

A Short Long Love Story

By Jeffery Greb

He started his car and drove away.

It was one of those April days that everyone thinks spring should be like: sunny, warm, mild. After they left the restaurant, they had sat on the steps of an old building and talked for hours, mostly reminiscing about high school.

She was his first love, a first taste of exquisite pleasure and pain. How can such an experience be described after so many years? It was like trying to describe the first time eating chocolate, the first time seeing a rosy-fingered dawn, the first time smelling rain. Although neither of them had been virgins, their love had remained virginal and chaste for reasons that seemed important at the time. She visited him once in college, and he reveled in a night that had left him feeling more complete than he'd ever feel again.

Here they were forty years later, forty years of marriages, children, life. For some time, he had wondered if his feelings had been real – was it really love he felt long ago, or had it been a teenage infatuation, a rehearsal for adulthood? When he first saw her enter the restaurant, he felt his heart quicken, but what did that prove? His heart had always been a treacherous muscle.

As she told him all the little things she remembered that he had forgotten, as it became clear she knew him so well – as if they'd been together and not apart for forty years! – the sound of her voice, rather than her words, convinced him. And he knew he loved her still, and she loved him.

Preparing to depart, they embraced twice – truly embraced, not like when she'd approached the table. He felt her body pressed tightly against his, her arms around his neck and shoulders, her breathing into his chest, the silk of her hair on his cheek. And then they let go and drove off in separate cars in different directions.

Later at the edge of town, he plucked a single long hair from his shirt. Holding it in front of his face, he smiled and was tempted to find some way to save it. In the end, however, he recognized his folly and, still smiling, let the strand be taken by the wind.