

**A** *pril*  
**L** *oems*



BATHROOM.

We beat these sterile offices of life  
into something that looks like us —

dirt under the nails of our bedroom,  
eczema creeping along the bathroom

floor. How many folding chairs does  
it take to hold up the roof? We watched

you play with smoke by the shower  
curtain, flip it in your mouth like tying

a cherry stem knot. *You was a temporary  
lover*, you've sung it a hundred times

before. Does this night make it any  
different? Can you feel me across the

room, sunk into my body and crawling  
away from the city where we were born?

I WILL MAKE ANY.

I will make any promise in the dark. I will  
hound anything that brushes my lips. This

bedroom harbors old hunger in the April moods.  
These windows spread their throats for me. Now

you have fallen into the mattress. You have pressed  
your feet into the floorboards. I will never be alone

again. I have tried to force the object out of my gut,  
but forever it remains, thick marble rolling through

my torso. I am unbalanced. I beg you to take my shoulders  
and love me into the ground, until my spine roots itself

into our shaken world. I beg you to push the clouds away,  
how long they have stayed.

MAY POEM.

I am sorry that the mood shifts inside me.  
I am sorry that the air is sucked out of this room  
  
so soon. My body has not known peace for years.  
I do not expect it any time soon. I do not expect  
  
you to want me anymore. May has come, the leave  
has come, the summer will melt memories in my  
  
head into trickles of tender longing, I will long for  
you, I will write for you, you will not care, you will  
  
wish I had come sooner, you will wish I had been  
more unforgiving.

OUR BODIES SLEEP TOGETHER.

Our bodies sleep together, fully clothed.  
The window sleeps alone, half-open. The

string lights never sleep. The floor sleeps  
dumb. The desk lies awake all night, scratching

the floor to try to wake him. The rug has never  
woken up. The dresser spins in her sleep. The

fire escape coughs all night. The cardstock have  
been giving quiet kisses to the wall. They do not

remember why they love him. The books flutter  
their eyelashes towards dawn. They have not slept

without nightmares for a year. The bedframe  
goes numb in the middle of the night, throws her

limbs to bring them back. I do not know what the  
night is. I know when you wake me it is over.

## BUGS.

In June, the bugs crawled in through the window.  
Whole mounds of breathing crittering, crawling  
towards the lampshade. Now it's August. How long  
they've stayed in the corner of the room, peered  
out through stainless black eyes. Once they saw us,  
together, legs twisted, blanket drawn, crushed  
foreheads. Do they know I'm alone now? Can  
they taste it in my blood? I would taste you  
from the stains in the sheet. Do not think time  
draws me away from you. A year turns the  
blood to oil in my gut, makes me lick  
at the figure in my summertime head.  
And back out the window with the cold again,  
then back to your skin as I meant.

WE CAN'T COME BACK FROM THIS.

We can't come back from this, white  
cords circling in the plexiglass suns.

How much more concrete will you  
cook up for me? I suck the asphalt

air, the streetcleaners in the morning.  
Is this where we come from, M—?

Can you come back to America, M—?  
The heat won't go away. The roads clog.

I have not dreamt in two months. I will  
give up. Do not dare me. I will surrender.

Do not tempt me. When my daughter asks  
for the cup of blood, it will be waiting

on the kitchen table.



NOLA.

Heat melts images  
out of my mind. You  
remember summer?  
Stung-eye pictures on  
the looping sidewalk. You  
were drunk when you  
picked your way inside  
the engine. All that grease  
on your knuckles. I was  
drunk when the fever came.  
I drank gallons of your sweat,  
don't look at me like I didn't.  
I drank gallons of your word.  
Do not touch me like I haven't.  
Can't you tell when a body bends  
like it longs to be held? When the  
streetcar arrives, I will bruise open  
the window and wait for you to take  
your seat.

READING.

I'd read the book to you,  
if I tried, if you listened. If  
you stayed rocky under  
my shoulder, if I made  
a place for you here. If  
we had fingers to follow  
the lines, nostrils to open  
in response, in code to  
each other, in love with  
nothing besides the sheet  
and the bed, the mosquitos  
pouring in, in love with the  
light, with blood, with sticky  
black feet on the white walls.  
We don't wipe our shoes when  
we come in, but I've licked the  
dirt from your toes and you can  
never say I haven't.

