

"I'll Still Sing to You After You've Gone"

by Rachel Tanner

All orange tufts of fur and loud mouth, you sit half-dreaming on the edge of the bed. You yawn all 10 years of your kitten breath into my face and buff my forehead sore until I tell you NO and STOP and I'M SORRY, MAN, BUT THIS ACTUALLY HURTS. You paw my breakfast, knock over my makeup, lick my shower water then yell at me about it like I forced the shampoo suds down your throat myself. Always whining for things you assume belong to you. Always thinking you know exactly what I need. Always being right.

I didn't know what to do the day you were diagnosed with kidney failure. You sat so small in that room. I fumbled with my phone while you were examined. While the vet talked about your NUMBERS. While I scraped the sobs back into my body.

I have a picture of you on the scale from that day.

You looked so cold.
I felt so cold.

You, the boy who throws up in my lap then demands I clean it up immediately. Me, the girl who knows you like when I sing "Love Me Tender" but not "Aura Lee," even though they're basically the same song. I don't know where this love goes after you end. I don't know what to do with all this ache.



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