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I can't explain why I did these things,
I guess its called growing up....

by Victoria Watson

Jessica's heart was beating fast; in fact, it was racing. It was racing and beating like it had never raced or beat before. It made her imagine cartoon hearts that jump out of chests and expand and contract with a boing sound effect and wondered if hers might actually do the same.

It was strange then, that despite her heart going like the clappers, the rest of her body was actually perfectly still, like a statue, poised you might even say, her face upturned, and her long sheaf of blonde hair falling down her back like a curtain. She was standing in the porch light hoping she looked like the movie stars did, she wondered if she should coyly lift one leg up behind her, just like Grace Kelly or Audrey Hepburn, but she didn't think she could pull it off in a size 9 Doc Martin; and more importantly she was incapable of movement. She was frozen, stuck, glued to the spot and what a spot it was.

The reason for her condition was simple; she could not move from this fixed spot because like some out of body experience, or that moment when you wake up having slept on your arms, Jessica could not move a muscle even if she tried, because standing opposite her was Jeremy Patterson, and Jeremy Patterson was about to kiss her.

Jeremy Patterson, not just the coolest boy in school, the football hero, the teacher's darling, the sixth former's poster boy was actually standing on her doorstep looking at her, with one hand coolly resting in his jeans back pocket, and the other about to touch her. She was uncertain as to the destination of this other hand, whether he would go for her face, her waist or would he just make a landgrab on her like the moving arrows on the beginning of Dad's Army. She tried not to think about it and focussed on the imminent kiss.

Jeremy Patterson who was now in her doorway, did not just walk around school, he simply glided on an aura of Clearasil, Lynx aftershave and bubble gum like some scholastic aurora borealis as all the cool girls huddled in groups and swooned as he went by.

Jessica looked up into his bright blue eyes and saw her startled face reflected back and resolved to smile, to remember to breathe, to lower her shoulders and unlock her jaw. The look of terror that she saw reflected back in his baby blues was more the look of one of Freddie Kruger's victims in *Nightmare on Elm Street* than Ingrid Bergman looking back at Humphrey Bogart in *Casablanca*. She tried again, but remembered not to show her braces, they might dazzle him in the street lights.

Jeremy Patterson did not seem to notice though, he just moved his face closer to hers, so close she could see the light fluff on his top lip, just like a small baby bird she thought. So downy and soft she wanted to reach out and touch it, but then she felt his breath on her face and it reminded her of Vimto, Monster Munch pickled onion crisps and Wrigleys chewing gum; and all thoughts of chicks evaporated.

She suddenly felt the mystery hand on her back, drawing her nearer and she closed her eyes, feeling herself floating away from this moment. She was flying way over head so that she could look down at Jeremy and herself and see their two heads neatly fitting like teeth in a zip. As she closed her eyes, she felt herself propel upwards until she was sky high, dancing on the roof tops, flying in the clouds, skipping through the stars, heading out into the Milky Way of her teenage dreams.

Except she wasn't. For at that exact moment as their lips touched, as Jessica's heart was bursting out of her Fruit of the Loom t shirt, her mother opened their front door and the stark hallway light placed them in a perfect sharp rectangle of overbearing yellow light. Her mother open-mouthed in a grubby dressing gown was holding a sleeping baby in one arm and a loaded bulging nappy bag in the other. She loomed out into the darkness and a shadow, much like a Dalek fell across them.

"Jessica?" she shrieked.

As if he had been hit by white lightning or kryptonite Jeremy Patterson shot back about four feet and slid into the darkness.

"Jessica?" her mother repeated, "is that you?"

Jessica a mixture of dismay and horror, looked from her mother to Jeremy Patterson and saw him physically shrink inside his denim jacket. She watched astounded as he seemed to drop ten inches in height, and under the rude glare of the hallway lights, all she saw was a skinny, quite spotty and rather average looking 16-year-old boy. He no longer seemed capable of gliding through school corridors, nonchalantly throwing back his sexy floppy fringe as he went. Right now, under the angry gaze of her mother he looked more like some laboratory rat cowering in his cage, pink eyes the size of drawing pins.

Jessica turned to her mother in bewilderment.

“Um, we were just saying goodnight, Mum.”

Her mother hoisted the sleeping baby a little higher for gravitas, threw with adept skill and aim the stinking nappy bag past Jeremy’s dumbfounded head and said, “well I think you’ve done that now so he’d better run along.”

Jessica cringed. Nobody told Jeremy Patterson to “run along.” Nobody threw nappy bags at his head and treated him like some human basketball net. She looked at him, desperate that he should reclaim some former dignity, to revert back to the hunk he had been only seconds before. She longed for him to suddenly take her in his arms, lean her back like some Brazilian tango dancer, stick his tongue down her throat, then waltz off into the night with just a shrug of his shoulders and that infamous flick of hair. She longed for it, she yearned for it, but sadly she did not get it.

Instead, Jeremy Patterson the school ground Love God of the sixth form, the stud muffin of the Upper Sixers merely grunted, “night then,” from behind his greasy hair and slunk off to the bus stop at the end of the street.