

Crush(ed)

Infatuation, fantasy & desire.



Poems by Linda Lenzke

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Introduction

Crushes are born in the imagination, sometimes secret musings, fantasy connections between our heart and mind, wishes given life and power, fueling passion and desire. Crushes are rehearsals for relationship, sometimes becoming real, often forgotten like last night's dream. Crushes acted upon may yield a yes or rejection. The infatuated becomes besotted and smitten when love is reciprocated and crushed when not.

Some of the poems included in this collection were previously published in my chapbooks, *Scenes of Everyday Life* and *The Valentine Poems*.

Dedication

I dedicate this collection of poems to all my crushes and the hearts I may have crushed.

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Falling for Her

It happened when I least expected it.

Just as others always said it would.

I'm falling for her.

She visits in uninvited thoughts,

or when someone mentions her name in conversation;

she appears in my inbox.

I interpret each word, search for hidden meaning.

When I see her, I survey her face,

reading between the lines,

the parenthesis that frame her lips.

I think about how a kiss is like fingerprints,

unique and recognizable upon examination.

I'm falling for her.

Crush

Sweet daydreams visit uninvited;
pleasant interruptions in my workaday life
like snacks between meals they satisfy momentarily,
but soon I crave more; I'm insatiable.

My appetite is piqued. I want to nibble
on the fleshy lobes of your ears, run my tongue
in the valley where your lips divide,
burrowing inside to seek the silky wetness of your kiss.

I think about you stretched out in my bed;
sheets gathered at your feet as the dusk light
casts shadows from the curves of your body
inviting me to explore your terrain.

Suddenly I'm shy realizing it has been a long time.
Desire trumps my fear; I find the courage
to wrap my hand firmly behind your neck
and draw you close, my flesh shivering as we kiss.

My phone rings; a colleague stands in the threshold
of my office impatiently; a sound cue reminds me I have new mail.
I'm jettisoned into the present moment
and discover a smile on my face.

Unkissed

This is not a love poem
it is too soon for anything
more than infatuation,
yet words make knots
when they spill from my lips.
I introduce you to my best friends
I only remember your name.
My synapse misfire
hands grasp a millisecond late;
I wear evidence of my dinner
but I don't know what I ate.
All my senses drink you in
I'm giddy in your presence.
But like the hero in a Capra film
I try to be suave under the porch light
of your parent's house,
we say goodbye
unkissed.

Valentine I.

I drink my first cup of coffee
hoping my brain will engage;
I think about how this is
the last drug I allow myself
(we won't count chocolate).
I already have an association with coffee and you
and I muse about that
as my hands are warmed
wrapped around ceramic curves
and my tongue swims in liquid.

I think the first cup of coffee
you poured me was drugged.
I'm sure of it being so close
to Valentine's Day;
some invisible, gossamer, giggling nymph
poured in some potion
that possesses me.
My symptoms are clear:
escalating excitement, complete disclosure
of thoughts and feelings,
a compelling desire to repeat the experience.

I drink my second cup of coffee
and have scheming thoughts of you
and the day ahead
seduction by voicemail;
I am possessed.

Dannie's Song

She has a slight overbite that delights me,
her white teeth glisten between the ruby curtains of her lips,
which open and draw closed as she speaks.
I watch the amber light of the brew pub lamp
dance across her dark-skinned face,
reflecting the glitter gracing her cheeks,
as her eyes seek mine and mine hers,
we connect.

We talk about our shared passion,
films we've seen, questionable remakes,
favorite directors and actors, our "can't wait to see lists."
We study each other's faces, read between the lines
of our stories about families and queerness,
where we've been and hope to go as we share
this horseshoe-shaped leather booth in a bar
on a Sunday night.

Bumping into each other as we leave,
laughing as we learn to walk together,
deciding where to cross the street, to others
we must look like drunken girls, we're not.
We drive home. I slip in a surprise in the CD player,
the soundtrack for a movie we both loved;
I learn it's her birthday this week; this will be her gift,
a song from a movie, for this night, and this memory.

Ellen's Face

Second grade sandlot softball
shaped your nose, soft curve to the left;
rosy birthmark down its shaft
signals for attention.

We eat Chinese food, red peppers spike
like a thermometer.

Your green eyes, almond-shaped
scrunch together, then like emerald fireworks
they sparkle brilliant as they open.

Faint tawny freckles sprinkle your face.

Your mouth moves, animated.

I listen, I nod, watch the room empty

behind you. I realize

that we linger again

in each other's company

spending time, carefree

like pennies in a fountain.

Yet Still I Fall

Dawn of this new day greets me
in a blush of rose, watercolor wash
of pinks, light and fleeting
like good morning kisses,
cast a scrim of color
over the gold bricks of my home
as I watch the daybreak.
Warm, buttery sunlight
filters through the periwinkle blue sky
and dusty wisps of clouds;
I am hopeful, anticipating you.

