

My dad taught me what infinity meant when I was eleven. At the bottom of his birthday card I wrote, "I love you to the moon and back times a trillion gazillion double million," and in parentheses, the number one with too many zeros to count or even make sense. "That is a lot of zeros my sweetness, he said joyfully. Not enough." I responded, my hand cramped but I pinky promise I love you more. He grabbed a napkin from the table and wrote "I love you to the moon and back times . ." It means I love you more than the human mind is capable of knowing. There is a potent unconditionality to infinity, and from that day on I simply assumed that all people knew it equally. But infinity is elusive and most people have never been given a napkin with unconditional love written on it.

Ahmad is, by pure definition, a whole-hearted and unconditional lover of both people and life. I ran into him early one October morning when time was dragging and the air was biting and my heart wasn't much warmer. He said boo instead of hello, always playful, always smiling. I appreciated this, as the morning was much too lonely. We were good friends, but not too good, ones that spent hours together but the hours never seemed to add up because of the chatter and anonymity of the group. I liked him though, thoroughly.

As we chatted, I noticed that his eyes smiled even when his mouth didn't and so I stared at the wrinkles that formed where his joy was carried. Around us, life went on. The wind carried fallen leaves and their musty scent around our ankles. The quad had a particular hush about it, as if everyone was too sleepy to ease their wintery loneliness. Time and students passed from this building to that one. Neither of us seemed to notice that we were in the middle of the walkway—not because it was a love-at-first-sight kind of meet-cute—but because he was a familiar face and so was I, and both of us were far from home; him from the UAE, me from myself.

He asked my major and my birthday, excited to tell me—an English major—about how he—an engineering major—wanted to write

