

Voicemail #5

Hey, it's me —
I'm calling again because I got that
Post-greasy-diner-breakfast feeling
That I could see you around town
Riding your bike backwards in the middle of the street
While I walk home to
Relieve some of the bloating

Every time I turn a corner I expect to run into
Your dopey-ass grin
(All teeth, unhindered by braces
And just a little crooked with
The right corner of your mouth tugged skyward)
Always hanging around my family's convenience store
On Station Street and Pearl
Where we met for the first time because

I was the new kid
And you were everywhere
Woven into the tattered fabric of that town
Barely fifteen and already a household name
So my auntie asked you
To look out for me

You know, it's funny
This morning on the train heading into work
I saw some kid wearing a Messi Naldo jersey
Sporting a blue cast on his left arm to match and
A scrawny, work-in-progress frame that screamed
"I'll get there someday, just you wait!"
And I thought of you

Far from small; towering
And you played basketball, not soccer
But, I mention this because it occurred to me
In the moment
That I never asked you
What you wanted to do with your life
It seemed like you were already doing it
Like you had it figured out

Like, I remember this one time
In the stairwell during lunch period
I overheard people talking about your SAT score of all
things
And thought about how possibility poured out of you
Like sunlight through an open window, golden
First prize in the flesh
I remember this and wonder
Where it went wrong

What had to happen for you
To take a corner too fast in the rain
On the way to your best friend's 16th birthday party
And for me
To stumble half-blind and flailing
Into a future you should've had

One that wasn't cut short
On a random Saturday at 4 o'clock in the afternoon
Somewhere between an old oak tree
And the double yellow lines

But, that's the nature of these things, right?
Sometimes they just happen
And we don't get to know why
That's what God said to Job, anyway
I know you believed in that stuff

I'm rambling now, but all this is to say:
Man
I miss the hell out of you
In my mind you're still grinning crooked and playing ball
In my mind, you're still looking out

And, for what it's worth, I just
Figured I'd let you know that I'm still
Alive, you know
Still here, just kicking around
And I'll always be right around the corner if
You ever want to find m

Thresholds

We'll come into being by my hand
Quiet admissions
Whispered like prayers through fingers
crossed
Will make it so

Until that day
I create you and me
Pen to paper
Guided by the world around me
To make it so

My written words
Turn want to devotion
Turn wish to incantation

Here, I say:

If the moon did not want us together
Her light would not shimmer so brightly in
your eyes
And the wind
Would not carry your voice so sweetly
Up my spine
If we were not meant to be
The summer heat would not descend so
heavily
And the beating sun would not illuminate the

Beads of sweat that drip off the ends of your
hair
Like shooting stars
If we are not the plan, why would hope
So benevolent yet cruel

Tug
Tug
Tug

At my ear
Dragging my stumbling feet
Through the crowds and across the street
Up the stairs and around the corner
To your door

And why, just as I reach out to knock
Would my half-stretched arm suddenly fall
slack
Dangling limp at my side
Unless

You were already there
Your own ear pressed to metal
Listening for my footsteps
Ready
To invite me in