This evening, after the work day,
we'll linger outside in back
of the coffee shop, where café tables
tip and totter uneasily
in the green grass of the small backyard
that hugs the bike path and community gardens.
Our coffee cups will empty as we fill time with stories
of who we are, where we've been, hope to go,
as the space between us narrows; I imagine
I will want to hold your hand,
as I grow smitten.

The night will gently draw down its violet shade,
as we part ways, retreating to our homes.
Alone again, I will replay our conversation,
conjuring up the image of you, tilting your head down
as you look up at me with your hazel eyes.
The setting sun glints in your hair
and the flint of my heart is struck.
I've been waiting patiently for this moment
to yearn again, to desire, to love.
It is too soon to say these words aloud, too soon to even think them,
yet still I fall.

Thinking

We listen to Lynette
string melodies
some bright, some jazzy.
I think about how I want to kiss you,
first running my hand up your neck
holding your chin in that crook
between thumb and forefinger.
You startle me in my reverie
grabbing my hand
you pull it close to your nose,
cold like a puppy.
I feel you breathe warm
beneath the cool.
I think about how I want to kiss you
deep to your core.
I smile, thinking, how I love loving women
how lovely the women are I love
I love thinking about how I want to kiss you.

Elevator Crush

Prologue

We met in person in the condo elevator
during a trip from the parking garage
to the second floor, my stop.
In those fleeting moments in motion
we said hello, introduced ourselves;
I asked her if she had a courtyard
or street view from her fourth floor home.
I mentioned I had met her days earlier
on the phone when she scheduled
an appointment for service on her Audi.
I recognized her address as mine.
We chatted awhile;
she told me she moved here from El Paso
to accept a job as an attorney,
that she hasn't been in Wisconsin long,
but so far, likes it here.

First Date

Now, as she remembers our conversation
she smiles warmly
and her eyes light up.
I've already forgotten her name,
not because it isn't important,
I'm simply distracted
by her beauty, yet her face
imprints upon memory
while endorphins course through my body
like champagne bubbles and blood pulses
and warms me in places that
delight and embarrass. I'm convinced
our pheromones are comingling
in the space between us,
in spite of the fact that she's probably
a straight girl and I'm not.
For this reason and more
I'm caught off guard, become unhinged.

Second Date

Parking garage again,
we enter the elevator. She's holding a drink
and bag from McDonald's. She looks down,
momentarily embarrassed. I ask what's wrong.
As she looks up and her eyes meet mine,
again they brighten. My heart beats faster.
She tells me she's embarrassed
that her dinner is fast food,
that it's bad for her,
as if it should matter to me.
I smile playfully, as the elevator
passes above the first floor. I say,
"Sometimes it's good to do something
that's bad for you, it's how we learn
the difference between good and bad."
I'm only thinking carnal thoughts
of spontaneous combustion and
sex in the elevator with her.
The elevator stops. We've arrived
at the second floor. I exit, wink
and say, "Enjoy," flirtatiously.
I'm so excited, I can't breathe.

Third Date

She greets me by name
in the parking garage again.
Today we are leaving for our day,
not arriving from it.
Her brow is furrowed and her expression sad.
I saw her poster in the elevator and at the mailbox.
Someone damaged her car a second time,
she has a suspect, she's upset.
I listen to her story, yet my mind wanders;
I want to draw her into my arms
comfort her, run my fingers in her long black hair,
nuzzle my nose in her neck as her head
rests on my breast and I tell her it will be okay.
I will somehow make it better. I promise I will.
(Long, silent pause).
We talk some more, say our good-byes.

Postscript

I realize this relationship, and yes, it's a relationship,
is happening mostly in my imagination
and the those parts of my body
my animal brain controls.

We continue to see each other in the elevator,
coming or going in our day-to-day.

I look forward to her smile,
how my name sounds when spoken in her voice,
and how her eyes brighten when she sees me,
my sweet, sweet woman, my elevator crush.

Infatuation Transmutation

Girl, the woman in me is paying attention
when you smile from across the room.

I make up stories, fill in the blanks,
projecting wishes and daydreams
on the canvas of your face.

Girl, the woman in me is smitten.

Woman, the girl in me is surprised
by your affection, caught off guard,
no defense or protection.

You approach, arms outstretched,
an invitation for connection.

Woman, the girl in me is flattered.

Girl, the woman in me wonders
is this friendship or admiration,
are we flirting or simply affirming,
we want to know each other better?

What's the next step in this dance?
Girl, the woman in me is asking.

Girl, the girl in me feels like playing,
let's get into a little trouble,
give others something to talk about.
I've made lots of choices that were good for me
maybe it's time for some bad for me.

Girl, the girl in me is wanting.

