

Lovesong

By Lars Peterson

She bolted upright, abruptly re-entering the waking world. It had been another dream about him. Julie was having them more often now. She had staying in this one a lot longer though. So good to see him again . . . “No, no it wasn’t,” she thought out loud, shaking her head.

She turned off the alarm. Only sixteen minutes before it went off and there was no sense risking another dream. Not when they were so accusing anyway. This time Brian had been on his knees, saying all those nice things he’d always say and begging her not to reject him. She had tried so very hard not to—it was only a dream after all—but she did. She did in every one of them. And that sad look of his . . . every time . . . “That’s enough!” She threw the covers aside and hopped out of bed.

She slipped out of her pajamas and put on her bathrobe, then walked down the hall to the bathroom shared by four girls. They must’ve all gone to class or something by now. No one’s shoulder to cry on. She did that sometimes—cried on her roommates’ shoulders. They understood. Well, most of them, she thought disrobing and hopping into the shower. Maybe she’d call mom. Mom rarely understood, but always listened. Listened to her cry the last few times.

The water came out cold and she gave a yelp, turning the hot water knob. “Ooo that’s cold!” Well, if only she weren’t so distracted! It was his fault. No it wasn’t, it was hers. She wouldn’t let him in. But how could she . . . And that water is still too cold. As cold as that first date. It had been Homecoming. She remembered three weeks ago, walking to the game in the pouring rain and that cool breeze. The bleachers had been freezing too. It had been so wonderful though, especially the dance. Dancing so close, the side of his head touching hers. She grunted. More hot water!

Her shower went quick. Why so quick? She had plenty of time. She had set her alarm in case she felt like going to class. She didn’t feel like it. Brushing her hair, she looked at the woman in the mirror. “You’re so beautiful, Julie,” he’d said. She believed that—even now. Not because she saw it, but because he saw it. “You’re a sin away from heaven.” He stole her heart with that one. Or was it when he said, “I love you” for the first time, and meant it? So few meant it. So few cared. So many shallow people. It’s not about the gift, it’s about the wrapping.

She finished her hair, dressed, and walked into the living room. It was raining outside. Why do people fall in love in the rain so quick? They certainly had, and everything had been perfect until the lightning had come. The lightning was her. Grief, she could be impulsive sometimes! But the rejection had been instinct, not impulse. He probably thought she hated him now. Men misunderstood everything. They could trip over a rock and think it had *meant* to trip them. She laughed, imagining Brian accusing a rock of such. My, what interesting things she found to laugh at today.

Anyways, where were her shoes? She checked under the couch, table and in the corners; it had become a morning routine. Finally deciding to check in her room, she looked

under the bed. There they were. Right next to her Jay Book. Her mind said, “leave the book, get the shoes,” but her hands disobeyed, reaching for the small-ring binder bulging with papers. Why could she not leave the past in the past? She opened the binder to the title page reading: “Jay Book,” written in her elaborate handwriting. She remembered the day she put together the half dozen poems into that binder. It had thickened throughout the months until, at last count, they numbered fifty-seven.

Turning the page revealed the first poem. Tears welled up as she read his words. This was him she was reading. His thoughts, his feelings, all that composed *him*, printed in verse. Jay never understood himself—kinda like her sometimes. She remembered about the fourth time they’d hung out, he’d showed her one of his poems. Why had he done that? The first time read she’d understood his poem. And him. Why did he leave me? From the flap in the binder she pulled out a picture. A handsome young man, on the thin side, with dark hair, cuddling with her. She was crying much harder now. What happened to us? I loved him. “Jay . . .”

He was gone now. He’d moved out of state. Didn’t write, didn’t call, didn’t care.

Then Brian had come. Dear, sweet Brian. She remembered so vividly the moment that tall, clean-cut guy with the gorgeous brown eyes had asked her to dance. There was something about him. Too good to be true from the beginning. Or was it just her fear again, caused by that one horrible experience? By all those experiences. By all those guys. “When will I trust again?”

She put the Jay Book under the bed. She should burn it. Walking into the living room, wiping her eyes, she found that it had stopped raining. Should she eat? No. Should she go to class? What if she met Brian on the way? She didn’t believe in chance, just bad luck. Oh well. She picked up her backpack and went out the door. The air was cool and she looked around

the yard. There by the oak tree, her and Brian had stood there that one night. I love you. His words echoed in her head. She loved hi too. What happened? Just one day she'd woken up and ignored him. She didn't mean to. It was her protection. Now he'd probably never trust again. There was that dream again, accusing her again.

She grunted and kicked the nearest rock as she began walking towards campus across the street. She crossed the street, walking across from the library and just as she'd feared, Brian came through the library doors. Bad luck. He stopped and stared at Julie with that pained look in his eyes that only asked *why*? The dream came again. Brian, kneeling, pleading for her mercy. With that look in his eyes, he was kneeling all over again. Tears welled up again and a knot caught her throat as she kept walking. Hearts get broken every day . . .