

**Define Me?**  
**by Katherine Bloch**

January 2018

*Keep Listening*

Tape it to your mirror next to the two photos of your father and above Saint Elizabeth.

---

September 2010

Before you met him, you heard that he was loud and annoying. He took Tae Kwon Do, same as you, and was the first person to notice that the front of your hair is blonde when it's wet. You will take it as an insult that he thinks you dyed it. You will take it as an insult that he says Penguin whenever he passes you, like he wants you to know he thinks you're slow and waddle when you walk. The year you turn twelve, you will tell him to shut up.

*Penguin (n.) - an arctic flightless bird that waddles when it walks.*

---

September 2011

When you meet Gillian, she will have just kissed the boy at the back of the bus. People will never stop reminding her and she will regret it for the rest of her life. People will call her a *slut*.

But she doesn't like to talk about that.

She likes to talk about her brother's new business in solar paneling. She likes to talk about natural disaster relief and global warming. She likes to use big words and design things and wants to go to Rome because it is the one place in the world that she felt so happy she shines

even when she talks about it. Shines so brightly it's like she doesn't even know she's been reduced from all her big, beautiful words, to a single one.

She teaches you to be shameless.

The year you turn eleven, you will stop believing in words that hurt.

*Slut (n, adj.) - a woman with many things to say and not enough people to share in her joy.*

---

September 2013

When you meet Bailey, she will be hopelessly in love, even though she knows it will not end well. People will never stop saying she's obsessed, even after she's moved on. They will call her *unlovable*.

But when you sit down next to her, it is like her soul wakes up.

She has thousands upon thousands of stories. You are a writer, of sorts, and she needs someone who will read her work and never show it to anyone because everything she makes is unlovable by association, despite the fact that she pours all her love and all her laughter and all her hope into her words. You write three whole books together.

She teaches you to never give up on the things that set your heart free.

The year you turn thirteen, you decide that to love passionately is to live freely.

*Unlovable (adj.) - describing the things inside a person that nobody can define, commonly used in mockery of that which we understand all too well.*

---

September 2014

When you are put with Sam, he will have bleached his hair. People will say it is because his brothers gave him a choice: snort the coke, or use the bleach. He chose bleach. They will call him a *delinquent*.

But when you peek over his shoulder, he is not sleeping on his arms. He is resting his forehead on them so that no one can see him drawing.

He draws green fire and silly caricatures and beautiful designs, and when he's done he throws them all away, hides them as though he is afraid that someone will steal the thing that makes him able to breathe. When you quietly tell him he should go to art school, he looks at you like, *duh*. When you compliment his glasses, his eyes, he ducks and blushes.

He teaches you to treasure the gifts you have as though they are all you have.

The year you turn fourteen, you begin to write a story of your own.

*Delinquent (n., adj.) - the people who see the world in colors the naked eye cannot.*

---

January 2012

Before you met him, you heard that he was loud and annoying. It wasn't until you met him that you realized he is loud and makes people laugh.

He took Tae Kwon Do, same as you, and was the first person to notice that the front of your hair is blonde when it's wet. You will take it as an insult that he thinks you dyed it, never realizing that he is as observant as you are to have noticed this, perhaps more so.

You will take it as an insult that he says Penguin whenever he passes you, like he wants you to know he thinks you're slow and waddle when you walk. Even though he never makes

sure anybody else hears it, just you, like it's not an insult but a secret. Like he knows the writer inside your body better than you do. Like he is telling you to let her out.

The year you turn twelve, you will tell him to shut up.

*Penguin (n.) -*

1. *an arctic flightless bird that waddles when it walks.*
  2. *A publishing company located in England*
- 

*A Message Before You Turn Twelve:*

Before you arrived at this place, you were a creator of worlds. But then you heard what they said about you - *freak*. Before you met Gillian, before you met Bailey, before you met Sam, there was Richard. Nobody had a name for him.

The Dreamer came to you to teach you how to release the Thinker, the Lover, and the Artist from their cages. If you silence him, you silence them all.

If you keep the message taped to your mirror next to the two photos of your father and above Saint Elizabeth, you will be reminded that there is a voice they are trying to keep quiet, that they told you was loud and annoying because they knew you would never expect him, then, to whisper to you about how to hope. One voice could destroy them all. One voice could set you free.

You are the Writer. You hold the pen. Don't let these words define themselves.

*Keep listening.*