

KIKI WALTER



P.S., I DO LOVE YOU

KiKi Walter

I do love you.

Words preserved on a single page in my yearbook, accompanied by a now thirty-seven-year-old dried and pressed rose and a photo of a handsome boy in his graduation gown.

The words took my breath away. They were painful to look at.

They still are.

The photo took my breath away. It was painful to look at.

It still is.

1984—My First Year of High School

High school was a whole new world and it opened many doors for a quirky, dramatic, foolish girl like me. I immediately gravitated toward the theatre department and other clubs where I made many upperclassmen friends, a majority of them boys whom I felt I related to more at the time.

Yeah.

I was always one of those girls who boasted that I preferred to make friends with guys. I was always one of those girls the other girls didn't like much because I was a deadly flirt.

As my friendships with the older crowd blossomed and I became involved in plays and other activities, my attention in the ninth grade drifted away from my friendship with Jason and others I hung out with in Junior High. Jason felt jilted, and I didn't much care. He seemed immature to me next to these much older boys. Biologically and emotionally – the truth is – at thirteen, he was. But he and I had a volatile relationship and never handled these things well. We either loved or hated each other. Thus began the ninth-grade period of our cold war while I flitted around the more mature upperclassmen boys like a butterfly in a blooming meadow.

My small-town theatrical career took off that autumn. In addition to my high school drama activities, I was cast in our community theatre production of *The Music Man* as Zaneeta Shinn – a dream role at the time. Ye, Gods!

That's when I met him.

George.

My storm. My obsession. My youthful pain.

I was in the small musty costume shop at Ballard Mill being fitted for my costumes. David, the boy playing my counterpart Tommy, arrived shortly thereafter. With him was the most beautiful boy I'd ever seen. He was tall and thin with light blonde wispy hair, pale blue eyes, and blush pink lips. As they stood there, I noticed he was quick-witted and responsive to my flirting.

When I left I realized I didn't get his name. I didn't know who he was. I'd never seen him before. Did he even go to our school?

I was quickly obsessed. I needed to find him.

I *had* to find him.

Turned out, I didn't need to try. He found me first. I was sitting on the stairs at the high school pool watching a swim meet, my cheeks flushed from the heat when I looked up and saw him walking in on the balcony above. He leaned against the railing as I tried to catch my breath. We caught eyes and I felt my face turn hot. We didn't talk or go near one another at that point, but my friend sitting next to me sure did.

"You like him?"

"I mean, he's cute?"

Brian laughed. "He's staring."

I was quickly obsessed. I needed to find him. I had to find him. Turned out, I didn't need to try.

"You're lying."

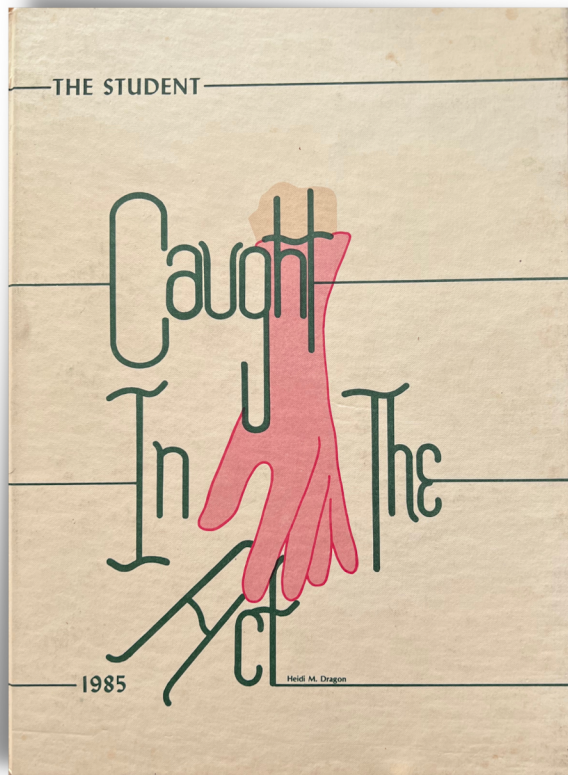
"He is staring."

"Shut up."

"Do you want me to go talk to him? We're friends. We go to North Country together."

