When I was in eighth grade, I destroyed my poems, a sad-sap stack, five inches thick, drowning them in a stream of yellow rust-water until they became a pulpy, inky composite weeping in my palms.

I did this in hopes of removing anything proving that there once was a fourteen-year-old girl, who realized that her poems were bad, and that rhyming love with of and life with strife a hundred times becomes tedious and dull and uninteresting.

As uninteresting as she felt when she realized the boys weren’t wedging little folded pieces of paper into the slats of her locker or sneaking glances at her from behind history books or lending her their sweatshirts when she felt a chill but wasn’t really cold at all but wanted to show everyone that he had given her his sweatshirt and had paid attention.

So I tipped the quaggy mass into the wastebin to compost with pencil shavings and used tissues and the broken hairclips of the pretty girls, to be erased by college classes that taught me language and lyricism and college boys who taught me that boys never really change, except they’re given liquor and late nights and stronger arms attached to sinewy hands impervious to fingernails and fists and elbows and teeth, transforming girls into pieces of meat, with one flick of the wrist and the words Quiet or I’ll make you.