First Kiss

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First Kiss

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

"My street was so narrow only one car could move at a time, but it didn't matter too much, hardly anybody owned a car. Everything was crowded on the street; the houses were smashed together with only alleyways separating them, the yards were small and never used, but every house had a big front porch. Sometimes when I was walking home at night, I'd be startled by the quick flash of light as my father, sitting in the dark, dragged on his cigarette."

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It was a fun summer even though we wouldn’t admit it to anyone then. We didn’t do much more than play softball, watch baseball, or hang out at the pool in the daytime and play cards or board games at night. Friday and Saturday nights the routine changed. We’d head out to the local movie theater. It was a small, family-oriented movie house, so we went no matter what was playing.

Days, we spent the morning at the ball-field; after lunch, we’d walk to the uptown pool to cool off. There, the girls would huddle together, giggling, and looking so cool; all the time hoping to attract the boys’ attention. While the macho boys, with peach-fuzz just appearing on their upper lips, snapped their towels at us or pulled us under when we went into the water. Sometimes we’d have chicken fights in the water but the lifeguards were always blowing their whistle at us--Danny and I were the champs. Around four, we’d get dressed and walk home, frozen Milky Ways melting in our mouths.

Every night that summer, as soon as we could bolt, the seven of us would congregate on my front porch. The pungent odor of chlorine wafted off us; if the boys had a baseball game a unique mix of dirt and sweat blended in. I began to notice Danny was around more than the others--always wearing the same uniform; tight jeans and a white tee shirt with the sleeves rolled up; sort of a Marlin Brando wanna-be. As the summer went on, Danny and I seemed to be paired off more and more. The boys teased Danny a lot, his response was a quick jab at the offenders biceps--it usually shut him up.

It was a hot, sticky Friday night that it happened. For a couple of weeks Danny had been telling the guys that he was going to kiss me. Nobody told me, but I knew that something was up by the jerky way they were acting. That Friday night we sat in the dark theater watching the movie, holding hands, and sharing popcorn. There seemed to be more tension in the air than usual. The other kids positioned themselves in strategic seats behind us, so as not to miss
the action. Danny had his shoulder jammed up against mine, much closer than usual. He whispered my name as I turned to look at him, Kevin blurted, “he’s doing it.” We jerked apart, Danny spilling the popcorn.

The other kids started pelting us with popcorn, and there was a lot of chicken calling. “What’s going on,” I asked, as Joe, the usher, ran down the aisle threatening to kick us all out. We weren’t too worried, Joe was only sixteen and didn’t command a lot of respect with his pimply face, baggy jeans, and red bell-hop jacket.

“Nothing,” Danny muttered, grabbing my hand again.

After the movie, Danny walked me home, still holding my hand; the other kids snickering along behind us. There was a lot of whispering going on. I heard Terry say, “Come on, man, you can do it, she won’t bite.” About a block from my house, Danny leaned in, kissed me on the lips and ran—the boys chasing him—hooting and hollering.

When Barbara, Anne, and I turned the corner onto my street, I felt like I was floating. My lips were tingling, cheeks blazing, and heart racing. They kept badgering me, “what’s it like?” I couldn’t describe the feeling, but knew I’d never forget it.

Saying good bye to the girls, I looked up at the quick flash, my father was smoking on the porch, as usual.

“Hi honey,” he said. “How was the movie?”

“Okay,” I mumbled, opening the door to get in before he noticed the difference in me.

“Sit here with me for a while, why don’t you? Tell me what’s going on. Anything new?”

“Geez Dad. You always ask me that. There’s nothing ever new around here.”

--Meg Kelly