

Day 4

My First Love

The big one-three—I had finally hit it. I was no longer a child, not yet an adult, but I was a teenager. No more childish toys, no more happy meals, no more baby treatment. I felt like a new person. I felt stronger somehow.

It was my birthday and it had fallen on a Saturday. I was expecting my friends to come over and celebrate in a few hours time. I prepared myself for what to me was the best party of the year.

My party was to be held at the clubhouse near my house. My parents were already there making the necessary preparations. I called up my best friends, Isaac, Gary, and Ivan. We had arranged to walk to the clubhouse together. I met them near the pine tree where we always met. The three of them were already there. They were talking and laughing when I joined them.

Picket Fence: A Personal Journey

Essays & Stories for Meditation

By Utanes

Copyright © 2008

The Overflow Publishing & Consultancy

www.overflowcentral.com

I soon found out that the topic of the discussion was girls. They were saying that now that I am thirteen, I would begin to like girls—to fall in love. I just rolled my eyes at the notion. “Girls are so weird. They cry for no reason, and they like to act like they are older. Why would I want to fall in love?”

I decided to drop the discussion and told them to set off for the clubhouse. To my dismay, my friends continued their talk and began to taunt me. They were saying that maybe I was trying to hide the fact that I already had fallen in love. What did they know? They were all younger than me by a few months. How would they know that becoming a teen instantly makes a person want to fall in love? I had always thought that all I needed were my family and friends, and video games of course. Who needed to fall in love?

I dismissed their annoying chants by covering my ears and singing, but to no avail. The words, “Felix has a girlfriend! Felix has a girlfriend!” were not drowned by my

Picket Fence: A Personal Journey

singing. I put up with their mindless, raucous jeering the rest of the journey.

Quite some time passed and almost all the guests had come and gone. It was close to noon when the girls from my class came as a group. They greeted me one by one and gave me presents. I guess that was one thing good about girls—they know how to give gifts, unlike my male friends who obviously forgot to buy presents. It did not matter too much though. I was just glad that they came.

The girls handed me presents, one after the other. It was at that time that I saw her. Jenna was not what you could call beautiful. She was pretty, but not as much as other girls. She was dressed a little formally. She was wearing a long-sleeved blouse and a semi-short skirt. To me, she was the prettiest girl in the party. She was feeling a little embarrassed as she passed me my present. She said that she did not know if it was a formal event so she tried not to dress too formally. What came out of my mouth were the last words I would have expected to hear from myself.

Picket Fence: A Personal Journey

Essays & Stories for Meditation

By Utanes

Copyright © 2008

The Overflow Publishing & Consultancy

www.overflowcentral.com

“You look fine,” I said as I took the present from her.

It’s funny that I exactly remembered the way the knot on the ribbon of the present was tied, the color of the gift-wrap, and the way it was wrapped. It’s amazing how you begin to notice the smallest details when you are in a mystifying situation such as that. I thought that the enigma was normal once you just turned thirteen. But maybe it was not the real reason why I would catch myself watching Jenna throughout the party. Maybe it was not the real reason why I remembered how many cups of juice she drank. Maybe it was not the real reason why I felt like smiling when my eyes met hers and she smiled. Maybe, just maybe, I had found my first love.

I did not believe what I was doing. Just that morning I was saying how I would never like girls that way, but just a few hours into teen-hood, I was already entertaining the idea that maybe there was something more to girls than just nagging and pointing out your mistakes. Maybe being a teen does make falling in love easier.

Picket Fence: A Personal Journey

Picket Fence: A Personal Journey

Essays & Stories for Meditation

By Utanes

Copyright © 2008

The Overflow Publishing & Consultancy

www.overflowcentral.com

I did not care anymore. I would have publicly denounced my beliefs about not falling in love, but to do that on my birthday in front of all my friends would be stupid. And besides, if I did that, she would see it too.

I guess that was one thing about falling in love. You become conscious of the person you like and begin to do things by first thinking of what she would think if I did so. I did not mind though. It was the first time I felt this way, and I loved the feeling.

Soon, my party had to end, and it was time for everyone to go. My best friends had all gone off, and only a few people were left. Among them was Jenna. She was waiting for her parents to fetch her. Being the 'host', I had to wait for everyone to leave before I could go.

Jenna's cell phone rang. Her parents would not be able to pick her up. She lived not far from the clubhouse, and she decided to walk home. She bid me goodbye, and I

Picket Fence: A Personal Journey

felt a little sad that she had to go. I waved back at her when she waved.

She said goodbye to my parents, and my mother asked her how she would be going home. When my mother heard that she would be walking to her home alone, she did not want Jenna to go without company.

To my surprise, my mother asked me to walk her home. I was excited and nervous, but I kept my cool. I pretended to act as natural as possible.

Soon, we reached Jenna's house, and it was time to say goodbye again. I was surprised when she kissed my cheek and thanked me for walking her home. She said goodbye once more and went inside her house. I waved back, stunned by the kiss and whispered, "Goodbye, my first love." I walked home, feeling like the king of the world.

STUDY GUIDE

Picket Fence: A Personal Journey

My First Love

1. What can you say about the writer of the short story? Describe him when he was a boy, his attitude towards friendship, his relationship with people, and his feelings about love.
2. Describe Felix's real impression about the opposite sex. Does he really dislike girls? Explain.
3. Felix has a seemingly sure understanding of the differences between boys and girls. What does this speak of him?
4. Describe the girl, Jenna.
5. Felix made mention of how funny he noticed the moves of Jenna along with the details of her present. What does this imply?
6. Why do you think at one point Felix said he disliked girls and the next moment his beliefs about falling in love? How would you explain this swift change in attitude toward the matter?
7. Aren't the last few paragraphs of the short story romantic? Does this really happen in real life? Has anything like this happened to you? Spend time on reflecting or discussing your own similar experiences. You may choose to be open and transparent about such experiences.