this  
Live this interlude  
This pause between things  
A valley of our own making  
I thought I could be in there with you  
Crystalline and ringing  
A chorus  
Under your hands  
With my heart lost in the blue sky  
Above, away  
Someone's else's storm

I thought I could be just a collection of sighs  
And lips  
And fingers  
and breath  
Curling and curving  
In the way only we can do

But she was here the whole time  
Outside my door  
Hanging from the eaves  
Growing longer, more beautiful  
Sharpened and dangerous  
All needle fangs and feelings  
Moment by moment  
Touch by touch  
When you kissed me goodbye  
The creeping crystal thing broke  
Falling  
And pierced me with her burning cold

she has shattered me  
No,  
you have

You have done it  
And I cannot be this anymore

I am a thing in search of love, always  
blind and fumbling  
There is a whole, a half, a balance that always reasserts  
In my gyroscopic heart  
And who could not stumble and fall  
Next to you  
I cannot contain the grey of your eyes  
if I cannot reach them  
You are breaking me apart already  
Three days in  
Shard by shard

So hold me with your talk of birds  
and don't fuck me  
Sit with me in silence  
Let me watch you in the firelight as you sing softly  
I need all your moments  
Not just your mouth  
And if you cannot give them to me  
Stay here in your mountain  
In your house with the peaks through the window and the ocean inside  
Stay here with your dog that smiles  
And your arms that hold the world  
Stay here with your sea eyes I cannot fathom, I cannot cross, I cannot reach

Float away like a goshawk while I stare from below  
Trying to make out the shape of your wings.

# Chinook

I didn't expect to see you again  
So soon  
The Chinook parked in the camping ground loop  
Distinctive  
Wonderful  
And it all came back  
The hope  
But it could have been someone else  
Wandering through my life like the wind

I buried my hands in my jackets pockets  
Fighting the biting wind against my cheeks  
Locked into a conversation with Kat as we walked across the grit desert  
Past the cholla and dodging mojave yucca  
Towards the gaggle of climbers nestling around the table strewn with coffee  
Patched jackets  
Patterned sweaters stolen from thrift stores  
The professional climbers hugging the back in clean, expensive puffies  
Quiet voices  
And then you

Gap-toothed  
Puffhaired  
Wonderful  
In the middle of it all  
I can't remember what Kat was saying to you  
I was just caught up in it all again  
The lightness inside  
Like beams bouncing between clouds  
or the flash of hawks in the sky  
I had forgotten  
And then you were with us again  
For a day  
And it was like you had never left  
And everything seemed so simple  
The intersections so effortless

Your voice grumbly as the desert we walked over  
And you got back in that damn Chinook  
The wholeness of you is something I cannot understand  
I want to piece you together like a machine

You looked better to me this time, older, more settled  
The lines of your face seemed important  
Your shoulders more able to carry something together  
The wispieness and breathiness from the years past, seemed gone  
All glowing in the desert sun  
But your eyes were the same  
And I couldn't look away  
I kept trying  
Keeping myself busy with things and books  
And trying to ignore the pull in my core towards you  
My hands kept curling like butterflies towards you  
But I knew if I touched you once  
Some invisible line would be crossed  
Some barrier broken  
And I was afraid  
Afraid of everything your gravity meant  
Even if your beauty was killing me

We raced to the top of Hobbit Roof  
You went left  
I went right  
Across the long slab, leaping the three narrow boulders and firing up the patina  
Hand over foot  
Joy blurring with adrenaline  
The smile  
Burning my face with its wideness  
My lungs were burning  
My thighs upset  
And then there you were  
Again  
Same puff of hair  
Same eyes

We went to find the downclimb for The Bong  
Something easy  
Something to keep me busy  
Something to keep me from injuring myself again  
We chimneyed through the slot canyon  
You went first  
Then up past a boulder hanging at the end of the slot  
It took me a while to find a way up without using my shoulder  
But you were there  
And that was the only place to be  
The descent was obvious, a line of brown patina leaning up to the brow of the formation, you  
raced up  
Long legs move fast  
From the ledge above you looked back, said  
I don't want to break you  
I smiled muttered something about the ease of the grade, matching hands, pulling with my right  
But Ben,  
It's too late for that  
You broke everything already  
The certainty  
The stillness of self  
With you and your damn Chinook

At the top, I don't know how I kept from holding you  
The storm in the distance, rain raging to the earth  
The red and gold rock formations jutting up like furious angels  
The Joshua trees wheeling towards the sky in their thousands  
The wind tearing at our faces  
Bring something closer and closer  
And I couldn't tell if it was us  
I didn't know if I wanted it to be us  
We took the long way down, curving through a different ravine  
You talked of education and the backcountry  
Words bouncing off the rock around us  
This world was made for us  
For this moment  
For you and me to walk through it  
Together, almost

The final boulder between our friends, laughter echoing from their attempts to conquer the roof  
I shifted my weight over my hips, til I stood closer to you

Our feet hit the hiking path  
You knelt laughing and picked up a cactus to shown me  
Dropped it in consternation  
Small thorns dotting your fingertips  
I ran back  
Reaching for your hand  
And it took my breath away

I don't know how they don't see it  
Your terrible beauty  
The perfectness of your being  
Tall, gangling, hinged at the seams  
Hands always searching for something  
Keeping busy  
Learning  
Hovering over the rocks as if searching for answers, the reassurance in their solid topography  
The inquisitive eyes peering at the new cam lobe design  
Two pieces held to the light side by side  
Head cocked  
And in that moment you shone so bright it hurt

It wasn't enough  
That day  
Again  
I want more this time  
I want you  
I want to hold you in my hands  
To walk the desert sun together  
Like we did towards your damn Chinook  
Only this time  
This time I would be brave  
This time I would just swing my hand out, a couple of inches  
While you were talking about The Baron in the Trees  
And then we would be us  
And that would be that

Instead my courage failed  
While the ambulance sirens flashed  
the gathered park rangers and rescuers stood around in the parking lot  
whispering words and waiting for a body to be hustled past into a circling helicopter  
All that frailty and uncertainty  
The ability of bodies to be broken and razed and torn apart  
negated the my conviction of togetherness  
Even though I know you are mine  
And I am yours  
I said goodbye quickly as we threw our bags into the car  
while the rangers called not to dillydally  
A word that seemed out of place with the gravity of the surroundings

For a brief moment as we said goodbye  
The curve of my body lay against you  
Slightly taller  
So I needed to stretch and bend  
Into the hollow of your chest  
My head against your neck  
The softness of your fleece and brush of a curl of your hair against my cheek  
All I could hear was helicopters  
All I could feel was you.

It was just so soon, unexpected

And then you were gone again  
You and that damn Chinook.

## A Wholeness

The wholeness of you is something I cannot understand  
If I looked for a thousand years I would still not know

My eyes could search your arms your legs  
Wander the ribs and neck  
I could measure, weigh, scale

But why  
Are you so dazzling?

