



2017

The Diary of a Young Girl and Jeff Mangum

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Recommended Citation

Heurmann, Andrew (2017) "The Diary of a Young Girl and Jeff Mangum," *The Laureate*: Vol. 16 , Article 11.

Available at: <http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/laureate/vol16/iss1/11>

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**The Diary of a Young Girl
and Jeff Mangum**

My love—she has a rash on her cheek.
When I come close to her it cups
The edge of her lips
And back towards her nape
All sweating and heavy.

She knows her flesh is blushing,
Drying then opening again,
And when she speaks I hear the layered skin of her
Face separate from her skull
Like clay pulled
From a smooth slab of stone.

It twitches
Like her hands twitch—he has not
Eaten.
To be beautiful
I sing
And trembling with life.

I would wipe it from her face
Leave her clean like white roses after rain,
Take her filth and rot and toil
From her
With my sleeve—
Keep them.

She would wince,
Her bare toes would scrape
Backward across the gravel, and the rocks would
Turn and scatter in time with the dripping of her dress
Then she would find me.

And I'm in Athens, Georgia writing
While a singing saw remembers frantically
That it is alive.
And 53 years ago my love was dying.
With just her sister at her side
We sing together