

I get permission for the art I make about you to be public
while you break up with me
and I love myself for asking that question

A pineapple, a mango, and a grape tomato walk into a

Break up conversation

Which sounds like the start to the worst dad joke I've ever
come up with

I tell you mid breakup (or post breakup but med breakup pro-
cessing)

That this is the easiest breakup I've ever digested

It makes you slightly uncomfortable and that's okay

I tell you about the pineapple, hands teared to get to rich relief,
a vibrating tongue as it consumes back, throat left sore

I tell you about the mango how easy that first bite felt, that first
cut, how we lasted to friends and now that only thing left is
fibrous skin and a pit

It took a long time to toss them, even as it turned

You

Are simple

Like a grape tomato

Still a fruit, but people forget

Popped into one mouth, hands staying clean

A burst, strong and big

I thought to myself wouldn't it be funny if the first time you
fainted was during a breakup conversation

But I don't faint, and I only start to cry because I talk about
religious trauma regarding intimacy

My stomach drops, my heart rate jumps, I feel pulled apart

But once I sit, once I adjust

It is easy

Hands cleaned, hands pulling across a fidget, hands reflecting
the light from trees and clouds

The conversation goes well, I think

You answer more questions than I expect you to

Give me a hug after it all

And it settles me, pieces start to tetris into place and yes that is
a tetris reference because it is the one phone game, I know you
play

And there is a calmness to it all, a bummer, like the ending of

your favorite movie, but not a tragedy
Not a sticky, messy, dissection of already dead things
No, this breakup was simple
This breakup was easy
I sit in the uncomfortable feelings of being your ex for 2 days
and then I get up again
A pineapple, a mango, and a grape tomato walk into a breakup
conversation
And I drive to my other partner's, no, my only partner's house,
with a very strange fruit salad



A collection of unfinished poems because I like the endless possibilities and now that the end is here, I still do

1. I've decided to draw you a cartoon

Because that is what you do I've decided to draw you a cartoon

Because you would make it clear if you ever take me out

So I sit back, I watch

I want to see what you make clear

Wipe away all the dust on our glasses

2.

I want to draw you a cartoon

Bats on a swing

Guys on a hammock

Do we know how to listen while swinging backwards

3.

I've never had a crush before with my belly on full display // Never let

go so much while infatuated // But then again // I find emotions new and

tantalizing every time

4.

I want to make you paper so you can make a card.

I want to produce the white space

around you.

5.

My mother has flakes of ruby in her skin

And I remember spending mornings in her bed

Hunting for treasure across her limbs

You have a spread of maroon sand

Freckles and skin soft enough to compare to pearls

6. You never thought the word gps could be poetic

And that was a word I never doubted to include

7. You smile too much in a meeting

and now people are making assumptions / But I'm just happy / I'm

just so excited that I can bring you joy / And now you want to make a

scrapbook if we make it through the summer / and I want to take so

many photos of you / Will our fingers brush while you tear them apart?

8.

I watch you work

And I work

And we slide in and out of each other's circles
I try not to make eye contact too frequently
But I shimmy my hands
Tap your palm
Let my limbs drift close enough to feel your heat
And you write a poem in which you consider putting me on the
backburner

9.
You ask if a list can be a poem
I do not tell you that list poems are an actual thing
I just reread the poem

10.
How does a book manage to smell like you? Feels fake

11.
Mismatched patterns
Polka Dots around thighs

12.
You close your eyes in front of me
And I like watching you
This time without making you self conscious
I like watching you breath in my hoodie
One I have never even worn before
Clear glasses and a smile
Your legs under my covers
Your head against my couch

13.
A sleepy kind of happiness
The steam of a medium roast coffee spreading between our thighs
The crackling of a fireplace in your lips
The trail of blanket capes us

14.
I like how big something can be while looking so small

15.
Architecture with another body
Build a space
Concave together
A fort of blankets
To host a new emotion

You turn 'I do my best stand-up during sex' to 'I do my best stand-up during breakups'

And it's still works on that perfectly ironic level because I made us sit down for the breakup conversation

Ruined your walk plan

Found the wall I sat at after reading *The Spirit Bares Its Teeth*

I cried that time too, but it was late, already a consuming dark

This time, we watch the sun set

Except we don't watch

Or at least I don't, I stare at trees and green leaves that blur

You say that you like walks because you don't have to look at someone if you don't want to

And I have the urge to tell you that you never have to look at me, not again, and never before

But I don't

I make a joke about being the perfect partner

A perfect transformer girlfriend or whatever you want to call it

I laugh

I smile, honestly a strange amount

I don't respond the way you expect

And when I ask, you say you don't know what you expected

Because I'm different

I am so different

And there's a part of me that wonders if that is a pro or a con

Should I be upset it wasn't enough? Worried that it was too much?