Crowns are dull and heavy  
You are light and golden  
Like the sun  
Your brown skin rarer than mahogany  
I know if I touched it, If I ran my fingers across your desert  
I would be kinglier than Alexander

I scream into the sky  
But nothing comes back except the echo of your voice  
Again and again  
Gravel  
Low  
Wondering

Where can I find you  
Why are you not here  
My hands are empty  
My mind full of only you  
Come back to me lover so I can understand you  
So I can know you infinitely

If only I could write an equation that encapsulates you  
But the sight of you sleeping cannot be quantified  
The rise and fall of your chest  
Would wreck the resting variables  
The certainty that you will return of like migratory birds

Beautiful  
Uncertain  
The world is wide  
And you are not yet mine

I write like a madperson  
If only I loved a thunderbird instead  
Alone in a separate rhythm of the world  
While you are on a different heartbeat  
I want to hear as one, to feel you beneath my hand, heart, mouth

Again I circle back  
Skimming the desert grit  
Hovering over the slot canyons and oak scrub  
Back to you

Your face dances like the heat and cold  
I am cracking like rock in the Mojave  
Towers tumbling to earth  
The energy cannot dissipate without you  
I am waiting, geologic  
Change me

I need to know, understand  
Perhaps I imagined you  
Perhaps you are only a vision  
Conjured from proximity  
What if all this inside is just a castle of the air  
And you are just a person  
If I touched you  
Only flesh and bone

Your face rises in my mind like the sun  
And I bloom for you  
Waist high wildflowers wave in the wind  
I am lily and poppy and rose  
I am lupins and maiden's hair

I will have you if it takes a thousand years

I will walk to the sun and back for you  
To hold you in my arms for just one night  
Would be enough  
I will take a night to last forever  
If that's all you can give  
The cold stars warm me after you have left  
And I will harden like crystal to become cruel and beautiful like them

What have you done to me?  
I may die like this  
Without you  
Without your voice, your words, a promise.  
I cannot understand you  
Nor can I have you  
Yet  
Now  
Ever?

The only answer is to join to stars in the sky  
So I may look down on you forever  
And you will see me as beautiful  
I will shine for you  
I will light your way  
I will become whole.

# Winter

Why are you so far from me lover  
Why are there mountains between us  
Plains and valleys  
Wide and open

I am here  
In this city  
Grey, cold, raining  
And you free  
held by the only the indistinct lines of granite and wind

Why do they get you  
*I* want to caress your face like the icy squalls  
*I* want to dot your lips with my cold hands

I don't even know you  
But I want all of you

Crossing the empty world  
Your hot breath ahead  
Breathe into me  
I am a jealous far off sun  
Hidden behind the winter clouds

That has always been us  
That has always been me  
Separated like a rock from a stream  
Needing the rush of you around me

How can the mountains love the winter  
They crave the ruin and scarring  
The ice that takes their proud peaks  
Downwards  
The cracks that burst the granite cliffs backwards  
Complicated  
Endless

Come fill me with your change  
Come break me with your touch  
I will fracture and crystallise  
With your kiss

Avalanches are just lovers coming together  
Glaciers are just old friends reuniting  
I am the beast who wanders hungry on their backs  
Jaws searching to be filled  
The roaring emptiness within  
Slavering desire burning my lips, teeth  
Tongue lolling at the lack of you

In search

I claw, I scratch the frozen earth  
Three tracks left in the black earth

You are the red berries that burst against the white  
You are the bough I wear  
Fresh and bright against my fur

I need you to crown me  
To let me roam the wild world adorned with something other than want

You don't even know my love  
Why would you stranger  
It runs wild like water under a frozen stream  
Blurred, encased  
Powerfully  
Passing unseen, near but unknown

You don't know my touch  
My hidden cataracts of glacial blue  
My love is buried  
Bones of the earth  
Beneath the black ground still  
Dormant

But not gone  
Never gone

But like winter  
You leave  
You recede snowbank after snowbank

I do not want to change, to lean into spring  
I want your endless frost  
There is no sun like that dawning over a crystal ridge

There are no snowflakes that for your hair  
Hold me close  
For now  
From an unknown sky  
Endless miles away  
It is all I can ever have

Spring comes for us all.

# Are you?

Are you or aren't you  
The ability to answer that is contingent on my divination skill  
But thorns and uneaten lemon meringues  
Point me in no direction at all  
I am spinning spinning  
In the middle of desert beneath a triangular cave  
By a bird shaped boulder  
The sky is snowing  
The ground is cold  
You are hot beside me  
Like magma like knob encrusted boulder  
Polished by floods  
Still the question thrums in the starting car engines  
Are you?  
Broad shoulder michigan rival man  
Are you?  
In stars beneath our feet  
Are you mine and i am yours  
Cover me in silver cloaks  
And wide valley washes  
The rabbit pauses eyes black as galaxies  
The motorcycles ride in the distance over the red earth  
One two three  
No faces behind helmets  
Just rabid shouts in the night  
Are you mine, lover  
The cold chills me to my bones  
The are no roads here  
The desert crumbles beneath our feet  
Coffee steams in brilliant spirals  
You have brought snow to the mountains around us  
Don't miss the turn  
Inefficient man  
Distracted me  
Ripping holes in curling thrones  
Around me legs,  
Heart head

The sound it makes is sharp  
Unlike marimbas  
Unlike folk ballads  
Unlike ghosts that crawl from rivers  
You cannot sing  
But speak honey  
But speak unghosted rivers  
But speak broad shouldered slopes  
Are you?  
My partner rises in baritones  
Your partners rise in shivering choruses  
Around us they shimmer in haze  
They aren't enough  
Are you  
Is your arm beneath my hand  
Is your body beneath mine  
I am in the sky  
Screaming  
You are on the ground waiting  
Split by air  
The rope falls with a thick  
The tunnels scrape with my pack  
The stones cut my knees  
The light falls into the chimneys  
Red and gold and black  
The skin is gone from my hands  
We built stones together  
We followed the goat path  
One then the other  
Footprints of goats  
Of man  
Of strangers  
Time stretched and stepped in footprints  
Hikers call, hikers follow  
Everyone disappears  
The wolfdog curls around my legs  
The apple is crisp and shatters like glaciers  
It is still so cold  
It is still just us

Turn left now  
Leave the drive  
Sit at the table you and i  
Feel the dog beneath your hand  
Feel me beneath your hand  
I am beside you I am beside you  
But are you mine?

## Three Hours

How can I sleep when you are not beside me  
When I have only tasted you briefly  
Only skimmed the waves of your surface  
Canyons thundering underneath

I need you in my belly  
Like a dagger  
I need you in my mouth like wine  
I need all of you  
To swallow you whole would only be the briefest sating

In the empty bed I wait  
You in the night walking  
My phantom hands run the length of you  
My phantom teeth bite the red of your lips  
I need the deep of your soul  
I need your life  
your voice

I stumble blind  
Avoiding sleep in like the desert sun  
Come back to me lover  
The world is large and cold  
Come back to me lover  
I will never sleep without you by my side

The moon is a silver coin I cannot spend  
The crickets are a symphony scorned  
The sirens take away the dead and leave me here in agony  
Return to me

Let me sip your bright blood  
Let me breathe you in  
Fill my hands  
And then it will be enough

Morning comes  
Dawn fragile and pale and silent like my echoing heart

Your lips your hands  
Your chest strong and warm  
How can I leave this place when I do not know the whole of you

Behind your eyes is a universe unknown  
I want to reach through the black and own your soul  
To trap and cage you like a bird  
However cruel my love it  
Is a desperate need  
I think I understand tyrants now  
My cruelty is love  
Because you torture me too  
Your breath and touch  
Your evanescence  
Cuts me from nape to nose  
Just your nearness  
Flays me to the bone  
How can you not see my bones  
It is all I am  
My soul laid bare  
You are the wind and I am a rock stirred and warm  
You are the sun and I am the desert hot and barren

Give me life  
Give me rain  
Give me all of you

I don't wish to chain you  
But how else can I have all of you that I need?  
From my throne I command nothing if I cannot have you  
Come closer  
Kiss me  
I will wear the chains  
If only you will kiss me once more.

