**Romantic Comedy in Reverse**

RESOLUTION

How do you know that you’re falling in love with someone? The small stain of margarita on your fingertips? Or one cigarette a day instead of two or three because those fuck up your lungs forever and we know there’s not a forever but maybe there’s a long enough.

CRISIS

I kiss you under the Valle Del Elqui stars which are some of the best stars in the entire world according to all of the astrologists. You say two thousand years ago, pre-European colonization, people were looking up at these same stars. Two thousand years ago people were loving under these same stars. Two thousand years ago the violence was a prenatal atom hundreds of iterations away, hundreds of disparate lips and fingertips and dust.

TURNING POINT

The atmosphere is milky like the blind dog’s eyes who followed us up the mountain ridge past the containers of rock and stumbled, dehydrated and sloppy, away from our arms. We all get older and lose something, if only to relive the ancient qualities of our birth, our sky. How do you know that you’re falling in love with someone when your love is already overflowing? I almost say I love you instead of goodbye because that’s what I tell my friends, I mean it’s true, I mean I love them, I mean I love the world, I mean I love infinitely. But love is different when you find a body to hold. That’s what my mother tells me when she forgets she once held me so fiercely and never had a reason for goodbye.

MIDPOINT

You smile before you kiss me and it’s this closed-mouth, curly-haired sort of thing, goofy but serious, like you’re concentrating so damn hard on nothing, really, at all. I sleep with you after. I’ve always thought it funny that sex and sleeping are synonyms because the latter is so much more intimate. So much less learned. With you, it’s the first time I don’t need to make that distinction.

COMPLICATION

How do you know you’re falling in love with someone when you fear the elevation? Someone wrote me a poem once and I tucked it in my back pocket. Saved for the harshness of our dryer. Their handwriting was noodly, chicken-scratch, like soup, they said. I texted them after we learned that gay slur in Spanish class to tell them I missed them. They never responded. I think one day I’ll find it burrowed in momentum and summon a poem for your rumpled khakis but right now, for your sake, I’ll let us rest.

CATALYST

When my therapist and I talked about you there was some sort of nostalgia in her voice. She told me her old dog had just died and she’d broken up with her husband that day after decades of marriage but that she didn’t regret any of it, you can never regret any of it, you can never regret anything like that at all. Her eyes were red like bullets. Continue loving, those eyes said.Love as deep and as hard as you can because of course you’ll fall so deeply and the metal will close your heart but oh boy oh boy what is the alternative? A slow puncture of slumped-over lung. A runaway playlist. A Valle del Elqui without all of the stars.

SETUP

How do I know I’m falling in love with you? I don’t. But I do remember when you told me about almost dying from that congenital brain problem, thank god they figured out what it was, thank god the doctors fixed it, thank god thank god you are here next to me is all I think, really. But you lived so you could love in all of its totality and you didn’t live for me to kiss you for just long enough. That’s the thing about impermanence. I’ve already shed the skin that touched your afternoon wildfire. You’ll go away. The sun will dampen. Like rain, we’ll move on.