


It Happened in Riverdale



Juliana Harvard

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It Happened in Riverdale, Volume 1

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IT HAPPENED IN RIVERDALE

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It Happened in Riverdale

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November Rain

That Morgan Boy

Beach City Breakup

To Sandra Lee Miller who encouraged me to write about growing up in Riverdale



Chapter 1. The Big Four

IT WAS A COLD DARK night in late November. Few stars shone in the moonless sky and an eerie wind played a haunting tune in the bare treetops. Steve Emory lay fast asleep in his room. He had strewn his clothes around the room and had not pushed the top drawer of his dresser all the way in. He had left one window halfway up, and the breeze played tag with the curtain.

When the clock struck twelve, this same breeze carried the sound of the midnight chimes from the big clock in the courtyard to Steve's ears. He turned over restlessly, gave one kick, and opened his eyes. Then he knew he had only been dreaming. He had been running from two monsters, Culture and Society. But as he ran they had called after him, "Rebel! Rebel!" And he became only more entangled in their traps.

"Boy, what an imagination my subconscious mind must have," he thought as he turned over. But the more he tried to sleep the more he thought about his crazy nightmare. Finally, from sheer exhaustion, he dropped off to sleep.

When morning came, Steve had quite forgotten the experience of the night before. He dressed and ate and started for school, as usual, his old gay self. Little did he know that today would be the beginning of a turning point in his life. He arrived at school at the usual time, 8:00, and saw the same familiar faces. He had taken his books to his locker and was on his way to history class when he felt a soft hand touch his shoulder. He turned to see Cynthia's smiling face.

"Good morning, Steve," she greeted. "Did you just get here?"

Steve grinned and nodded and automatically took hold of her soft tiny hand.

"Well, then," she said, "I guess you haven't seen the announcements on the bulletin board."

He shook his head and walked over to the bulletin board where someone had placed a large colored poster. After reading it silently, he turned back to Cynthia. "So," he said, "the first formal banquet of the year, huh?"

Cynthia nodded, her eyes shining. "And Ella—she's on the social committee, you know—says it's really going to be spectacular this year."

Steve knew right well what Cynthia, his girl for the past two years, was expecting now—an invitation. But just then the bell rang, and Steve said, "See you—got to run now"—and he ran.

Meanwhile, in the chemistry classroom, Julie had been going over her lesson before the bell rang. Suddenly Sandra burst into the room, her face beaming. "Look, Julie, look, will you? It's happened, finally! I told you Ken and Ella would never last. Just read this, Julie, just read this!" She held out a small, wrinkled piece of paper. Julie took the note and began to read. A queer smile crossed her face.

"What's the matter? Don't you think it's pretty neat?" asked Sandra.

"Yeah, sure," said Julie, trying her best to act normal. "Ah, read it out loud to me."

"Dearest Sandra," she began, "Ella and I are split up for good. But I've been thinking about you for a long time. I'd like to take you to the banquet, doll. Let me know as soon as you can. With all my love, Ken.' Oh, Julie, isn't it wonderful?"

"Yeah, sure," said Julie, "wonderful."

When Julie and Sandra went to the cafeteria for lunch that noon, Ken, Steve, Cynthia, and Ella were at their usual place. They seemed as happy and gay as ever. The "Big Four," as some of the kids called them, didn't look as though anything had happened or was going to happen that would ever break them up.

Sandra turned confusedly to Julie. "I don't get it. Look at 'em."

"I know, but they won't be like that for long," Julie said.

"How do you know?"

"Instinct," replied Julie.

Sandra said no more but was beginning to grow suspicious. In a matter of a few hours, her suspicions were confirmed. She had asked Julie to stop at the Snack Shop for a malt on the way home, but Julie had a music lesson. So Sandra went there with Carolyn instead. They sat down in the booth next to the one where the "Big Four" were seated.

"All right, Ella," Ken was saying. "You'd better start talking."

"No, no," Ella giggled. "Leave me alone."

"You did write that note, didn't you, didn't you?"

"Okay, okay," she screeched, "let me go and I'll tell you."

Ken relaxed his grip on her shoulders. "Okay, start talking."

"We only did it because—"

"We?" Ken interrupted. "Who's 'we'?"

"Julie and I," Ella continued. "We just wanted to get your reactions, and Sandra's."

"You little—" Ken shook his fist in mock anger at her. "It would serve you right if I did go to the banquet with Sandra."

Ella only laughed but Ken was getting serious. Anyway, Sandra had heard all she wanted to, so she got up and left.

"I wouldn't laugh if I were you," warned Steve. "Ken might just show you."

"I don't care," said Ella, tossing her head carelessly.

"You don't think I would, do you?" Ken said.

Up until this time, Cynthia had been looking on with an amused smile. At this point, she broke in with, "Oh, say, Ella, Jim wanted your phone number last night—"

"Jim who?" broke in Ken, who spoke with a slightly worried tone.

"Her brother, who do you think?" replied Ella. Then turning to Cynthia, she said, "Go on."

"Well," continued Cynthia, "it seems he asked Sandra to go to the banquet with him and she refused, so he thought about you and—"

"And so he wanted my phone number, huh?" finished Ella. "Did you give it to him?"

"I thought I'd better check with you first," replied Cynthia.