Touch me as birds do

Fluttering and dancing on wind  
Touch me like waves upon the ocean  
Crashing and folding into each other with no end  
Touch me like clouds around a mountain  
Disappear into your rocks and crags  
Dissipation is ecstasy

You have left me here  
And without you  
I am myself completely  
But togetherness is something else entirely

I was myself before you  
But like sun from behind clouds  
Everything is illuminated  
Everything is electric

You have ruined breath  
You have ruined life  
Without yours  
Existence is a horizon I cannot meet  
Touch me again  
Save me with your lips like a drowning sailor  
Meet me like a siren at the surface  
Drag me under  
And I will breathe water for you  
I will breathe fire for you  
If only I exhale the length and breadth of you

My heart slows like winter  
When you leave  
I am slowly frosting over  
My blue lips can make no words  
My limbs sink under the frozen lake  
To love is to drown  
To love you is to drown breath by breath  
Your water fills my lungs  
The cold burns like fire  
Feeling is suspended

Come back to me like air  
Come back to me like a song I cannot remember  
What color are your eyes, my lover  
Come back to me  
So I can hear again  
So I can sing  
So I can throw open the doors

But it is too soon  
You are only fragments  
I could not carve you from the stone  
I could not draw you on the page  
You are simply a night, three hours  
A pair of hands  
Lips  
Ideas  
Unformed  
Unknown  
And I am still drowning without the rest of you.  
Drowning, lover.  
Return and save me.  
Walk through the door  
Tear off my chains  
Love me again.  
Or once at all.  
Know me.

# Snap Lock

You coiled a small plastic snap lock  
When we talked  
The first time  
The first date  
Flicking it between your hands restlessly  
I could feel it all  
Bursting out of you  
Thoughts  
Motions  
Like an animal caged  
I saw a foosa once  
In a zoo in madagascar  
Pacing  
And pacing  
Tracks around it cage  
And I felt like crying  
It had the same look in your eyes  
I want to give you the world  
I want to give you a purpose  
I know I cannot  
I can only be by your side  
However agonizing  
But from across the table  
I wanted so many things  
From you  
From life  
But I sat eating my chocolate cake in the chair that creaks  
And burning inside  
Uncovering you sentence by sentence  
I wanted one more thing  
To stretch and smash time  
So that I could know you soul  
To know everything there is about you  
I sit on the other side of the table  
Watching you turn and turn the small plastic loop  
And it is me in your hand  
Run me through your fingers

Over your lips  
In the kitchen you fiddled with the poetry magnets  
It is still here this morning  
More things that got to touch you  
Be moved by you  
I envy them  
Inanimate  
Unable to burn as I still am  
The small taste of you I got at the end of the night  
In the living room  
After I told you about my family, after I picked up the yearbook  
A ludicrous thing  
And explained my life to you  
All it did was rip a hole in me that can never be filled.  
By years, by time by distance  
And yet  
I didn't want time to progress any further  
If I could just stop it  
With your lips on mine  
Hands around me  
In the circle of your body  
Safe  
Wanted  
The first time  
Balanced on possibility  
Surrounded by leaves and books and you  
Slowly swaying in your gravity.

## Thorn Street Brewery and the Aerialist

I am easily distracted today  
by thoughts of you  
and tonight  
and maybe brushing your hand  
thoughts of when i'll take yours  
when the exact moment two separate individuals lean into each other  
in the summer night  
walking back from the brewery  
dreaming here  
I fill the void with your voice  
which i barely recall  
right now you are just blurred edges  
black eyes  
and endless potential  
the most beautiful perfect things off all  
i wish i could teeter at the edge of this moment forever  
holding the fluttering in my stomach and wide smile  
swiveling my chair around and around  
not working at my desk  
anything could happen now  
with you  
and the momentum that fills me up to my core  
making me want to fling myself headlong towards you and your eyes  
and deep voice (i think)  
you make me purr and dream  
and pine for tonight  
smiling like an idiot  
like those songs the blast from my grandfather's radio  
a fool in love  
well not love  
not even close  
but i am still swiveling in my chair, smiling, dreaming of tonight.

Will you be a good lover  
Will your lips taste like summer  
how will you feel against my body

Warm and solid like time itself?  
I think you have a gravity like continents  
That draws you to me  
I want to draw you with my hands and write you with my lips  
Over under around in front  
I want to see all of you and swallow you whole

Until tonight then, lover  
Until reality and the evening  
Until then I'll be in my head  
Lost in your shadowy black eyes.

The reality fell far from the dream  
Far  
Squashed  
Like I was under you  
Ugh.

Corte Madera

I don't know about you yet...

I know about blonde curls

I know about the feel of rock under my fingertips

--sharp, angled, crystalline--

I know how to move towards the sky

When you are below me

Tied to the ledge (one point, I prefer two)

Murmuring in russian or singing to yourself

Which is better (one, I prefer two)

--sky blue no hawks wheeling feathers fluttering on the ledge--

Deep voice, strong shoulders, smile slow like the heat that rises from the mountain base

The rock is red under my hands

The dike we are climbing is streaked and white

In the sun the granite is slippery

I climb with care

-salamander scurry, black and thick, s-shaped, too quick-

The pain in my feet from balancing on cutouts is exquisite

Like my indecision

-hikers call from above inviting us for a beer-

-neon green, blue, running shorts and no eyes-

The reach is tall, I must shift my weight left

Above me now you climb, I cannot help but imagine how it would feel in your arms

The earth below is green, deep primal green, the chaparral uncompromising, unmarred or broken

The middle split a river must run

--do you think a river runs--

Cool silver, unseen

This is what california must have been like

In the east county where no houses dare the heat and exile

The mountain rings to the south stand in mexico

The proudest mountain *must* be mexico

It is beautiful, unclimbed, but I think not uncrossed

I see why people are drawn to here

It is beautiful here

Below you

Especially close to you

Though, it is beautiful there

No lines

Only the river below splitting the valley

Unseen

Everything is in balance when I start to climb again,

--Toe, hip, shoulder, arch--

Though it is blank

The section of rock, slick smooth untouched

Everything is in balance

You, unknown

The river unseen,

The two countries at war.

