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O N C E U P O N A T I M E . . .

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AS I SIT HERE IN TYPING CLASS, just whiling the hour away on this very last day of my last year of high school, I find my thoughts drifting back to a time not long after I'd just arrived, the first year that I walked through these halls...



It was between classes, and I was making my way through the crowd -- countless kids coming and going in different directions, everyone lumbering into each other with their books and bags -- and as I struggled past the gym on my way to "The Tower", from around the corner and right before me twirled into emergence a most brilliant pixie, smiling and laughing alongside her delighted companions as they made their own way to class. Like a dervish, she was veritably dancing her joy as she strolled along in her billowing paisley peasant dress.

I stopped in my tracks! -- spun on my heels as she went past and stood there in amazement over what I had just witnessed. "Who was that?!?!", I wanted to shout! My god, she was the most astonishingly adorable young woman I had ever seen -- no, not quite a Woman yet, but a flower that was certainly beginning to bloom into something clearly remarkable, her russet bob affirming the instant impression

of her serene, natural, even more earthy outward countenance, yet shimmering through the spark of something much more firey could be observed, lying in wait to come forth and create, inside.

How sweet and, oh, how pretty she was! But then, just as quickly she was gone, lost from my sight in the crowd. As the days went by, I just couldn't help wondering about her -- she wasn't in any of my classes, nor had I ever seen her before that day -- and for rest of the year I found myself looking for her, hoping to catch a glimpse of her again and perhaps discover who, who this astonishing entity was. Sadly, though, those moments came few and only far between, and ever so far away -- I began surmising that perhaps she only materialized whenever the stars came into perfect alignment -- and there seemed to be no others who could help me unveil her identity.

**T**he summer months came and trifled by, and I forgot all about this angelic apparition that had materialized on occasion that first year at that school. Autumn eventually arrived with the return of the school buses to take us to our destinies, and there I went to my first physics class of the year, choosing as my seat for the term a suitably incognito desk at the back. Slowly the other students began to fill the chairs here and there, and then suddenly, to my utter surprise and great delight, at the empty table in front of me appeared... my angel!

I melted. Over the summer, it had seemed that this little pixie had metamorphosed into a butterfly, carrying herself with a grace and shy deference truly remarkable for her young age -- and there she was, having chosen for her seat a place right there before me.

As the days and weeks went by I slowly got to know her, we would share notes and did a science project or two together, and as our amity progressed I eventually slid my chair over and sat beside her for the rest of the year, joking and giggling along with her, and just getting to know the spirit that lived inside this pretty shell. Each class with her had me full of anticipation, just wondering in what form she might appear that day. Even on a lazy morning, perhaps she might wake up and say to herself, "Oh, I can't be bothered today, I think I'll just wear my jeans...", but she made even "dressing down" into something far closer to "haute couture" with her wonderful sense of style, and even in just plain ol' jeans, with a simple shirt and a mere bauble or two for adornment, any fortuitous bystander couldn't help but acknowledge her perfectly proportioned hourglass figure...oh, my!

Just as often, though, she might swirl, furl and unfurl down the hall and into class dressed veritably for a formal occasion or romantic evening on the town, wearing one of her many gorgeous dresses, or maybe a colourful, bejewelled blouse, a skirt cut sometimes high, sometimes low; and in her elongating heels she would come in so quietly and daintily, and gently slide down and alight upon her chair beside me. Little did she know how I would be sitting there with my heart all a-flutter for the entire hour of every class we shared together, stealing any glimpse I might of those sexy, sexy legs of hers (yum!). And maybe, if I was lucky, sometimes we might even nudge our chairs up close beside one another (just to compare notes, of course), and perhaps I might dare to brush my knee against hers, gently -- almost imperceptibly -- touching my rough, weather-beaten corduroys against her soft, velvety skin. For but a moment, I would be in Heaven...

Yet, perhaps the most sensuous and inspiring-of-s i g h s was to simply gaze upon her soft hands on the desk, taking a note about that day's subject, or maybe just idly playing with her pen. Or maybe I might ignore the teacher's lesson completely in favour of stealing a glance to my side, to just sneak a peek at her, and then invariably find myself utterly mesmerized and entranced by the beauty of her face, brought almost to tears in my seat over how so exquisitely pretty she was; with all of this, all of this, all rounded to perfection with how kind, how gentle, how full-of-bashful-surprises I had come to learn the sweet spirit was that she also carried within her, inside.

**B**ut I never stood a chance. This astonishing young woman only naturally hung out with all the coolest kids in the school, and when she began dating one of the more popular guys, well, I knew it was over, if I'd ever had any dream of proffering my hand for even just an evening together, I no longer had the courage to presume to be so worthy of her company.

But, hey, at least we had that one physics class together! Through that I got to know her and I suppose one can say we've since become "school chums", still meeting up and sharing smokes between classes. Chilly winter days might leave us shivering and consoling of each other in the frozen snows outside, but she's warmed my heart with her aura and presence, with maybe the cup of a hand as we light a match, the squeeze of an arm over a chuckle together, or a soft stroke on the shoulder as she says bye-bye until the next time. And a sunny spring afternoon might find us chatting out there on the grass during lunch or a spare, maybe not hardly even saying a word, just quietly hangin' out, relaxing in a moment of calm respite away from the hustle, bustle and ado of the rest of our day.

After these long years of high school subside for me today, I wonder if I might still enjoy the pleasure of her company from time to time, or, otherwise, if perhaps she'll now just slowly, slowly fade away -- or far more forlornly, simply disappear in an instant, forever, never to be seen again? Such are these times of our lives, I suppose.

