

When Love Arrives

by Sarah Kay and Phil Kaye

I knew exactly what love looked like- in seventh grade.
Even though I hadn't met love yet, if love had wandered into my homeroom I
would've recognized him at first glance. Love wore a hemp necklace.
I would've recognized her at first glance; love wore a tight French braid.
Love played acoustic guitar and knew all my favorite Beatle songs.
Love wasn't afraid to ride the bus with me.
And I knew, I just must be searching the wrong classrooms,
just must be checking the wrong hallways, she was there, I was sure of it.
If only I could find him.
But when love finally showed up, she had a bowl cut.
He wore the same clothes every day for a week.
Love hated the bus.
Love didn't know anything about The Beatles.
Instead, every time I tried to kiss love, our teeth got in the way.
Love became the reason I lied to my parents.
I'm going to- Ben's house.
Love had terrible rhythm on the dance floor, but made sure we never missed a slow song.
Love waited by the phone because she knew that if her father picked up it would be:
"Hello? Hello? I guess they hung up."
And love grew, stretched like a trampoline.
Love changed.
Love disappeared, slowly, like baby teeth, losing parts of me I thought I needed.
Love vanished like an amateur magician, and everyone could see the trapdoor but me.
Like a flat tire, there were other places I planned on going, but my plans didn't matter.
Love stayed away for years, and when love finally reappeared, I barely recognized him.
Love smelt different now,
had darker eyes, a broader back, love came with freckles I didn't recognize.
New birthmarks, a softer voice.
Now there were new sleeping patterns, new favorite books.
Love had songs that reminded him of someone else, songs love didn't like to listen to. So did I.
But we found a park bench that fit us perfectly; we found jokes that make us laugh.
And now, love makes me fresh homemade chocolate chip cookies.
But love will probably finish most of them for a midnight snack.
Love looks great in lingerie but still likes to wear her retainer.
Love is a terrible driver, but a great navigator.
Love knows where she's going; it just might take her two hours longer than she planned.
Love is messier now, not as simple.
Love uses the words "boobs" in front of my parents.

Love chews too loud.

Love leaves the cap off the toothpaste.

Love uses smiley faces in her text messages.

And turns out, love shits!

But love also cries. And love will tell you "you are beautiful" and mean it, over and over again.

"You are beautiful." When you first wake up,

"You are beautiful." When you've just been crying,

"You are beautiful." When you don't want to hear it,

"You are beautiful." When you don't believe it,

"You are beautiful." When nobody else will tell you, "You are beautiful."

Love still thinks- you are beautiful.

But love is not perfect and will sometimes forget, when you need to hear it most, "You are beautiful," do not forget this.

Love is not who you were expecting, love is not who you can predict.

Maybe love is in New York City, already asleep, and you are in California, Australia, wide awake.

Maybe love is always in the wrong time zone,

Maybe love is not ready for you. Maybe you are not ready for love.

Maybe love just isn't the marrying type.

Maybe the next time you see love is twenty years after the divorce, love is older now, but just as beautiful as you remembered.

Maybe love is only there for a month.

Maybe love is there for every firework, every birthday party, every hospital visit.

Maybe love stays-

maybe love can't.

Maybe love shouldn't.

Love arrives exactly when love is supposed to, and love leaves exactly when love must.

When love arrives, say, "Welcome. Make yourself comfortable."

If love leaves, ask her to leave the door open behind her.

Turn off the music, listen to the quiet, whisper,

"Thank you. Thank you for stopping by."