

Why I Smile
by Megan Froehlich

You look at me.
And you puff air through your nose.
You tilt your head with a smirk.
“Why are you smiling?” You ask.

That’s when I realize my teeth are on display.
My cheeks are rosy.
My eyes are squinted just a bit
And there’s a lightness inside my chest that lets me know
I’m anticipating something great about to happen.

“I—” look to the comforter we’re sitting on,
And I form the lie:
“I don’t know.”

You scoot closer
and turn onto your side to face me.
“C’mon, what are you so smug about?”

“I’m not smug—I’m”

“What?
What are you?”

He sits there reading the newspaper,
Mocking Dennis the Menace,
Finding excuses to touch me,
Or even look my way,
And I can’t remember what he said
that made me smile.

All I do remember:
Is the first time he looked at me.
It was a look so compelling that
I walked up to the worst ride at the fair
because that’s where you were standing.
I remember standing in the line for the ferris wheel
And him asking me “you wanna just get out of here?
You look nervous, and from the shaking of your leg,
I’m guessing you don’t like heights.”
I smiled then.

I remember getting caught in the rain walking home from school.
You held your jacket over my head and we ran to your car,
Listening to the pounding of the hail on the roof of your Lexus.
You started staring at me
as I was gazing as a bolt of lightning in the distance.

I looked back at you, and found myself staring too,
Until the thunder came and startled me
to the point of jumping out of my seat.
You laughed at me.
I smiled then, too.

I remember dancing with you at Prom,
At your graduation party,
At your sister's wedding,
Smiling every time.
And I think maybe I'm smiling now,
Because when you raise your eyebrows to judge the Peanuts,
It reminds me of how you never once judged me.
Even when I buried my face in your chest during Annabelle Comes Home.
Even when I couldn't decide on the perfect curtains for our living room for months.
Even when I hit the snooze five times each morning and wake you up with every ring.

"I'm happy."
My eyes start to feel dry,
so you lean over and brush my cheek,
Then kiss me.

"I know the feeling," you smile.