

# SPOKEN SCARRING

*Liam "Lee" Balmeo*

lied when I said that it was better off this way, holding that  
gray slug upon our chests. Your harsh voice had struck a forest,  
explosions growing from our uneven breaths. I lied when I said  
it was fine, waiting for you that night. I knew where you were  
after I saw that stain on your shirt and smelled whiskey on  
your breath. I lied when I said that we were fine—I knew  
what you were on. Your tongue snapped into a rubber band  
while you cursed under your breath. I lied when I said we  
were fine. I still feel your raggedy breath down my neck. I  
lied when I said that you loved me. You wanted to feel loved  
no matter who shared the same breath as you. I lied when I said  
that your family was like mine. I saw and knew the chemicals  
that brewed inside each of their breaths. I lied when I said you  
were the only one for me, when our love became a birch. That  
tree of ours has lost its breath after running from your last laugh.  
It hurt, by the way; pulling out the splinters and wood chips  
doused in poison—scratches becoming wounds becoming sores  
with never-ending bloodshed. It was because I lied when I said  
that we had become nothing, that you finally became something to  
me. Our exhales and inhales kindled the seeds to blossom,  
breaths birthing a new beginning. I lied when I said that you  
weren't important to me, words falling down my shoulders like

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my flower petals. In that forest we called “home”, fragments of your  
poisonous birch flow through my veins until I finally lose my breath.