

Life lessons from a dead girl

Summer 2014

*in loving memory,
of a Cosmonaut*

1.

A gift is just something that was given to you,
Not something you asked for.
Gold is only precious
because someone wanted it.

2.

There's a reason you weren't born with armor
Skin is supposed to be soft
Uncover your veins
Leave your throat open
Close your eyes on the freeway
You weren't built to be permanent.

3.

When it happens
The papers will say, She died in her sleep
They'll talk about the people you left behind
Left,
like children you forgot on a train platform
You will be old, no matter how young you were

Your name will close around them like a mist they can't shake
When they think of you,
they will think of headstones and flowers
And the things people might say at their funerals.

4.

They will make you an attraction.
Everyone's favorite dinner conversation
Did you hear what happened?
Did you know her?
They'll list off all the facts:
She was blonde,
she was smart,
she loved music.

Everyone loves music.
People die every day who love music.

5.

You can't run away from darkness.

Everything has to sleep sometime.

6.

The papers will just say, She died in her sleep
They won't mention
the track marks
and the needles
and the time you said This was exactly how you'd do it.

No one wants to ask those questions.
They'll say that Ophelia just fell into the river,
like gravity goes more than one way.

7.

Don't imagine anyone will fight for you.
If you want to keep your head up
Learn to swim.
Don't you realize
no one wants to mourn for you?
They will read your name in the paper like nostalgia.
The first on a list of things no one wants to think about
but still can't forget
I'm asking you to remember:
That you can leave at any moment.
This is a branch that will break if you shake it.
No one will stop you from jumping.
No one will take the needle out of your hand.
No one will love you just because you want them to.

8.

Waking up is a choice you made this morning.

Tomorrow you will get to choose again.

9.

The papers say, I died in my sleep
Killed by gravity
like Ophelia
when I lived at the end of a branch so thin
it only took a sigh to break it

Don't judge me
because the water looked calmer than the wind.

10.

Someday you will find yourself dangling

and I hope you don't look down
or you will see my hands reaching.

There's a map to me written on your wrists
I can show you a shortcut
No one will take the blade out of your hand
No one will love you just because you need it.
They'll have the headline ready:
She died in her sleep.

Everything has to sleep sometime.

They'll tell themselves all kinds of stories
String lights in the gap where your smile used to be
They won't know where you went,
But they know how you got there.
They'll hold each other and cry and say:
When things like this happen, it's no one's fault.