I laugh

And you ask me why

And I am different

And you ask if I wanted you to get drunk over me

And with relief that floods my body like my now circulating blood

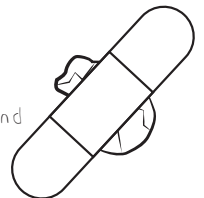
I say no, I say

Never

And suddenly feel comfortable with this thing, feel so much more comfortable with

Breakup with me
But please do it because you are taking care of yourself, your
priorities
Please
Hurt me as an unintended
Consequence of being kind and accepting to yourself
And I too, will hurt you unintended
I will be
Angry with you but only in the ways that
Take care of myself
Only in the ways that let me heal
I do my best emergency healthcare during breakups
And all of these jokes are for myself
All these coping mechanisms are mine, but I am glad you
laughed too

It's not a heart behind
here but it is a scab



I read a paragraph in a book about how the only times you notice breath are on the phone or during sex (or: a lullaby in your breath)

I want to listen to the white noise of a different house, one you don't even like

The gaps between your words, like crooked teeth, containing a history of the way you bite

I want to be enveloped by the version of your voice that can only be heard when you are breathing in

I want to be transported

I want to stick a fingernail through a window, a portal, dig it into wet soil from a rainy day I've never experienced

An obsession so deep my bones start to grow again

See, there are days I listen to poems over and over again

Until my brain is convinced it is music

Just words and daily sounds, repeated on a 2 and a half minute loop

I want to make a movie, a overexposed grain infested photo of you, and the sound of your space blaring through crackling speakers

I want it to feel old, Almost incidental, How close it is able to capture you, How intimate these sounds could be

Like a sound I got to stick around long enough to learn you hate

Or the click of your front door when you are so exhausted everything drops to the floor immediately

The way your speaker echos because you place it in a corner, how it snakes around the closest doorway

I want to dip my hands in

The sound and you

I want to know if your bones ever click when you dance

What sounds your comfiest clothes makes with every slide and step

I want silent movement and screaming stillness, I want something that could get stuck in my head, That I am able to make a perfect reflection of, Like the first night of sleeping in the same bed

I really liked the feeling of your blanket against my skin, Of you tapping your chest as it dips into sleep

I don't remember ever being sung a lullaby but I think

I've learned how to imagine it, the lull of someone else, a fantasy in a tale

I think

This is the perfected version of one

You say that sex wasn't important to our relationship and
that's why you didn't think about the fact that you took me to a
sex toy store as our last date

It takes me so long to talk about the religious trauma

Tears pop in my mouth

A bubbling mess, ellipsis made from soapy water

No sex wasn't a priority in our relationship, wasn't vital to it

But that doesn't mean it wasn't important

I swallow

And I want to make a sex joke about this act

I want you to understand that you are the first person I al-
lowed myself to enjoy having sex with

The first person I ask to partake in my religious trauma,

Offered on a white platter of nothing pure, nothing but pure

Desire, I tell you a story,

How the first time I had sex, I didn't feel anything

How it took a year for me to mention my kinks to my friends

How I got into long distance relationships so I could hide from
it

And when I failed, when I decided to have sex without being
able to want it,

I laid with shame

I made it go by as quick as possible

Found escape in the post sex pee, in the clothing wrapping all
the intimate parts of me

I am still not sure I would call it sexual attraction

But the experience I had with you was different

I wanted to have sex with you

You specifically, with you, involved and active

I wanted you to have sex with me

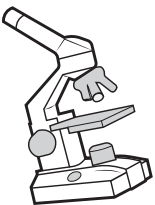
I wanted to splay myself open and feel

To me whiny, to be messy, I wanted to explore all the things I
had been too afraid of having bad reactions to