VASE.

I have worn these clothes for weeks ,  
    haven't you ? I do not undress  
alone , do you ? Cotton cloth topples  
    over my shoulders , my muscles  
and bones push pockets into me , I am  
    clay , I am soft , I am warm , I  
have been held in your hands and made  
    to curve , bend back over , lick  
at myself , curse at myself , if not for you  
    I would be hard now , a rock crystal  
vase on the shelf , waiting for the bolts to  
    come loose . Would be pieces , knife  
plates on the dust floor , preying for cups  
    of blood to tip out the skin doors.

## SOFT HOURS.

I have never been strong (can  
you feel me ?) only hard ,  
sometimes sharp in the nighttime ,  
nothing since you went , only  
cold in the nighttime (can you  
come to me ?) , only breathing  
in the day , kneeling in the street ,  
praying to skyscrapers , in our  
nature , October is a humid month  
now , will November be a wave ?

I have never been strong , only there  
under the sheet damp with sweat ,  
under the eyes damp with vision , soft  
hours in the early morning , hard  
seconds when I turn out of bed , November  
bulged in through the window ,  
December will cry against the window sill .  
Tears like bricks , built up into this  
horrible home , a shelter we made in time ,  
time like bricks , a mausoleum of  
months , the dark like bricks , the faces like  
bricks , when you held me in your  
hand I was writing with my tongue into  
your palm , *Do not bring me home .*

BRIGHTON.

The black casket in my pocket shakes like a crying boy.  
I have grown now, into November, and placed my mattress

on the floor so to look up at the window, at the light.  
I think of you every second, and so every second promise myself

I have placed my heart behind me and I do not look back.  
Once we woke up trading air with each other's mouths.

I spun my arms around you so wide, so tight, I could have held  
the whole duplex to my chest and pulled it down. But instead

I only came late, every few days, lingering in the parking lot,  
looking through windows, asking myself, Which one is hers?

What can she see?  
Will she unlock the door?

## MOON.

The train rattles on over the East River,  
through the cut-up window I can see  
the moon, a broken plate, drift between  
buildings, sustained on gentle air, large  
enough to press its feet against the ocean.  
It disappears behind high-rises, then rises  
again and again, small eclipses of a lingering  
planet, and for a brief moment hangs as a  
billboard or penthouse between the constructs,  
shines its light on the sinning bodies and the  
widening nostrils, hooks its tip through the  
subway window and watches me, small, bony,  
wonder how it will ever become full.

SHORE.

I sleep and come along to open doors.  
Inside them wait the trances of my mind,  
Small moments stolen for a soul to find  
When eyes give way to night's most lonesome Shore.

I wonder — could I lock them, and be sure  
Desire would not come again? Confine  
My tiny mind to things I know are mine,  
And quiet the spirit that calls for more.

Is my heart too sore? Can I meet with disgust  
The richness of a life lived half in want?  
Not yet. I know you will return to me.

Take my restful nights with your phantom touch,  
And I will live, waking, without your love,  
And dream my dark away on Gutwrench beach.

MY HEART, THE JUNKIE.

— *After Emily Berry.*

My heart, the junkie, begging for the friction  
of dust drug against pink membrane. Why  
did you go away & leave me? I will not spare  
late night calls & dropped pins, jotted down  
notes in the eyebackrolling buzz, a pupil like the  
wide & frowning moon, sick bodies begging  
to copulate in the horrible light. My pulse  
is a horse I've ridden for days, shaggy breaths  
& bony knees crooning for collapse. It is a quiet  
& bitter morning now, the river exhaling smoke  
into the sky into the sky into the sky. I see you  
far ahead, holding your arms tight in the chill of  
early spring, wisps of hair kissing the mist of water.  
When we have our reunion it is amiable, and I linger  
on words I held inside for those months. When we  
finish talking, you nod and step onto the waterface,  
walk across to the riverfront, and leave me in the wake.





