

The Girl Under the Japanese Maple Tree

November 18 , 2022



I'm pretty sure it was in 9th grade. That seemed to be the year I was testing the waters with girls: I asked Connie to join me for an ice cream soda. I gave my Jr HiY pin to Suzy. It might have also been the year I stopped biting my nails. Hey, I wasn't the only boy I knew who chewed on his nails. And I wasn't the last one to stop the habit.

There was a girl in my class who lived down by Milton Avenue School. Let's

call her Donna. We arranged to meet on Main Street by Mother's Pantry and walked all the way up Fairmount Avenue to the Fair Mount Cemetery. There was no real plan for the day. Just find some place quiet, comfortable, and secluded.

Inside the place of rest, we walked along parallel to the wall at the top of the hill until we came to a Japanese Maple tree. It was young, maybe only 6 feet tall with branches that fanned out like an umbrella almost to the ground. That would do nicely. We climbed under until we were lying on the grass next to each other, completely hidden from prying eyes. I don't know about Donna—she never voiced any concern—but I wasn't bothered by the fact we were surrounded by "the dearly departed." Of course, I had played many games in the cemetery in my younger years; although, this was a first.

We kissed each other on the lips. The innocent kissing lasted for a few minutes until I guess you might say we were all kissed out. We didn't touch each other anywhere else on the body. Having accomplished our risky behavior, we walked back down the hill to her house. And you thought I was going to leave her at Chatham Street to walk the rest of the way by herself?

The front door to her house was locked and she didn't have a key. I found an open window on the side of the house and climbed inside where I found myself in her mother's bedroom. Before I went out to open the front door, I saw a woman's bra on the dresser. I was curious so picked it up and was looking at it when Donna walked into the room. She grabbed the bra from my hands and yelled at me to get out of the house. I asked her how she got in and she said she found a spare key that was kept by the door. When I was outside she slammed the door behind me.

Not sure, at the time, what I did wrong, but we never talked again. And that was okay by me because I really didn't care for her one way or the other. I'm pretty sure the feelings were mutual.