

Loveletters

by Joshua Moses

"Dear Debbie,

It started with Anika.

I don't know entirely why I picked her except that she was suitably blonde and I could see down her shirt when she leaned over her desk in Geometry. Also she was smart and said hello and wasn't somebody I felt comfortable approaching. To sum up: attractive, beyond my reach. It could have been any of two dozen girls in the tenth and eleventh grades but Anika was first.

The original idea had been to woo her via poetry but the reality is that I am more of a prose artist, and anyways anonymous notes in lockers are not really a good way to give a potential lover the news of your attraction.

Still, I proceeded.

Dear Anika, I wrote.

It was a good beginning -- cliched, perhaps, but to the point. And there I stumbled. The page sat in my notebook for a good week, row upon row of white space, empty corridors of longing. I tried to frame, contextualize my attraction, the way veins beat when she, you know, did whatever it was she did to make them beat. Look - I'm not a poet. I'm just not. But I have opinions and those opinions are careful and valid and finally that's what I wrote in there.

Your teeth are pretty, I wrote, and then I crossed it out.

It is incredibly ironic that The Unforgiven is the most famous song on Metallica's Black Album. Either that or Enter Sandman. But it's

the worst song on the album and it doesn't make any sense. It goes on and on and never changes and has no depth to it. It's as though James Hetfield wanted to write a One-style epic and got bogged down with the guitar solo and just put some words over the top of it to the effect that whoever it is he's talking to - he doesn't specify - is unforgiven. For what, James? Because society doesn't like your song? Obviously, and again ironically, they DO like your song, because they've all bought copies of it. And they vote for it on MTV. Are you insulting your own listeners, James? Or are you blind to the irony?

I was proud of the note and so I folded it into a triangle and forced it into the slit in her locker. And later on in geometry I turned and looked over my shoulder as she took notes and looked at the white of her breasts over her black bra and she looked up at me and I looked at her face and she didn't smile, exactly, but it's not like she intentionally didn't smile and I'm 95% sure she didn't know I was looking down her shirt. I didn't want to give the game away and so I didn't say anything and the next note I wrote was to Nya Chung in gym class:

There are four critical aspects to being an effective leadoff hitter. First, one must have excellent strike zone judgement as strikeouts are absolutely a killer with nobody on base. Second, speed is important for legging out the infield single and for stealing second if appropriate. Third, similar to #1, a leadoff hitter must have excellent judgement on the basepaths so as not to be thrown out / be able to break up the double play. Lastly, and most importantly, the leadoff hitter must be comfortable accepting that he will almost never be the hero and will not be anyone's favorite and he will not be the baseball card that is traded for simply because his skills and abilities are subtle, and that ironically although he is the key to the offense he is ultimately seen as a role player because it is the leadoff hitter's task to score runs and not to drive them in.

I don't know if Nya got the letter when I hid it in her locker because she broke her wrist playing volleyball the same day and when she came back three days later she had all kinds of get well notes stuffed in there too and she had a cast that I signed after I asked her if I could and she said "sure."

My letters evolved over the next six weeks into regular missives into the hive of femininity at Park Glen High School. Each individualized, my wisdom was first ignored, then denigrated, and then became the mark of class and style. To have received one of my notes meant that you were Admired, Beautiful, and so on through the alphabet. Speculation grew as to their origin. And then, unsurprisingly, came impostors - whether the girls themselves or other boys, I had no way of knowing.

Debbie Cartwright took the lead on assembling them into a compilation, a girl, I might note, who had never received a note from me - she had escaped me by virtue of being on the other end of the building, by being too something, the words for which I cannot grasp (I am not a poet). She is tall and gorgeous and although she wears her sweaters knotted over her shoulders never having received a letter is an oversight, an ironic oversight. Somehow I must gain entry to her locker, so as to weed out the letters written by others, leaving only mine...

XXX Anonymous"