North Country was the community college down the road. It sat just about directly in front of where I lived. I smiled. If he was in the North Country program, that meant...

"Oh, so he's smart?"



“Smart? He’s the smartest guy in our school. Don’t you know who he is?”

“No...!” I giggled while trying to catch glances.

“I’m going to talk to him.”

“No, don’t!”

“I’ll be back.”

Brian was one of the upperclassmen I hung out with. A lot of us were in Music Man together — he and I were sitting watching David in the meet before our rehearsal. I watched Brian disappear up the stairs toward George on the balcony and tried not to look too goofy.

They spoke for a few minutes until George left the building and Brian started making his way back with a huge grin.

“He likes you.”

“He does?”

“He wants to know why you wear so much makeup.”

I didn’t know how to take this. On one hand, I was freaking out that he liked me. On the other, what kind of idiotic comment was that? I may have been much younger, but that still seemed pretty awkward.

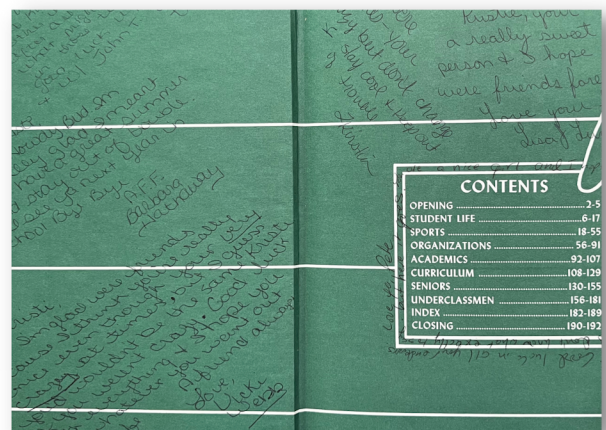
I should’ve known who George was. His brother was my age and a dear friend. Our paths would meet shortly thereafter at a party in his rectory.

“He wants to know why you wear so much makeup.”

Yes. His rectory.

Well, not his rectory. His father was a pastor and they lived in the beautiful stone building attached to the Episcopal church near the library. Walking into the huge house the two boys lived in with their father was like walking into a story tale.

As far as I remember, at the rectory, we did not drink or partake in anything like that. We just would talk and laugh and sing and dance. Sometimes there would be more than twenty of us in the small room, jumping on the sofas to songs from the early 80s.





I was head over heels in love with George.

That's what I thought. That's what I believed. I thought we were meant to be together. Because I was so taken by him, I failed to see that he didn't treat me very well in return.

George was kind. He was smart. He was likable. But, he didn't know how to do the relationship thing or be straight with a girl.

Again, I didn't know who he was. But one of my friends came up to me in the hall and told me that he liked me.

"Who...is he?"

We walked around the hall together until we passed him.

He had wavy brown hair, kind eyes, a bright smile, and a wicked good body. "He wants to ask you out."

I was head over heels in love with George. That's what I believed. I thought we were meant to be together. Because I was so taken by him, I failed to see that he didn't treat me very well in return.

He would walk with me, and we would sit and listen to music together, and talk. He was the first person I ever told that writing was my passion. Most people saw me as an actress, and I was every bit as passionate about the theatre at that point as I was writing. But writing was always a kind of...secret passion. We talked about writing a book together one day.

He gave me his scarf. It smelled like him, and I would wear it everywhere.

But then...I met this other beautiful boy.

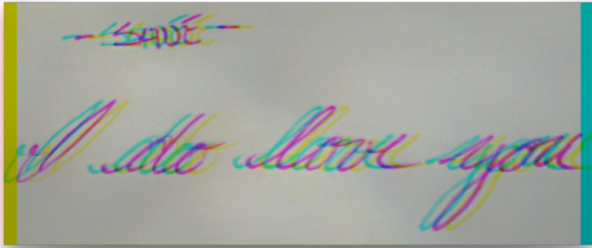
"What?"

"Let's go talk to him."

We approached him and my friend introduced us. He smiled at me and said, "Hi, I'm Doug," softly. "Would you like to go skiing some time?"

Oh, shit.

OK. Nothing was happening with George other than talking. He wasn't making a move. I was free to go on dates, right?



