Orange Lifetime

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The charm of the necklace jumped between her twisting fingers as she looked up at him. *Don’t lose that necklace, he had said, I don’t know how much it cost.*

“Do you want it back?”

*Dammit!* she thought. Cost shouldn’t be an issue, not when he had given her the necklace for their one month anniversary, not when he said he loved her, not when she was leaving today. Didn’t he see the necklace hanging between her breasts each day? Didn’t he notice it when, as she kissed him, it would sometimes tumble from its place beside her heart and gently strike his chin?

“No, I just don’t want you to lose it.”

But he was thinking about how he missed it. He was thinking, *I used to like having it. If I had it still, I would wear it. I would wear it today. I would be wearing it right now, and that chain and that cross would be hanging around my neck, not hers.*

Her fingers were no longer twisting the chain, no longer playing anxiously, but rather supporting her as she leaned back against her car. She tilted her head at him.

“If you want it back, you can have it.”

He eyed it, hanging before him and thought, *this is my apple. But I am Adam. It is Eve who must give in.* He eyed the necklace, and then he peered at his Eve. Was Eve ever such an anal bitch? He felt the trap his girlfriend was building around him; if he said yes, I want it back, he would be in deep shit.

So he smiled and wrapped his arm around her, an embrace tight enough that she couldn’t see his face as he grimaced.

“I love you,” he whispered.

“I love you, too,” she replied, her hands in the short hairs at the nape of his neck, the spot where she knew he wanted her necklace to be hanging.
As cars squeeze the fat, dirty snow along South Westnedge,  
Sea gulls squabble over grade-F meat behind the Taco Bell.  
They stamp webbed feet and the sound  
is the smack of a cheek on asphalt.

Sunflowers droop over the sidewalk.  
Their pale trunks struggle to support their big, empty faces.  

Grass that poked the skin between my shirt and shorts  
Freezes to porcelain  
Shards now,  
slides into flesh without a fuss.

The Whitetail Museum is a pyre of antlers.

Outside my apartment, the crack heads dance  
To a song as taciturn as the Northern Lights.