



The Valley of Achor: An Essay

Sarah M. Wells

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"Why was I so drawn to Eric, what made me fall so deep in love with him? Could it have been his reckless pursuit of me, the way he showed up at the drive-in restaurant where I worked as a car hop, the way he touched my wrist, sending flares of desire through my body, how he planned extravagant dates, courted his country girl to lakeside restaurants and break-wall sunsets, penciled sketches of palm tree islands? ... Maybe I was shell-shocked and honored to be desired by someone in another class than me: six years older, graduated from college and ready for the rest of his life, a football player in high school, on the Homecoming court, one of the popular and untouchable crowd of confident young men that strolled the hallways, whose gaze I could never meet. No, this part made me question how he could ever love me, the band dork, the book worm, the computer nerd. I tucked my hair behind my ears and pulled my pony tail tighter, looked down at the ground as we walked...Or was it how ever-important he made me feel every time we were together that first summer. Desired. Adored. Possessed. Maybe what I wanted was someone to belong to."

In this essay, Sarah Wells explores her journey of faith and self-discovery in the midst of a passionate relationship. "The Valley of Achor" braids romantic infatuation with a desire to know God, even as the person loved does not possess the same passion for faith. These two obsessions collide in this coming-of-age and "come to Jesus" memoir of love, brokenness, and grace.

Sarah M. Wells is the author of the poetry collection, *Pruning Burning Bushes*, a chapbook of poems, *Acquiesce*, and a memoir-in-progress, tentatively titled *American Honey*. Essays by Wells have been published in *Ascent*, *Brevity*, *Full Grown People*, *The Good Men Project*, *Relief*, *River Teeth*, and elsewhere. Sarah's work has received three Pushcart nominations, and two of her essays have been listed as notable in *Best American Essays*. She is the Administrative Director of the Ashland University MFA Program and Managing Editor of *River Teeth* and the Ashland Poetry Press. She lives with her husband and three children in Ashland, Ohio.

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