

# LOVE: LIONS AND DINOSAURS AND BEARS

by Samantha Brodsky

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I am four years old. I have a helmet of curls that makes my tiny head look like a mushroom. My favorite food is Cornflakes with chocolate milk. I am infatuated with the shiny Oreos-colored shoes that sleep in my closet, black with creamy white straps. I call them my "party shoes" and stomp around in them like I'm squishing bugs with every step. My favorite part of preschool is the naptime I'm given, and I spend these minutes exploring the Crayola-smearred collage of my eccentric cranium and digging for gold in my nostrils. The love of my life is a big magenta and green dinosaur who goes by the name of Barney. He sings to little boys and girls (like me) about sharing with each other and caring for one another, and I will do whatever he tells me to do. Because I love him. And he loves me, he tells me so. And we're a happy family (he tells me this too). I love him because he loves me, and that's that.

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## Love according to Dictionary.com:

Love (noun)

1. a profoundly tender, passionate affection for another person.
2. a feeling of warm personal attachment or deep affection, as for a parent, child, or friend.
3. sexual passion or desire.

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L

Listening to the lull of waves as the sun radiates off of the ribbons and rolls and spirals of water that curl into themselves like cursive penmanship reaching off the page.

Letting yourself slip slowly, slowly away from the night's burdening hold and gliding ever so swiftly like the drip drip dropping of water into the first slender wisps of whispering serenity.

Lies, ~~little kids~~, long talks, longing, lust.

\* \* \*

*As he read, I fell in love the way you fall asleep: slowly, and then all at once.*

-John Green

\* \* \*

I am thirteen years old. I've just started wearing a training bra, and I think I'm the shit because I can call myself a woman (yeah, right). I've also just started wearing my hair down to school and applying thick lines of black around my eyes for the first time (I think it's super sexy). I can do more push-ups than almost all of the boys in my grade, and I'm damn proud of it. Maybe more than I should be. I've started drinking coffee because it makes me feel sophisticated like taking-long-draws-of-a-cigarette-walking-down

the-streets-of-New-York-City-in-high-heels-with-the-wind-brushing-the-waves-of brown-away-from-my-faintly-crimson-cheeks kind of sophisticated. I spend the midnight hours chatting with many other middle schoolers on-line, faceless conversations masked by computer screens and fake confidence.

His name is Leo, the boy I love (like the lion). Before we sign off and shrink back into our quirky adolescence, we daringly send each other little hearts. These hearts, these tiny red icons of pulsing, overwhelming passion, beat for each other. We talk for hours on end about everything, and I walk the halls of school chanting his name over and over again in my mind as blue cartoon birds swirl around my head like a halo. But of course, whenever we lay eyes on each other through the swarms of our puberty-bound peers (and through those rare few who are products, or rather prisoners, of premature puberty), we do not utter a single word. We simply gulp like dumbfounded, flapping fish. But we are in love. I swear.

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**Love according to Urbandictionary.com:**

**Love**

1. nature's way of tricking people into reproducing.

\* \* \*

**O**

Opening up your mind like unwrapping presents, crisp paper peeled away to reveal thoughts of wonder that slip and slide like snakes and coil into themselves,

h  
i  
s  
i  
n  
g

in all their freeness, in all their flexibility.

Offering yourself up, unclenching your distressed, white-as-snow knuckled fists and surrendering to the moment, to the here and now that squeezes your hands reassuringly with the danger and risk and joy that courses through your veins and dresses your entire being in an undeniable glow.

Obligation, ongoing traffic, on days, off days, odd days.

\* \* \*

*We accept the love we think we deserve.*

*-Perks of Being a Wallflower*

\* \* \*

I am eighteen years old when I first meet you. I still wear thick strokes of black around my lash lines, but I think of them as works of art, and I think of myself as glamorous (but not the snobby kind of glamorous, the good kind). I am a fanatic when it comes to working out, and coffee is still my number 1 drink (and 2 and 3). I now wear a B-cup bra (moving up in the world, I know). I'm a writer. I'm a virgin. I'm also a freshman in college and live over four hours away from home. It's a strange, new world, like trying to feel your way through a room that is pitch black. It's terrifying. I've kissed three men here (Men? Ok, boys...I've kissed three boys). But when I lay eyes on you with your brown, mystery-laced irises, your joltingly handsome face, I forget about the others.

They are as meaningless as pesky bugs that I have crushed flat from my memory. For I can't help my curiosity, that sweaty-palmed, fluttering-heart, wide-eyed feeling otherwise known as desire. You know, that spark that makes you feel alive, like you've swallowed firecrackers?

