

On days I don't think I'll die of grief,

CARRIE SHIPERS

I don't wake up in tears from dreams I don't remember. I don't have to hold my coffee with both hands or wear an extra sweater to stop shivering, don't have to write down when I need to leave and what to take for lunch. I don't have to remind myself my racing thoughts are only thoughts and nothing bad has happened—or at least nothing else—and even if it has I can't prevent every disaster. I don't turn up the shower until it scalds my skin, don't forget if I've already washed my hair. I don't feel like my clothes belong to someone else, don't worry I can't see my sweater's stained, heels scuffed beyond what polish covers. I don't look for my keys and find them in my hand, don't drive to work wishing I could hide behind black veils, take to my bed with fainting fits and fevers. I don't cross the parking lot—breath short, shoulders sinking to my knees—as though I'm moving underwater, don't assume the hallway pleasantries I stumble through are proof my colleagues are discussing me. In my classroom, I don't have to keep checking the syllabus and date, don't count how many weeks it's been.

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