

# Beautiful

by Rachel Aldrich

She'll walk in  
in all her glory of disheveled messes  
and pause for a moment to toss her shoes in an unorganized heap by the door.  
I stare at her,  
eyes darting unconsciously to the muddy prints left on the tile by her well-worn soles,  
watching her stance.  
A messy ponytail sits easily on her head,  
Matted cascades brushing the ratty shoulders of an old class t-shirt.  
She seems so extraordinary,  
dirty and sweaty and sun burnt and real.  
And I,  
in all of my persistence for order and cleanliness,  
desperately wish I could be the way she can just be.  
She smiles at me,  
all crooked lips and oversized teeth,  
and I realize she's never looked so perfect.