# Decision

I feel poised  
A the edge of something  
At the breakfast table  
Sipping the coffee, your coffee, sharp and bitter  
With the sugar cubes from your cream cat tongs  
You at work  
Me working at something completely different  
Throwing scenarios after scenarios in the spotlight of my mind  
Figures entwined, figures at odds, all silhouettes, blurred, uncertain, voices dim  
You see,  
There is all of you  
I want to fall, darkly, deeply  
But my toes are still gripping the earth, still firmly planted at this precipice, feeling the sway of  
gravity tugging at my hair, winds of change whip at my face  
Sharp and chapped  
The vacuum of us lingers, almost close enough to hear  
Almost close enough to see  
Drawing me closer to the nothingness of the edge  
Tugging at my midsection, in my gut whenever I see your face  
Your things scattered across the living room  
You are everywhere  
The void looms  
The sweetness of your lips below  
The tantalizing warmth of your chest  
The touch of your hands on my neck  
Or-  
perhaps after the step, the fall ends, briefly,  
a swift burst against the cold ground, brains and heart scattered across the cold plain of rejection  
So then, what to do?  
How long am I stand here  
Against the weight of you  
Simply me,  
Me with my impulse and eyes that are full of you  
I hear the siren call  
It is sweeter than death itself  
It is sweeter than life

Perhaps apathy is the only choice then.  
Firmly rooting myself at this edge forever,  
Or at least until I finish my cup of coffee.

# Koji Development

I am wondering  
Just wondering  
The thoughts flitting through my head  
Winged and drifting  
Like endangered moths or slightly drunk birds  
Or more perfectly like that seagull Sarah C clocked with a frisbee in the fourth grade which flew sideways across the playground for the next couple days feathered head askew but still zigging and zagging his way happily though the southern californian sky  
If I am in love with you  
As you sit coding away  
At your desk  
Me on the couch  
Braced against the pillows and a particularly stressful day at work  
Your mind racing and reeling through dialogue like some high strung thoroughbred  
Throwing turf and lunging at the gate  
As you cross through Epstein and the perils of venture capitalism  
Veering off into may-december romances and the concerns of generalization and status  
On your leggy and palomino lengths  
Still writing your ideas across the whiteboard for the app  
And associated containers (I assume)  
Unable to turn off all things  
Hair in a bun  
Sweatpants freshly ordered from some japanese teenage girls pinterest (I assume)  
I think I love it all  
The verve  
The swerve  
The unwavering connection and depth  
I think...I do  
And then, you are gone  
While I'm still dazed and drifting with the moths and seagulls  
And the fan is still turning in this august night above me  
I hear your footsteps creak across the wooden floors  
To the back part of the house where you sleep  
And I wonder  
What would happen if I followed you there, floors creaking under my feet  
Tonight

Would anything?

Or is it just proximity and my hapless predilection for steep, deep unprovoked love

Do I love your mind, your bookshelf, your lanky, awkward lengths?

I honestly don't know.

But, if I do...do you, me?

# How can you sleep

how can you sleep  
next to me  
it is impossible for me  
not to run my hands over  
the entirety of you  
not to memorize the sharpness  
of your cheekbones  
the single line of your eyelids  
closed now in sleep  
it cuts like tectonic plates  
you, dormant underneath  
mine

how can you sleep when there are miles of you to go  
your dark skin  
beneath my hands  
my fingers fluttering over  
your warm earth  
miles to go  
and I am lost in your wilderness

in sleep your bicep flexes  
curling together  
moving you from here to there  
and me to wonder

how can you sleep

I am a hawk above your mountains  
my wings waiting to dive  
tensed in salutation to the sun  
coiled above your heat  
caught between two life-giving heats

how can you sleep

your hair dark  
like an ocean I could slip beneath  
the waves in curls  
lapping at your mouth  
the pillow  
so soft  
I dive ecstatic  
the curve of your ear  
a seashell, coffeebrown against the dark black  
the surface of the world  
miles above  
and you pull me under  
tumbling  
the black of the waves  
thick and patterned in raven, cobalt, the deep green of kelp  
each breath, under still another depth, descended  
the pressure of you is glorious  
I feel it in my chest  
my ribs, my arms, the tips of my toes buckling

if this is drowning, let me drown  
if this is dreaming, let me dream  
how can you sleep, my love?

the scalloped shadows of your biceps  
are beautiful  
I hunger to put my lips against them

your chest is cold  
like those statues of Grecian youths lost beneath the Aegean sea  
tumbled from trader galleons  
tossed in the storms of our making  
I am the mussels that cling to you  
I am the coral that kisses your lips, sheltering your youth from the sweep of the currents  
so that when centuries from now  
thousands of generations of my love later  
wondering hands will sweep me from your glorious lengths my watch, my close touch  
your ageless beauty  
and be struck in amazement

as I am now  
as you sleep

my shepherd boy  
I am the moon staring down at you

I crave nothing more than your curves  
but you sleep

I would give up my days to lie by your side  
your beauty, your strength  
the sinews of you call me

even if you do not wake  
I am there

the moon, and you my shepherd boy, sleeping

if that was all I had of you  
I would stay here my love  
as your chest rises and falls  
in my light  
you glow under me

I could find you in the night  
trailing you like a hound  
the scent of you  
hot and wild  
my love, my monster

a coyote on the ridge  
paused in the night  
teeth bared at the moon white above tearing into you

you the red earth beneath me  
you the rabbit I tear

my monster, my love

The sage rustles in the night  
I howl high

you are all the scents  
and I find you in every one

hot and wild  
my monster, my love

you are the sharp pine tang  
the metallic sea breeze  
the cool of the pacific fog  
the acrid diesel burn

you among nothing  
matting my fur with thickness

I shake and walk on  
heavy with you

never alone  
always in search of you  
found.

# Murderer

You've taken up all the space in my head

Monster

The smell of you

The length of you

Running up and down me your hands

Two mountains

Me unexplored

You undo me

When we are together

I want you to hold me together by the collarbone

Yours so delicate, like I could break you between my fingers

Your nose like an ocean your mouth like a song

Your breath on my neck a forest to get lost in

Dark paths dreamt in fog

The sun a forgotten thing above our rolling earth

We are the nights

Whisper into me

And I will break apart into the stars that shine above us.

# My monster, my love

my monster, my love  
you become more abstract as we age  
you still ten years ahead  
running parallel to my indiscretion and barbary  
your body becomes riddled with memories  
dopamine bullet holes  
like this weekend  
you knuckles are no longer simply skin beneath my hands  
they fly and dance over the century old piano that stands at my grandparents  
they coax solfeggietto out from the worn keys, the sounds booming from the hood  
my grandfather humming behind the three leaf palm, knees crossed eyes closed  
us all enclosed by the portraits that have hung for decades  
one in particular a confusing war of geometry next to what I now see is a sensuously painted  
landscape  
they are no longer simply yours to move over me, the meaning transmuted the three palms and a  
foyer of paintings  
no longer just felt moving inside me  
my back arching underneath your hands  
thighs squeezing your forearms  
warm breath on my neck  
sweep of hair across my back  
the sheets rustling  
teeth on mine  
inside me, inside me inside me  
a gaping  
a collection of objects and smells and failures  
so heavy, I don't know how you can walk with the weight of them  
I see you now  
in the kitchen  
light as ballerina, all curves and sinews  
as you stir the pot filled with vegetables  
lit from behind like a Picasso

# Noise

Why is everything suddenly loud  
The panting of the dogs  
Licking and gumming the rubber toy  
The center of their being  
Pink tongues black rubbers  
Flicking like horrible lovers  
The heavy panting over gnawing  
Overrides the crickets legs noise  
The fish tank whirrs  
Trickling and motor whirring louder and louder  
The third movement is the knife against the chicken  
Thick and rubbery  
Because I've undercooked it  
Because I've never roasted chicken  
Because it a hot July night  
Because the murder rates spike during heat waves  
because my computers keyboard tick tacks  
Because the swish of my feet against the cabinets and my nose slurping up insides  
And the bulge of my throat and the closing sounds it makes to swallow the phlegm  
And your chicken and your chicken and the sounds my knife could make sliding into your breast  
Would be soft  
Maybe not even heard  
The loudness being only your dying eyes.

