

*Twelve Years Ago.*

On a Wednesday, we met on the edge of the Golden Gate Bridge. I was looking for a new beginning, and you were looking for an end. I saw you dance on the edge, playing with fate. One wrong step and you would have fallen through the air like a shooting star going down into the middle of a lake.

I shouted, "Wait!"

You stopped and stared back at me with gray eyes that were permanently stained with the color of grief. I don't know how I did it, but I convinced you to stay with me until the sun went up. Together, we watched the ghost of your father jump to his death from the railing three more times and wished we could save him.

That night, you took me into your apartment where your only company for eight months had been old shopping lists and spoiled milk. Your body brushed against mine, and I felt a shudder of revulsion, but also a kind of love. It was a longing sharper and more distant than desire, like the electric current that moved through my body after I stuck my fingers into sockets when I was three years old just to see if my heart was flammable.

You became my angel. As I held you, I swore that I could almost feel the wings forming on your shoulders. I felt all the layers of your cells shift over mine like tectonic plates coming to rest against my heart. And you whispered, "Stay."

*Twelve Months Ago.*

We got a house built on land reserved for weary souls and lost thoughts where the home builders buried the buried again. When they told us this, you said you wished they had buried you with them. Sometimes, we visit the only remaining tombstone in our backyard together. You bring her pieces of your father's broken mirror, as if it would be enough for her to move over and spare some room for you.

On Monday, you were so desperate to rot into nothingness that you pushed away your bowl of alphabet soup with letters that spelled out the date of your death. I looked at you, you were holding your own hands and whispering, "Daddy. Daddy. Daddy. Daddy, Daddy. Daddy.

*Daddy.*” I reached out to touch you, to hold you, to bring you back to me. But you pushed me away and threw up in the kitchen sink before falling over like a card tower.

I went to clean up the remains of your soul and saw seven lines on the inside of your wrist. They were perfect, as if you had taken a straightedge and used it to draw red lines on your canvas. When I asked you about the scars, you looked up at me and smiled like a child, “Oh these? The cat did it.”

The cat always does it, the cat is going to keep doing it, and the cat will always do it.  
We don't have a cat.

### *Twelve Weeks Ago.*

You called me, except it wasn't you on the other end. It was a stranger who said you had just driven into an oak tree, but refused to allow the ambulance to be called. I went to the tree where we exchanged our wedding vows eighteen months ago and found your body slumped over the steering wheel like a comma at the end of a page where the reader has to pause. You were barely able to lift your head to stare me in the eyes, “I saw him today, Erica. I saw him.” You smiled before letting your hands fall.

You ran your car into the tree again just to see your father's face for the second time. I met you and all you said was, “He didn't come today.” We were dripping wet from the rain and the streetlights bled into color on the pavement. They formed purple shadows along the plane of your jaw; you looked like a stained glass window, reflecting all the different shades of sadness back into a church.

When I took you back home, you put Elmer's glue onto your palms and waited for them to dry so you could peel them off, as if you could peel away your own grief. I sat beside you and did the same. You looked at the imprints of my palm and asked me what I used to do in my spare time before I met you.

I told you that I used to rip the price tag off my own self worth and tried to auction myself off to the highest bidder in the dark corners of the bar on Tuesday nights. I gingerly took your hand in mine and whispered, “It was only because all I ever wanted was to feel wanted.”

You nodded before telling me that you burned down all the bridges people made for you

even though you never learned how to swim. You took your hand out of mine and stated, "Instead of rescuing me, they watched me drown."

*Twelve Days Ago.*

It rained. I remember that first day out in the rain, you had approximated that it would take me 314,159 minutes and 26 seconds to fall in love with the angels our arms made when we interlocked fingers. I remember how our bodies shook with different frequencies when we felt the thunder crackle underneath our bones, and how we trembled like a high note when we first held each other.

Today, my calendar was rude enough to remind me that it's been seventy eight-days since we last touched and sixty-four days since we last saw each other. You got a plane ticket to Baltimore, left, and I haven't heard from you since. I remember that every time we said goodbye, I practiced counting the number of steps it would take for you to disappear from my sight. It was exactly forty-three and a half, but it didn't prepare me for goodbye.

I still can't forget what you sound like.

Some nights, I cook dinner for two and do your laundry with mine, just in case you decide that you miss late Thursday night science lessons. The first time you told me that we are only made of seventy percent water, that our hearts beat stronger even though we get closer to death every second, and that our brains are just a layer of tissue and nerves decaying in fluid. So, should you trust the heart or the brain? The last Thursday we spent together, I remember you accounted for the speed of light and the effect mass had on the kinetic energy of an object in motion, like the way your hands found mine out of habit when I sighed.

*Twelve Minutes Ago.*

You sent me another drunk voice mail like you always do whenever you want to jump off the Empire State building. There are about twelve missed calls on my answering machine right now, and most of them say things like: "I love you, thank you for loving me."

The one you just sent me said, "I'm sorry, I need to get out of this skin."

But I don't want to listen to your voice mails. I want you to lie to me until I can no longer distinguish between your promises and Friday night confessions of love in the backseat of a car. I want you to lie to me and tell me that loving and leaving are not synonyms. I want you to lie to me and tell me that I am more than just your crutch.

I want you to lie to me and tell me that you won't ever, *ever* jump.