

I am watering your plants. I start with the small succulent. You know the one you picked out because you told me it reminded you of me. I thought it was because it didn't bloom, but you told me it was because they were survivors. Your mother would always joke about building a greenhouse for her "daughter," not realizing that each time she said it she brought you a little closer to the cliff.

Sometimes, I think it is because I didn't speak up when you needed me, didn't stop the words our classmates hurled so casually around. I was the only one who knew, but I couldn't say anything outside our rooms.

I did help you cut your hair short. We stole the electric razor from my older brother and sheared off clumps of your long, dirty blonde hair. You said it reminded you of the nettle that we walked over on our hikes. Your mother grounded you, and we couldn't see each other for months, even going as far as taking your phone away. I wonder if that was when you decided you couldn't take it anymore. We used to dream about what we would be when we got older. I wanted to be an artist and you said you wanted to be "the man." I asked you what being "the man" entails, and you said you don't know yet.

Now, I guess I will never know.

Next, I water the monstera that I'm pretty sure I almost killed at one point when half of it turned brown, but I saved it by clipping the dead parts away. My therapist has a monstera too. She wanted me to start clipping off feelings of grief, one by one. I refused, mentally of course, you know how much I hate saying no. She told me I have depression and anxiety. I wanted to

ask, “Who doesn’t,” but decided against it. It’s not like I’m gonna follow you. I did that too much when you were living. I just want to quit feeling like shit.

Lastly, your moth orchid. It combined two things you loved. The other day I saw a Black-Bordered Lemon Moth and thought about the tattoo you will never get; I wonder if I could get it for you. Your mom kept the rest. I wonder if she actually waters them or if they are slowly dying in your room. Wouldn’t be the first thing to die there because of her lack of care.

Remember our first date. It was cold, and I had forgotten to put on my aloe vera chapstick before we walked around the outdoor mall and by the end of the ordeal my lips were pretty chapped. When we went to leave you bent forward and locked your lips with mine, and as you pulled back you used your teeth to graze a piece of dry skin off my lips. I didn't know it was bleeding till I kissed your lower neck and a red mark appeared on your light brown skin. I quickly removed the mark with my finger before running my arms down your sides to make sure this was real. You were real. We stayed up till 4 am that night just watching the stars. You shoved me playfully and told me to make a wish on a shooting star. I tried informing you that it was just some space dust, but your eyes were closed already, wishing for something that I forgot to ask you about.

Sometimes, I run my fingers along the edges of the monstera, imagining it is your hand I only took in private the nights you slept over and we fell asleep watching true crime documentaries. I didn’t cry until after your funeral was over. Your parents kept calling you by a different name. My anger got the best of me, and I threw the tiger’s eye stone you gave me into the pond behind your house. I imagine fish staring at it wondering where it came from.

It’s raining when I get to the cemetery, but I get out of the car anyway. Your gravestone is cold and wet, but I trace my fingers along, spelling out your real name over and over again. I

whisper the thing I was too scared to tell you, wait a moment to make sure you heard me, then turn around, and head back home.