## Do I?

I loved you once, madly  
and now I think I love you still, I think  
love in confusion, confused  
a deer started mid-meadow  
neck straight towards the sky  
eyes wide  
ears flush  
fog puddling around, parting at hooves  
grass crushed beneath leading away  
in twos and fours  
but where does love end and habit begin  
I have no comparison  
no geologic timescale, no stratifications to pare back through  
you and me frozen in mid embrace, a look across the table as you stir the pasta  
our hands held as we watch the surf at sunset cliffs  
the subtle shift has started in my chest  
perhaps the knowledge of stillness  
the deep belief that we can pause together in the same breath  
the exhalation of our being  
is enough to change the burn and quake  
transmuting it into something deeper and stronger  
I hope  
or perhaps you have faded into habit  
the tread of my instep being worn  
the stairs slightly shorter at the bottom  
the shine of new brass on statues hands  
maybe it's best that I go.

uncertainty has killed love many times over  
it is taking another now  
with you and me  
it is not the future, looming, unwritten, hanging like a cresting wave, all ripples and wild foam  
it is not you  
the strength and length of you  
your wide smile, and quick laugh  
your warm hands and rough touch

it is always me  
it wrecked Tristan and Isolde  
Romeo and Juliet  
porgy and bess  
and now it sweeps us apart with desperate lashings  
because of me, the blankness inside me  
never you, my love  
my brave love.

# Wednesdays are for fucking

Wednesdays are for fucking  
fucking you  
my monster  
every other day can be for civility  
but allowances must be made for my demons of the body  
and demons of the mind  
that undo me when you breathe  
proximity barbarizes  
your heat infuriates the hordes  
I scream and gnash  
I tear and rend  
when you simply open the door.

## B-----

I've missed you, my monster  
Though this separation of ours is my own doing  
It does not stop the pain of the absence of you  
Loss is heaviness  
Loss is the sting in the base of your stomach  
When i ripped you from me  
When i drove from your house that night  
Words stuck in my throat  
The california night dark and blurred with my tears  
I did not realize i was taking away half of a life i spent a year making  
The unmaking of you is far worse than anything i can do  
Only time can fix this  
Only time in its cruelty and kindness  
Layering pieces of bacon with simple gristle  
And not your fatcat smile  
And the neat cans piled with its grease  
And the layers of it in your freezer  
And the six strips next to the avocado on your plate  
And your disappointment at the hotel in red rocks that i stole the last pieces and your poorly  
timed coffee run yielded you a baconless cliffside  
The first time  
Is it the worst  
Because each pain is new an unknown  
The magnitude startling  
Each tear that slips down your face inside an airplane at the clasped hands in front of you just  
visible through the slats of the chairback  
At the quietness of that first night you didn't call  
And the stack of the days events piled up of my chest  
Or it is worse the know the pain is coming and to plunge on anyway  
Starting from scratch at the next handsome smile  
I hope to never know this again  
I hope the next one is the last one  
And i hope i die first  
Because i am weaker, willingly admitted  
And can never do this again.

## Sandwiches of Men

I have come to think about all the things i have taken from men

Smiles, drinks, dinner

They stack up in edible towers, like some teetering flirtatious cornucopia

And other things less caloric

A hairtie that was not mine, a bobbypin from some past paramour who had my hair color (type, much, embarrassing-so!)

Two weeks from Cody, two months from Sam, I'm not even sure what I took from the Ians

In embodying the gaiety of unattainability i take it all

I prey on possibilities

Until you

You ruined those beautiful abstractions

With a sandwich

And now i hate you for it

Because you gave me love

And trust

Beautiful like a drop of dew that gathers on the tips of leaves

And i have ruined it with logic

All i have left is impressions of water.

## Week Two

I am emptying myself of you  
day by day  
cup by cup  
so that eventually there will be nothing left of you inside me  
and i will be hollow  
ready to be filled with the rush of somebody else  
but now  
I slosh when i walk  
I drip when i bend  
drops of you left on my windshield  
behind me on sidewalks  
are the blue of the ocean just touched by morning light.

# Unsent

I miss you i missyou imissyou  
the times i have said that into the air quietly  
because i cannot say it to you anymore  
I wish they should grow wings and flutter away  
so that they would leave my heart and stomach  
I wish they would gather into a small dark cloud and haunt someone else's vicinity  
I want to say it to you now  
but i wanted something else more  
I wanted a lifetime of curiosity and bravery  
things unattainable from your warm, safe harbor  
but lifetimes seem large and unimportant  
like elephants in africa  
or gently melting ice shelves  
vague things that loom and are impressive to behold (contain consequence)  
what i want now in the small darkness  
is to hold you close and whisper  
I miss you  
and you to just kiss my cheek.

## The View from the Table

You just walked out the front door  
because I sent you  
this last time  
with a letter from me in your pocket  
signed and dated, like you asked  
it's full of cross outs and added notes  
lines that I delivered shaking and tremulous  
not at all like I pictured in my head  
that me was far more logical and cool  
but this went better than all my fevered projections enacted at my desk  
it was real  
you were real  
and we were tangible together  
in a letter  
scrawled on graph paper  
taken from my office  
I tried but I don't think I pieced it all together  
the enormity of this past year and a half  
not even that much time really  
a blink  
or a sneeze  
maybe even a scamper of the rats in the walls in my little yellow house  
with the absurd rose garden  
I don't think I want to remember the heat and stink of it  
rising like a summer dawn  
I might fall and tear at my mind like a lioness if I do  
far better to have it written in me  
etched by your fingers tracing my hips  
and stare forward as that feeling fades  
and wait for the hands of another  
who will come to me  
as one will come to you  
rising from the ocean  
all foam and sea spray  
who will take me  
almost

as you did  
and close the door behind.

## Inverse

There is a strange inverse in the vacuum left by you  
Once torrentially empty  
Now the waters have receded along with your touch  
Your voice your eyes your hands your mouth your warmth  
And only sun and wind skim the surface  
I wish I was more rocked by your disappearance  
But time dulls most things  
And the knife edge of my youth is blunting itself day by day  
Which saddens me more  
Which compounds and exacerbates  
In positive feedback loops  
This sense of placid waters  
Touched only by wind and sun.

# Stone

I don't need you  
I'll make myself stone  
Round and cold and complete  
No pocks or shapes  
No divots or rents  
Even the light will slide off  
Even the dew will fall to ground  
There is nothing for the world to hold on to  
I will sit on the mountaintop  
And watch the stars turn  
They  
Like me  
Burn only for themselves.

# Blacks

You stare off into the waves  
The shape of you against them breaks my heart  
I cannot understand how you are not cold  
In this wind  
In this beach  
With the holes in your shirt

The wind whips my heart into bursting  
I am dying behind you and your barefeet  
While I stretch my hamstrings.