\* \* \*

V

Viewing the world, the little things, the big things, and everything in between with selfless appreciation, with eyes that have never before been so clear, so wide with wonder as though every-

BIG-  
little-  
in between-  
thing is transparent, translucent in its most innocent form.

Veiling your mind with the sweet salvation of security. You can b-r-e-a-t-h-e,

in<sup>hale</sup>  
hale  
ex  
for you are at ease, safe from suffering.

Violence, violets, vibrant, values, vacant.

\* \* \*

*Love is a serious mental disease.*

— Plato

\* \* \*

So you, Teddy (like the bear), are a sure thing in my unsure, uncontrollable world of uncertainty. You are my first boyfriend. And my first lover. I learn that love is hard. There's no hiding behind computer screens; there's no easy way out of anything, and sharing and caring isn't good enough anymore. Falling in love, and I mean

really in love isn't falling at all. It's more like plummeting at full speed, crashing out of control. Better yet, that one person has all of it: all of your sanity, all of your fears, every one of your emotions in his pleading palms. And I have none of it. It's like letting another use your heart as his own personal stress ball, squeezing the meaty pulp of your beating organ in unforgiving fists. But I feel more alive than I ever have before, as though I'm viewing my life in color for the first time, and you've brought the blurred reality of my surroundings into focus. But I realize quite harshly that all of this whimsical wonder can be snatched from my grasp in a mere moment. And there's this relentlessly stubborn thing called doubt poking at my rib cage every time my heart is wounded the slightest bit (which is every goddamn day). It reminds me that just as easily as I've fallen in love, I can just as easily fall in hate. I can fall in jealousy, slip in doubt, and drown in ignorance. But it's my first time, and so mistakes are bound to happen, right?

(Wrong.)

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**Love according to Wikipedia.com:**

**Love**

1. love may be understood as a function keep human beings together against menaces and to facilitate the continuation of the species.

\* \* \*

E

Embarking on a jolting journey that expands and crushes your life back into place like an accordion, mangling your every emotion, every tampering thought.

Eventually finding your way.  
Eternity, earrings, endure, everything, endings.

\* \* \*

*The course of true love never did run smooth.*

*-William Shakespeare*

\* \* \*

I am nineteen years old now, almost twenty. My mind doesn't work like a dictionary. I don't have permanent-as-glue definitions for everything; my brain isn't printed onto pinecone-smelling pages, words organized alphabetically in **Times New Roman** with explanations galore. Frankly, I don't know what anything means. And so my mind is a chameleon when it comes to pinpointing the right words for "love," what love is according to me. When I'm enraged, I think love is a wrathful leach that bleeds a person dry of any and all confidence. Happiness is shoved aside. But when I'm joyous, when I'm inspired, I think of love as floating in the cotton-puffed clouds, as dizzyingly wonderful. It's all the disgustingly corny clichés that Hallmark lives off of rolled into one neatly (or, rather not-so-neatly) wrapped package. It's caring for another so much so that sharing your life with them seems as simple as walking, as effortless as breathing (maybe Barney's "sharing is caring" spiel really does still apply). When it's good, it's really good, but when it's bad, boy is it really bad. I've learned this through my very first breakup, a breakup I never thought I'd have, with my very first love. It's weird calling someone my "ex," a strange concept that still makes my tongue feel numb yet impossibly heavy behind my teeth. It's like I'm crossing out memories and feelings and features on my face with thick, black sharpie. I'm trying to X-out and X-out and X-out until there is nothing but vacant spaces and dark holes.

Right now I'm raw still; I've never broken up with someone before. I feel the breakup in my fingertips, my knees, my chest, every bone and every joint. And when I think about what once was, I still feel that love. Feel it through me like a comb brushing through knotted hair. But it's different now. Now it's like I'm staring at this heart on a wooden tabletop or dented pillow or ashy sidewalk in front of me, glowing, pulsing red as it beats, and I'm watching that heart, my heart, from a distance. Now I feel as though my love for my ex is stretched out like taffy and is at the point where the candy is too thin, breaking in half. So it's still there, but broken. And eventually it will decompose in the dirt speckled grass or evaporate into the breeze and will only be a whisper within a storm of blizzarding sounds. So, in simple terms, love confuses the hell out of me (as for most). It's this thing that I cannot quite grasp. Like running your fingers through wafting smoke. It's like I'm just trailing my feet while I walk hoping to leave a path for someone to find me in case my heart has stopped beating. Because love is scary when it's fragmented with jagged edges, and it's not warm and fuzzy all the time like Barney tries to trick the young, malleable mind into thinking. And so, for now, I'm working on it.

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*If a writer falls in love with you, you can never die.*

*-Mik Everett*