

Sara Letourneau

Gas Station Valentine

It need not happen on February fourteenth.
Nor need it be delivered with a dozen red roses,

a box of chocolates, or a diamond necklace.
It should, however, be proof that compassion

can bloom in places that we think can't be watered.
A gas station, for instance, where the stench seeps

into your clothes like secondhand smoke
and the dollars you spend siphon off your self-worth.

A space so acrid and unclean, so rich with exhaust
and morosity, that there couldn't possibly be room for

such a burst of tenderness, a small act of humanity.
Yet there it is, next to the pump's keypad—

a Post-it Note, radiant in yellow, with a message
written in black ink and smooth, careful print—

and for a moment, all the odor and commotion
of the world fall away, and all you're aware of

are those five simple, unanticipated words,
words that blink back at you like your reflection

in glass and direct your gaze inward to the truth,
words that peel you open like spring on flower buds,

words that you know you should tell yourself more often:
You are beautiful. Happy V-Day.

Sara Letourneau is a poet, freelance editor, and writing coach who lives in Massachusetts. In addition to the Fall 2018 issue of *Muddy River Poetry Review*, her poetry has appeared in *Mass Poetry's Poem of the Moment*, *Constellations*, *Boston Area Small Press and Poetry Scene*, *Soul-Lit*, *Amethyst Review*, *The Aurean*, *Golden Walkman Magazine*, *The Bookends Review*, *The Avocet*, and *Canary*, among others. You can find her on Twitter @Sara_HeartStory and Instagram @sara_heartofthestory or visit her at <https://heartofthestoryeditorial.com> or <https://saraletourneauwriter.com>.