With you

I wanted to push, to find the things I still wanted to process,
with you

But you also could have told me we would never have sex again
And I would have smiled and asked if you wanted a hug
You were the first person
And I am not sure if you will be the last
But that step, that slow progression, those kisses, our bodies
pressed up to each other
My comfortability with each of our nakedness
That will always be special to me
That will always be important to me
And I will hold all those moments with such gentle fondness
I will hold our bodies tangled in darkness with all my adora-
tion



Sweep away the

I write breakup poems about you while you sweep
And that shouldn't give me so much joy, but it does
But it's hilarious

I processed you today, not with you though
I let my stomach drop again when I saw you
Not on the schedule, not planned,
Purposefully planned to do the exact opposite if I am being
honest

And that plan backfired
You smirk at me, your eyes stay on me, and I am not sure how
to feel about it

I want to ask you to look away
I want to tell you to not give me that look
Say that this is not what we are anymore, that you turned this
down

But I am too excited about the produce stickers I made
And I am not sure if friends who are not yet friends would
make those kinds of comments and
I think you might take offense to my brain deciding this break
means not yet

So instead, I focus on looking at my own art
You say

It's nice to see you

And I am not sure what I say

But I don't think I said it back

A note filled with themed puns because I thought that would be a great way to support you without requiring any attention, or responses, or anything. I thought that would be an unintrusive way to be a part of your life

What is a slugs favorite mode of transportation? A *snailboat*.

I'm always keeping my eyes *peeled* for bananaslugs

You better not hurt any slugs. That would be *a salt*

How do you know if slugs are in a healthy relationship?
They don't *slug* it out, just occasionally *pester* each other.

How can you tell if a slug is really mad?
You will hear the *mucuss* for miles

How does a witch slug make a living?
They *mucurse* the competition

How does a slug show love? With a *mukiss!*

Why was the naive slug teased?
They had a very *shelltered* childhood!

How do you know if a slug is neurodivergent?
It's easy! Just pay attention to how *slime* flies when ze gets into a hyperfocus

**The timing means I
only sent you one pun.
But I wrote this whole list.
Searched random slug related
questions so I could make my own
puns, own versions, all specific to you.
You heartreat the one pun you do recieve
You already stopped telling me you love me **

A queer subversion

Living in the parentheses
The tangents
Sweet like a tangerine
Past my chin
Trail my neck
Sticks to my tongue
A brightness, fireworks with no sound
Crisscrossing across the top
You use tongue before the makeout
The tease
I let your words flick across my lips
I fall into the arms of your sentence
It's funny how the things
That matter most to me are the ones you are
Eager to dismiss
I follow anyway
I hold onto the dandelion cotton seeds
Tiny fingers grasping
Through the tallest patches of grass
Treasures
Hidden between the ocean
Glinting gems
Pressed into costume jewelry
A worth unimportant to anyone else
Living in the parentheses
Maybe it's the most queer version of
Connection, the love
In weeds
And subtext
And sparks grown from green carpet

(s u m m e t)

God, I hate that I want to be there to help you process this. God, I hate that I still want to know what you think. That I want to know you in every way you'd want to share. I don't get to know, am not welcome, but, could I just, I just, I want to know what color our breakup is? I want to know just how long you will grasp at the air, how your fingers will curl, the way you will taste thoughts. I worry I'll want to talk about it too much. What kind of friend wants you to go over your breakup with them time and time again? What friend wants a step-by-step play of every action, every moment. A recipe regarding reduced excitement simmers. Sub-simmer, rapid, rolling and boil. What kind of friend stops by your job hours before you breakup with them?

—And you didn't ask me to leave

...

You didn't ask me to leave.

You didn't even lie to me, say it wasn't worth it when I asked if I should stop by. When I said I wasn't sure.

