

Staying in Ashford, 1985

That whole summer was a gamble,
friend to lover, lover to unfriend, his
clumsy bent erection not the ending
in and of itself. Cricket was the fire

burning white along his body but
I was cool with that, the pointless rut
of tedious afternoons punctured by
the sound of clapping, southern

vowels hawing at limp jokes, spittle
rife as aftershave. He liked to watch
me bathe and talk me through his day,
shiny briefcase by his leg catching

what little light there was in glossy
drops of condensation slipping
to the mat. He'd lean across to flip
the wet fringe from my eyes, pass

me wine, call me *girly*. When did we
finish? Was it after the local graveyard
visit when that heart-shaped stone
stayed too heavy with me after? Hard

to say I loved him, despite his easy
grin, his charcoal sketches effortless
and bold, the Humphrey Bogart my
mum preserved up in the attic mess

of boyfriends run to dust. I think
we drifted rather than a sudden stop,
he wasn't the type to squall. He'd be
a catch for Laura/Helen/Sue - pop

your Home Counties lass of choice
in right there; his washboard belly,
muscled butt and dry square palms
a find in pavilions packed with jelly

hoorays already spread to seed. He
must have settled early, be 4x4'd
with a wardrobe full of pastel socks,
pristine whites and custom boxes,

that big fat kink moulded to the left
ensuring his box is never grabbed up
by mistake, no man ever wants to heft
a boomerang if they need to shine the ball.