So, skiing wasn't my most graceful activity....

"I'd love to...I really haven't been downhill skiing much though. I'm not sure how good I am."

"It's a date," he smiled. "How about I teach you how to ski?"

Oh. My. Gawd. I mean, this was like something out of a John Hughes movie!

"OK," I giggled. The date was set.



Titus Mountain was huge in the winter. Anyone who was anyone went downhill skiing all season long. I was not anyone. I sat on my ass eating hot Pop-Tarts and watching MTV in my nice warm house.

That's when a blur came flying by and spraying us with snow.

It was him.

George looked at us and didn't look happy.

"What are you doing here?"

Doug laughed. "Teaching her to ski!"

George asked him if they could talk. They spoke quietly for a moment then George took off.

"Are you seeing George?" he asked.

I responded that, you know, we liked each other but I didn't think he wanted it to go anywhere.

"Well, you're wrong," he said.

What made me sad is that Doug's demeanor changed completely. He wasn't angry, but he was quiet and withdrawn.

"I want to be here with you," I said.

"I think maybe we should just go home now."



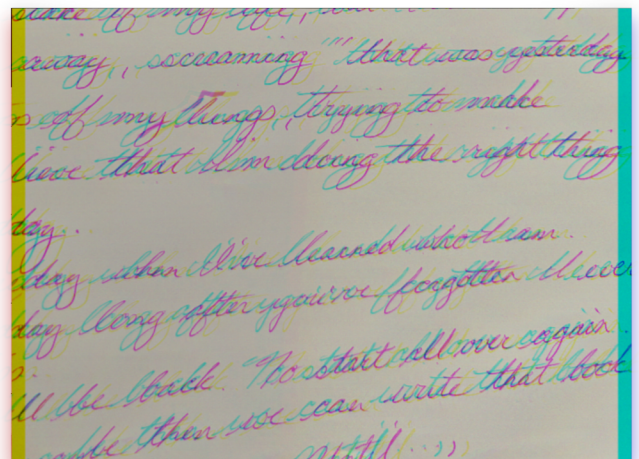
Doug and George were best friends.

They had been best friends for a long time. Longer than I was ever in the picture, that's for sure. I had no idea. I never saw Doug with George until this point.

Word got around the school quickly that Doug and George were battling over me.

It wasn't a battle.

They approached me and said that it was my choice. They would be fine with whatever I chose, but I needed to choose one of them. It could not be both and would not carry on with either of them until I did.





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George would make comments indicating I should pick Doug — that he'd be better for me. That he, himself, wasn't what I wanted. Of course, this made me want him more.

And I chose George.

And George was right.

He wasn't what I wanted, and Doug would've been better for me. But, I didn't care. It was my first taste of wanting what I couldn't really have.

And I was a girl.

There would be many more Georges and Dougs and heartbreaks along the way.

Things were tense between George and Doug for a bit, but they got over it.

Who knew that I would find myself in between two best friends like that. But I "won the prize," I guess. There were a lot of other girls who thought they won the George prize too that year.

The will they-won't-they we played lasted the entire school year. Well. Not the entire school year, because there was prom. My hopes were high. Despite the nature of our "relationship" (which was...

no relationship), I was sure he'd ask me to prom.

Days ticked by. He did not.

That's when I heard the rumor that he asked a girl from Canada to the prom.

No. Not the proverbial "he's got a girlfriend in Canada" thing — he really asked a real girl from Canada. Marie.



The night of prom — 1985 — I sat on the floor under my bedroom window crying as I watched the cars drive by on their way up to the school. Our house sat right at the corner toward the high school.

Our song was *That Was Yesterday* by Foreigner. That probably should have been a clue. I took my boombox and placed it in the window, blasting the song on repeat. I'd never felt such rage and resentment in my young 15 years of life.

As I subjected myself willingly and wantingly to that song, the cars, and my sorrow, I scrawled hate poetry for the next couple of hours. I wiped myself out but good.

Marie, the Canadian, even came to his graduation and spent the day with his family. (I lived in a small town, so news traveled fast.)

In the end, he got the girl. But the girl wasn't me.

But the school year ended...and summer began.

And...my adventure continued. ♦