

# The Heart

A poem for Wednesday

By Grady Chambers



Jared Bartman / The Atlantic. Sources: Bruce Burkhardt / Getty; Getty.

The heart was small and made of paper. I found it on the floor of my apartment, struck by the similarity: It matched in shape and color the heart that she'd discovered stitched to the sleeve of her robe. We'd brought our cat to the vet the week before and were handed back a box of ashes. We were looking for signs.

The city at that time was emerging from winter. We left the vet. I walked her home through the cold streets. We stood beneath a church's eaves, listening to the singing. We crawled together across the floor of her apartment, rolling the rug our cat had slept on. I hadn't been that close to her in months.

In the weeks after, small things happened. A moth she'd thought was dead rose from the floor and landed on her shoulder. The green tree outside my window grew white overnight, heavy with blossoms. The sky darkened. Stars came out. Late one evening, she called me just to talk.

When we'd separated, the cat had remained with her. People asked me if I lived alone, and I told them yes, though it is also true that making breakfast or returning home, I'd sometimes speak out loud to the absent cat, telling it about my day, as I sometimes also, late in the warm evenings, would find myself in the study, where I'd lift the ring from where I'd buried it, deep in the desk's bottom drawer, and examine the diamond in my palm like a living thing.