

Legendary

He doesn't really talk about them. At least, he never tells me anything I want to know, their hang-ups or what kind of pretty they are. He tells only half a story about each of them, and he tells it three times. Verbatim, as if he has it written on the cuff of his sleeve. Normally he doesn't have two words to rub together, but when he does, something kind of flickers. These broken sparks and the three-times-telling make his exes seem mythical, crystalline.

When he tells me about Holly for the first time, we're at the movies sitting too close to the screen. We're watching the trailers and he's tracing shapes on the sensitive part of my wrist with his thumb. Every one of his exes has a *thing*—they've been molested or are a cellist or something. Holly shattered seventeen bones falling from a trapeze. She was wearing a cast and working in a library when he met her. Ten weeks later, when all the bones were knit, he finally saw her do her act. That's when he dumped her. He doesn't say, but I guess she must have looked too free and capable up there, swinging from the ropes. A girl like that could never honestly need you.