

about dying (except not really)

I died when I was sixteen years old.

It's not a big deal. I have died countless times, perhaps even before that. It's hard to keep track, especially when it keeps happening, especially when you don't notice it every time.

But I did notice back then; I was reminded of it over and over again, when people wept and mourned, and called and asked and pitied. I noticed it when my world suddenly shrank and, at the same time, expanded, with new terms and appointments and doctors. How come everything seemed both impossibly big and impossibly small at the same time? Someone had buried me alive, except my coffin was the endless void of space, with meteors and dying stars rushing past me, every single one of them a dream, a meeting with friends, a career path I wouldn't be able to experience.

My mom always told me I was born because she wished upon a star. All I could think about, stuck in that void, was that even stars don't live forever.

I died when I was sixteen and was replaced with someone who was sick. Not all the time, but at least every February or March. Who knows how that works, but my body is very reliable when it comes to that.

I died when I left school and stopped touching the piano. I have no good reason or excuse or apology for that. I burned that part of myself and sprinkled it across the untouched piano, where it mingled with the dust on the keys.

I died when I crossed out names and replaced them with new ones. I keep stumbling across, over, my own tombstones, evidence of the person whose identity I shamelessly stole and merged with my own. I still hear her name, and for a moment I wonder how that person could have ever been me, how I could pretend to be her for so long.

I *almost* died on the 28th of March. For real, this time. It didn't feel very different from all the other times.

Like I said, it's not a big deal.

It's not the end of the world, except that it is.

Because you don't die, not really, not at the hospital and not on the plane and not at the doctor's office or on your first day back at university. Not when you dust that piano or when you call one more insurance to tell them that you changed your name.

But in a way, you have died, and you die over and over again, because you find yourself living the life of someone you no longer are.