

Kara Han

Mrs. Cannon

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To All The Maeser Boys I've Loved Before

"I like you." The three words I dreamed my crush would say to me. From the time I was little, to senior me, I adored every Rom Com I watched. From the perfect depictions of awkward girls talking with crushes, to the unrealistic relationships and romantic gestures, I wanted to have love like in the movies. When I came to this school, I wanted so badly to have all of the Maeser boys I loved, love me too.

In seventh grade I quickly became best friends with some beautiful girls and, to no surprise, it seemed as though every boy liked them. They were outgoing, sweet, and pretty, perfectly fitting into society's standard of beauty. I couldn't help but feel as though I was falling behind. I would stare in the mirror and wonder what I had to change to get a boy to like me. I was too short, not skinny enough, I needed better clothes, I needed to change myself. My insecurity grew as I tried to please everyone around me. I would paint a picture in my head of what the perfect girl would be like. Prettier, skinnier, funnier. Not because someone told me I needed to change, but because I never saw myself as enough.

With every crush I've had at Maeser, I would change. My personality would become geared towards each boy and change to what I thought would please them. I would change my music taste, to how I acted in big groups, even the way I would talk. From the flirtatious teasing and chasing each other in the middle school hallway, to the feeling of your heart racing as you

reach to grab hands for the first time, to the shaky clammy hands pinning on the boutonniere at your first dance, all these boys knew I liked them. A couple even liked me too, but I still never liked myself. I craved the validation of having a boy like me, but that feeling never truly filled the void. No matter how deep the connection was, the validation I got was by believing they liked the idea of me.

Another year, another crush. Another connection with a new boy. This Maeser boy told me I was pretty. Simple words that normally have a big impact. A girl being told she's pretty by her crush would normally stir the butterflies in her stomach and bring a smile to her face. Except this time was different. I didn't smile, I didn't say thank you. I broke down quietly uttering out, "I don't believe you." While crying in a Maeser boy's arm I had a realization that changed my perspective. In my room that night I stared at my flaws in the mirror, I found myself drained searching for someone else's love. I finally knew I could not rely on another person's perspective of me any longer. This was when I made the change. I would get ready in the morning, not to look good for a crush, but for myself. I would plan a healthy meal, not to look skinny to other people, but to feel healthy on the inside. I began to know myself, and truly fill the emptiness I thought could only be filled by others.

Experiencing something new with a crush was still fun, but my value did not change based on that person. Although in this new relationship I was never perfect at loving myself, I noticed a change. I no longer needed to be prettier, skinnier or funnier. Self love filled my empty void. I learned to love my flaws, my strengths and everything about me. Looking back on my Maeser experience, I grew to be grateful for all of the Maeser boys, the crushes and the memories. I know now that it's not about how many Maeser boys love you, what's most

important is if you love yourself first.