

Dear first love,
I fell in love with you
before I knew
your names, your faces.
Violin piano
ukulele guitar: a prayer
in its order.

I pressed
notes into
shape
forced
proper
tones
into
wandering
ears
steel and
wood
under my
fingers.

We met
when I was
11
I walked
into a store
found you
there
speaking to
me
Ibanez
redwood
I brought
you to
school, sang

with you my first songs, showed you off to all my
friends. I could spend three hours with you and it'd feel like
three minutes. You had me dreaming for stars and reaching for
moons in glittering stadiums, in my room imagining recording
studios.

When I had to leave you my world fell into silence, my mind caco-
phonised. Shocks mottled my arms, scar tissue built over calluses.
Zipping you away above a bookshelf I buried Berklee College for
Cambridge Law. Set new goals, found new dreams, filling up my
days to fill my heart's soundhole –

I am a girl who wants so deeply I have forgotten what it is like
to have.

I listen to music in the car on the bus on the train. When our songs
shuffle on my fingers twitch, hungry for frets steel and wood. I don't
think of you.

At night I hear melodies in my head. The pain rips my flesh from wrist to scapula
when I hold you up. How do I grieve you when you live in my room out of sight but
not quite out of mind?

Music used to be an open ocean and now it's mud overflowing a river.

Dear first love,
I bought a smaller guitar years ago – your younger sibling. I spent my last days being 17
relearning the frets relearning you. Started clipping my nails. Willed my shoulders upright and
covered my arms. Learned to record (to hide) in oversized sweaters. Fumbled through scales to
feel steel under my fingers again. My calluses returned and I turned my face from your neck.
Anything to play longer with less pain.

I learned to feel notes in my chest, see frets behind eyelids, change my position.
Wrote a song again. At 18 I began dreaming again because

I have the rest of my life to fall back in love with you.