You just said, 'it's been kind of steady today'

And

that is its own heart wrenching metaphor

This love poem isn't really about you

It's about my muscles

And the way they like to tense

And the worry about the wave of dissipation when I finally notice, when I tell my muscles that this pull isn't worth it

It's about my toes

And the way they sit behind your back

Between my couch and your shirt

And wiggle, in a pattern that's just out of my reach

But if I think about it, in just the right way, with just the corner of my brain

Then it flows

It's about my knees

And the way they sweat, especially under covers I find comforting

And the need to move, to be rid of the stickiness tainting my limbs homebase

It's about the way I change pjs

And the way I steal covers

It's about the amount of attention I want

The amount of me there is

It is about

The way I love myself

And I think that makes the moment I learn people don't

That much worse

I think it makes it a betrayal

This poem is about the way I slept on Thursday night

How I'd forget you were there

Which really meant

I forgot I was suppose to care

About being witnessed

It's about the way I whine in front of the door to my apartment building

Aggressive, and loud, and obnoxious, and you smile

You frown

You say oh no

Like the key purposefully slipped out of the lock before I
could pull on the door
And how easy it was
Until a stranger walked behind us
And suddenly I remember what
Perception feels like
This poem
Is about the way it feels
To exist with someone else
Without it being about the someone else
To exist
And be witnessed
And be cared for
And be forgotten
And be unimportant
And so important at the same time
This poem is about the way being me with you and still
without you is so freeing



I read a tumblr post on Tiktok that reads ‘any love I made you feel is yours to keep’

I see your reaction—only a week post breakup, an accidental run in, but you say it is okay that I am here, so I stay
And you notice that I have a produce sticker on my shirt—A flash of emotion, captured on my right side, just peeking out from a thick knit collar, almost on my shoulder, almost a badge of honor

This is admittedly a thing I stole from you—But it is mine
I see your reaction and I know it brings you joy—I worry you think this is a way to stay close to you.

It is not. It is a way to enjoy life, it is a sticker saved, cared for, until I can return home and gently pick a spot for it on a glass jar left by the vegan alfredo

I do not tell you this—any love I made you feel is yours to keep just like any love you made me feel is mine to keep

You can bask in summer poems when winter takes away your light, you can lull yourself with poems filled with whispers and I can read my own words and smile

I can edit love poems about you after we breakup and change them—without taking out the love, without putting in any anger, any remorse

Because I do not regret this

An almost perfect summer fling sparks against my tongue

I do not regret this—And you will never get to make me

Thank you for making me feel it in the first place

thank you for leaving when it was your time too

I love myself,—drap that s’mores fire like a shawl, and keep your love in the inside pocket of my jacket

An emergency lighter for the next time I doubt it

A spark to start from but to put away once its job is done

—There was one summer, where my lover was everything, where my lover experienced me, an autistic transformer girlfriend—and kept kissing me, kept hugging me, kept making me feel love

Ze stayed until I became my own lover and now I am everything I am mine to keep

I carry a bag of my smiles, hide a frame in my closet

They sound like such good metaphors, some deep introspective things

But they are simple truths, not self-explanatory but simple

I wonder what your reaction was, when I stopped by your work like normal

When I pulled out a paper of my faces and started to tear into them

6 hours before you break up with me

It was its own art project, I promise, one planned way before

But how terrifying that must have been to see

Each tear asking you if your happiness is worth the loss of mine

But there is no worth, it only exists under capitalism

And that is a very silly question to focus on

You ask for a bullet list because you think it will be difficult

But actually it's the five word limit to each point

That digs under my skin

I write things like

First Legendarium, towel back pocket

And

In rain, going in circles

And maybe more so than writing them

I hate that

There's something very beautiful

In a list of sentences with only the most important

pullable green belt

hand passenger car

cold chairs

Looking up

Walking close

you skate

I have been told I overwrite

I repeat

I spiral into prettier words

A continually dig

Excavation

How many barrels full of dirt

And soot

And waste

Can I fit

Maybe I will take you gardening for

Our first date

Maybe I will edit love poems after

We breakup

My car is cursed

It took 5 days for my car

To give me a fake notification

A false text message, a lie born of Bluetooth and the desire for control

One simple buzz

And your name popped up on the screen

I had forgotten I have your full name in my contact for you

I know you didn't text me, because we agreed we wouldn't

2 weeks of no intentional contact

But my car beeps for attention and displays your name

This has been an issue with this car

3 exes, 3 different kinds of false notifications

And only happens with those exes

Only starts to happen with you

After you break up with me

And I am not sure how my car heard, how it gained this knowledge so quickly

But it did

And all I can think about is how I texted you a blurry photo of this phenomenon so early in the relationship, I think it was before we were dating

