“The poem, ‘To his lost lover’, appeared originally in Simon Armitage’s 1993 collection Book of Matches, a set of poems about failed relationships, family and marriage. It has since been widely reproduced and anthologised across numerous poetry appreciation websites and social network favourites lists, and it featured for several years in the final school-level examination (the 16+ GCSE) curriculum in the UK.” (Gavins & Stockwell, 2012, p.35)

**To his lost lover**

Simon Armitage

Now they are no longer  
any trouble to each other  
  
he can turn things over, get down to that list  
of things that never happened, all of the lost  
  
unfinishable business.  
For instance… for instance,  
  
how he never clipped and kept her hair, or drew a hairbrush  
through that style of hers, and never knew how not to blush  
  
at the fall of her name in close company.  
How they never slept like buried cutlery –  
  
two spoons or forks cupped perfectly together,  
or made the most of some heavy weather –  
  
walked out into hard rain under sheet lightning,  
or did the gears while the other was driving.  
  
How he never raised his fingertips  
to stop the segments of her lips  
  
from breaking the news,  
or tasted the fruit  
  
or picked for himself the pear of her heart,  
or lifted her hand to where his own heart  
  
was a small, dark, terrified bird  
in her grip. Where it hurt.  
  
Or said the right thing,  
or put it in writing.  
  
And never fled the black mile back to his house  
before midnight, or coaxed another button of her blouse,  
  
then another,  
or knew her  
  
favourite colour,  
her taste, her flavour,  
  
and never ran a bath or held a towel for her,  
or soft-soaped her, or whipped her hair  
  
into an ice-cream cornet or a beehive  
of lather, or acted out of turn, or misbehaved  
  
when he might have, or worked a comb  
where no comb had been, or walked back home  
  
through a black mile hugging a punctured heart,  
where it hurt, where it hurt, or helped her hand  
  
to his butterfly heart  
in its two blue halves.  
  
And never almost cried,  
and never once described  
  
an attack of the heart,  
or under a silk shirt  
  
nursed in his hand her breast,  
her left, like a tear of flesh  
  
wept by the heart,  
where it hurts.  
  
Or christened the Pole Star in her name,  
or shielded the mask of her face like a flame,  
  
a pilot light,  
or stayed the night,  
  
or steered her back to that house of his,  
or said “Don’t ask me how it is  
  
I like you.  
I just might do.”  
  
How he never figured out a fireproof plan,  
or unravelled her hand, as if her hand  
  
were a solid ball  
of silver foil  
  
and discovered a lifeline hiding inside it,  
and measured the trace of his own alongside it.  
  
But said some things and never meant them –  
sweet nothings anybody could have mentioned.  
  
And left unsaid some things he should have spoken,  
about the heart, where it hurt exactly, and how often.