

Coming of Age

Mairi Neil

Kate twirled in front of the mirror; her new dress hugging her soon to be eighteen-year-old body, accentuating womanly curves, slim waist, and pert breasts. The electric blue material matched her eyes and with dark hair swept back from a face needing only the lightest of make-up, she felt glamorous and seductive.

'I hope Jimmy is impressed,' she murmured, a hot flush staining her neck and face pink when she thought of his kiss last night and the warm breath in her ear as he whispered goodnight and promised her a 'night to remember' at the mid-year school dance.

Anticipation sprouted goosebumps on Kate's arms and legs but a voice from the doorway brought her back to the present. 'Ready Madame? If we don't go soon you will wear out that mirror!' Kate's stepmother ready to drop her off but Jimmy will walk her home.

A grin still brightened her stepmother's face when the Holden stopped outside the school hall, 'I can't believe you'll be eighteen tomorrow - nearly all grown up. Now, enjoy yourself - please!'

The emphasised 'please' reminded Kate that birthday eves were rarely nights of enjoyment. For years she dreaded the time to close her eyes to sleep because of the nightmare. The recurring dream of a bus crash, her birth amongst the wreckage, followed by her mother's death.

The school psychologist convinced her parents the bad dreams were linked to growing up. They will stop, the closer she gets to adulthood. Kate hoped the explanation right but...

'Wow! You are stunning.' Jimmy's voice interrupted her reflections and his crushing hug and kiss confirmed what she hoped - he loved and desired her.

The teenagers went into the dance hall arm in arm and the night flew by in a haze of music, dance and warm embraces, until, like Cinderella's Ball, the evening ended on the stroke of midnight.

Kate and Jimmy left for home, entwined and absorbed in each other, stopping in Lover's Lane to lose their sexual innocence, in a bushy nook, like generations of young people before them.

It was a flushed and glowing Kate who called 'goodnight' into the living room where her parents sat awaiting her safe arrival and pretending to be interested in the late movie.

Reluctant to undress, Kate sat on the edge of the bed staring at the bedside clock. Red digits glowed 1.00am. This was when she usually awoke screaming, reliving the bus accident...

Memories of Jimmy's warm body comforting as she caressed her stomach, remembering the pain and delicious delight of an ecstasy never experienced.

'I'm a woman,' she whispered into the emptiness of the room, 'I wish you were here, Mum.'

A shaft of moonlight shone through a break in the curtains and an ephemeral glow descended to caress the photograph of her mother atop the dressing table.

'I'll never forget you,' Kate said and was sure her mother winked as the moonbeam stretched across the room and kissed her cheek.

The relaxed teenager slipped into bed a few minutes later and somehow knew she'd sleep through the night undisturbed.

©2012



Image from Huffpost