

Fall 1960

I had planned what for we ordinary guys in the early days of Kennedy's Camelot was a romantic evening – dinner, a movie, and a make out session in the front seat of my father's 1957 Pontiac which, if all went well, would wind up in the back seat.

I was feeling debonair and looking sharper than five tacks (as I was told the guys in south central Los Angeles would say, with the addition of "cleaner than the Board of Health" which would have been stretching it a little for Inglewood in that era) as I headed for Judy's house. My new girlfriend was tall and willowy and seemed to like me. A lot. We had known each other for a couple of years and even though we had met at church I decided she had too much potential to hold that against her. Although this was not our first date nor our last, it would prove to be our most memorable (or most worthy of being forgotten, depending on your point of view) and most dramatic.

Judy had wanted to go to what today would probably be called a "chick flick" or what back then was referred to as a light, frothy romantic comedy, *The Apartment*, with Jack Lemmon and Shirley MacLaine in her pre-guru days. I couldn't have cared less what movie we saw, as long as it put her in the mood, although thinking back I expect it probably would have been better for her (and me) to have seen someone like Cary Grant in action rather than Jack Lemmon.

Judy lived about half an hour's drive from me, so to amuse myself I turned the radio to KFVB, which at that time specialized in pop music. A brief afternoon shower had left the streets wet and displaying rainbows in the inevitable oil slicks. I was feeling rather jaunty, and tapped my foot to the music, enjoying the cool freshness of the early evening.

A little nervous as I walked up to the front door, I arranged my features to read Supremely Confident, and rapped on the front door rather loudly. Her father answered, led me into the livingroom, and launched into a running commentary on football, intent on eliciting my most private thoughts on the upcoming Big Game between UCLA and Stanford. Although I was grateful he wasn't giving me the hackneyed concerned-father-grills-daughter's-date thing, I honestly didn't give a damn about UCLA and Stanford. Fortunately, I was well versed in the art and science of faking hearty enthusiasm on just about any subject, so I eagerly threw my support behind the Bruins, praising them to the moon, and generally letting him think I was really into it, even though I was doing nothing but following his lead and feeding him back his own lines.

Just as I was assuring him that Stanford's train wreck of a team didn't stand a chance against the Westwood eleven, Judy appeared. She looked good in her green dress, tight at the waist, hem coming just above her knees. I bade her good evening, adding a slight bow for the right touch of flourish, took her by the hand, and guided her to the door while comforting her father with the promise of cheering for UCLA on the morrow.

It was a good thing I'd placed Judy's coat around her shoulders as the rain started again on the way to the car. We scampered inside and it was off to the races.

Although both Judy and I were pretty animated conversationalists, this evening I was a little taciturn. Something was bothering me, but I was having trouble identifying what it was, so I let her carry the small talk ball. She sensed something was amiss and we did my mother's and my patented what's-wrong-nothing routine. I was experiencing a slight degree of dizziness, but with the prospect of a successful evening looming before me, I cavalierly wrote it off as a lack of food and drove on to dinner.

We arrived at the pizza parlor without incident in time to make the 7:30 PM theatre time. The table talk was normal, we held hands, the usual agenda, then left for the movie theatre. *The Apartment* proved to be a very popular date movie; the line stretched around the block. I didn't mind as the night was turning out to be very cold which led to a significant session of pre-marital cuddling.

The movie turned out to be very good and a suitable preamble for the next item on my itinerary. One line from the film kept repeating itself in my mind, Jack Lemmon's statement that his take home pay was \$94.70 per week, which was not bad for those days. I decided I would never be able to make such an enormous sum, as my knowledge of money – particularly how to earn it – did not exist, nor did my understanding of the practical mechanics of living in the “real” world.

My penchant for living in realms of fantasy had left me somewhat ill-equipped to deal with more here-and-now issues, although I was able to switch my focus without difficulty to Judy's knees and shapely legs, which were comfortably crossed and seemed to be begging for attention. Was she to be denied? Not while Myron Dyal drew breath.

I was fully appreciative of the way the light from the movie projector was reflected by her stockings. My hand began edging towards her lap, carrying out my intention to hold her hand and establish the physical aspect of the special connection of youthful love.

My hand never reached its destination. My arm began to shake uncontrollably, causing me to withdraw my hand and place it securely beneath my right thigh, desperately attempting to conceal my inability to control my own limb. Thankfully, Judy was too absorbed in the movie to notice anything going on around her.

Quickly excusing myself, I made dash up the aisle and into the men's room. I had no sooner closed the door behind me than the seizure struck. I fell into one of the stalls, slamming into the toilet, and losing consciousness for a few seconds, which turned out to be plenty long enough for me to lose control of my bladder.

I washed the stained area and dried my pants with a handful of paper towels. I had providentially chosen a pair of black pants, concealing any staining and residual dampness, both of which could be blamed on the rain if need be. When I returned to my seat, Judy was

expressing concern about me, which provided an opening to take her hand. I reassuringly told her all was well and she immediately turned back to the film.

Although she seemed to be ignoring our hand holding, I didn't really mind as my head was pounding and I had not yet shaken off all the dizziness. When the first movie ended I was almost entirely back to normal and when the second feature was over my pants had completely dried and I was feeling much better.

In the car Judy couldn't stop reciting the endless merits of *The Apartment*. It was wonderful, it was romantic, etc., etc. Fortunately she didn't say anything about what a breathtaking hunk Jack Lemmon was (surprise) so I didn't have any competition in Judy's mind.

At Pann's Restaurant our after movie nosh was still dominated by Judy's running commentary on the movie, giving detailed analyses of certain scenes that especially appealed to her. Her self-absorbed chatter gave me the opportunity to withdraw into myself and walk some of the interior ways of my secret life.

Judy wasn't as oblivious to me as I'd thought she was, as she reached over, tugged my shirt, and demanded to know if I was listening to her unsolicited film review. I had lost awareness of her until she shook my arm and asked if I were all right.

"What?" I asked, confused.

"Are you alright?"

I told her I was fine. Then why wasn't I listening to her?

"I was listening," I lied. "You were talking about *The Apartment*. Weren't you?"

I was trapped in a conversation I did not want to be involved with, but I was stuck there with Judy and I was not about to start explaining to her about my seizures. We finished out coffee and apple pie, then left for her house, parking a discreet block away and settling down for a session of fun and frolic. Just as events were building to a critical moment, along came another seizure.

I did not lose consciousness and my bodily functions did not take off on their own again, but I did momentarily lose my awareness of my surroundings and she got a good look at me staring blankly into space.

I faintly heard Judy calling my name repeatedly, though for some time I was unable to answer. Finally I made my voice work and told her I was fine. She kissed me, which snapped my concentration fully back into the present.

I told her I was tired. It was 11:30 and getting late. As Judy had to be home by midnight, I started the car and drove the remaining block to her house. The walk to the door, hug, and passionate goodnight kiss all went well.

That evening heralded the end of our relationship and by mid-winter I would be deeply involved with a girl named Bonnie. Judy was probably better off for it. My epileptic cover was blown with her and I felt it safer to move on to a woman who didn't know about my oddities.

I went home and found respite in my private land of dreams.

The night was finished, with a whimper rather than a bang.