FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Culture

Missed Connections: Love, Lost & Found
Sophie Blackall, illustrator
Workman Publishing
978-0-7611-6358-9
(September 30, 2011)

Love at first sight? It's never out of fashion, according to this collection of lovely, quirky drawings recording many such hopeful moments. Celebrated are mostly young strangers in and around New York City, whose paths crossed or even collided and wished they'd honored the impulse to reach out to one another. Tattooed Girl at Danbury gas station, Phoenix with Crutches, Unbelievable Moustache on the C, and Hot Toll Collector all inspired potential paramours to pause and take a moment to proclaim their interest on Missed Connections, the popular classifieds section on Craigslist.

Blackall operates something like a cultural anthropologist, tracking and then memorializing these intersections, thereby taking the pulse of modern-day Romeos and affirming the value of such encounters. That her gentle and funny illustrations, made using Chinese ink and watercolor, capture the fragility of their subjects and consequently strike a major chord with viewers (her blog is followed internationally) makes it an even sweeter project.

Each of the more than fifty entries will leave readers smiling, and perhaps wincing, at the same time, so raw are the emotions. Take "Appliance Shopping—M4M—40: You were appliance shopping on Saturday. We kept running into each other in the store. I couldn't take my eyes off you. If this is you, tell me what I was carrying." Or "Green Hula Hoop in Tomkins Square Park—W4M—27: Yesterday you had a bright green hula hoop around your waist and you were VERY cute. Hope you reply." Even when it's the simplest of sentiments, like these, just the notion that someone cares enough to invite someone they don't know in is impressive in a place where people guard their personal space like pit bulls.

Blackall has remarked on the voyeuristic pleasure she takes in her work; and she's obviously in good company; plenty of Missed Connections' readers, like her, aren't even looking for someone, but nonetheless are inspired to log on regularly. Ships passing in the night, messages in a bottle, and now Missed Connections—in Laundromats, on movie lines and in

grocery stores in cities around the world. The appetite for requited love is timeless and irrepressible. Technology only makes it easier and more immediate.

Julie Eakin