

The Reflection

by LDP

Here it was, the first week of summer vacation and his parents had shipped him off to summer camp. It would be good for him to mix with other kids and become involved. His parents worried about him. He never seemed to like the things other boys his age did. Was it something they had done wrong? They had done their best to give him everything he needed. No boy preferred books and school to baseball games and swimming holes. Summer camp will be good for him, they thought.

There was the usual bustle of activity. Kids arriving on busses, old campers reunions, and mothers crying while they said goodbye to their disinterested and embarrassed kids. Russell stood aside watching the scene. His mother had left a while ago. Russell had the feeling of being invisible and watching the movements of people who didn't know he was there. He was about average height but was slight in build. His complexion was pale from many hours spent indoors.

He was wearing the usual camper's dress of jeans and T-shirt. His sneakers had holes in them but he liked them. They were like old companions in a sea of strangers.

Finally, the counselors started hurrying their boys off to their appropriate cabins.

The first night is always the same. Rules are laid out but carefully hidden in all the talk about the good times and fun they would have.

When all the campers were in bed the camp became quiet except for the chirp of the crickets and an occasional giggle somewhere. Russell hated this time of day. He never could get right to sleep so he had to lay there and think. The day would slowly rerun in his mind and he would see how much of a fool he'd made of himself.

He looked at the other campers asleep around him and wondered what was different. Why did they all seem so secure and happy while he never fit in? They were probably all from similar backgrounds. Fathers--engineers, doctors, or businessmen while mother stayed at home with the kids. Finally sleep came. Blissful sleep where all the problems of this world are non-existent.

The sun was slowly rising the next morning when the campers began to stir. Shortly they were all awakened and sent

down to the lake for the flag raising. This was always a solemn ceremony. The stars and stripes were being raised while the boys, all sleepy eyed, stood straight with one hand across their hearts. The sun was slowly peeping through the fog that had settled over the lake during the night.

Russell had always liked this time of the morning. The fog distorts everything and softens it. It sort of fades reality and his mind could wander.

Later in the day, when the baseball game was announced, Russell's first thought was to hope and pray that they would be placed in teams instead of choosing them. He hated vehemently standing there waiting to be picked while the number of people around him slowly dwindles to nothing. He breathed a sigh of relief when the counselor began to read from a list the names of the players.

Back in the cabin after the games, some of the boys were plotting a harmless attack on the director's cabin. Russell walked in and the group fell silent. They watched him walk by and lie down on his bed. When it was obvious that he wasn't leaving they began their conspiracy again, only in lower tones this time. Their voices buzzed in his ears while he lay there thinking.

He thought back over the day. Would he always be different or would he finally fit in? He wondered what would happen if he just walked over to those guys and offered to help them in their raid. He thought it out carefully in his mind, weighing all the possibilities. Either they would laugh at him and tell him to scram, or they would include him. If they laughed he didn't think he'd be able to stand it, but if they accepted him, he wouldn't be alone. At least for a while. His mother had told him that camp was the perfect place to prove oneself. No one knows you so you have no past reputation to hinder you.

He looked out the window at a group playing marbles. They were laughing and having a good time, but there was one guy standing off to the side by himself. He was holding a bag of marbles but he looked like he was too scared to try to play. Russell looked away with disgust and caught his reflection in the window across from him. He took a deep breath, swung his legs off the bed and strode off to the group of conspirators.

First Love

Now what? I don't understand what I'm supposed to do, or how I'm supposed to act. Everything just all the sudden fell apart, and now there's nothing left. Why did I ever care about him? I said "I love you", and where did that get me? It all ends up the same anyhow. My friends don't seem to know what to say. They just sort of ignore the whole thing so they won't embarrass me--or so they think.

I remember the beginning was so good. It was like we were made for each other, you know, one of those fairy-tale romances. Everything he did seemed so right. We would spend as much time together as possible. Not because we had nothing better to do, or because that's the way couples are supposed to act; but because we truly enjoyed being with each other. Like the time he took me up to his grandparents farm in Virginia. The place was absolutely beautiful. It was harvest time, and all the leaves were turning. We would walk down to the old bridge, and or go riding, or just sit inside and listen to his grandmother tell us stories of how things used to be when she was our age. I told him things I had never told anyone before, things I now wish I hadn't told him. He has a huge part of me walking around with him and he probably doesn't know it. It's like when you tell somebody something about yourself, that's something you can never get back. They know YOU. The good and the bad. Before you get married, you promise to take that person for better or for worse. Maybe it should be better and

worse. I don't know. I wish I'd never met him. He's caused me so much pain.

Oh, I suppose I have 'grown' from all this, and I hear that suffering builds character, or something like that. But, somehow I don't feel any bigger or any more like a character. Sometimes I think people tell you things just to make you feel better, whether they are true or not.

And when I go outside, what do I see? Thousands of couples walking around hand in hand; and the ironic thing is that they all seem so much "in love"--like I was. I wonder if they will wind up like I did? And there He is, talking to her. Look how he puts his hand on her shoulder, like he used to always do with me. I used to think I was special because of that. Some joke, huh? It's kinda like a ferris wheel. There are the highs, and the lows, but it seems like you just follow the same path over and over.

Well, maybe I'll fall in love again, and this time it will be the "real thing". Not like before. But before is what I want, and I hate the way things are now. They say that Time will ease the pain, but I have to wonder about that too. I don't see how anything could ever change the feelings I have. I suppose I will always love him. No one else could ever be what he was to me. And besides that, I don't think I want anyone else to be what he was to me. It's great to be in love, but it's terrible to be rejected. I guess that's life, and I have to go on living.

But, now what?



One In The Spirit

Now that this new year at Montreat is well under way, it's time to sit back and observe ourselves. Are we giving this school the respect it deserves? Not only do we need vigor in sports, but also in how we act, work, and assume authoritative positions. During our short time at Montreat, we must start to work as one unit. Striving to win or create, won't do much good if we merely ignore each other and busy ourselves in our own work night and day. As much as the student needs this college, so does this college need the student. And the exciting challenges that we'll be facing year round can only be put into motion by a certain power--a spirit in the student body. We must start now to build that spirit up, so that it will prove other colleges and places, that though Montreat may not always "win the game" her students are indeed "one in the spirit".

Marg Allen

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