

In the Eyes of a Romantic

By Sheila Johnson

There you are Mel! Over the years, I have longed to know where you are and how you are doing. I remember your curly reddish-brown hair, your mustache, blue eyes, and those sparkling beautiful white teeth that could never hide behind your wide, warm, inviting smile. Oh how I loved spending time with you! I fondly remember riding on the back of your motorcycle to the very top of what we El Pasoans called a mountain, then you would race for time down the side of the mountain dare devil style. I remember the rush that I got from seeing the red and black rock so close to my face that I could kiss the stones. Mel, I remember holding on to your ripped torso so tight, we were almost one body on the back of that bike! Moving so fast, so carelessly; we both threw caution to the wind. Oh Mel how I remember with joy the time we spent together!

Do you remember Mel; our dates to the live theater where we drank beer and all of the customers were expected to throw their empty peanut shells on the floor for the next patrons to crush them into dust? Do you remember the squeals I let out when the local theater company performed *Fiddler on the Roof* in that cozy, western restaurant bar? Oh, and Mel, remember the look on my Father's face when he asked you your age, and you answered, "thirty-two" — a mere fifteen years older than me? Oh, the days gone by have scripted so many beautiful memories on my heart. And to this day, I have never seen or touched any red hair that can compare to those curly, warm, glistening locks on your head.

I was seventeen, and I had never been to a beach in California where you said you were from. I remember dreaming of sailing in the boat that you and your buddy built with your hands over the summer that would see the end to our friendship. I'm sure the Universe wept with me when we said our goodbyes standing in front of 7709 Parral Street. The work of art that you built was thirsty for the California Ocean; you were ready to drive me to a new frontier; and I, well I was ready to lie down on the railroad tracks. I didn't think I would ever forgive my parents for holding me back from what was sure to be the most romantic rendezvous in my young life. I wanted, with all of my heart, to run off to California with you and sail the seas in that masterpiece built by your hands.

I'm so glad I found you again Mel! It appears that life has been good to you. Sitting barefoot on the beach in shorts, thinking about me. Wondering if I ever lived past our goodbyes. Wondering if there was another who took your place in my heart. Wondering where I was, never imagining that I would end up in a winter state like Colorado. Oh Mel. I'm so glad I found you again!