

HADAS BRAJTMAN

I was fifteen years old and had spent the entire year being secretly in love with my best friend. He was also fifteen and a talented guitarist, he played me songs by Oasis, Roxette, and Guns N' Roses, and I was really, really in love with him, but I didn't believe for one second that he felt the same way about me.

It was a really exciting and terrifying year. We were going through all the highs and lows as we dealt with new feelings and political instability and a serious teenage desire to be understood and free. For me and my best friend, it was a year of coming of age.

The school year had ended and I was going away for the summer and one night, it was my last Saturday night in town when my group of friends met in a downtown park, the way we always used to, and I locked eyes with my best friend who was clearly happy to see me, as always.

And in that moment, something came over me and I decided that I was going to live out my biggest fear and tell him how I felt and honestly, going away for the summer gave me the perfect opportunity to get over him in peace so I took him aside and as we sat down on the grass facing each other, he put down his guitar because he realized by my expression that I was about to say something serious.

My heart was racing and all of a sudden, there it was, the words just came out of my mouth. I told him everything. I told him I was incredibly attracted to him and that over the past year I fell completely in love with him and I didn't mean to, and I was sorry, and I didn't want to ruin our friendship but I felt completely tortured and I needed it to end and he was the only one that could help.

And he sat there looking at me quietly, and I kept going. I told him I knew he didn't feel the same, and that I never thought otherwise, and that I'm going away and need to hear him say the words so that I can be done with it and start the process of getting over him and all of a sudden, he took my hand and he said "Hadas, I didn't know" and then he kissed me.

And he kissed me exactly the way I had imagined it in my wildest dreams and that was the first time in my life where I was awake but I thought I was actually dreaming, and that kiss changed my life. That kiss ended our friendship and went on to begin a love

story that, while would be short-lived in many ways, would also last a lifetime and also, for me, build a foundation of romance and courage intertwined together.

And that moment and that kiss still gives me so much joy and twenty years later, I still have to remind myself sometimes when I think about it, that it wasn't a dream.