

2003

Remember when we walked to Taco Bell for the first time? And how it was an accident? I was terrified of a rustling in leaves and so I ran, and you ran after me, and suddenly, we were behind the cinema. And we could see Arby's big, metal hat and Taco Bell's flags blowing in the wind. The world was at our fingertips. And we were hungry.

We spent those hot July days finding new destinations; crafting alibis while we cut through backyards and fields, avoiding main roads, on our way to Lic's, Gage's house, Andrew's apartment, playgrounds, the river, or the Fortress of Fun. If I think hard enough, I can feel the breeze on my face as we planned world domination on the swing set: making promises we didn't know we could never keep.

More than those sweaty, rebellious days, I remember the stars, the perfect, silver coin in the sky, and how our moonlight shadows smashed together, the way we laugh a little lighter in these midnight blue memories, and how your voice changed in the dark, and how every single night felt unmarked by all those people you had to impress.

Lifehouse is still your ringtone on my phone, and I don't think that was ever a joke, but I would never ask you about it. Of course, why would I? I've never been allowed to ask you anything.

But I wouldn't ask you about "You And Me" if I could. No, if I could ask you anything right now, I'd only have one question: Do you remember the July nights we snuck out just to go walking, without destinations, without alibis, just us? Did you feel free or was it just me?

ONE TIME, I ALMOST HATED YOU

I remember it every time I look at that one faint scar on my thigh and every time I crawl into a bed without my pants. I remember it when I get up earlier than everyone else and when I go to bed later than you. I think about it in the shower, in the car, at the park, and while I'm buying socks and Kit-Kats. I feel it when I press a knife too hard against my tongue while licking Nutella off the blade, and when my feet are cold. I smell it in the freshly cut grass and the sweet scent of fallen leaves. I think of you and the one time I almost hated you every time I see your name pop up in my Facebook News Feed, every time I pump my own gas.

Does that night weigh in your mind like it does in mine? Is it thicker over here, with all these unasked questions chewing holes through my vocal chords and brain matter, sticking to my lungs like tar? Is it heavier here, since you were the one on top of me?

One time, I almost loved you, but I talked myself out of that, too.