

## How to Look Him in the Eyes

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# How to Look Him in the Eyes

Kylie Walsh

1.

The morning after you will crawl to the shower,  
lie there until your hollow body has turned red  
in an attempt to stop feeling his hands on you.  
You will see him at breakfast.  
You will not let yourself throw up.  
You will let yourself dig your fingernails into your wrist,  
laughing so your friend across the table does not see  
the bruises underneath the surface  
threatening to break free.

2.

You will beg him to understand.  
He will not.  
Keep breathing as he shuts the door in your face,  
pushing you out of the same room  
he carried you into the night before.  
His echoing excuses bury themselves  
in the graveyard your body has become.  
Part of you has died.  
It's okay,  
you will grow back.

3.

You will stand naked before a mirror,  
seeing how your body has shrunk into itself.  
Remind yourself of the truth,  
you are still beautiful.

4.

He will sit next to you at dinner,  
his arm resting on the back of your chair.  
You will stare straight ahead,  
cry for hours afterward

the bone breaking kind  
against the wall  
blade to wrist.  
You are stronger than these temptations.  
part of you has died,  
the rest of you does not have to.

5.  
You will speak up.  
They will tell you that you made your own choices that night.  
You never choose this.  
Remember that.

6.  
You will not be able to breathe when you see him,  
you run across campus  
gasping for air,  
for answers,  
for safety.  
You may never get these things.  
Keep demanding them.

7.  
Flowers will begin to grow inside your chest.  
You open your mouth to find daisies poking out.  
Do not cut them,  
let life return.

8.  
You will see him with his little sister.  
You pray that she never meets a boy like him  
when she is drunk on trust and rum.  
You pray that he sees your face  
whenever he looks at her.

9.  
You will walk around  
with the worst words in your fists,  
Over time, your grip will loosen.

You will not explode, but slowly release.

10.

You will look him in the eyes  
when he runs into you in the library.  
You will both freeze and sidestep each other,  
quick to avoid.  
You will turn to watch him leave,  
whispering your forgiveness under your breath.  
He is no longer holding you down.