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Creative Nonfiction Writing Exercise

### Victims-of-Love Club

I don't think I belong anywhere. People love to say that, don't they? Perhaps it's because belonging somewhere is to limit or define oneself. Maybe it's because everyone is so busy chasing originality they don't realize that's the last thing that will get you any. In truth, I belong to a variety of groups, cults, secret societies, and families. As much as I'd like to say they're all good in nature and positive, they are not, because that's not life. In fact, most of them are of a specific subculture of sadness that only a teenage girl can obtain, holding onto them in her adult years.

I belong to the blind-left-eye club from an injury I had when I was fifteen. I belong to the stitches club, the ex-smokers club that occasionally buys a pack after a shit day but only smokes one. I belong to two percent of the population that has green eyes. I, unfortunately, belong to the loving people who are dead club, the empty coffee cups in the backseat of my car club, the superstitious club, and probably a million more that I can't think of right now. It's the strangest thing but, whenever I see a toddler with their tiny body existing in this world, I choke back tears because I know that, once, I was that small and naive, too. I wish I could borrow their little mind for a while, just to witness that blind happiness I know I must've had as a child. I imagine what my parents must think, how it's possible that the goofy, stubborn, chapped-lipped kid they raised just had her second emergency room visit for stitches, which were done so at the hands of herself. I imagine what my father must feel knowing the wound was done with the jackknife he gifted to me this Christmas.

Within the last two years, I became a member of the girlfriends club. His name is Stephen. To say I'm proud of that fact is a true statement but it's only the surface level of how I really feel about it. Belonging to that club, in my mind, means that I belong to someone else, which is a notion that has never sat right with me. However, I can honestly say that I have never had more fun with a person than I do with Steve, not even with myself. I love him to the point of tears and I know he loves me, too, but I can't help feeling that he loves the version of me he's crafted in his head for the past two years. I guess I could say that about anyone because what is a person if not an altered version of how other people see them? There's this quote by Anne Carson that I think of from time to time when I think of Steve. It goes, "I suppose you do love me, in your way," I said to him one night close to dawn when we lay on the narrow bed. "And how else should I love you— in your way?" he asked. I am still thinking about that." How do we not only understand, but truly accept the different ways someone loves us? And take that acceptance and sit comfortably with it, even if it's not what we want?

After I was discharged from the emergency room early Tuesday morning, my father drove me home, but not without stopping for an iced coffee and plain donut combo, another club I belong to. I decided to refrain from telling anyone about it for a couple days, so I could let the reality of the situation settle inside me. However, it was just last night that I confessed my sin to Steve after he invited me to visit him at school this weekend for Valentine's Day. I couldn't keep it from him any longer, even though it had barely been 48 hours since the incident. I said, "There's like, no casual way of telling someone something like that, is there?" He replied with a

text saying, “No, I guess there isn't. Are you okay?” The difference between me and Steve is, if the roles were reversed, I wouldn't have responded with a text. I would have started my car and drove to wherever he was. The difference between me and him is that I would have called.