

Interference

If the amplitudes of two waves have opposite signs, they will subtract to form a combined wave with a lower amplitude. This is called *destructive interference*.

Each word spoken felt like a dandelion being blown out, and each laugh exchanged was a penny in a fountain. His name felt on her tongue like the solid weight of a dreamcatcher, and his hand felt in hers like the featherlight touch of a four-leaf clover.

Luck.

He was new in school, had come in with all the rest of the army kids that would come and go without saying. There was an entire group of them, the kind that floated by too quickly for anyone to ever really know who they were. She knew who he was though, had known him since the day he took the empty seat next to her's in history. They had become fast friends; it was the kind of friendship that blossoms almost as quickly as it can fall apart. They tore into each other in the way two people who have never known friendship would -- fast and with abandon, almost carnal. He was the best friend she'd never been able to find in that town, a town that was too small for the dreams she carried like petals around her head. She was the steadiness he needed in a life of fluctuation, the single rock jutting out of a stream that was flowing too fast to be peaceful. His life was a stream that was flowing too fast to be peaceful.

They bonded over a lot of things
different things
all kinds of things.

She liked that he talked with a lisp, the kind that was just shy of being childish but silly enough to be cute. He liked that she wore her hair in one long swingy ponytail on the top of her head, thick and almost-black and always smacking him in the face when she turned around too fast. They liked that their houses were built in the same plot, the kind that were replicas of each other but looked as though they had been flipped on a mirror (when they each faced the same wall in their bedrooms, it was as though they were looking at each other). He liked that her mother made him dinner when he would show up at their doorstep every once in a while grinning sheepishly; she would sigh like he was a problem (he wasn't) and make him a meal like it was an inconvenience (it wasn't). He would laugh and roll his eyes when her mother made the same comment every time, *She forgot tonight, didn't she?* And he wouldn't mention how it wasn't just tonight, it was mostly every night. He liked that she didn't say anything about the beer bottles

and cigarette butts laying like a thick layer of shame on every inch of his floor, and that instead of throwing away the millions of wrappers of gum that flooded his kitchen table, she would twist them into colorful crowns that rested perfectly on his head and securely around his heart.

He liked that she was sweet -- she was the sweetest thing he had ever tasted.

She liked that he was hers -- he was the only thing she had ever owned.

He asked her once if she'd ever been in love. She laughed and kept walking, only stopping to shrug and blush when she realized he was still staring at her, waiting for an answer.

A hurried no,
A sideways glance.
There's hair in her face
and then they're walking again.

He doesn't bring it up again.

He doesn't bring it up again, but she does. They're laying on her bed in a tangle of limbs, and her head is resting on his shins when she asks
simply,
quietly.

Have you?

She asks it like it hasn't been days since they last talked about it, like she wasn't the one who shut it down. His answer comes out broken when he says it
simply,
quietly.
Half like it's a secret,
half like it's a lie.

no

She smiles like she believes him, and shrugs like she doesn't care. She's in the process of pretending his words don't matter to her (they do) when she thinks of his presence

his aura
his vibe
his color.

In her mind he is red. He is anger and dirt and chaos and everything she knows she should stay away from but nothing she can resist. He is laughing with his head thrown back and hair that's too long to be stylish and too dirty to be chic. He is a face shaded in red light and dimples in cheeks and the opposite of the life she's created for herself in small, compact boxes and neat, clean squares. He is too good for her, but she's out of his league. He's too much for her to handle and he is red. He is red like anger and hot like lava -- lava that burns to touch but cool when she holds. He's on fire,
he is fire,
he's setting fires.

She is burning.

And so she explains to him her theory -- the theory of potential. The potential to be in love with someone. As though you're just on the edge of falling, just shy of jumping but you're not quite ready yet -- not quite there. You're standing on the lip of the Niagara Falls or on the edge of the Grand Canyon and you're staring out into what could potentially be the best and worst experience you've ever put your heart through, but you haven't jumped yet -- you're not falling. You're just almost. Almost there,
almost ready,
almost in love
but you're not and
that's what potential love is.

She thinks she was in potential love with him (but she doesn't tell him that).

In his mind she is white. She is white like snow and cold like ice -- cool enough to save him from burning himself. She is long hair and big eyes that widen every time he's about to shove the bigger guy back. She is hands that grab his every time she convinces him to walk away. She is a lunchbox full of everything in doubles: one sandwich for her and one for him, one apple for her and one for him. She is simple and quiet and everything he never knew he needed in his life of scattered thoughts and messy pages that never seemed to stay in a box. He'd rather talk in the dark, intoxicated, and she's the bright, sober light that makes eye contact rather than hiding. She is white.

He listens to her like his life depends on it. He takes the words that fall from her lips, (he's memorized her lips in way too much detail) and absorbs them into his very being, beats them into his very soul.

He falls into what she's saying just like he thinks he fell into potential love with her (but he doesn't tell her that).

If the amplitudes of two waves have the same sign (either both positive or both negative), they will add together to form a wave with a larger amplitude. This is called *constructive interference*.