

Parade

a story
by Michael Descy

Summer. I'm 16, a senior-to-be, green-grey eyes, big dork-glasses. All I've got is a mop of blond hair, an acoustic guitar, a puppy-dog heart with paws too big, and the world's my mud-puddle. Add a girl, like a sunset; she lives on a dead-end street: Susan. Her eyes find mine in every crowded room and stay locked. No one knows about her, she's so quiet, but there's fire in her. That's enough for me.

I love her. I long for her. I get desperate. Each night I dream tomorrow: school and after, I pursue, impress her, ask her out. I wake up exhausted, and fold one life into the next. School and after, I pursue. But she wears her girlfriends like a cheap perfume, sends them out like a smoke screen. I melt into brick-lined hallways, a spark falling to the floor.

Susan, the unattainable, I invent in my own image. She's a poet, a musician, my other half. I write her songs, dream up poetry. Fast language flies from my fingertips. I live on unrequited love. Somewhere, deep down, she knows me, and understands. That's enough for me.

School drifts away. I get desperate. Each night I pace her street, guitar in hands, voice hovering above in serenade. I tempt fate, but never pause at her house. Her neighbors start to look forward to my parades; they smile and wave as they hose the grass, one sits out on a lawn chair and waits. The sun is sinking and I wonder if she's thinking of me; once or twice her light's gone out as I've sung past, but not tonight, not yet.

I pace to her house, freeze at the end of her driveway, and strum for her my own lullaby. The sun is a cat's eye closing. I stroll up the walk, vault the steps to her front door, and ring the bell. Again and again. My guitar hangs heavy about my neck, and she's not there. Nine o'clock. It's dark and there are no dreams left.