

## What You Remember

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“If you can still see how you could once  
have loved a person, you are still in love...”

—Michael Chabon, *A Model World*

1. How you used to jump on her trampoline when you were in middle school. How you were nervous when she was watching. How she told you later that she always knew.
2. How she twirled her blonde hair as she walked down the alley behind St. Xavier High. How you sat in the passenger seat of your mom’s pearl-white Cadillac and watched her. How tan her skin looked against that white blouse and blue pleated skirt.
3. How you didn’t masturbate for weeks after she passed you that first letter in the hall on your way to freshman English because, for some reason, it seemed dirty again.
4. How she kept dating that older guy who drove a red ’65 Mustang. How she would lie to your face and you let her.
5. How soft and warm her bed was after you snuck over to her house. How she smelled like junipers. How crazy for her you were to climb those creaking poplar stairs that ran over her father’s bedroom. How she still made you work for it although you both knew the point of sneaking you into her bedroom at two in the morning.
6. How you finally understood she was human after you noticed cellulite on the curve of her ass when she bent over in those purple cheerleading shorts.
7. How you had sex on her trampoline that night after she’d been out with another guy. How she told you she wanted you the most—always.
8. How she whispered in your ear, “Come in me,” when she knew you were close. How you never considered disobeying.
9. How she missed that day of school six weeks later, and you walked to her house that afternoon. How you sat on the edge of the couch with your hands clasped together and didn’t know what

- to say. How she lay there with a heating pad on her stomach.  
How you can't remember crying.
10. How the sex was always infrequent, even before, but better than any you'd had, or have had.
  11. How you started punching things when she pissed you off: lockers, walls, your father's Ford truck. How you broke your hand the night before the Christmas dance and it swelled up like a grapefruit and you screamed and cried like a baby, and she held you.
  12. How you slapped her that night in her U of L dorm room and bruised her cheek. How she told her friends and her parents she fell. How you didn't really give a fuck then, and wouldn't for several years.
  13. How you got drunk at dinner the night before you left on sweet imported beer from the Caribbean. How you made out on the way home from Cincinnati to Louisville and almost wrecked her car in that curve while she had her tongue in your mouth and her hand down your pants. How good the sex was that night in the basement of your parent's house, on the floor, in that slippery, blue sleeping bag. How she cried the next day when you left for a job in Chicago. How it always made you horny when she cried and you still don't know why.
  14. How you thought Cassie and Megan were cute but they never called back; Sylvia from Michigan just smelled wrong, citrus mixed with pepper; Kelly from Iowa wouldn't go to the beach; Mary from California liked heroin; and all the talk of indie rock and literature meant nothing.
  15. How, when you were younger, you knew who you loved and it didn't have a goddamn thing to do with conversations. How you are beginning to understand this again.
  16. How you never saw how squinty her eyes could be or how she looked cuter if she didn't smile in pictures. How you notice these things now and you wish you didn't.
  17. How if you could be with one person for one hour before you died, it would be her. How you would hold her and not talk.
  18. How, after that sad movie last week, you stood in the lobby and counted the nine years on your fingers. How you couldn't remember the day you started, but knew you hadn't stopped. How that little girl with the popcorn asked if you were okay.