how, I want tell you about it again

but I do not break the agreement, not even because you are

the only one who will truly understand this technology driven emotion

I do not break the agreement

I start a poem, dance in the emotion alone

And tell the story at a red rock

I never got to make you a comic

I never got to make you a comic

I gave you my
favorite books
to read



Let your
hobbies
take
root

took better
care of them
than my desk

Plant



risked
being
competitive
with you

no hands
analog screens
nickles

But I never
got to make
you a comic.



it feels like there
are so many things
I never got to do
4 you

@Lewishllw

Note to future self: Request that breakups do not occur while walking. Bring water. Have somewhere cozy to sit.

&

ask for your accommodations,
even if you do not trust them,
even if you do not love them,
as much as this one

I think the thing that sucks, is that I really liked our relationship

And not in a 'how dare you end this' way

But in a

Oh, wow

You mean that really is a possibility for me?

You mean I could enjoy that?

Be comfortable, like that, want a relationship, like that,
want something like that with someone else?

You put a face to the daydreams

It's the kind of sadness that hits when you realize you have
been playing this game afraid of someone else's rules

When you try dark chocolate for the first time

And realized your mom lied because she wanted it to herself

It's the hit, when you hit puberty, and realize all those dream
jobs

Are actual jobs, and if you want it, if you really really want to
travel to space

To be with the stars

Then you have to work

Have to offer yourself up

You showed me

Just how close a queer relationship that makes sense

That brings me joy

is

And now I have to decide if I want to put in that effort with
someone else

Because you don't want to

Not anymore



On and off

I liked being on around you

And it is weird losing that

You brought out a me / that leaned in for hugs / that held onto
belt loops / tug against seams / tap an unrepeating rhythm
Urges that trusted your hands to move mine whenever, for
whatever

I like the on with you

Because it is actively letting myself go with impulses

I like the off with them

Because I don't have to be a person on their chaise lounge

I could be a blob / could be a telephone could / drip into aca-
demic ink / close my eyes to bad tv

It felt like a nice balance

To go from the / inhuman off / to the / all too human on /

To have spaces for both of those

The ex that pushed me towards an ADHD diagnosis is the
same one I use in examples about how my life is negatively im-
pacted. I had to be inhuman on for her, had to keep legs stilled

| ears open | eyes closed | captions were 2 second spoilers

And my inability to understand her, an offense. My desire for
instructions ruined any loving act

Every narcissistic boss I've had requires no emotion and all the
percentage of effort

Too human off | Too not care | But improve | But understand

instructions | To not fight | to let it go | to move on | to numb |

But still afraid of deadlines | Still afraid of hostility |

I've spent my life being told I care in all the wrong ways

At all the wrong times

And I thought being the inhuman off was it

I thought I had to hate masking

But I don't

I am a performer

I want an audience

And you were such a kind one

And then you walked home before the house lights turned off

This is not a blackout poem of a letter sent pre breakup and delivered after. A letter you returned to me because I asked. One I still mean. One that I scanned, and only then retraced, in case one of us wants the original copy.

Lewis

9/13/23

Well hello there! Funny to run into you here in a letter I put in an envelope & addressed to you ip so unexpected!! Hehe okay so I accidentally took a nap again today (was trying to recover from a migraine) and as I was drifting off, I thought about you & love and analog tech. This started because I saw a post that read, "Any love I made you feel is yours to keep" (2am-ish) & I immediately loved that. The permission & confirmation that any love I inspired in you is your story to hold, yours to edit & retell & cherish. However you want. However feels right for you. I want you to know, any way, any love I made for you is yours to keep forever. No matter what, it'll be yours. So I decided I wanted to write you a letter. Give you something physical to remind you of everything else you have too. I love you [redacted] I love all of you. welp I don't know how to get back from that haha but I'm imagining your SMILE still with crinkles in your eyes (so presumptuous of me, right?) I think those are some of my favorite moments. Tear filled laughs. Okay so now I want to share some of the other thoughts I had. I love my phone but sometimes I hate the fleetingness of it. The way we lose the texts we sent each other, how I forget who sent me what meme, how I feel closing browsers because what if I never remember to try to find it again. I like the idea of queer lovers in the 80s sending each other

