

## BEDTIME STORY FOR A PAST LOVER

---

*Kristen Catalano*

Pick ten of anything. Buttons from the clothes you've just removed.

Pick one to suck on, under your tongue, its tang like copper, that first penny ever alive in your pocket.

Flip one on its back and watch its legs move.

Hold one in your armpit, where the fever starts. Children running and running in the rain.

Hold one responsible for the mess you're in.

Hold one steady at the top of the hill, then fly, untangle, scream, and this time *it* just wins bottom, and you both breathe hard and happy.

Let one go.

One of them will swear, always, it never saw your face.

One of them will remember a night with trees, shadows chased across a lawn, rain waiting, pine smell, the wind up. It never heard, it never saw the thing that came.

One had a dream about a star coming down to become a tiny planet which survived just one week on earth, though it had all the earthly requirements. When it died, he buried it in the backyard under the wheelbarrow. He brought it something every day. A bunch of violets. Or long clumps of crying, the whole sky cracking open. Or a handful of mint.

Or a blue eraser. But it doesn't matter. He dreamed the whole thing. Or the wind blew it all away. Every few days the wind blew the yard clean and sent the wheelbarrow singing into the fence. It doesn't matter. The lights in this room will go out when I leave. Just let me. Just sleep.