

*[Written in response to two creative writing prompts during my 2008 Advanced Writing course at Messiah College]*

### **Snippets**

There was no moon that night. The blinking red eye of the smoke detector was the only light in the ink filled basement. Jess and I didn't mind. It was better that way, without a steady light, we were ten times more likely to mistake my dog for an axe murderer or the blank TV screen for a portal to another world.

Yeah, it was better that way. No lights meant we couldn't see the other blush as we giggled over boys we liked. Unable to see each other's faces, our mouths were free to form new questions, taste new answers, uninhibited by surprised glances or frowns of misunderstanding.

Jess had always been braver than I was, always been more forward, more daring, more brash. I was too shy, too awkward, too unsure to blaze any path alone. Jess was happy to lead, and I was happy to follow.

And it was better that way. So I wasn't surprised when she took advantage of the darkness to ask me a personal question.

"So, this whole 'not dating' thing. I mean, I know you say you're doing it 'cause you're not ready or your church told you to or something. But, I mean, are you just 'not dating' cause no one asks you?"

I lay, eyes fixated unblinkingly on that pulsing red light, the blood in my cheeks and the tears in my eyes pumping to that same beat. Jess cleared her throat, impatient for the answer that the merciful obscurity was denying her.

I didn't give her one, either.

It was better that way.

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“You only say that ‘cause you’re my mom.”

I sigh, bite my tongue, and decide to pick my battles. A mother is never heeded in matters of love, beauty, self-confidence, or really any matter in which the daughter’s mind is already made up. I may see her beauty, I may see her talents, I may see her desirability, but as I am her mother and not Prince Charming, I can’t be believed.

Her sigh echoes in response to mine. I can almost see her pausing, poised to reveal what sent her into the “depths of despair” this time.

“I want a boy,” she mutters. “And not in the baby kind of way.”

“Well go out and get one,” I tell her, for the millionth time. I don’t add that she just needs to project a little more confidence, reign in the sarcasm and tone down the attitude. No. Advice was not a language she understood; humor, however, was a language in which she was fluent.

“You know,” I add, trying to keep the laughter out of my voice, “we’re told to be fishers of men.”

She gasps, laughs, inhales joy, exhales fear, gasps again and cries, “Mom, I don’t think that’s what God meant!”