

ON SILENT WINGS

(sung by Tina Turner on her Wildest Dreams album)

I can see it in his eyes, the fire that burned between us is out. How did the passion of so many years fade?

They say you never notice love leaving until it's too late. It flies off on silent wings. I know the song.

I am not a good time girl, a gold-digger chasing Derek for his fame and wealth. We've known each other since school. I wasn't his first girl friend, and he was by no means my first boyfriend. If I count four dates to qualify, he was my tenth beau. But I always supported him after I joined his class and he started being recognised as a football talent. He played for the school's First Eleven when he was only 13 and I was on the touch line with the others cheering him on. He wasn't interested in girls then.

We were both sixteen before we started noticing each other in that special way. Others noticed him too, the scouts from major football clubs and it wasn't long before Arsenal offered to sign him as an apprentice. What an achievement. He told me this was his dream come true. I wasn't going to stand in his way. We agreed to keep in touch as friends. I wished him well while I looked for my dream at Edinburgh University. But I soon realised my dream was him and that I would follow him anywhere.

I watched him progress to the Arsenal first team and win England caps. Somehow, we managed to meet up occasionally and I moved back to London after my degree to be close. Of course, he had many admirers but he still wanted to see me. I was stunned when he asked to marry me. So I married Derek, my childhood lover, not Derek Arsenal's top scorer.

Within a year we had our beautiful Cindy and maybe I gave him less attention than he needed. Maybe I didn't always comfort him when his performance was criticised or praise him for playing a great game. Were those silent wings flying off with our love just a little then?

I think I can name the day when we lost our relationship. Arsenal v Manchester United was always a very physical game. The defender was given a red card for his sliding tackle, he just didn't play for three games. Derek never played again. His knee was never strong enough for physical sport.

What do you do when your lover loses his dream so young? .Drink, drugs and other women now seem to offer the highs Derek still craves for. I'm no longer enough This isn't the life I want. I've lost my dream too. Tonight I will try one last time to save our marriage.

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