

## another letter she'll never read

*Kate Coffin*

When I was 13, I think I fell in love with a girl from my soft-ball team. She was the first girl who made me feel fuzzy and safe, like there was no one out to get me as long as she was by my side. Eventually, as all eighth grade relationships do, it came and passed. You know when the sun is beaming into your room and the dust is floating in the air? It's beautiful, for something so drab. It's the first sign of a warm day or the pollen to come in early spring. It's small and meaningless, but it sure is pretty, even if it doesn't last long.

After the breakup, I lost the ability to suspend myself in the sunlight. I was so afraid of the vacuum that I didn't let myself love or be loved. I lost that ability for so long, so I filled it with pot and sex and other stupid things a stupid kid who can't express their feelings would choose. I lost it, but recently, I've found it again.

I've found it in the soft smiles and outbursts of laughter. I've found it in the passing touches and lingering eye contact. I've found it while watching your side rise and fall as you sleep beside me, the few inches between us stretching miles:

I've found it in you.

There are feelings I haven't had since I was 13 that live and breathe only in my head because saying them out loud could cause a breeze, dispersing the dust until it finds its way to another, lesser, window sill.

I don't know if it's love. I'm not sure I've really loved someone, and I don't think love can exist if it's one-sided. To love someone is to be loved, you know? I wouldn't call it obsession or infatuation, either. It's the feeling you get on the first day in spring that you can wear shorts and a hoodie; it's not quite the right time of year for it, but it feels right. It feels like you have to wear them because you want to. Even if you get cold, you made your decision before you left your house. You chose how you interacted with a feeling you enjoy. There's potential for it to be a warm 64 degrees or a chilly one. You

took the risk when you wore shorts, and maybe it didn't pay off. Maybe you'll vow to never wear shorts again in early April, even if the weather calls for it.

Dust is always around us, even when we can't see it. It's making us sneeze and cough, getting caught in our throat mid-laugh. You never notice it until you open your window in the early afternoon, and right then, at least to me, it's a moment you can't ignore. All it has to do is suspend itself, vulnerable to just a flick of a disregarding wrist.

I hope that you never wipe down your nightstand again. I hope that you never decide on leggings instead of shorts. But more than that, I hope you find a sunbeam you can't look away from and a pair of shorts that fit your body just right.

I hope that you can love and be loved.

I hope that it's with me.