Grieving Mother Exacts Revenge on Dying Fruit Fly

Twenty-four times I’ve called your number since you left the house.
Twenty-four times I’ve been sent straight to voicemail.
Twenty-four times I’ve cried hearing your voice deny me of an answer.
Yet I still listen through the full message every time.

“Sorry I can’t come to the phone right now, but you should totally leave a message! God knows if I’ll listen to it or not, but you might as well try!”
in that playful tone I’ve grown to love.

Those words are an epitaph
painted like graffiti across the folds of my brain.
I notice new parts every time:
How your voice squeaks when you say “might”,
How your friend Barry is chewing tobacco ever so faintly during the first four seconds,
How you intentionally pause for comedic effect between sentences, even though the joke isn’t funny anymore,
How speckles of sarcasm insert themselves during your “totally” only to be dissipated by that childlike innocence that ends a sentence’s life,
How the exclamation points crackle into existence, picked up by static waves I was too stupid to ignore,
How your voice stumbled over the first word, almost like it hurt to admit you were ever sorry for anything,
How mean spirited I’ve become for implying you were never sorry,
How overwhelming my thoughts of you have become,
How I can’t eat the Kraft mac and cheese we used to share because you preferred it over homemade,
How I can’t surf through channels without briefly pausing on Family Feud, being reminded of how badly you wanted us to compete together,
How every song of love has become a song of loss,
How the LED lights that decorate your bedroom have been shining a solemn blue ever since you left,
How I need to stop,
How I need to stop,
Oh for the love of God please let it stop.
Matthew Van Praagh

After my twenty-fourth attempt,
I notice

A lone fruit fly perched
on the dirty windowsill
sucking the juices from an expired peach
fragilely wrapped,
brutally massacred.

The fly taunts,
reminds me of how things are,
and how things never will be because of you
leaving me
because of you
leaving all of us.
because your friends never learned how to stop,
because your friends never loved you,
ever protected you
like you know damn well I would have.
So your friends let you go,
and go,
and be gone.

I can’t take this fucking buzzing anymore
I pick up the yellowed sandal that used to cage your right foot,
Goliath wielding a battle ax,
and I slam it full-force against my opponent,
hoping all the frustrations,
all the gossip,
all the sirens,
all the police reports,
all the eulogies,
all the settlements,
will splat alongside you.

I was naive to think I could end the life
of one who was leaving regardless.

I stand dejected over unbroken thorax,
as I shake off the limpness of my right arm
reaching for the phone,
reaching for number twenty-five.