

I never wanted you to go.

At night, I catch you out on the balcony—you turn, you smile at me, your hair a little tussled by the wind. It makes me shiver, and I could tell in the way your eyes turned that you wanted to give me your coat. I'm proud, and maybe a little drunk, and I don't want to give that to you, and I shake my head before you can part your lips.

I lean into the railing and listen to how it creaks. The wind sends my hair whipping, and I have to spit it out of my mouth—I hear you laugh a little beside me, and I scowl, even though it makes me happy to hear.

I want you to say something, anything, just to hear your voice again. But you leave me there, waiting until I can't wait anymore, and my heart so full of pain bursts from my chest. I ask you why you took the car. I ask why you couldn't have walked. I ask why you couldn't have waited. But you don't have answers for me. You never do.

I close my eyes, and I can feel your arms wrap around me, pulling me into the sanctuary of your embrace—it lets me think for a second that you didn't ever go. I shut my eyes tighter, and I breathe, and the smell of you wafts in like a distant dream, the smell of sawdust and espresso and I can barely just find the smell of the mints you always bought—but I'm imagining that last one.

You don't say anything. You don't have to. It's enough that you're back, even if you're not really back, even if you can only be here for this instant; this moment is all I need. It digs the dirt from my grave, pulling me out from the ground, even though I know it's only to dig a deeper hole. I need to get away from all of this, but when I think of you, I want you back again.

My eyes are closed for the longest time. I'm still waiting for you. But you're a right bastard, aren't you?

I open my eyes—you're gone again. My tears are staining your photo. I try to wipe them away, but they sink into the thin paper, scarring your memory. It still smells a little like you—I'm forgetting how you smell a little more every day.

I wish we took more photos. It's only this one I can bear to look at. We took two photos alone—the other has the car. I hate that I can't look at it. I want to want the smile on your face, the red in your cheeks from the frost, that coat with the broken zipper you never wanted to replace. It's another piece of you, and I don't want to let it go—but I can't bear to see the car that took the rest of you away.

I think I might just tear them up. Maybe I can stop remembering you. Maybe I'll stop seeing you out on the balcony, hearing you hum in the shower, and maybe one day I'll put on a pot of coffee and stop making your share. Maybe one day I'll look at that photo with the car and stop hearing that call, stop seeing the red on the white paint, and maybe I'll look at you without seeing the way you were when you left me.