“OCD” by Neil Hilborn

The first time I saw her

everything in my head went quiet.

All the tics, all the constantly refreshing images,

just disappeared.

When you have Obsessive Compulsive Disorder,

you don’t really get quiet moments.

Even in bed I’m thinking

*did I lock the door yes did I wash my hands yes did I lock the door yes did I wash my hands yes.*

When I saw her, the only thing I could think about

was the hairpin curve of her lips

or the eyelash on her cheek

*the eyelash on her cheek the eyelash on her cheek.*

I knew I had to talk to her.

I asked her out six times. In 30 seconds.

She said yes after the third one,

but none of them felt right, so I had to keep going.

On our first date, I spent more time organizing my meal by color

than eating, or fucking talking to her, but she loved it.

She loved that I had to kiss her goodbye 16 times,

or 24 times if it was Wednesday. She loved that it took me forever

to walk home because there are lots of cracks on our sidewalk.

When we moved in together, she said she felt safe,

like no one would ever rob us,

because I definitely locked the door 18 times.

I’d always watch her mouth when she talked

*when she talked when she talked when she talked when she talked*.

When she said she loved me,

her mouth would curl up at the edges.

At night, she’d lay in bed and watch me turn all the lights off and on

*and off and on and off and on and off and on and off and on and off and on and off.*

She’d close her eyes and imagine that days and nights

were just passing in front of her.

Some mornings, I’d start kissing her goodbye

but she’d just leave because I was making her late for work.

When I stopped at a crack in the sidewalk,

she just kept walking.

When she said she loved me,

her mouth was a straight line.

She told me I was taking up too much of her time.

Last week, she started sleeping at her mother’s place.

She told me that she shouldn’t have let me get so attached to her,

that this whole thing was a mistake,

but how can it be a mistake that I don’t have to wash my hands

after I touch her?

Love is not a mistake.

It’s killing me that she can run away from this

and I just can’t.

I can’t go out and find someone new

because I always think of her.

Usually, when I obsess over things,

I see germs sneaking into my skin,

I see myself crushed by an endless succession of cars,

and she was the first beautiful thing I ever got stuck on.

I want to wake up every morning

thinking about the way she holds her steering wheel,

how she turns shower knobs like she’s opening a safe,

how she blows out candles

*blows out candles blows out candles blows out candles*

*blows out candles blows out candles blows out—*

Now, I just think about who else is kissing her.

I can’t breathe because he only kisses her once.

He doesn’t care if it’s perfect.

I want her back so bad,

I leave the door unlocked.

I leave the lights on.