# Letter

I wrote you a letter  
It was red  
And my writing was crooked  
I wrote you a letter  
Because you were the first thing that mattered to me this morning

I wrote you a letter,  
Inside was a playlist  
It was boring  
But didn't quite fit on the stationary  
Numbered one to thirteen  
Because there is no unlucky thoughts around you  
It starts with good morning  
And ends with Vienna  
Because every mixtape should have billy joel on it  
Even kids know that  
And that song kicks round my head every time you crack your elbows  
And curl your chin into my neck  
Slow down  
And slide your hands around my waist  
You crazy child  
Tucking me into your chest  
You're so ambitious  
In the way you surround me  
In the way I fall into you  
In the way I wrote you a letter in a red envelope.

# Ludicrous

you're late again  
in your mismatched  
the brown is a rather horrible one  
not that you would know  
not that its your fault exactly  
but it niggles at me  
like an popcorn kernel between my teeth  
the sky is storming, leaving a fine mist of drops along my fleece  
lines along my running shoes  
and we are walking and talking  
while I am just waiting to run far away from you as possible  
to feel the sand beneath my feet  
to kick out and stretch breathing in the cold, salt air  
lungs burning, legs churning and-  
you end it first  
in the parking lot  
five steps from your car  
guess you couldn't wait  
or even pretend this was about anything else  
I wish I could have pretended to be outraged, to be hurt and angry  
but the relief staggers itself out of me  
in a smile  
we hug like strangers, you walk back  
slowly, maddeningly, disappearingly  
and I run across the world full speed.

## Full Circle

You startled me  
Your familiar face  
Across the gym  
Same curls  
Same absentminded smile  
The way you have of swivel around to take the most of the world in, but never the important  
things like grounds  
So I ducked behind a corner  
Naturally  
My heart spluttering  
Naturally  
This was bound to happen  
Like train crashes  
And the migrations of birds  
So I hand you the books  
That have been sitting in my car for two weeks  
The floor is spongy beneath my barefeet  
I look cute today, thank god  
You say you thought of me  
Ask how I've been  
We spend two minutes talking of border collies and boardgames  
You take the books  
I met you while belaying,  
The symmetry pleases me  
We bookend us.

# Broken Wings

I wanted you because you had built yourself a body to hide the pain

I saw it

Behind your eyes

Behind the beard and closed smile

I wanted you too because you were beautiful

Because i could have you so easily

I could feel you watching me

I stared back, beauty recognizes

After months of sweating next to each other, after lingering stares and shoulder touches, forms corrected, hands on mine, watching me breathe hard, me smiling back, fierce white teethed, your goddess, burning for you

I couldn't stand it anymore

Beneath the overhanging crack, around us the gym folk, rope over my shoulder

Shorts clinging to my thighs, dotted with sweat

The way you like me, and i liked you

Why don't you cook me dinner and take me out on your bike

The only response, a shy smile and okay

You picked me up after work, the sun was setting, I held onto you as we crested the butte, the ocean to our left, bluffs curving away below us

You so solid, so warm, my chest was fire, the wind whipped

We stopped on the beach to talk, the sun set slowly, setting the ocean bronze and burnished, your beard glowed gently, lit with fire

You told me of your father who was cruel, your family you never knew, your dreams, your future, which was uncertain

This was why i loved you

So strong but so uncertain

I wanted to hold you together, I took your hand, gave you some of myself

Your eyes drank me in, i wanted to be your breath.

You took me home, the night grew blue and cold around us, holding you on the back of the bike filled my throat with the ocean glow, bronze burnished

You cooked, that meal I'll never forget, you were a chef, the only time i heard your laugh boom through the small space

Your movements then so certain, knife flashing, string wrapped, the food a portrait that burst on my tongue in greens. I leaned in. I needed more.

Your room was unremarkable, you swept me up in your arms you built, you spin me like a bird

Gave me wings, gave me your lips as you lay me down

Months of waiting for this  
I had built this up  
for something, for a night, for motion, for...  
I wanted to cross a thing  
To become something else  
other, older, more  
You had a tattoo across your chest, I ran my hands over it, slowing my breathing, racing  
Unable to cross  
Wide eyed  
I froze. I had thought that  
I had been so  
It's just  
Everything that had come before had felt so effortless, right  
Flirtygirl prettygirl mermaid on the rock  
Everything was ferris wheels, all summer and motion and flashing light, until I  
It ran out, clanked to a halt, throwing me against the, ground to a  
What came after  
I didn't know  
It was just  
What came after  
A small thing  
A small thing I  
I couldn't  
We didn't  
You were so kind. I was a marionette. Strings cut.  
Your voice low. Calming. So kind. So perfectly kind.  
Everyone always thought that I  
Because I am  
assumed

You're married now  
Happier than I ever saw. Happier than I could ever make you. Happier than I could ever be with  
you.  
She is perfect for you.  
I am glad you have your wings.

# Waterloo

I had always said yes and nothing had ever happened  
I was young and unafraid  
You were next to me in a suit, briefcase  
I was a student, head shaved in geometric patterns  
Nose pierced, fiercely glorious  
Fiercely free  
You asked me out  
I always say yes  
You picked me up in a car in the city  
It wasn't what we had agreed  
The restaurant was close  
But i always say yes  
Even when i flutter  
When i don't want to be impolite  
We went to a place on the outskirts  
The buildings were tall and unremarkable  
Boxes and concrete and glass  
Dirty  
I lived in the beautiful part of the city  
I lived by the neon and bustle  
It was warm, filled with people, eyes, life  
Here there was no one  
I couldn't call  
But i didn't want to be impolite, so I followed  
Maybe this was going to be wonderful  
An adventure in brown and grey stains and litter filled gutters  
I held my beaded satchel a little closer  
You were one of six people i was seeing  
I was brave i was bold i was unafraid i was beautiful  
We went up stairs  
You wouldn't answer my questions  
But i still followed you  
I didn't want to be impolite  
I didn't know where i was, other than behind you  
But i had always said yes  
We went to a room, there was no one in the halls, the room was empty except for a mattress, a  
man was on the balcony smoking, there was a six pack half cracked on the counter

No dishes  
Another girl sat uncertainly leaning in the counter with no dishes  
I saw her confusion too  
He leaned in and said make yourself comfortable, then vanished to the balcony to smoke  
He shut the door behind him and they got high on the balcony  
I drifted towards the girl  
It was quiet and she looked as empty and unsure as me.  
Do you know them? I asked  
No. She said, glancing towards the balcony  
Neither do I.  
We stood a bit in silence  
We had been invited.  
We didn't want to be impolite.  
We had gotten dressed, pretty, excited.  
The mattress was in the corner, under the white walls. The men were on the balcony, eyes getting redder, voices getting slurred and louder.  
Do you want to get out of here? It came out so quietly between my lips  
But she heard  
They didn't  
We ran when their backs were turned for another hit.  
The metal was cold and I was so afraid they would catch us on the way out, we ran down the stairs, out into the night,  
She had a phone, she found us the station  
I ran  
I was afraid  
Waiting for the tube, I was afraid, I looked over my shoulder. She did too. Only when I was on it, whirring towards home, did I remember, I hadn't asked for her name. How terribly impolite.