Woman, the woman in me is suddenly shy
I know how these stories sometimes end
I've often leapt before I've thought
about consequences and regret.

Let's take it slow, a step at a time.

Woman, the woman in me is ready.

Then I Met You

Simple pleasures, stopping at a favorite bakery for a sourdough baguette dressed in a Kraft paper sheaf, the morning breeze, brisk and effervescent, as I walk back to my car, during this morning commute which begins the day that will end with you.

There is something hopeful about the sky this morning and thoughts of you, the possibility of an us in the making, our unfolding, unraveling the mystery and history of who we are and how we arrived at this moment, when tonight we share the bounty of a peasant's meal.

Once I dreamed of princes to wake me with a magic kiss, wished for a swashbuckling pirate to steal my innocence, or a tall dark stranger to draw me close with intent and desire, and finally a sandy-haired, freckled-face, blue-eyed soft butch, who would whisper in my ear, seduce with her words.

Then I met you.

Synchronicity

Is it random or synchronicity?

We write about each other independently
describe character attributes with acuity:
kind-hearted, tender-loving, gentle spirit,
yet delineate no recognizable physical features
other than woman, caring eyes,
warm knowing smile.

I find you finding me strangely familiar,
like friends encountering each other
in an unexpected place, it just might be
right place, right time.

In a prelude to this moment
you walked the labyrinth meditating,
beginning with a question, ending with an answer,
finding direction and yourself, full circle.

I entered the wilderness of intimacy, lost my way
found my path back to me, now you.

We stand at the gateway,
parallel lives becoming tandem,
we pose unasked questions
with our eyes and body language,
mull imagined answers,
then say good night with an awkward hug
and words left unsaid.

Sexagenarian Dance

It made me smile, looking up
the word for a person in their sixties.
We are both children of the sixties, now in our sixties,
twice the age of those we once swore
we could never trust.
How times change and how we are changed by time,
when young, we'd act first, regret later,
now we reflect, take it slow
one step, a day at a time,
measure risk versus benefit,
like actuaries or fund managers,
protecting our investments,
paying attention to profit and loss,
return on investment.
We are both singletons, survivors of the once-partnered
looking for love and companionship.
We do the sexagenarian dance,
the "come here, go away,
I like my single life, but miss the
warm body in my bed,
companion in life, two-step."
Yes, back and forth we go, first pretending
we have no romantic interest, then pursue and court,
like a waltz, we take it slow, to and fro.
We'll dance until the music ends,
or we no longer hear its sweet notes.

Beside Myself (Next to You)

Longing begins when I recall your image,
or memory of a moment shared,
the sound of your voice, your eyes, when they gaze
directly at mine before shyly turning downward.
You tell me you are not easily embarrassed. I only wish
I could be saved from humiliation, as I stumble
to find the right words, safe to express.
A debate rages in my head; do I tell you what I'm thinking,
or what I think you will be able to hear
and not find me besotted and mumble-brained?
I'm beside myself, next to you.

Attraction bubbles, first in the beaker of my brain,
my senses awakened by the intoxicating chemistry
of your pheromones and centuries of synapse
honed to vibrate like tuning forks,
inciting unexplained urges, clearly urgent.
I can't wait to see you, yet I feel compelled to flee and hide.
My fear informs me; this matters. There is risk
at the beginning of a journey when the destination is unknown,
when courage is required for the next step, or leap,
eyes closed until safe landing.
I'm beside myself, next to you.

Rational thinking hinders more than helps me solve this puzzle,
the mystery of you and me, where we may go, or not.
I know that when I think of you, I want to be a friend
or more, yes, more than a friend, more, yes more.
I want to explore what captures your attention, engages your heart,
feeds your curiosity. I want to know you and you me.
We are different in so many ways; I want to learn your story,
listen to your dreams, unwrap the gift of you.
I want to tell you everything, like a child's show and tell,
yet the first thing you should know is this:
I'm beside myself next to you.

Yin-Yang

You asked me,
“What does partnership look like to you?”
True to form, I responded, no pause, or skipped beat,
words exiting my mouth like commuters from a train
racing to their next destination. I babbled on,
something about three homes,
yours, mine and ours, something more about solitude,
finally learning how to live alone.

You said you enjoyed the pace,
the slow unfolding of our relationship.
You reminded me I once stated I wasn't interested
in friends with benefits, I wanted partnership.
You were listening, paying attention.
I realize this is your vocation *and* gift: asking questions,
listening, paying attention, and remembering.
I'll have to be more careful of what I say.

We are learning small things too about each other.
I like to sleep at night with the blinds open
so the moon and stars, street lamps and signal lights
keep me company. You like it dark as pitch, eyes
covered. You drink your milk warm in tea, I pour mine
over a glass of ice. I'm an early bird, you, a night owl.
We are both very different, yet want the same thing.
Different, same. Yin-Yang.

