

Spring 5-1-2014

Twenty-Seven, Love

Megan Thornsby
College of DuPage

Follow this and additional works at: <http://dc.cod.edu/plr>

Recommended Citation

Thornsby, Megan (2014) "Twenty-Seven, Love," *The Prairie Light Review*: Vol. 36: No. 2, Article 57.
Available at: <http://dc.cod.edu/plr/vol36/iss2/57>

This Selection is brought to you for free and open access by the College Publications at DigitalCommons@COD. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Prairie Light Review by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@COD. For more information, please contact koteles@cod.edu.

Love is finding beauty in the fault lines. Or, maybe it is the blackberry, vanilla musk clouding my thoughts when Mabel is near. Gently, she sleeps next to me. Careful not to disturb her, I inch along her naked frame. In the gentle dusk of our bedroom I transform into a blind man hungrily thumbing his braille for knowledge. I explore the scattered scars that mar her thigh and expose her past. My hand continues up over her stomach, where it rests and waits.

The first time I noticed Mabel, her gaunt frame was ragdoll-slouching in a corner. The eager sparkle in her eyes contrasted the furrowed brow she wore. She illuminated the ding of the basement frat party. Motivated by desperation to taste her pouted lips, I swaggered toward her; the dirty thoughts pinwheeled through my brain.

“What are you, some kind of lady-killer?” she taunted. In that moment, I hated her.

Our mutual connections made it impossible to avoid each other. After many haphazard meetings, my focus shifted from avoiding Mabel, to avoiding the fondness I felt brewing. I needed to be near her, to hear her forced laughter—the kind that clipped more abruptly than it began, and it never changed her stoic expression. I could imagine watching someone hollow out the giggles of her youth before stuffing her with a generic laugh track. And one sticky night after the beer had flowed freely and while the crickets rose in the silence, she claimed me. Afterward, she fell into a frantic sleep, and told tales of the bows that never adorned her childish tangles.

Three years later, I continue to catalog the confessions that slip from her sleep. Each one leads me to another false bottom just when I think I’ve arrived at her core. Much like her, I’ve also come to loathe that puffy, blue coat from her school days, the one with the matted fur lining the hood. If quizzed, I could recite her rushed, middle-of-the-night prayers. Her silent sobs admit the prayers failed to protect her innocence.

Tonight her sleep jitters. Nightmares of failure snake through the coils of her mind. The flaws of Mabel’s framework discourage her, but I know her perfection exists in those broken bits. Despite her notion of unworthiness, I refuse to abandon her. Becoming another faceless offender on the list she tallies internally was never an option.

Finally, I feel a flutter, our daughter. Mabel writhes beneath my hand; my excitement is burdening her sleep. Deciding I should give it a rest for the night, I lean in and whisper, “Happy Birthday Mabel, I love you.”

