

Dreaming Boy

Sarah Kay

In most of the dreams I remember from childhood, I am a boy. Rescuing a maiden from a tower, or not rescuing anyone in particular, but definitely a boy. For years, when the only language I had were the scraps tossed from the popular kids table, “lesbian” seemed as likely an explanation as anything. What does it mean to dream myself a gender? What does it mean to hold that secret beneath my tongue?

The first time I kissed a boy, he was so tall, his lips so soft I dreamt of the ocean for weeks, never in control of my limbs. Next to him, I seemed a convincing enough girl. At least when I was awake. At night, I was Batman. At night, a fireman. At night, a boy, with muscles in boy places, and a firm hand, and a direction to run.

The first time I kissed a girl, I did not like the way our faces melted into each other. Where was the stubble? The hard jaw, the cinnamon, I could not breathe through all her lilac. I dreamt about being lost in a forest of a terrible tidal wave. If I was not a lesbian, what possible explanation did I have? What words could I tie around this treacherous heart, this impossible hunger, this miserable mind.

The first time I saw you, someone said, “oh, he’s definitely gay”. And maybe that was the confusion I recognised. The first time we kissed, you told me to take it slow. I placed my hand against your ribcage and

you moved it away. I felt like a fourteen year old trying to get a bra strap off. You spent the night anyway, and we lay next to each other breathing, my hands inches away from your boxer shorts twitching under the covers. The next morning, you made the bed and folded all of my clothes while I was at class. You learnt to play the harp and sang me songs while you played. For my birthday, you baked me a triple layer cake, woke up early to ice it. I watched your shirtless torso push icing through a tube - I have never loved a body the way I loved yours. In that moment you picked flowers on your way to class, leave bouquets in every room. When you danced, the walls leaned closer to get closer to you. When I finally asked you if you might want to date boys, I held my breath while you thought about it for a long, quiet moment.

“I haven’t met one I’d like to date yet,” you said. “And right now, I’m pretty in love with you, if that’s okay.”

And just like that, I did not crave language I always thought I needed. And just like that, a hand reached backwards into a faraway dream and said, “come on then, we’ve got a maiden to save.” I guess what I am saying is you make me feel like a boy, like the boy I have always been. At night, I climb trees and wear cargo shorts. I steal buildings and I build fires. When I wake I am curled around your back, the happiest big spoon in my drawer. You are naked and heavy breathing, the man I love. I hold your body like the gift it is, and safely sink back into dreams.