

# Two Weeks Till Twenty

(The following story was taken from the collection in a booklet compiled by Miss Byrd's advanced composition class first semester. Editor.)

By Judy Graham

It was hot that summer I turned twenty—too hot to go to school. Even the breeze was warm, and I remember trying to make a fan from a piece of notebook paper. I watched the boy with the blond crew-cut as he stood in front of the classroom making a speech. He clutched the rostrum tightly and talked hesitantly. I could tell that he, like others in the room, had taken the speech class only because it was required. I tried to listen; but his speech on "Water Safety" was vague, his delivery poor and his grammar even poorer. I crossed my legs again and wiggled my toes in the white high-heels. They always hurt my feet, but I felt that high heels were a necessity for a girl who was almost twenty. Then, too, there was the speech teacher, Professor Moody.

I watched him as he sat in the corner of the room. A stack of multi-colored papers were before him and he added comments and doodles as the boy droned on. The gray hair on the temples—though only slightly gray—makes him very distinguished looking, I mused as I fanned myself. He was more than six feet tall and seemed to dwarf the desk. His voice was suited to tall, distinguished looking men—the kind you would listen to attentively regardless of whether he used it to sell Super Suds or read Keats. And more important, he was a bachelor. He seemed to me to be a combination Michael Rennie-Clark Gable. There was no denying that I had a crush on Professor Moody.

And neither could I deny—although I wanted to—that my twentieth birthday was still ahead of me. It would be two weeks before my years of being a teenager were over. Yet, even with the addition of those two weeks, I would be only twenty, and Professor Moody was at least thirty. That made him ten years my senior. Six to eight years was O.K., but ten years put him in that distant, undatable—but still desirable—category. Besides students should not date faculty. I sighed.

The boy with the crew-cut finally finished his speech. Then Professor Moody called on me. I walked quickly to the podium and began to talk about the theater and its place in our society. I talked confidently and almost lovingly about Shakespeare, Ibsen and Tennessee Williams. I felt a proud flush color my cheeks; but as I sat down, I consciously avoided Professor Moody's eyes.

A few more speeches and the bell rang. I walked to the front of the room for my grade and comments. As he handed them to me, he asked me to wait a few minutes after class. "He's probably gonna suggest another art-film for me to see," I thought, remembering Fernandel in "The Sheep Has Five Legs." So I sat down to read the comments. As always, they were written on the back of an out-dated handbill, this time for "Pygmalion". The paper was a bright pink, and in that bold mas-

culine script I found what I expected—a large "A" followed by "excellent presentation and audience contact." I added this paper to the other comments in the back of my notebook. Then I looked up to find Mr. Moody standing over me. The gray hairs sprinkled (above his ears) were more noticeable now. His blue cord pants were paired with an immaculately white shirt. Though he wore no coat, his tie was held in place by a plain gold bar.

"Judy," he said. Always before it had been "Miss Graham," but this time he said "Judy" in that special Keats' voice. I shivered. "Your speech today was exceptionally good," he continued as he sat on the arm of the chair in front of me. I mumbled my thanks but knew that he had not asked me to wait just to tell me that. I crossed my legs nervously. He finally said, "I'm having a few friends over tonight to listen to some Judith Anderson recordings and wondered if you'd like to join the party." I must have looked puzzled, for he answered my unstated question by saying, "Your speech showed me how much you love the theater; therefore, you must be a Judith Anderson fan too." I shivered a second time when he added, "Besides, it would be my pleasure to have you." I accepted very quickly; and as soon as he told me where he lived and when the party was, I left—also very quickly.

Should I wear my beige linen or the red cotton with the scallops on the hem, I wondered as I rushed back to the dorm. Betty, my roommate, was sprawled on the bed painting her fingernails.

"Well, what did Lover-boy Moody want? I saw you talking to him," she asked teasingly.

"Oh, nothing in particular," I answered as I pulled my red dress out of the closet.

"Judy," Betty said, "I've got you the cutest blind date tonight. Just wait till you see him. He's a real doll!"

I let her talk on for a few minutes about the tall football player. He sounded like the typical college football player—dumb and immature. Tonight I would date a real brain!

"He sounds mighty nice, Betty; and I'd love to—but I had already planned to go to the show," I said. She protested, but I finally convinced her that the girl across the hall would probably suit a football player better anyway.

But instead of going to the show that night, I looked up at Prof. Moody from the level of my three-inch spikes. As he took my wrap, I noticed the other two people in the room. The man looked familiar; and during introductions, I learned that he was working on his Ph. D. at the University. That was where I had seen him. His wife was dressed in a conservative blue linen and made me wish that I had not worn my red cotton with so many crinolines. I felt that her face could easily have fit into that maze of women that made a weekly appearance at my mother's bridge

club. As she scrutinized me, I was consciously aware that my twentieth birthday was still two weeks away. To escape her scrutiny, I wanted to pick up the copy of "New Yorker" that lay on the coffee table before me. Instead, I shifted my position and finally escaped her eyes.

Glancing around the room, I decided that it had that unusual artistic flavor about it—something you would expect to find only in Greenwich Village. Abstract paintings cluttered each wall. The colors hurt my eyes—vivid greens, yellows and a profusion of red. I wondered how Mr. Moody could possibly have a peaceful sleep in such a room. I was sure that I would dream of abstract monsters. I thought I recognized one of the pictures and asked if it were not a Chagall reproduction. He looked at me for a moment and then answered, "Why, yes, Judy." His eyes gleamed with both surprise and pleasure. Again that proud flush colored my cheeks as I silently blessed Mr. Shewmake's Art History course.

Later as we listened to Judith Anderson's "Medea", Mr. Moody sat beside me, his legs stretching past the width of the coffee table. Afterwards we discussed Greek drama, roaming from "Oedipus" to Sophocles and back to "Medea". I was probably talking too much, but this was the first time this had ever happened to me—I had never found a football player who knew anything about Greek drama! I slipped off one of my shoes and propped my elbow against the foam rubber pillow. Mr. Moody moved closer. The lady in the blue dress said she thought that women should have had some part in those Greek festivals. I agreed with her. I told them about the contraption called an "ecclyma" which was used to roll the dead bodies on and off the stage. Mr. Moody mentioned the cumbersome masks and long flowing robes. Then I said, "In one aspect of the costuming, the Greeks set a precedent for our modern movie stars—they, too, padded their figures!" Even the conservative blue dress laughed.

I laughed too, as I followed Mr. Moody into the kitchen to help fix the drinks. The cordial was too sweet, and I was almost glad when the other couple said they would have to leave. The lady added laughingly, "Baby sitters come high nowadays." The group broke up quickly. I remember Prof. Moody looking down at me and saying, "We'll have to do this again some time."

Back in the dorm, I found Betty propped in bed removing the same red polish. She talked ecstatically about the darling football player, and the drive-in movie they did not see. "And Judy, I chug-a-lugged two beers, and it didn't even phase me!" she giggled.

I hung up the red dress and smiled as I kicked off the spike heels. "Beer and football!" I thought. And I remembered the banana cordial and "Medea" and Professor Moody. **Twenty or not, I was a woman.**



Dr. and Mrs. S. E. Pace of Wilmington announce the engagement of their daughter Barbara to Thomas A. Doster, son of Mr. and Mrs. Dennis S. Doster of Gastonia.

Barbara is a member of this year's Sophomore Class at Salem while Tommy is a senior at the University of North Carolina. He is a member of Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity. The wedding is planned for June 16.

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