

Erin Bealmear

## I Love You, Jack

I say it aloud, on occasion, when I am alone,  
it will pop out, at random points during the day,  
like when I am walking to the kitchen or cleaning  
the cat's litter box. *I love you, Jack*. There it is,  
again, always arriving unexpectedly, as if I have  
some obscure version of Tourette's, one in which  
I only repeat romantic phrases. *I love you, Jack*.  
Hearing it even surprises me, a sound of such  
wide-eyed innocence, because I don't love him.  
Jack, that is. I don't even really like him.  
It's not hate. I don't hate, Jack, *I love you,*  
*Jack*, but I do often wish that his life had never  
dripped into mine. Still, I keep speaking  
these adoring words, as if he were next to me,  
in the room, and I fear I will continue this wooing,  
*I love you, Jack*, against my will, forever,  
even after remembering becomes forgetting  
and I'm sliding along the hallways  
of an old age home, broken and crooked,  
my mental radio station will be tuned  
to those four syllables. There will be nothing left  
of me, but there will still be *I love you, Jack*.

