

# **DIGITAL REGRETS**

by kate inglis.

**1**

The internet has splintered every relationship I've had.

**2**

I wonder how many times I've asked you something you've already told me because I was scrolling through twitter and not really listening to you.

I say that I don't remember you telling me.

You insist that you did.

Sometimes my phone is a barrier.

**3**

I went to sleep without saying goodnight.

So you went to sleep without saying goodnight.

If we never spoke again then my last words to you would've been a text saying 'turn the volume down.' What kind of a goodbye is that?

**4**

You made fun of my 'feminist' porn.

You made fun of my internet politics.

You learned about sex from Pornhub. I learned about it from LiveJournal.

Is that the thing that makes us fundamentally different?

When you tell me that I don't make noise during sex anymore, you think it's because I don't enjoy it.

I don't have the energy to tell you that I made those noises because the adult film industry taught me to so you'd feel a sense of accomplishment.

I stopped making noise, not because you stopped satisfying me, but because I realised I didn't have to.

If I brought this up you'd tell me I spend too much time thinking about internet feminism, as if it's a brand.

But I couldn't tell you that you spend too much time on reddit relationship advice trying to diagnose and dissect me through the stories of others instead of speaking to me.

## 6

I wonder how many hours we've stacked up, sitting in different rooms, looking at different screens.

Or how many times we've sat next to each other, pretending to be sharing one screen, but looking at our own simultaneously.

I wonder how many times you've whined, "spend time with me".  
Pawing at my phone.

I wonder how many times I've insisted that I am.

**7**

You wrote poetry about me. I saw it published on their website.

You insisted that it wasn't you and that it wasn't me.

The comments described the 'girl' as cruel, and you, the author  
as 'weak'.

You cried in bed for a week and still pretended that it wasn't  
you.

It took until anonymous strangers pointed out what you  
couldn't see, for you to unravel. Even though it was written in  
your words.

**8**

You deleted everything, and I was resentful because it felt like  
you were deleting us.

I knew I was being dramatic so I didn't ask why, but I knew. You  
didn't want the evidence.

The act of ticking a box makes it so easy.

When the system asks, 'are you sure?' You only need to think of  
a single action in the moment. There's no tone in an automated

message. It can't convey disappointment, or the gravity of what you are doing.

I went back looking, and I found only traces of us. Nothing that ties us together, at least nothing obvious if you didn't know the history.

## 9

I asked you to put all of the windows down. Wanted to feel the wind in my hair and have that moment I'd read about and finally seen played out on screen, that quote that littered tumblr for years.

I wanted to feel 'infinite'.

But instead of Bowie you put on Mumford and Sons and instead of a tunnel it was the Forth Road Bridge and instead of standing in the back of a pickup truck at night; I squirmed in your passenger seat in the Autumn wind.

## 10

Emotional cheating isn't cheating if you aren't the one drunkenly professing your love.

It's still not technically cheating when sending The Office memes to each other becomes your arm around me on your parents couch on a Thursday night.

## 11

If I looked at you and said Alex, said Tom, or Ellie, I don't think we would ever speak again. Not really.

I mean, words would be exchanged out of necessity, but they would be hollow, and they would hurt.

All I need to do is scroll through my DMs on Twitter and read the same damn argument over and over again.

I said no.

The silence could have said it for me, if we'd been allowed silence. Yet from 4,000 miles away you were able to make me feel guilty in an instant, and you had proof that I'd read your words.

**12**

I found you on Facebook.

If I didn't have the ability to reach out that way, to ask you a favour on behalf of a friend, then I'd never have ended up in that situation.

Did you think that by putting on an old movie I'd be too distracted to realise what you were trying to put in my hands.

When you block someone on the internet, there's a sense of relief.

That relief is soon replaced by nausea when you realise 'blocking' in reality isn't actually achievable.

Especially when a month later I am forced to unceremoniously show you respect, in what was possibly the most mortifying moment of my life.

## 13

Technology has redefined history and memory for me.

History has become something that can be deleted, memory is a thing that can get too full. I have become complacent at being present, because I know I can relive or remove words and actions with a few clicks.

I wish I could delete memories from my brain with a click, I wish I could lock files away in my head, I wish I could curate memories like an Instagram feed.

I would erase you, and it would be peaceful in my mind.

## 14

You kept asking me who I was pretending to be.

A person isn't a picture.

I built my personality around being the girl in all of those lyrics and all of those movies, and I hate that you thought it was an act, and I wanted someone to buy it.

I couldn't help romanticising the things I did, I couldn't help but sob when you wouldn't slow dance with me.

It took me too long to realise that although life can imitate art, you can't turn the people around you into someone they are not.

## 15

I try to say all of the important things with my voice now, and not with my fingers.

I can't afford to be lost in translation.

There are too many parts of me scattered all over the internet. There are too many secrets that I thought were safe.

**16**

We just broke up, but the thing that is most broken is my inability to distance myself.

You can't burn text messages, tweets, Facebook comments and your digital footprint the way you can burn letters, diaries and photographs.

It's not cathartic, it's just sad.

I am forced to relive us because of algorithms, 'friends in common', image anniversaries, a constant onslaught of being 'connected'.

You will never really be gone.