

4-13-2015

Aromantic

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Class of 2015

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Martinelli, Rachel L. (2015) "Aromantic," *The Mercury*: Year 2015, Article 23.
Available at: <http://cupola.gettysburg.edu/mercury/vol2015/iss1/23>

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Keywords

creative writing, poetry

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Rachel Martinelli

I always found it difficult to sleep next to you.

The heat of your chest against my back
and your wet breath on my neck all trapped
beneath that fleece blanket was suffocating,
often unbearable when followed by a round
of frantic kisses and quivering limbs that
lasted longer than I liked and filled
the already thick air with salt and musk.

You wanted to consummate our love.
I just wanted to get off and be done with it.

You were my friend, so for two years I
willed myself to fall into the all-consuming
intensity of love's sun that you write
about in your poetry and that the world
can't seem to keep out of its mythos.

You were Pygmalion, I was your sculpture,
your frigid muse, and though your desire
was flattering to my self-conscious ego,
I could not feel what you felt,
desire what you desired.

You asked the goddess of love to breathe warm life into
this ivory body, but my blood calcified at her touch.

Every time you sat me down and told me that I wasn't
doing enough to make you feel loved, that warm smiles
over green tea and quiet conversations over long car rides
were meaningless if they weren't accompanied
by mindless kisses and romantic affirmations,
I would promise to try harder, all the while
wondering why my carnal blood had cooled,

why sex had become the nightly toll to prove
that I was capable of reciprocating the love
I was supposed to feel, a way to alleviate the guilt
I felt for not giving you what you said you needed.

I watched you chip off pieces of yourself and toss
them at my heart's window, attempting to gain entry,
unaware that the glass was two-sided,
that I was standing there the whole time
and just didn't want to let you in.

I searched my alabaster skin for faults, certain a part of me
broke with the collapse of my parents' wedding vows,
that my insides had crumbled into chalky dust ready to seep
through any crevice I didn't fill with kind lies and barren promises.
I thought I needed the hands of another to cover the cracks.

But now I can smile as I claw into my chest, tear out the rib
passed down to me from Eve and fling it back at Adam,
because I breathe easier when all of myself belongs to me.