

LOVE SONG

By April Oliver
QEP Essay Contest, Honorable Mention

I can still see her sitting on the top step of that old house's antique porch, head bowed in shame, posture slumped in hopelessness and despair. The warm air swirled around her as if to embrace her in a badly needed hug and the smell of honeysuckle filled her nostrils as the hot July sun scorched the nape of her neck. It was summer now and school was out of session so the thrilled voices of children playing in a neighboring yard echoed in the air. They seemed to be enjoying their day while hers was falling apart. Sorrow flooded her eyes, spilling over like a gushing waterfall trying to find its way, creating a pool of wetness upon the shirt she used to bury her face in. She was only fifteen. A child trapped in a woman's body, facing adult circumstances. The sting of life had crept upon her and was bound to change her forever.

I can still feel that little girl as the emotions raged within her, too many to decipher at the time. She was afraid but excited, defeated yet somehow persevering. She was heavily burdened and confused, searching for some light in a world of darkness. Who could she talk to? No one seemed to understand. Instead of lifting her up and offering reassurance, people beat her down and bruised

her already broken spirit with the foulness of their words. They engraved her memory with the looks of disgust on their faces when they noticed the bulge beneath her shirt. It was at this time that her self-image was altered. It was during this time that she made a promise to herself that no matter what the future held, she would endure with patience and long-suffering. She would be more than a just a mere survivor, she would be a conqueror, withstanding all the turmoil that pursued her dreams.

Yes. I remember that young lady so vividly, whose innocence had been stolen by the bitterness of past wounds. Within her formed a blessing, breathed on by God, that people would try to make her believe was a curse. She sat there as if in a trance, rehearsing how she got to this point. Late nights, sweet talk, naïve giggles and a young man so charming she couldn't help but be enticed. He was her Mr. Right, or so she thought, fulfilling all of her unspoken desires, giving her all of the attention she'd been longing for. She was in heaven, having no idea that this heavenly realm was really a mirage induced by infatuation. She spent most of her days with him and eventually some nights, too. She was thirteen and he was sixteen, both allowed entirely too much freedom.

They continued on like this for two years strong before things began to change. Arguments became physical and she acquired new habits to deal with the pressure. Soon she began skipping school just to be with him every moment, and even though she knew she was messing up, she just couldn't seem to stop this downward spiral. She was in love and just refused to let it go, dedicating all of her time and energy into making it work.

Eventually, she became pregnant, and while she thought this would bring them closer together, he decided that the stress was too much and disposed of her, leaving her to fend for herself. Once again she was alone. Her family began treating her like a failure and parents withdrew her friends. For now she was considered to be a "bad influence" and, who knows, this pregnancy thing just might be contagious. She was treated like an

infectious disease, isolated by the embarrassment she had brought to her family. She soon became a master of disguise, learning how to hide all of her pain, and living each day became a challenge.

Then one day she met Love. Love came to her in many forms: women of wisdom, divine intervention and the new life that had formed within her. Love became her companion and delivered her from herself. Love picked her up out of that dark place and taught her that she was not a problem but that she was a solution. Love taught her how to laugh again. Love taught her how to trust again. Love taught her that even though she hurt right now, she would be a testimony to the other young women that were enduring similar circumstances and that she was being conditioned for something greater. Love put a song in her heart. I was that young girl and love taught me to overcome. ▲