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## Life by a calendar

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## Life by a calendar

Julie Birkey

I used to mark it on the calendar,  
the 20<sup>th</sup> of every month.  
A heart next to the number,  
another month we've been together.  
I even circled the 20<sup>th</sup>  
that December.  
A year of our relationship  
bottled down to one day.

I used to mark it on the calendar,  
our weekend plans  
our day trips to Chicago  
our double dates  
our movie nights.  
Every day written on there  
reminding me  
of the history we were creating  
the story we were writing  
the legacy we were leaving.

I even marked the calendar,  
when you wanted to break up with me.  
When you going away to school  
would come between us  
as you packed up your whole life  
into just one box,  
leaving me stranded,  
cold  
miserable  
and alone,  
in the middle of the street  
suffocated in the exhaust  
not even looking back in the rear view mirror.  
When you decided  
long-distance relationships weren't for you.  
When in reality you were  
only going a mere 45 minutes away.  
Staying up,  
waiting by the phone  
cord to cord,  
just for a chance to hear your voice.  
Driving out of my way  
for a surprise visit  
just for a chance to see your face.  
But even that was too difficult for you.  
I marked down,  
documented the day I was crushed  
like a soda can,  
flat as paper.

I marked the calendar,  
three days after breaking up with me

you wanted to make things work,  
or at least try.  
That was the happiest day of my life  
and will forever be written down on paper.  
That night at the party,  
the smell of the febrezed couch,  
the sound of beer bottles clinking  
when you said it was breaking your heart  
knowing you broke mine.  
When you decided I was worth the try.

I used to mark it on the calendar,  
the day you left for college.  
How terrified I was  
if we made the right decision.  
I felt like I was saying good-bye to you forever  
as if I was saying farewell to my soldier.  
I didn't know what I was getting myself into,  
if I had the strength.

I used to mark it on the calendar,  
the 10<sup>th</sup> of January  
shortly after we celebrated  
our one year anniversary.  
That Monday you took me out for coffee.  
The Caribou down the street,  
“our” Caribou,  
our now ruined Caribou,  
from the sweet smell  
of a Campfire Mocha,  
to the bitter smell of nothing but pure coffee grinds.  
The corner table,  
right next to the sweating glass window  
when the words from your mouth  
nearly killed me,  
each one piercing through me  
like needles in a pin cushion.  
“I think it'd be best if we were just friends.”  
The same exact line I heard  
six months earlier.  
The same exact line  
that broke my heart the first time.  
The same exact line  
I hate you for.

I used to mark it on the calendar,  
our life by the month,  
our future by the day.  
Now I have a new date to heart.  
Every 10<sup>th</sup> of the month  
I mark.  
One less month without you  
one more month  
to finding someone better  
someone who deserves me.