

Featured story:

FIRST KISS

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As a boy slowly grows into a man, his desire to progress along that path surpasses the fears that accompany it.

It's a big event, that first kiss. I was a late bloomer, not from lack of desire, but from being very shy, I suppose, more than anything. That, and, of course, some guys have a greater knack for being a ladies man than others. It wasn't something I have ever cultivated but I would have appreciated a greater ease and success rate in my younger years. By the way, I have since found out that there are a lot more late bloomers around than I had originally thought. (Sometimes when I talk with people I feel good with, these more delicate themes can arise. And I find out I wasn't the only one who started later.) Older now, and further removed from living in that set of situations, it doesn't seem to matter as much.

Living back then, though, while I was somewhat eager to experience kissing a girl, I was also scared. Not sure exactly of what. Of her rejection, of her being disappointed, of the novelty of the situation, taking a step towards adulthood, what other people might think. Maybe just the uncertainty of it all. I couldn't appreciate it back then, but there was another accompanying element. While at times a bit eager and certainly desirous, I also was in no hurry. This arose not only from my fear(s) but I believe I felt I needed to go at my own pace. Opportunities (and pressures) would certainly influence that pace, but I'm glad I didn't rush in. I suppose for some this is a silly idea, but it was important to me, and I wanted that kiss to have importance to me. To be special.

And it turned out to be just that.

There was a girl I liked and I asked her out. I really don't remember what we did, perhaps a movie or bowling. All I can remember was that kiss. But I'm jumping ahead of myself a bit.

Around that time period but a year or so earlier I remember walking with my good friend Stan in a park late one summer evening. We were talking about a lot of things, as we usually did, and the topic of kissing a girl came up. Stan had a lot of older brothers which helped give him some insight into what was in store for us plus he had a good head of common sense on his shoulders, something I have always respected in him. So in the comfort of the dark night I bravely voiced a concern I had been harbouring. What if I kissed a girl and she didn't like the way I kissed?

I was worried that when the moment finally arrived, when I was with a girl who liked me and I liked her, that we were in a situation where we would both want to, and I found the courage to do it, what if, what if when it finally happened, she didn't like it?

That was when Stan, good & wise friend that he was, replied with some words that I have never forgotten. He told me that if she really liked me, she's not going to care all that much how I kissed.

Many years later I think back on that, and I know those words to be true. If we liked each other, what was important was that we were together, and that first kiss would be an acknowledgement of our liking each other, an intimate exploration into expressing that liking a little further.

Stan had more to say. "Besides," he went on, "kissing is something that improves with practice. And it will be fun to practice, no?"

I smiled and began to imagine kissing the girl I had the latest crush on.

I don't know if it was from Stan, quite likely somebody else, but it was suggested that I could practice kissing my hand, bringing my thumb in close to the beginnings of my index finger, the two fingers parallel and touching,

roughly approximating somebody's lips. Then I could safely try it out to see how it might feel. It wouldn't be the same thing, of course, but it's still something to give one an idea. I tried it a few times then gave it up. In the end I decided to listen to Stan's words and place my trust in the situation when it would eventually arrive.

And that day did eventually come. It involved not only the girl and myself but a car and a hill.

I was 16 (or maybe even 17) and in Canada one can drive at that age. I didn't have my own car but my Dad was generous enough to lend me his for the occasion. Actually, I don't think he knew it was for my first date. I was shy to begin with and I didn't share those intimate events, thoughts or feelings much with my parents. Part of me wanted to, but my parents and I didn't seem to communicate much in that way. Still, and perhaps especially at that time period, I doubt if most adolescent boys did. Things have changed a bit nowadays. While it may still not be very commonplace, the opportunity is there should some teenaged boy wish to seek advice from his parents. I envision it easier for girls but I could be wrong about that. I guess much of it is case by case, depending on the person and his or her family.

Anyway, back to the story. She lived on a street at the top of a hill. It was a fairly level street, which is to say it wasn't one of those steeply angled ones. Her home was several houses away from the end of that street which later continued on into an empty space, then a sheer drop. There was a cliff that went a long way down and living on that street, so high up, awarded one with some spectacular views.

I believe our date was a good one. Again, I don't remember what we did, just the part starting with me about to drop her off at her home. We both seemed to be in a good mood so our innocence and nervousness couldn't have interfered too much. I parked the car in front of her house. I don't know if there was a parent or two hidden behind some curtains, peering out at their daughter growing up. All I could see, all that I could think about was whether or not to try and kiss her. I didn't want to come on too strong, especially if she didn't want me to. Yet what if she wanted me to? I imagine she was wondering if I would try but I was hoping she would give me a clear(er) signal. Perhaps no signal was a good signal. If she was in a hurry to leave, all she had to do was click the door open. I don't know where the bravado came from, but it helped me cross that barrier and I leaned towards her to kiss her.

She didn't pull back as I came closer and soon our lips met. Perhaps it was her first kiss too. My eyes were closed and I could feel her lips against mine. It was wonderful. Truly wonderful. We kissed for a bit more. It wasn't overly passionate. It was even more special. It was innocent, it was involving all my senses, it was my first encounter. It felt like the world was moving. Not super fast but moving nevertheless. A slight motion. Almost like floating. Moving forward ever so slowly. Maybe gaining some speed.

I opened my eyes. Yes! We WERE moving! The car was clearly headed to the last part of the street, and after that patch of ground, over the cliff!

I slammed on the brakes and our lives were safe once again. Apparently, in my preoccupation with *The Kiss* I had forgotten to put the car into 'park' or the park brake on. The car was idling away with my foot on the brake. As I leaned over towards her, the foot slowly released its pressure on the brake, and the car slowly started edging towards the cliff.

Well, you're here and reading this so a potentially tragic story ended well. And that's the story of my first kiss.

AFTERWORD:

I was shy and took a long time going through the various phases. At the time I thought it too long, but looking back, it was a wonderful luxury. I was able to enjoy each stage thoroughly for what it was. Had I successfully rushed through it all like I so much wanted, I would have missed out a lot along the way.