## Bethnal Green

You lean your bike against the railing  
Of the underground station  
The one with the short handlebars  
That I have no opinion on whatsoever  
I close my umbrella  
The red one I broke at the beginning of tonight  
Before we walked up the stairs  
To join your friends on their rooftop terrace  
Where we bbq'd with the determination of twentysomethings  
Against the indomitable British weather  
Holding mulled wine in our hands  
And defiance in our hearts  
You sat on the tired sofa next to me and our legs touched  
We talked of apartments and Yorkshire accents  
And all I could think about was your shoulder against mine  
The fireworks burst pregnant against the night sky  
You took pictures of them on your Leica  
I saw you silhouetted against the red bursts of the fireworks  
Which were set to a peculiar medley of songs  
And in that moment you were everything  
As you held my hand the world the world shivered  
When the rain growled too much we went inside  
The potatoes in their foil forgotten on the slow wisping grill  
For some more mulled wine and not quite toffee apples  
I ate them unabashedly, thick strands of toffee on my hands  
You laughed and whispered for me to get more, more  
After your friends had shadow soft drifted one by one home  
Our host showed us to the door  
Muttering about the propensity of late friends named Joe  
We walked down the alley into the night  
A man stood uncertainly between the raindrops at the alley end  
You called out and it was the wandering Joe  
Now, with our bikes leaned and umbrellas closed  
We look at each other  
There is an eternity in the inch between us  
And it is tentative, trembling, perfection  
But my rabbit heart runs lost  
Down into the tube station  
Away from you and this perfect night

# Blueberry Pancakes

I had a policy once of always saying yes  
It had taken me to so many interesting places  
With so many beautiful and interesting people  
A couple of ugly and stormy ones too, but mostly beautiful  
Mostly beautiful  
The one I roll on my tongue sometimes  
When i want to feel wanted  
Not ugly and stormy  
Is one thursday night in particular  
College  
We were both young  
I worked the movie ticket counter in the student center  
An alcohol free programming activity  
Drew mostly the quiet crowd, the small groups of friends who didn't talk that much even to each other as they quietly paid the six dollar to see the movies that were still in the theaters  
It was a good job  
I sat and listened to music with a friend eating skittles and selling candy then watched a movie or played bananagrams with my coworkers.  
A brief bit of accounting was the hardest part of the night.  
And directing the drunk students who teetered through the warm halls in winter on the way to the bar at the end of campus, and calling the janitors when they threw up too messily in the bathrooms. A frequent occurrence.  
You were a regular.  
A quiet one, soft blond hair that was already fading from your head, an enormous forehead, square, watery blue eyes and a soft voice, a philosophy major that performed the bravest most electric standup I had ever seen in my short life  
I remember trying to reconcile the soft spoken person who came every thursday, barely meeting my eyes as you slid me the six dollars and walked past the folding table into the auditorium  
With the fiery figure on stage churning through acidic puns and spitfire  
I complimented you on it the next thursday  
You were startled, looking at me in confusion, and hurried on  
I laughed, exchanging a glance with Chilinh who raised her eyebrows and turned up the Kesha music playing from the computer and bouncing off the long tiled hallways  
The next thursday, you waited in line, as I took the money from the waiting students ahead, all bouncing into the auditorium anxious to find the best most comfortable best view seats together  
You seemed more nervous than usual, a bit quivery around the edges  
I had been lazy that day. It was cold and late, so I was in pajamas, sweatpants and an overlarge tee, wrapped up in a hot pink microfleece blanket I had gotten for free from Vidcon 2011, wrapped like a magenta burrito, hair in a messy bun sliding out of its confines as i bobbed to Jessie J  
Jobs then were simpler

I reached for the six dollars, and you asked if I wanted to get dinner sometime.  
I put the six dollars in the cash box, automatically separating the five from the one, then your question landed like a spaceship.  
I beamed back  
Oh, sure. Why don't we make it brunch tomorrow?  
You quivered back as if struck, surprised by the yes, as if expecting a no.  
Shook your head and quickly walked into the auditorium, like usual  
I had to run after you and give you my number  
Laughing to Chilih who was quivering with suppressed mirth  
And a bit of confusion  
Him?  
Why not? I shrugged and went on dancing to Jessie J  
There was a thing in you I'd like to know, not kiss, but your bravery was to be commended.  
I wanted to calm the quivering, stoke the fire onstage, to know that person, the creator of that person, that mind.  
Brunch the next day was just as quivering as the rest of the thursdays before, almost as silent in the dining hall across from you, as it had been from across the table.  
Things happen quick when you are young.  
I had gotten blueberry pancakes, you were trembling like a leaf, sweating and quiet.  
It was the hardest I had ever had to work for a conversation.  
The blueberry pancakes were delicious.  
I smothered them in syrup and delighted a bit in how much you loved me across from you.  
Blueberry pancakes always remind me of the desperate way you loved me for thursday nights, sweatpants, and a magenta blanket burrito.

# You

Even now I don't want to write about you

If I do

Open that door

You'll come muscling after me

All of you

Even now i am weak for you

I can feel the need surging in, to find you again

Years apart, thousands of miles apart, assured by me—the only way to stay apart

I feel the need

To be whatever you need me to be

Dark, tall, a voice, such a voice

I hated that I couldnt I couldnt

Even now

Just thinking about it

Because i am someone who is strong, not your leashed thing

Determined, Rational.

With a head on her shoulders who knows. Who knows what love is and should be.

But you

You made it so hard

And yet

Even now I...

I...

I want to thrash and burn with you

To end the night in tears, silent and pressed between your pages

Because before, the intensity burns just right, if you hold your hand to it, you become it

I know its bad

I know its not love

It never was

Even from me

It was so strong

You

Even now.

M-----

You were persistent, present  
A broad smile, wheedling, always trying to get me to do something  
After school during track, the only time I ever saw boys  
My days rapunzeled in a girls school, then dance class  
You marveled at my jumps, my leg, my smile, my hair  
The attention was dizzying, ever as I tried to focus on the runway, the form, the jump the landing  
To try and distract me from the glory of motion and success  
By myself I was good, I had a trajectory, I was beautiful and blameless  
but  
I had a fascination with you  
As you whispered to me from the bench  
The way you walked in the world, so sharp, so pressing, urgent, hair like a firework  
You were older, you wanted *me*  
There was something in me that held back  
I thought it was because boys were a variable i didn't know  
Surrounded in my girlhood by girls  
Siloed in my tower  
Talking of school and sports and books  
My world bright and blameless  
But I was focused  
You were focused on me  
You were older, more sure  
Always trying to get me to do something  
At the end of the season  
You asked me to prom  
older, a senior, asking *me*, a freshman  
In that moment, it seemed important, i teetered, stuttered on the runway, and I breathed, and I  
thought of the leap ahead  
But, your smile, however bright seemed sharp, wavering midair, feet outstretched  
I said no  
I didn't know why, but something prickled at me  
My hackles were raised even as you still smiled at me  
Me and my jumps and my legs and my smiles  
Years later I found out your went to jail for rape  
Coercion and assault of women from the internet  
Even then i knew, when we were young and blameless

I felt relieved, even as i shouldnt, things had happened, harm  
But not to me  
I felt like i had escaped something, stayed bright, stayed  
But then a terrible sadness overtook me  
You had been bright too  
You had been with me  
You had chosen something dark, you had chosen to take choice from strangers from people  
To become biting  
Your mugshot filled me with fear, sadness, your face had aged, drooped and darkened, hardened  
I tried to see how you had gotten to the other side of the screen, to that place  
What had life done to you, swept you up, til you had ended there, snapped  
But how could i know you  
How could i know your life, i didn't know you even then, when  
We had been young and blameless together.

