

UNAPPROACHABLE

At this age I should get over it. It being an infatuation that started the day she walked through our chemistry class door. I never told anyone. If I had, they probably would have thought I was some kind of pervert.

Yes, there she was, so cute, and so feisty as my grandpa used to say. She smiled, and frequently laughed with her friends.

For some strange reason a few of us sophomores shared the class with a few juniors. Me and the other testosterone infused adolescents sat a couple of rows back. And among the group my desk was a bit to the left, giving me perfect viewing. Perfect, that was so I could see her—her smile, her laugh, her everything. I could and did sit there dreaming what it would be like to hug her, and kiss her. For her to smile at me, and laugh with me.

I don't think I said one single word to her the entire year. Not that she gave me any leeway, but....

For Valentine's Day I bought her a selection of chocolate candy I put in a blue box, complete with a gray ribbon. Did I give it to her? No. It sat in the back of my locker the rest of the year.

Before we could blink, the days I watched her come and go, summer vacation began. A little school like ours, everyone pretty well knew everything about everybody. Yes, I knew she was dating a few of her classmates, and of course a few older guys—while I dated a girl or two, but none measured up to the one who occupied a desk in my chemistry class.

Soon, all too soon she graduated causing me the pangs of knowing I wouldn't have the opportunity of seeing her every day. But toward the end of my senior year, I met Nora. I could hug her, and yes I could kiss her. We soon married and started a family; two boys and a girl. They were absolutely adorable and smart. I'm telling you they were much smarter than I ever was. I couldn't believe how fast they grew, married and began having children of their own. And of course their children are perfect in every way.

After 35 happy years, one morning Nora said she didn't feel well, and should be taken to the hospital. Heart disease, the doctor said. Those last eight days were horrible, but we, her loving family sat by her side, held her hand, and watched as she breathed her last.

As life tends to do, each morning the sun came up, the days slowly inched their way forward, and nightfall arrived. Sometimes it seemed to get a bit easier, and sometimes ... well, it's hard.

Throughout this time, and before, did I think of the girl from my chemistry class? Yes, I'll have to admit I have.

I did hear her husband passed. Cancer, I believe.

Do I see her anymore? Yes. You see, we live in the same town, shop in the same stores, and more than likely breathe the same air. Have we ever interacted? No.

Then last Friday night, while walking toward the entrance of Olive Garden, there she stood. "Don't I know you from school?" she asked. "Algebra? Right?"

"Chemistry."

"Sure, I remember you guys."

And before another thing could be said, a tall, good-looking fellow came out of the door and said, "You ready to go?" And they headed arm and arm toward his orange, fancy little pickup.

I still have the blue box hidden away in my garage. And after all these years I have never untied the gray ribbon. I probably should throw it away.