

August & Everything After
-Counting Crows 1993 Album

Today I'd tell you how the downtown buildings built
shadows I walked for blocks in—
I'm old enough to know death but not old enough
to see it everywhere—only the songs
we shared like star-crossed teenager lovers
echo, lyrics the veneer of a place I found
filled with Szechwan dishes
& peppercorn husks that numbed our tongues
to the spice of my first lotus root.
It's been long enough, now, that it doesn't matter so much
how you died, but that you did.

Your ex-girlfriend from LA
will say you were a recovering alcoholic
but still we read
Donald Hall poems in eternity
me saying I finally understand the meaning of Love
you, pulling your hair back into that manbun
pindot shirt, fresh shoes.

*When I said I was sad/ I don't know if it was/ what I didn't have/
or what I did*
was your favorite line of mine that I ever wrote
& now I know it's what I didn't.

I'll say I was with you on one of your happiest days:
the day you won the writing scholarship
you grin as if discovering the lost art of not losing.
Also: the scope of the yellowed sun ducking
down to caress our forearms while we share a shaved Thai ice dessert
that I'd never tried but you said was excellent.

& though my loss will never rival a mother's
each page I bookmark and don't send
slices like a papercut I wish would bloom
like the brilliant red chili
oil we spooned until we wept

something to say I'm sorry
since I never made it to your funeral
& it was too far to drive
to find the spot where your mother placed her son
besides his father.