If our friendship should indeed drift apart, then nevertheless, surely for the rest of my days the bounteous memories of these past years at this school will return to me from time to time, and amongst those many that I might possibly recall I know that I will no doubt reflect most fondly upon this sweet friend. I may then only naturally wonder what will have become of this so-very-beautiful young woman who once so cheered this young man -- what might she be doing with her time, has she a family, whether she's happy. Life will no doubt send me off in my own directions, with paths that may very well find me scaling mysterious mountains or fording some deep water of the Earth, and I do hope and trust that love, too, may also come my way and take me to other great summits (and, pray, nary a dark valley), but throughout this coming lifetime I know that I shall never forget that little pixie, that little angel, that beautiful, ever-blossoming flower that I have had the wonderful gift to have known, and I will only ever feel eternally blessed to have shared the joy of her delightful companionship for these few years, and be ever cheered with a smile any time I might so wish by simply recalling that, hey, I'm one of the luckiest guys around, because I got to bump knees with -- and perhaps in this secret, symbolic way, so tenderly caress the soft cheek of -- the oh-so-prettiest, prettiest girl in this whole, whole school.

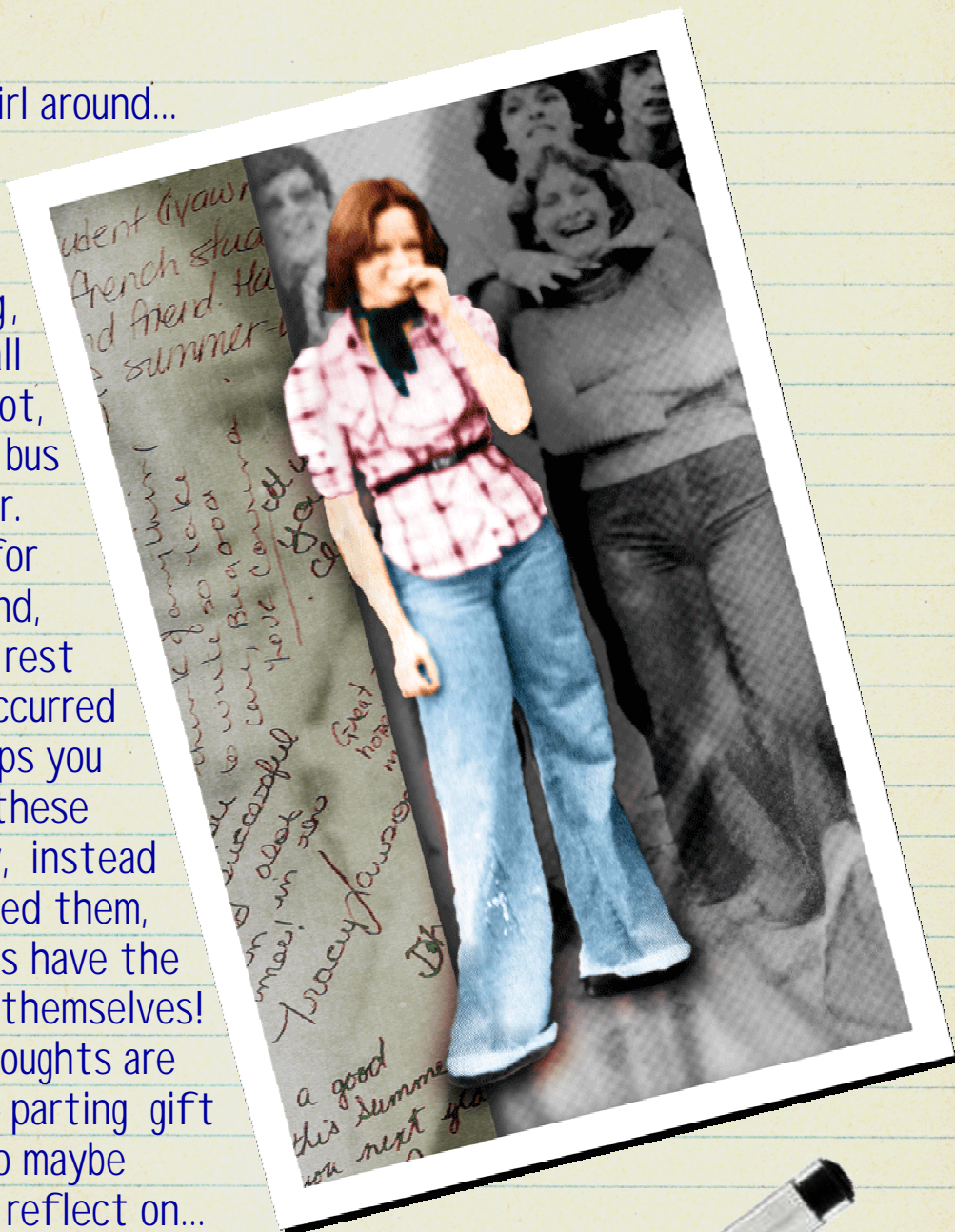
To the prettiest girl around...

I wrote up these reminiscences in typing this morning, and now here we all are in the parking lot, waiting for our last bus home for the year.

As we head off for the summer – and, this time, for the rest of our lives – it occurred to me that perhaps you should hang onto these pages for posterity, instead of me. I don't need them, after all – I'll always have the vivid recollections themselves!

So here, these thoughts are my hopefully-not-parting gift for you to have, to maybe some day read and reflect on...

with a happy smile. ☺



From the depths of my heart, thank you for all the lovely memories, ol' friend! I'll treasure them forever. You'll always be a sweetheart to me, an eternally blossoming, ever-beautiful sweetheart...

With love always,