

How to Forget

by M. Barns

Drop out of school. Not because you're failing, but because everything there reminds you of him. Don't tell your teachers because they will ask *What's wrong? Is this because of a boy?* Because as a freshman in college, it almost always is. Don't admit to your friends why you're leaving. Tell them you're failing out of school. Tell them you lied about your academic scholarship. Call an old boyfriend to drive five hours in the middle of the night to pick you up, and move you back home. Don't tell him why.

Live with you ex-boyfriend for a few weeks. Pretend that the curves of his body match the curves that you're missing. Accidentally spill water on his cracked hands so they momentarily feel like the damp ones you're missing. Cook him food that you used to eat with *him* and get upset when your ex-boyfriend turns up his nose and refuses to even try. Read poetry the way you used to read it, before you understood the definition of *gone*. Be upset that he doesn't know what it's like to lose someone. Hate him for it. Move back in with your Mom.

Refuse to go to the church service, even though you already missed the funeral. Tell his mother something came up. Call his phone over and over, just to hear his voice, until his mother asks you to stop. Make a recording of his voicemail. Delete it and re-record it until it's not there anymore. Cry for the first time.

Go on a drinking spell. Always start with tequila. Tequila was his favorite; you met over a bottle one drunken night. Remember what it tasted like when he kissed you. Remember that you were both dating other people, so you had to pretend that it never happened. Remember sneaking away beside buildings, into bathrooms, and behind shower curtains to kiss again. Miss him sneaking into your dorm room in the middle of the night just to sit with you until you finally fell asleep. Remember how he was the only one who didn't mock you for your nightmares.

Flip through your old notebooks, where he would leave you notes and drawings in the margins. Pay particular attention to the flip book he made out of your chemistry notebook. Smell the fading scent of the bubblegum ink pen you let him borrow. Wonder where it ever went. Wonder if it was in his pocket when he killed himself.

Blame yourself, because when you look back on it you know what he was planning. Drink more tequila and pour some on the floor for him. Laugh at yourself for wasting tequila. Feel bad for laughing, but remember that he told you he loved your laugh. Remember how he said you laughed like a little kid. Wish you could hear him say it now. Laugh at everything you can. Laugh loudly and unapologetically. Laugh at inappropriate things like dead baby jokes and semi-serious injuries. Forget to remember sometimes. Throw away all of your notebooks (except for the chemistry one). Smile again.