Technically my ex

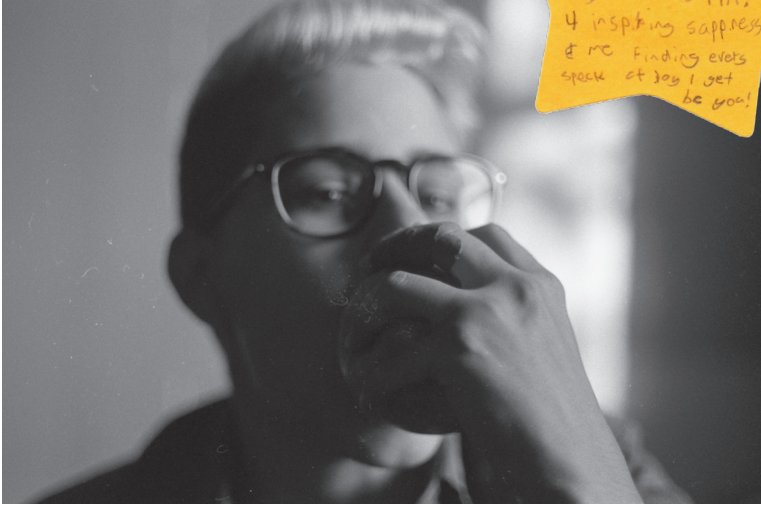
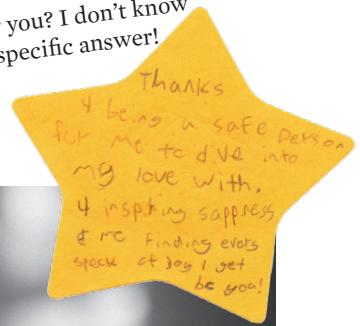
I remove your name but still mean it. I just mean it about myself too

A letter to myself, a scrapbook because we lasted past summer, just barely, a promise, an acknowledgements, a physical goodbye to something intangible, a metaphorical hello to new, to different

clippings of newspapers as they laugh about misspellings of their most hated author being proven wrong. Maybe a new couple who combined their names in the worst way possible or a religious lady who accidentally made a sex joke. I like the idea of analog memes, of stumbling upon a 'gout man' joke in your falling apart biology textbook. I like a physical representation of small joys, of giant loves. I love initials carved into trees & growing so tall no human can even see them anymore. I think I want to make note of my tokens into a physical form. I want a fridge like you. I've been the physical tokens I have from you. When missing gets strong, I find I'm able to grab your card, or the photo booth strip and now a post-it note with my name & a heart in your handwriting and the pressure is relieved. I'm not sure if that would have worked with previous partners of people. I've never tried it before. I like that your joy fills me with comfort. I like that seeing you at a baseball game on an Instagram story makes me smile rather than freak out about a secret meaning behind the action of you sharing it with me in your own time (or even never). Thank you for bringing me so much joy & care & comfort. Thank you for seeking me out when you want to. Thank you for coming back. P.S. This paper is from my oldest journal & that just felt like an extra little sappy touch up. Love Lewis or L.L. for short!

What is this but a physical rep of why our relationship means so much to me

Is this gold star for me or you? I don't know
and have no desire for a specific answer!



Lewis Figun Westbrook (he/they) will always prefer their bio be some kind of joke but apparently that isn't very professional. They are a queer writer of too many genres and artist of too many things. And have now officially written 2 zines about breakups. They are unsure if the joy about that comes from pride or humor. Lewis grew up in New Jersey where the trees are thick enough to inspire fantasies of magic and a suspicion of secrets in the most mundane places. They now live in Utah with their partners and found family. There, the buildings are short enough to remind you that an adventure is always closer than you expect. He is currently published in *Love Gone Wrong*, a horror anthology, and *BarBar*, an online literary magazine. They've also printed many different zines. Find them on most social media @lewisrllw or look for them in local queer shops (bonus parts if they have books or art!).