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Efemera

Mollie R. Sherman

Gettysburg College, shermo01@gettysburg.edu

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Efemera

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Author Bio

Mollie Sherman appreciates well ripened fruit and well lit rooms. She is a first year English Major with a Writing Concentration and reads arguably too much Anne Sexton in her free time.

Efemera

Mollie Sherman

I was caught off guard the morning you told me you loved me. It was past 2 am and I was almost asleep, head tucked against your side and my hand curled in the collar of your shirt. It was our four month anniversary. I had insisted we watch a romantic comedy for once, but you had opted to study my face instead of the screen. The more frustrated I was at the plot, the more you smiled, your mouth stretching over your sullen face. Something softened in your eyes and it made me want to kiss you. Instead I leaned in closer and you let out a breath, pressing your hand to the small of my back, gentle as air.

We waited too long after the credits and the title menu tattooed itself to the inside of my eyelids. You fumbled to find the remote and turn off the television after the third loop of music. In the familiar weight of the quiet that followed, I memorized the rise and fall of your chest. We had learned to speak through silence, since I always said the wrong things out loud.

You spoke it cautiously, the “I love you,” like you weren’t sure if you were allowed. Like you were afraid your hands weren’t enough to keep me from floating away. I’m sure you felt the heart tense in my chest and set off running.

I curled myself tighter against your side and tried not to hear the threat tucked beneath the framework of your words, the “I’ll leave you.” I had known you would ever since you first kissed me against the passenger door of your Chevy and blamed my lightheadedness on the mid-afternoon heat.

The hum of the heaters tucked in my neighbors’ backyards almost overpowered the sound of your heart beating cautiously under my ear. You were solid under my fingertips but your voice was hollow in my chest, settling itself between my ribs. More than anything I didn’t want to drift away. My lips parted to kiss your collarbone and go back to the days in August when we still weren’t sure of each other and I thought you would be gone by October. But my mouth met your cool skin and my own voice came tumbling out, four words I hadn’t prepared to say. My mumbled “I love you too” hung in the silence as I pretended to fall asleep.

When you left the next morning, I stood barefoot at the glass door and watched the gap in the side of the frame let cold air seep in. You plant-

ed a kiss on my forehead and I closed my eyes, trying to remember who I was before this. I gave up in time to watch you drive away in your Chevy, rear bumper dented from when you let me practice stick shift.

I held on to the doorframe. The air leaking through the gap stung at my eyes so that later I still couldn't read your texts, or the same ten digits that called for two weeks until you gave up.

The next month I called you and it went to voicemail after two rings. I ended my apologies with "I love you."