

## These Girls

She was the best and he knew for as long as he lived, he would never find another girl on the planet like Bel. She was his first serious girlfriend. He entrusted her with all his secrets, fears, anxieties, dreams, hopes, and the teenage crushes he had on his teachers and the girl next door. She was the kind of girl that would say something dumb to make him feel better after saying something just as dumb if not dumber. She liked to read books he'd never heard of but that he decided to read after hearing the excitement in her voice as she described them to him at her favorite Greek place during dinner. He'd wake up in the mornings after she had already left for work, but a scent that could only belong to her lingered in the sheets and he wrapped them around himself until her fragrance dissipated over time; lavender vanilla wafting whenever he shifted positions.

It was all these memories about her that made him hate himself for sleeping with another girl. A girl that wasn't as smart or as pretty, but she admired him, and he could feel that she wanted him. It felt good and he liked being desired. His guilty conscience or maybe a self-destructing personality is what convinced him to tell Bel the next day what he'd done. He recalled Bel's voice breaking so vividly, but he could remember all of them perfectly since then.

Her smile and light breathy laughter mixed with a sinking feeling of duress, "What?" She asked him, and he knew she wasn't asking what happened, but why he did it. It was a request and a demand rolled into one. She wanted to know, and he was driven to tell her, but the details were stuck in his throat. He just knew he had to tell her, self-hatred with a hint of egomaniacal pride.

"Why, Ant? Why would you?" Her questions echoed in his head as he sat in silence asking himself the same thing. His answer? "She made me feel like I was better; like I was worth something." It was all he could come up with without delving into his past.

"And I didn't do that for you?" She sobbed as tears started to stream past her cheeks and fell along her jacket and the wood flooring of his studio apartment.

"You did--You do. I just..." He didn't know how to answer her, but he went for the tissue box on the coffee table and handed her something to wipe away her tears.

"You just what? You just liked getting attention from some fucking girl who doesn't know you were a fat kid who got picked on during P.E.?"

She was right, but he would never admit that to her. He just crossed his arms defiantly and shook his head, "Oh, man,

you seriously think that's why? You think that's what it is?" He began to laugh to cover up the pain.

"Yeah, I think that's what it is." Her sobbing ceased and was replaced with an angry conviction. Good. Anger he could work with. Anger means he could respond with anger.