

A Sudden Keen Nostalgia

by S.H. Gall

Junior year, word got around that Eric had lost his virginity to his sophomore girlfriend. She rode him on the back seat of his car. Eric wasn't keen to discuss it - he seemed to feel a certain blushing shame. It was almost as if he was raped.

Eric was a scientist, first and foremost. He didn't get hooked on pot like the rest of us, and was usually the designated driver for our inebriated clan. He got off on research and discovery. Some of us would catch up to him, years later, in other fields. But high school was our purview, while Eric was faster to mature.

A friend and I went to visit Eric and a bunch of others at a college that was both backwater and elite. Mostly I remember that Eric got up in the middle of the night to use the bathroom and stepped on my glasses, ruining them. I was sleeping on the floor. I had no choice but to slip contacts into my blood-veined eyes the next morning. We had smoked pot and eaten mushrooms the night before, on top of a massive beer binge. Eric was the only one who didn't throw up on a gravestone.

Depending on the fluid criteria of adolescence, we consisted of five, six, eight, or ten different members of a clan. We came and went, and over the years found new clans in different cities or shoals, and when Eric turned 30 he died of cancer. I don't think this bodes of anything. I think Eric did us all a favor, just as he once volunteered for designated driver on a reliable basis. He left no significant other, and nobody knows what exactly he was researching when he passed.

Thinking back, I can barely remember anything Eric ever said. All I see is his sad, ironic mien, his hunched shoulders, his clumsy modesty. It feels, despite all contrary evidence, like I've never loved anyone so much.

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