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Autumn Winds

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Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"I remember she wore red the year she was a platinum blonde. Just picture it. Red clothes-bleached hair-Native American skin. That was my Mom. She drove a white Buick convertible and chain smoked Pall Mall cigarettes. I was in the sixth grade with Mrs. Austin; a God-awful woman who disliked me almost as much as I disliked her."

Cover Page Footnote

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I remember she wore red the year she was a platinum blond. Just picture it. Red clothes-bleached hair- Native American skin. That was my Mom. She drove a white Buick convertible and chain smoked Pall Mall cigarettes. I was in the sixth grade with Mrs. Austin; a God-awful woman who disliked me almost as much as I disliked her.

The invitation for the open house was sent home with a large R.S.V.P. on the bottom that my Mother chose to ignore. She lived life by her rules; no one else's.

"Are you going?" I asked her the day of the open house.

"I'm not sure," she said a cigarette perched between her two fingers with the ash dangerously long. "Depends on how fast I finish my hair." The peroxide worked miraculously underneath the woven bath towel guaranteeing another week of long blond strands in the hairbrush.

My sister stood darkly in the archway. "I don't think you should go," she said loudly.

"Why?" my Mother asked with the momentary hurt showing in her eyes.

"Because people will stare," my sister retorted, her nose once again higher than any of us had a right to be.

My Mother took a long drag on her cigarette inhaling deeply; her cheeks sunken in with effort. "I've decided," she told me exhaling long . . . fast, "I'm going."

"Fine," my sister said stamping away, "I'm not."

Dinner was quiet; both my sister and my Mother now not eating very much. I could hear the changing leaves blowing outside, hitting the window in their whirlwind fury.

My hand stalled on each button as I dressed for the open house. I practiced the speech I would give to my Mother convincing her that she wouldn't fit in with the other parents who didn't drive too fast and drink in country bars too much.

I waited for my Mother in the car. Finally she came out, her cigarette blazing a hazy trail towards the car. On the ride to school I lost my nerve, sitting quietly in the corner of the seat.

She double parked in the school parking lot, smoothing herself as she got out. She wore a bright red wool suit. An imitation fur collar encircled her rudy face. It was loud and wrong for a teacher conference. People would laugh!

“Do I look alright?” she asked momentarily unsure of herself.

“You look great,” I lied.

I took a deep breath, hooking my arm in hers we walked toward the dreaded Mrs. Austin. The cold, fall night surrounded me and I shivered.

--Linda DeMaso