

YOU

You intrigue me. You have an air of mystery about you. An indefinable something. A mysterious allure.

You conjure up all sorts of fantasies in my mind.

I look forward to seeing you in the mall.

I'm vaguely disappointed when you're not there.

At odd moments I catch myself wondering; are you married, single, divorced, in a relationship? Where do you live? Where do you come from? I want to know more about you.

Then, I think not. I want the enchantment, the fantasy to continue.

I want us to tease each other. To lead each other just one step up the garden path and then to turn and run away.

I want you to tantalize me to distraction. But not to cross over that invisible barrier.

Red and black. These are your colours. I've never seen you in anything else.

You always wear black stockings. And a high collar. And long sleeves. And boots.

I've only seen the skin of your face and hands. Your hairstyle fascinates me.

I've glimpsed the shape of your legs between those boots and your skirt.

Though they are covered in black stockings they send a shiver through me.

I watch you walk towards me, distracted by some shop window. I love your spontaneous laugh when I touch your arm and say that we should stop meeting like this. I hold your arm for a moment. It's thin and thrilling. Our eyes meet and then I walk on.

I lie in bed and think of you.

Dare I make a pass?

Will I destroy what we enjoy in that moment and will you think that I'm being forward, just another dirty old man. Or will you respond because you feel that way too?

What will I do if you make a pass at me?

I'd be scared.

I begin to think of undressing you and quickly stop. No, I don't want to destroy the image, the dream, the . . . I really don't know what.

I've been married for longer than I need to remember. I've watched love turn into something else. I no longer think that there is a thing like love. I hear people say that they love this one or that one or this thing or that idea. I can't say that I love anything.

And so I try and put a name to my feelings for you. It's not lust. It's not love. Perhaps fun and laughter and . . . I don't know what. Perhaps you are fun and possibility and promise all rolled into one.

It's like a spell. I want to always experience that spell. I never want to break it.

I can't promise you anything and you can't promise me anything. We don't know what people we may be tomorrow so we cannot promise anything on behalf of those strangers into which our today selves will inevitably evolve.

My thoughts about you jumble and tumble incoherently.

What is the magic spell you weave inside me?

I hear the modern talk of taking a relationship to the next level.

How awful that sounds, how unnatural, as though relationships are like ticking numbered boxes.

I want to stay at the same level, whatever that means.

I can make love to any woman I want to in my imagination. But I don't want to with you.

I don't ever want to cross the sex barrier.

Sex invariably changes a relationship, destroys the magic.

One can never know the mind of another. The mythical belonging associated with marriage is utter nonsense. You can no more belong to another than you can get inside their mind and know their thoughts.

I know women who openly admitted to me that they have never loved their husbands. They married them for a variety of security or societal reasons. Perhaps because mummy said he was a good man and would provide for them.

Sad.

I believe that you cannot fall in love a second time. What you feel is an illusion.

But isn't that what you felt in the first place? What you called love?

Why do I go down this track?

All I have to do is never go to the mall again and I'll never see you again.

But I do want to see you again. To feel that thrill, that intrigue, that mystery.

That possibility. That inexpressible feeling.

You unlock unformed thoughts in my mind. You make me challenge my belief systems.

You are a cathartic catalyst.

You make me stand back and look searchingly at myself.

I love the feelings you conjure up inside me.

Perhaps I need them more than I can admit.

You make me alive to the moment. For those brief minutes I'm in eternity and the universe is empty except for you and me.

Have you been sent to haunt me? To tempt me? To test me?

You have certainly unlocked much that lay hidden in my subconscious.

Are you an angel in disguise? Or a demon?

I want this to be a fairy tale that never ends, that is never fulfilled. Perpetually moving towards paradise but turning back before arriving there.

You have the air of someone who has never been hurt. You have an air of both innocence and of knowing.

I don't ever want us to have to be honest.

Total honesty can destroy a relationship just as surely as dishonesty. Both engender doubt. And doubt is a terrible thing. It can never be cured.

I want to live forever in the pleasures of anticipation, without doubt. I never want to destroy these pleasures with the colder flood of fulfillment.

After all, is it not better to travel hopefully than to arrive?

Relationship, like any journey, changes us forever and I do not want the pain of that change.

You are a child of the universe. I cannot own you. In fact, I cannot own anything. Not even the life that moves in and through me.

Only in imagination is everything possible, can anything remain the same forever.

I'm astounded by what has come out on these pages.

All that I was tasked with was to write a fifteen hundred word story using the words, bicycle, student and river.

I started to form an erotic story built around you but then my mind dragged me - screaming and kicking, leaving nail marks on the wall and heel marks on the floor – into this jumble of seemingly incoherent thoughts and feelings.

We must meet once more in the garden of our minds and then part forever. Only this way will the fairy tale, the dream, the endless possibility; remain in anticipation as a goal never to be reached - never to experience that dull, cold flood of fulfillment - but to be enjoyed forever as a permanent, changeless, perfect, imaginary relationship.

But tomorrow? Tomorrow I will eagerly look out for you in the mall again . . .

Ray Hattingh