Uncharted

"I feel like I'm in a small boat, rocking back and forth, not having a rudder or oar to steer me. I'm at the mercy of the waves and where they may take me, where I may drift closer to or further from the shore, to a new destination, or return me to where I began."

Journal Entry

Day breaks open my heart;

Fear greets me.

The comfort of sleep disrupted

as dreams dissolve, dissipating

in the morning light.

I'm reminded in this fragile moment

of both the promise of a new day

and my inevitable mortality.

I exist at the intersection,

the longitude and latitude of my journey,

the culmination of choices,

the destination to which I've navigated

a day at a time. Decades later

I'm uncertain at what the new day may bring,

how the course of my life may change

as I steer the rudder of my heart.

Rom-Com Love Bomb

Watching a romantic comedy,
themes of soul mates, one
lover for life, vexes me, perplexes me.
I want to believe she's still out there
that we're wandering, wondering,
each calling out, who is she, where is she,
we're searching for each other,
lost in some wilderness of intimacy,
unknotting the tangles of
the wranglers of love,
who lasso us and keep us,
then leave us or heave us out some door.
Some days I feel I've been captive
by an irresistible force that became bored
with me, abandoned me, moved on.
I'm still working on forgive and forget
when I realize, my salvation, revelation is
forgive and remember.

I know I sound jaded, yet I'm persuaded
by movies and novels,
poems and pictures,
that love is a song waiting to be sung
when you meet the right one
it can never be wrong.
I have decades of practice, hits and misses,
been a wife, a lover, even the other.
I've been long-termed, one-nighted,
divorced and remorseful,
yet I still wake up in the morning
and ask, is today the day, I meet her,
greet her in some random place
share a cup of coffee and conversation,
court her, caress and seduce her,
promise her the best of me, believe her,
get lost in her eyes, let go of the past
embrace her and the future, again?

Valentine to My Unknown Lover

Whoever you are, whatever you do, wherever you live,
whenever you're ready, however scared you may be,
I am waiting for you, my new love. I try to recognize you
in the faces of the unfamiliar, or in the eyes of friendly others.
Perhaps I've already met you at the bookstore, or the
Farmer's Market on the Square, our hands reaching for the same red pepper.
Were you the woman two rows in front of me
in the movie theater? I watched you, then the film.
Maybe we're friends; belong to the same group,
pass each other on the road during our daily commute.

You may not yet have arrived in town; the new kid at work;
The neighbor moving into my building,
whose ripped cardboard box I rescue before hitting the ground,
our eyes meeting for a second
in recognition of something important, strangely familiar.
We ready ourselves for each other each day in our meditations and reverie,
conversations with friends, when they ask, what will your next girlfriend be like?
I ponder you. I wonder. My curiosity distracts me in my work, sometimes
becoming the purpose of my play, inspiration for poetry.
I write about you in my journal, I conjure you up in my dreams.

Know this sweet woman. I have loved, I love, I will love again.
I will love you as well as I have learned to love myself,
sometimes with abundance and generosity of spirit, often imperfectly.
I can't promise I won't hurt you, I will. It is the nature of life and love,
yet I will give you my best and hope you can accept the rest.
My passion and desire will wax and wane, yet my love will always be true
and yours. You will have my hand, my heart, my attention.
We will laugh at our similarities, and practice patience with our differences.
We will hold each other during the dark nights
and giggle under the covers as the sun peeks in the window in the morning.

Unknown Valentine, come out, come out, whoever you are, whatever you do,
wherever you live, whenever you're ready, however scared you may be,
I am waiting for you, my new love.

Author's Biography

Linda Lenzke lives in Madison, Wisconsin and has been writing poetry, prose, comedy and spoken word monologues for the past 30 years. She co-edits a poetry and prose feature for *Our Lives* magazine and is a founding member of LGBTQ Narratives Activist-Writers. Linda is a writer and producer of *Conceal & Carry: Queers Exposed* monologue play and has also authored, *Jenifer Street*, a short play in three scenes. In addition to *Crush(ed)*, she has self-published poetry chapbooks, *Scenes of Everyday Life* and *The Valentine Poems*. Linda is currently working on a memoir entitled, *Perfectly Flawed* and launching a new blog, *Mixed Metaphors, Oh My!* Earlier in her writing career, Linda wrote and performed stand-up comedy and was a member of improvisational comedy troupes. Her poetry and prose has been published in print and online in the *Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets 2011 Calendar*, *Our Lives*, *Queers Read This Too*, *Echoes*, *[un]*, *True Stories Well Told*, *Forward Thinking*, *Tales of the Pack*, and *A Voice of One's Own: Twenty-Five Years of Readings at A Room of One's Own Feminist Bookstore*.

