

Being 16- May 11 2011 by Amy Lloyd

The day was grand in epic proportions. As a high school junior, little was more important than getting a part in the school play and spending time with the man of my dreams. Lucky me- I got both.

It was the fall and the drama department was doing the dour play, "The Crucible." I remember at the time I was into "dour." I listened to a lot of *Jane Oliver* and *Air Supply*, and really relished any lyrics that involved waiting and rainy days and thinly disguised hope for some kind of wonderful.

So to do a play about witches and unlawful hangings, betrayal, and of course sex- I was intoxicated with happiness. And if that wasn't blissful enough, the dreamy and perfect Brian Pass was also in the play. I hit the mother lode and I was only 16!

I was to play Ann Putnam: a pinched critical woman who had a bunch of miscarriages and was suspicious of everyone. Brian Pass was to play Reverend Parris- a noble, anxious, man torn over the mysterious malady that had overtaken his young daughter. Actually who cares: I was in the same play as Brian Pass and that meant long rehearsals, which inevitably leads to bonding, and would surely inspire more poetry for me to write about the two of us escaping to a log cabin and him chopping wood and us living dreamily perfect forever.

Here's the thing about Brian. He was about 9 by 9. That is- nine feet by 90 pounds. He looked like a pencil. He had a thicket of dark hair and these beautiful soulful grey eyes. Brian was a senior to my junior. The cast had some pretty girls in it, but I didn't worry too much about that. What I didn't have in beauty I had in tenacity and wit. And as I had predicted in my many fantasies, (most created drinking Kaluha and cream with Ellen Porath), was Brian and I would get along famously. And in fact that was what happened. I made him laugh, we rallied each other on in rehearsals, and I felt like yes- he would ask me out and soon. Alas, the play ended, months passed, and still no date. But as the eternal cockeyed optimist and devout thespian, I rationalized this was merely our "first act." Our glorious

romance would bloom during the “second act” and the timing was just off. I continued to imagine being his girlfriend and cooking hearty stews to fatten him up.

As the stars aligned in the planets and luck would have it, we both were also cast in *West Side Story*. Being of Irish descent with large thighs and skin as white as table salt, I was naturally cast as a Latina. A *Shark* What could have only made this worse, and there were few to none options, was to place a peroxide blond wig on my head, the effect mimicking a Dolly Parton-esque poufyness. It was a size too large and had a tendency to slip forward over my eyebrows, creating a peculiar village idiot hairline, or someone who had recently had their forehead removed. And, as a painful omen, Brian was cast as a *Jet*: the enemy. My love for Brian had grown exponentially and so had the hovering reality that he would be attending college in the fall. I had a time pressure here. Bold action was called for and ASAP. After all, I did not want to end up like poor Jane Oliver in her wrap around skirt singing sad songs from her porch window. I was a *Shark* and if I could dance “America” without losing my wig or my dignity. I was unstoppable. The bounds of true love (in my mind) required acts of courage and élan. Brian appreciated my cleverness and a plan was hatched.

My high school had this cheesy service on Valentines Day’s .You could order a “Valentines gram” and have it sent to someone’s class. They were fashioned on kindergarten colored construction paper. Purchasing a pink and violet card and deliberating for hours on the poetic hypnotizing message I finally summoned the sentence: “Your stormy grey eyes warm my heart.”

And to add what I assume was a hint of alluring mystery I left it anonymous. Yes, I fancied myself that much of a seductress.

Valentine’s Day came and went. I held my breath, I wore extra mascara, I practiced funny things I would say when he declared the obvious: “Amy, please be my Valentine.”

Here is where my plan failed. He never spoke of it. Never. I didn’t see the lit up look in his eyes or the floating on air as only a man in love can do- zippo.

More weeks past. Rehearsals were tortuous. We still flirted, we still smiled, we still... but never once did he mention getting a valentine. What if there was another who loved him? What if he never got it?

How in the Universe could my beautiful mystique filled plan be a wash?

After 3 weeks, three important weeks before he graduated and left me forever for Connecticut, I break. I mean really how much can anyone take? Scene: first dress rehearsal of *West Side Story*. Time: 5:50 p.m. Perhaps it was the power I felt from wearing the bad blond wig, perhaps it was the gonjos I found as I applied the orange brown bronzer, or perhaps it was just having a buffer, a disguise but I finally asked him.

“Hey Bri. (He was my future husband and I had my pet name for him already) ‘member back when they had that silly Valentine gram thing?”

Brain is practicing his menacing looks across the stage, fumbling through the choreography with his show girl’s length legs. Beautiful he was, graceful – no way.

“Oh yeah.” He is now doing some sort of bent knee, karate stance and air punching something imaginary.

“I sent you one. Whatever. Oh, I didn’t sign it.” Taking a cue from him, I begin in a panic to use my fingers as if they were castanets and practice my dance moves. By the way, I am physically incapable of snapping, so it looks like I am scraping glue off my fingers.

He turns to me. “That was you??? I asked everyone. Wow, that was you, Amy?”

The crushing feeling of being unbearably vulnerable prevented me, even in my sassy disguise, to look at him. But his voice sounded happy. And I was good with that.

2 days later- opening night- he asked me out. There is a god!

The plan was he would pick me up and we would see a movie and have dinner.

The plan was it would be charming and giggly and a night full of sweet nectar filled kisses and admissions of adoration.

The plan did not include me waking up with an acne rash on my face. I don't know maybe it was 2 hours, maybe 3 hours, but we tried everything, my sister and I, to conceal its angry bumpy crap on my cheeks and chin. Really? Really today of ALL DAYS! Have you ever seen cold oatmeal in a bowl after it sat in the sink all night? That is what my skin looked like. Nevertheless the proverbial *show must go on* and so must this amazing date. Besides, if I remained in very dim light and thank god a movie theatre is it would work.

I only wish that had been the biggest disaster of the evening.

First: Brain was very late. He called because he had spent a bunch of money or lost it in poker, the details are fuzzy, so I actually ended up paying for a lot of the evening. I was willing to let that be compensation for my sci-fi complexion. Two, "Mousetrap," the movie, sold its last ticket right in front of me. The 8:00 show. A lady in a weird poncho bought the last ticket right there, cramping my dream date in an instant. The next show was at 10:30. We plan B to a restaurant. I am now starving and starting to feel the shellac of makeup begin to flake. It is imperative I escape to dim lighting. No French bistro, no lovely little mom and pop eatery- no. He chooses *Viva Disgusting*, a very bad cantina. Chubby waitresses with manly arms and loud skirts serving bad, bad food. I am grasping at some semblance of a date, of romance, of the great story we will together laugh about when he is sitting by the fire smoking his pipe and I bring him lamb stew in our log cabin in Vermont. Conversation – tense. Mood- strange.

I pay for the check, because as I mentioned he blew it all on some shady something. But like Annie Oakley, I ain't down yet! Now for the show stopper. As we walk back to the parking lot and as we round the corner there is the final curtain.

Brian's brother had completely, I mean completely, covered the car, the big ass Cadillac only old people should be allowed to drive, covered it with toilet paper. I started to cry.

A silent ride home followed by an awkward split second kiss on the lips, barely missing a weird skin ball rash.

No second date. The flirting and fun got less and less. And Brian Pass asked Sharon Hall to the prom.

Alas. After all that, I am the *sadder but wiser girl*. And the next year I got the lead in "Alice in Wonderland."

By Amy Lloyd

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