

What We Talk About When We Talk About Love

by Jake Barnes

My first love was a woman of principle. Never deny your man was her motto. She would do it at the drop of a hat. Any time, any place. I still remember the girl's name. Flora. Lovely young woman. Generous. If she had a thing, and you wanted it, you could have it and welcome.

She liked to have sex in odd places, too, which I also enjoyed. Once we made love on a chaise lounge by an apartment house swimming pool.

In high school I was in love with a tiny girl with a face like a mink. She wore glasses, too. In college we had a few steamy sessions, but we never went all the way. She liked older men. Artists. Later on she was friendly with a famous poet who killed himself by jumping off a bridge. My friend Tom had his way with her once. Tom was a musician; he was getting his PhD in psychology. She liked his beard, he said. After he shaved it off, she was no longer interested.

