

I Lost the Rest in Portland

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Armed with only the essentials in my bag—
A book, a journal, far too many pens,
Water, a credit card, and some headphones—
I explored the coast.
This was the last time I remember feeling safe
Without a weapon in my possession.

I had not yet become the type of person
Who found it necessary to travel in pairs
Or bring pepper spray to the bus stop.
I was the type of person who went out of my way
To smile at strangers.

I was the type to strike up a conversation with anyone nearby.
I was the type that felt the most peaceful in the city late at night.
I was the type that got annoyed
When friends didn't want me to wander off alone.

Call me naïve. Call me ignorant. Call me young.
It doesn't matter anymore
Because I haven't been the same for years.

I've had too much trust in everyone
For as long as I can remember.
I used it all up that summer,
And I don't know how to get it back.

Call me naive,
But when that man moved over on that crowded bus,
I assumed he was being polite.
Call me ignorant,
But I didn't notice he was looking down my shirt
Until my sister pulled me away
And told me we had to go.
Call me crazy, but I swear I didn't even flinch
When he put his hands between my legs.

It had happened so many times before
That I almost didn't notice.
I almost didn't even say anything, but so many people saw it.
I never cared enough about myself to get angry at the wounds
Until he left them on my family when they defended me.

I wish the only thing you stole was my body
That would've been easy.

I'd wrap my skin in sheets of gold,
Shine my breasts 'til you could see your reflection in them.
I'd gladly give you that over this.
I'd eat only honey for days until my lips dripped it as I spoke.
I'd tie myself up in ribbon for you,
Give my body over gladly,
If I could have my trust back.

I used to trust everyone.
Now, I trust nothing.
Now I notice everything.
Day or night, City or small town, grocery store or sidewalk—
If a man walks near me, I can't think straight.

I take the next turn,
I bike so fast I can't breathe,
I take the long way home.
Because of them,
I can no longer embrace my independence.

Because of them,
I am afraid of people who would never hurt me.
Because of them, I live in fear.
But because of them,
I have something to write about again.
Because they took so much more than my skin.