

A Boy

by Lauren Becker

Your name unspeakable, you are The Boy. You move like peanut butter down the halls of school. Smooth. No hurry. I want to spread you and me on white bread and take a bite. I want to put you on a spoon and lick you while I pretend to watch tv. I want you to take my hunger. I want you to bite back.

Your voice is motor oil. It makes things move. It is dark and liquid. Without it, damage is done. I check you frequently. You are enough.

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It is summer and you are a long bike ride away. I don't know anyone in your neighborhood so I ride around mine. Tomorrow I will go to yours and act surprised when you say hi. I will tell you I like to read at the park by your house if you ask but you will know why I am there. We will hear the ominous song of the ice cream man and you will say you want a Creamsicle. You will ask me if I want anything and it will become a date- at fifteen, my first- because you will pay. I'll ask for a Creamsicle, even though I like Fudgsicles better, so I can taste how your tongue tastes. It will be cold and slippery in places nobody has touched. It will make me shiver.

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You took me to your house after we sat on the curb and ate our Creamsicles. I paid for my own. Your brother was making a tunafish sandwich. You stood over him and gave a dangerous look. He practiced his peanut butter moves, finding a Coke in the fridge and, tucking a basketball under one arm. He held the can and sandwich in the other hand and opened the unlatched door with his hip. You didn't introduce us.

We went to your bedroom. You said my name like a question. I would hear it soon as an answer. I memorized your tangled dark and light blue striped bedspread, your poster of the dark-haired perfect girl from tv, your yellow Frisbee, the dirty white sock- only one- on the

floor. Your motor oil voice invited me to sit on your bed and I did. You touched my shoulder, bare in the red tank top I chose with care that morning. You said I had a bug-bite and asked if I wanted to play Risk. You took the game from the top shelf in your closet and we went downstairs.

I didn't want to but I played. I won and asked why. You said it was easier when you were ten and could play Risk with a girl and it was a game, not foreplay. You said you felt like a pretty girl with a pretty mouth who said words nobody listened to. You said I would laugh but I didn't. I was looking at your mouth, thinking that should not be what your mouth was doing. You asked me to come back the next day. I told you I couldn't and saw you see yourself in my eyes. I thought about another Boy and how I would wear the same top to his house and not play Risk. I would be the pretty girl with the pretty mouth. I got on my bike and said bye John. I had no trouble saying your name.

