The True Artist of Fairfax County
Diane Hardin

Accents away
On the east coast of the country
He makes music
In a small dorm room he shares with a gay Mexican gangster
Named Juan
Who smells like the attic of a Middle Eastern grandmother.
It's here that my artist works on tones, pitch, flow
Digital sounds weaving together
Fluctuations making love to my ears
Across computer speakers
And I know him
Though I've only seen him, hugged him once in Provo, Utah
In the parking lot of broken down brown brick college apartments
When we stared at the mountainside to find the hidden B-Y-U
And he pointed out the pizza under my pointer's fingernail
And I told him I hated people touching my neck.
Now we talk online a few hours a day
And sometimes leave each other voicemails—he'll hang up if I answer—
He hates phones.
We always speak, of course, of music—
We watched Bright Eyes' "Easy/Lucky/Free"
On You Tube and practiced writing backwards for hours like Conor Oberst
Before realizing the camera's trick.
We discuss the loves of his life who all have had water names—
Claire Fischer, Rachel Sealig, Yvan Karp, and Kate Welly
And my boyfriend,
Who he insists looks like Adam Savage with sunglasses,
Sending me the Mythbusters’ link to the picture the instant I mention him and
Correcting me to stubbornly call him Andy though that’s not his name.
He calls me “Diary” or types out my Guster song.
He shares his joy on handwritten notes on folded papers that come
Priority Mail
With little pictures and lyrics written and doodled
Each title and artist of the CD contained in the package
And listed on the paper has its reason for being there
He knows me and he knows music.
I play the CD with black markered drawings
Again and again
And again
And again
Because music is lyrics is poetry is mine
He gives and creates not to make money
But to share
This beauty and I sing along because he chose each piece for me to love
And he wants me to care.
Something chose us
To learn from each other—
I don’t question this, but embrace
The true artist of Fairfax County.