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Creative Nonfiction

### Whispers

Melissa was an undergraduate trying to find herself at the University of Denver. She was taking various classes exploring her likes and dislikes when she came upon Professor Argent. He was a teacher, but an artist first, so he pushed his students to reach new heights and encouraged them to push their own limitations. Melissa found this sculpting class to be incredibly intense, but overwhelmingly fun at the same time. Professor Argent intrigued Melissa, and she enjoyed coming to class every other day. Lawrence Argent was teaching, but also in the process of creating his next public art project that would be placed in the heart of the University. This piece would express the freedom of speech and the freedom to listen provided by the university. Argent wanted to create an accurate representation of DU's community, so he enlisted the help of Melissa and some other students to be the models of his sculpture. Using 3D imaging, Argent created sets of lips from each student to be used throughout his sculpture. Argent planned to use these lips as benches. His idea was to create an interactive sculpture where people could sit on the benches and hear the sounds of the university. One set of lips belonged to Melissa, and she could not wait for the sculpture to be finished, so she could see herself as a work of art.

It was the first quarter of Melissa's junior year, while she was abroad, that Argent finally finished his sculpture. Melissa had no idea that it had been completed; she had almost forgotten about it completely, assuming that Argent got bored and didn't continue. She returned to the campus after a long winter break and took a stroll to get familiar with the campus she used to call

home. She walked passed the library, smiling, imagining herself spending endless hours in there this quarter and the next. She waited for the seemingly endless streams of cars to stop before she crossed Evans towards the green grass of Driscoll, stopping to admire the freshly cut grass. She crossed the next street and headed towards the Ritchie Center. As she reached the path to the south entrance, she caught sight of something new. There were five limestone columns with bronze lips sitting on top. She then looked around and saw four benches in the shape of lips. Melissa was ecstatic; Argent finally finished his sculpture. She studied each set of lips very closely until she thoughtfully decided which set was hers. Finally, the anticipation was over, she sat down on her lips and listened. It worked! She could hear the voices of professors and students reading various pieces. She sat there for almost an hour before someone walked by. Melissa watched as he sat down on the bench diagonal from her. At first she kept to herself and they both listened in silence, but eventually she broke the silence as she walked over to sit next to him.

“Pretty cool, isn’t it?” she said to him.

“Yeah, I come here everyday. It’s so peaceful.”

“This is my first time here.”

“Really? Well were sitting in favorite spot.”

“Wait, for real?” she said laughing a little.

“Yes. What’s so funny?” He asked confused.

“Those are my lips,” she giggled. They talked the day away. Melissa told him about Argent, and the inspiration he brought her. The boy talked about the bench, explaining that it played his favorite poem, *A Glimpse* by Walt Whitman. Eventually they parted ways, but had agreed to meet in the same spot this time tomorrow.

These meetings continued for several weeks before the boy finally asked her on a date. Melissa had been waiting for this day to come for quite some time. She agreed excitedly, and spent the next couple of days preparing. She had no idea what to wear or where they were going, but she couldn't help feeling like it was meant to be. The dates continued for a couple years. Each one was more exciting than the last. She felt herself fall madly in love with this boy as though she was in a poem herself. It was three years from the very first day they met that they returned to their special spot. They sat down and listened to end of a lecture on molecular biology before the words of the boy's favorite poem flowed out of the speakers. Melissa instantly recognized it, but she knew something was off. Something was different this time, but she could not pinpoint until the very end. The melodic voice she finally recognized as the boy's read out, "There we two, content, happy in being together, speaking little, perhaps not a word."

As the last words lingered in her mind, she watched the boy get down on one knee while the speaker echoed, "Melissa, will you marry me?"