# Sneeze

At an intersection near the lagoon,  
I sneezed  
Such an enormous blathering snozzling guzzling gloopy sneeze of a thing  
I couldn't help but laugh  
The light was still red  
I noticed the man in the car in the turn lane adjacent was staring at me, he laughed too  
I smiled and turned up my radio and danced  
I was meeting a highschool friend, and I wasn't late, high spirits ensued  
The light turned green  
I made the left and lost myself in the lagoons turns and soft browns and greens  
The car on my right sped up to right next to me  
I noticed it  
In that way uncomfortable things demand attention  
The man was waving at me  
Gesturing at me with his hand  
I looked at my car, my lights were off, nothing was amiss. Confusion shot through me.  
He gestured faster and I turned back at stared right ahead accelerating a little, music forgotten in  
the pounding of my stomach  
He sped up I could see from the corner of my eye his gesturing to pull over following me over  
the miles  
The lagoon was empty, there was fog this morning that covered the lone fruit stand and nothing  
else  
I drove  
He pulled in front of me and slowed down. We were at another light. He turned around in the car  
in front and gestured to the park and ride, finger like a knife, smile like a wolf.  
The light turned green he went. I accelerated around him and veered into the intersection onto  
the freeway ramp  
Forty fifty sixty  
I can't remember much  
There was fog  
The battered camry whined  
The highway was empty  
I looked behind me, he wasn't there  
I drove home.  
I didn't meet my friend.  
I don't laugh when I sneeze anymore.

# Goat Boy

It was the haircut  
It was absolutely the haircut  
I couldn't take my eyes off it at state leadership conference  
You were squinty eyed and beaky  
With tight pants  
From San Diego as well  
A slightly different part  
A slightly more agricultural and therefore cooler part  
You had goats  
Real goats  
You skated  
I was an establishment candidate  
Debate club, sports captain academic league, competition dancer  
But you simply listened to music and skated  
With those tight pants  
I remember the chills and flutters and sharp tingles  
As I agonized over sending that message to ask you to prom. Didn't even call. Far too scary.  
The rely came back on my Razor Envy flip  
Yes.  
I wore a strapless backless dress  
I was so sweaty  
But the eggplant satin didn't show  
It was the first time i wore boning, i wanted to be daring see, if I was going to have the guts to  
ask a boy out, I was going to have the guts to show some acreage of past white skin  
I had to tug it up all night, slipping down my nonexistent waist and chest  
Slender as a reed  
I still don't regret it, that night  
We held hands, I sweated  
We danced, me twirling around you, trying to get the guts up to stop spinning and put my hands  
on you, or even look you in the eyes when we talked.  
I did it though, Eliza, far more experienced and braver than I pushed me forward when the  
dreaded slow bars of Life is a Highways came on  
I leaned it  
You were sweaty to  
Small like me  
And we swayed, you were a terrible lead, so we mostly turned in a circle

Sweating under the hotel lights  
Surrounded by my giggling friends who were also leaning into their skinny sweaty dates  
Nothing happened after the dance  
Which was fine, school rushed back in, and dance and sports  
You were a brief haircut, but i'll never forget  
that dress

F-----

I still don't know why I loved you

I loved you for years

Years

From the first time i conceived of what romantic love could be

Outside the pages of ivanhoe of course,

Chivalric love seemed different

Filled with gloves and slaps and lances

Real playground third period, st johns ask someone to a dance love

Well that was something else entirely

I had always been pursued

But the general feeling up until seventh grade, was flight was better than those skinny twerps with adam's apples

With their cookies and their cards and their stalkings and their daisies and their starings

There comes a moment for everyone, when annoyance turns to notice

And after all those years, after all the spitballs, and notes slipped into my desk, and general distraction from study periods, I finally noticed, you

The height of my imagination was a kiss, a single kiss, first kiss on the even of our graduation

The concept of a relationship seemed manacled, leaden, cutting and dragging

There was too much to do in that simple time

Ponies to ride

Goals to defend

Tests to ace

Libraries of books to read, shelves and shelves of em, mostly Tamora Pierce

Nothing else figured in, nor should it, my world was stuffed full

But I could slow for a single kiss, from you

It must have been the ganglyness, the curls, the enormous shorts that puzzled and billowed when you played at lunch. Or dark eyes, I always had something for dark eyes.

But really, deep down, I think its because there was a fragility to you, like hurt bird, fluttering

I was always in the front of the class, winning, loudest, best. I can't help it, never can, the whirlwind must turn, and grade school was a simple thing if you broke it down and tried hard enough. But you didn't, and that puzzled me, I didn't know if you didn't try, didn't want to, I thought you wanted me more than all of that. It puzzled me, it puzzles me now.

I looked you up recently

A brief flit of curiosity and the internet provided

You found someone

You became someone who i imagined you would be

Simple, recognizable, all built up bro muscles, bold print tanks, and thin chains  
Professing love for your lady  
Also recognizable  
Long nails, pressed hair, thick makeup, small necklace with her initials on it  
You looked happy which brought me joy.  
I also thought you would be something different  
I also thought that we would kiss  
But that moment slipped by  
Us in our blue robes and parents all around  
Then life carried us both to these separate places  
Edges still adjacent, but buildings, communities, interests, apart.  
I wished I'd have been braver.  
I wished I'd stolen that kiss.

# Taller

Proximity, I am convinced is the arbiter of first love  
Or perhaps the cruelty of your thick arms as you tumbled me in tag, again and again  
Dark eyes and you were taller, that much I remember now taller and stronger  
Unfair  
But the love gleamed from me like gold bullion  
Our parents were friends  
And in that way that children have  
So were we  
And your hair and curls and boyness  
The meanness and general waspy competitive edge made me love beating you and therefore you  
The ways childhoods tumbled into each other, so easily  
Then like the somersaults competitions were would have in the narrow grassy strip of the two  
bedroom in alameda  
So easily out  
Panting, heavily  
All of us catching our breaths  
Looking back, everything has faded  
Including our parents friendship  
And your parents marriage  
That's time, dissapitory  
Last time i heard, when your dad came round the surf reunion  
You worked in a pot field in south america  
Or masseuse in hawaii  
School was my things as we aged and drifted  
Wandering was yours  
But I still have your gleam, your curls  
And the fierce way I loved you  
Like hawks.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my mother whose belief in me has never wavered. Never. Even when I have fallen so far and so hard.

To my grandparents for ceaselessly encouraging me to write and for reading everything I sent their way.

To all the people who have filled me with things. Beauty, lust, confusion, hatred, appendages. Without it, I could not write. All of it was wonderful, all of it led me to the end of this thing and the start of another. Without your stories, your lips, your moments, the greatest gift of all, *yourself*, I could not have loved in return. I don't remember all your names, I would thank you all individually, but then you might think me insane. I don't blame you, I would too. I hope all your lives, after those brief moments, months, or years we shared are as wonderful as complicated as can be.

To all the people I have forgotten. Your moments were just as important.



COCO BOYLE is an American poet. She was born in San Diego, California and started writing poetry in 2011. About the same time she fell in love for the elevenyteenth time. Correlate away...This is her second collection of poetry.