

A Quick Stop

A warm June evening, two weeks to grad. I end up in Harry's car after youth. Ten minutes later he parks his Rambler behind the white stucco house. A quick stop, then we'll meet the guys at Denny's. The basement door is open. Someone hands me an Extra Old Stock. My brand. This is Harry's high school crowd. We're in different zones. The rec room, in black light, is hot and hazy and full with *In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida*. I grab some pretzels and disappear into a corner armchair. The beer done, I lean my head back; eyes closed I focus on the drum solo.

The chair bumps and someone tugs on my hair. A girl on either side of me. Introductions. Kim, parents own the house, and Janet, fuzzy tight sweater and red and black tartan pants. I-I-I'm Jake, Harry's friend. Damn. Kim disappears. Janet wants to dance. I don't really dance. It's the Mennonite in me. The music turns Creedence. Fine, I don't know anyone anyway. Four songs later, I break for a beer. Another song begins.

Janet grabs my hand and we're outside. The lawn is dry and slopes toward the alley. I sit and she leans against me. I hear *Oye Como Va*. She turns and says nice t-shirt. Then we kiss. It just happens. I don't know who made the first move. We explore each other's mouths. Our teeth clink. We start again. There is no law of diminishing returns. Our embrace tightens. Strangers drift past us and make comments. It's just noise. My eyes are shut and we are on full ignore. My pants get uncomfortably tight. I suggest another beer and head for the washroom. This is a bit fast. On the way back to the rec room, some girl stops me in the hall. Janet shows up. She slips my arm around her shoulder and leads me toward a slow dance. Beach Boys *In My Room*. More grinding. I move her to the armchair and we talk between kissing. Janet's in grade twelve as well. She's planning to work after bumming around for the summer. I'm off to UBC. I'm thinking another beer. Harry walks by, kicks my foot and says it's time to go. I'm glad.

In the Rambler Harry says, "You were getting kinda friendly."

"Couldn't get away," I say.

"Janet's a bit of geek" he says. "Not a lotta friends." I'm quiet.

The next day Kim calls. Says Janet wants to talk. I wonder how she found my number. I don't want to go to the beach. I'm busy later too. No. I don't want talk. Yeah, I'll call you.