

Love Boxes

by Andre-Marie Tabarnac

Brown box, red box, white box. First ex, second ex, third ex. Three boxes of past love. They look and feel like caskets where a significant number of letters, photographs, CDs, and dried flowers along with memories are buried.

Keeping them probably has no point, yet not only that I keep them, but I take them with me wherever I move, regularly check everything inside, and sometimes even smell them. It is like eating carbs and sugar right after gym. It makes you feel guilty, but it tastes good so you do it anyway.

The first box smells like cheap cigarette smoke, dust, and cat urine. That was exactly his smell, it makes me have an asthma attack when I even think of it. Not even God knows why do I still keep this dirty box. He was quite interesting though, with long fuzzy hair and lost psycho eyes. Raised only by his mother and grandmother, I had high expectations that he would treat women well. By having great expectations, I set myself up for disappointment.

The second box smells like ink, vanilla, and musty polaroid film. Inside there is a large number of love letters and silly polaroid pictures. I cannot look at the red box without feeling claustrophobic. The letters are so sleazy and suffocating, it is like grandmother kissing you on your forehead, but with her mouth full of mac and cheese. Your forehead is now sticky. I love both my grandmother and mac and cheese, yet the combination of the two is repulsive. He was like a hunter, and I was a prey animal. I could not walk, sleep, or even eat without being watched and followed.

The third box smells expensive: red roses, toffees, and an aphrodisiac fragrance that turns me on. He was the definition of chivalry, but this box is forbidden. This box has a crack in it which duct tape cannot fix.

Who knew that years of memories can fit perfectly inside three boxes? Who knew caskets can be made of cardboard? Who knew cat urine scent can last more than 6 years? Who knew that my past lovers would get along so well on the top shelf of my dusty closet? They would have never sat so patiently next to each other, not even for a minute.

My lovers ended up in those boxes because they do not teach you how to read red flags in schools. Or if they do, I must be colorblind. They do not teach you to be conscious and recognize patterns. Or if they do, I must be a fool. They do not teach you how to check if the timing is wrong. Or if they do, my watch must be broken. But most importantly, they do not teach you not to fall in love with a psycho, best friend, or prince charming.

Dear psycho, I am sorry that you had a noisy fridge in your bedroom. Even though my bedroom was nice and quiet, I could hear the disturbing lullabies of your fridge too. You were the human version of a headache. I am sorry that your mother did not teach you how to respect women, but she defiantly taught you how to cry like one.

Dear best friend, it is horrible to read text messages intended for someone else. Falling in love with you was the worst thing ever. You should have had a label with instruction and warnings "caution: even your cousin wishing you happy birthday will make me jealous/ handle with care: needy, overprotective and controlling." You could not be the safe place I was looking for, because you were the hurricane I was running from.

Dear prince charming, no one will love you, if you do not love yourself. I thought that the right people are timeless, but you proved me wrong. We could have been so beautiful together. Sometimes you meet the right person at the wrong time – we all bloom at different times, we all grow at different speeds. Do not rush, you will be ok.