

The Last Seasons of Our Friendship  
*for Samantha*

Fall

I kept thinking to call you that weekend, but  
I left my phone book at the office where  
I didn't want to go until Monday  
--or was it Tuesday?

The news arrived while visiting a friend, and  
I rushed home to dial the number of your mother, who  
recounted helping you with lessons to  
calm your nerves about teaching again, where  
you worked before the last tale spin.

She explained about the books downstairs you went to unpack, but  
your hands strung a cord around your neck.  
Out in the sticks, your family waited for an ambulance, and  
they stayed by your side until the next day when you died.

Spring

Running into you that sunny day after so many years,  
my heart swelled with a pleasant pain, and  
I lamely said, "Hi. How are you?"  
We spoke with care, eyes skimming fragile smiles, and  
exchanged numbers under the morning sky.

The next time I saw your doe-brown eyes,  
we sat at a café, filling a cracked riverbed with  
a stream of stories.

How unexpected to find you again, because  
you had written me off, along with so many friends,  
after that tale spin when  
you stopped medicating without supervision.

But, in that moment, somehow  
sorrow dissolved in your shower of attention.

Summer

We walked along the River Trail,

wading around our resurrected friendship, and  
I struggled with a torrent of questions,  
navigating our exchange with caution,  
afraid to lose you again without learning  
why our paths merged in this moment.

You see, you disappeared more than once before, and  
I had lost hope to hear your laughter after  
years of sending unanswered cards. And  
listening to your voice, I wanted to ask about

that secret--

the one tearing you up for a year,  
the one broke open to me and others who  
you discarded after that tale spin  
requiring hospitalization.

But I held back the tide of my wonder,  
in cowardice, convincing myself that, in time,  
you would break the surface of safe topics.

#### Winter

The group met without you, a first  
since we began together to  
write, tell stories, and break bread.

We remembered the last circle and your  
dish to pass, read your poem about  
life as a teenager, when  
you failed to commit suicide.

We grieved losing you  
as women, as writers, as  
survivors of a world that tries to drown us in  
secrets,  
when they say, "Hide!" and  
then justify our pain away.

As I replayed your downcast eyes when  
we all last dove into conversation, your  
sudden silence struck me with  
waves of guilt for not disturbing your silent smooth surface.

Your fatal farewell has led me to

white waters, which have scoured away any doubt about riding the turbulent river called friendship that tenderly carves us over time.

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