

Speed of Life

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On Monday, I saw a Valentine peeking out of my locker. Inside the envelope, it said:

Happy Valentine's Day to Sofia the Sweet

from Kiki the Kind

That was *Sweet*. And Kiki was *Kind*. Yet maybe what *S* really stood for was *Starved for love*.

I never used to feel that way. According to Dad, I was the apple of my mother's eye. But lately, I felt like moldy applesauce. It still seemed absurd that Dad and I were supposed to just get by without Mom, amble along without her as though her absence hadn't drained the color out of everything.

After school, I went online and googled "Dear Kate." A pale pink website popped up, and I clicked around, watched a Love 101 video, skimmed an interview, and took a quiz. Then I saw: Contact me.

My heart began pounding. I double clicked and there was a blank email with the address filled in.

Should I start typing?

What would I say?

Maybe that I wished I could be happy again? And that I didn't like feeling jealous of my friends?

Everyone else had gotten her first kiss during summer camp or winter break or at last year's bar and bat mitzvahs or even earlier playing spin the bottle. Kiki had already had three boyfriends. And while I didn't want to kiss someone random just to get it over with, I also didn't like feeling behind.

I clicked on a few more links. There were book reviews, a Facebook fan page, a photo of a white, fluffy cat, and a black and white photo of a girl with braces and pigtails. Was that Dear Kate at my age? If so, she was cute.

Cute? Now that was a word I could do without. My friends said I was cute- and cute was better than not cute. But cute was not hot or beautiful. I turned to the computer and my hands started typing.

Dear Kate,

My mother died ten months and one week ago, and I'm still not over it. I keep wishing things would go back to normal. I think some people, especially boys, are afraid to get close to me. (When it first happened, I sometimes cried when I shouldn't have.) I'm still sad, but I don't cry as much. (Maybe I don't laugh as much either?)

Anyway, I just really miss her. I'm also the only girl in my class who has never kissed a guy. I'm nervous about doing it right. I'm 14, so I'm way too old to be kissing my cat.

Signed,

Pathetic

I pressed Send and my insides tightened.