Ella nodded her approval. At that moment, a girl rushed up to the table. Cynthia recognized her as the associate editor of the school paper. She had been over to Cynthia's house several times to work with her brother Jim who was editor-in-chief of the paper. "Excuse me," the girl said, "but have any of you seen Sandra Lee? I was across the street and I saw her come in here. I've got some real exciting news to tell her."

The kids shook their heads. "We haven't seen her, JoAnn," said Cynthia. "I could give you her telephone number and maybe you could call her if the news is very important."

"Thanks," JoAnn said, "but I don't have a phone." She sighed. "I guess I'll just have to wait until tomorrow to tell her that Jim asked me to the banquet. Well, sorry to disturb you." And she started away.

"Wait a minute," Ken called to her. "Don't mind me being snoopy, but Jim who?"

"Why, Jim Donaldson," answered JoAnn, slightly startled. "You know, Cynthia's brother."

At that point, Ella coughed, Cynthia turned red and covered her face with her hands, Ken turned a deep purple, Steve burst out laughing, and JoAnn shrugged her shoulders and walked away. After a moment of very uncomfortable silence, Ken said to Cynthia, "Maybe that girl JoAnn doesn't have a phone, but I do. Do you, ah, have Sandra's number handy?"

"Oh, now, look, you two!" Steve interrupted. "I think this little game has gone far enough. You're not really going to bust us up, are you?"

"Right now I'm not sure," snapped Ken. "Anyway, you don't have any room to talk, you know."

"Well, at least I didn't fuss—" He stopped short and covered his mouth.

“What do you mean?” asked Cynthia. “You didn’t fuss with who?”

“It isn’t anything, probably,” reassured Ella. “Forget it.”

“Hey, look at the time,” said Steve, changing his tone. “We’d better be getting on home. Remember, I’m treating you guys today.” He reached into his pocket for some change to pay for the sodas. As he did, a shiny metal object fell to the floor. He dived for it and tried to stuff it back into his pocket before anyone saw what it was. But he was too late. Cynthia had it in her hand.

“My ring!” she exclaimed.

“Correction,” said Ken. “Steve’s ring.”

“Yes, but he gave it to me ‘cause we’re...going...steady...” Her voice trailed off and she eyed the other three suspiciously. They looked at one another, none of them daring to speak a word.

“Now I’m beginning to put it all together,” Cynthia continued. “No wonder you didn’t ask me to the banquet the minute you saw the announcement. I knew I had put your ring on the bench by the jukebox that day at the pool when we had our swimming party. I thought I had lost it, and all the time you had it!” She shifted her gaze toward Ken and Ella. “And you two knew it all the time. Of course, you’d know, Ken. But, Ella, why didn’t you tell me that Steve had somebody new—”

“Honest, Cynthia,” Steve interrupted. “It’s not somebody new. I—I just, well, want to ‘play the field’ awhile.”

“But don’t you realize what you’re doing to us?” Cynthia persisted. “The four of us, I mean?”

“But we can still be friends,” Ken argued.

“That’s not the point!” Cynthia snapped back. “You just don’t understand! Anyway, when you knew about it, you shouldn’t have kept it from me so long!” Then turning toward Steve, she softened her tone. “All right if that’s the way you feel, okay. Go ahead and be a wolf and have your fun. Forget I even existed. Forget all those good times we used to have together. Forget that graduation night two years ago and all the promises you used to make. Forget it all!” She paused. “But, Steve, I won’t forget, I can’t forget. And someday you’re going to be tortured and hurt by somebody. Remember what I said, Steve Emory, someday you’ll be sorry!” With that she got up and left, still clutching the ring in her fingers. Steve started after her, but Ken shook his head.

“Let her go,” he said. Steve shrugged and sat back down. He started to say something and then stopped. For a few minutes, everyone was silent. Finally, Steve could bear it no longer, so he excused himself with, “See you kids tomorrow.”

“Steve?” Ella called to him.

“Yes?” he said without turning around. Ella made no reply. Steve whirled around. “Aw, look,” he said, “I’m just as sorry as you are that it had to happen like this. But it was going to come out sometime anyway, so,” and he shrugged, “this is the way it happened. I didn’t want to hurt her, but she knew as well as I did that it wouldn’t last for eternity. She should be able to accept some facts.”

“You always told her it would last for eter—”

“Aw, Ella,” Steve said disgustedly. “You’re as naïve as she is. For pity’s sake, every fellow has a line of some sort.”

Ella rose to her feet, shaking her head slowly. “You men are all alike,” she said as she departed.

“Aw, forget it,” Ken told him. “Let’s go.”



Chapter 2. Banquet Night

IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED, none of the kids at school seemed to detect the uneasiness within the “Big Four.” Then came the night of the banquet. Ella and Cynthia went “stag.” Ken, as Ella had suspected, took Sandra. Steve, much to everyone’s surprise, took Carolyn Bullenhacker, who was notoriously known as the “little wolverine.”

“I told you,” Cynthia whispered to Ella, “that Steve was quitting me for another girl.”

“Oh, Cynthia,” Ella said, “I wouldn’t pay any attention to it if I were you. You know Carolyn’s reputation. Steve was probably trapped into asking her tonight.”

Cynthia only shook her head and refused to listen.

“Listen, honey,” Ella advised her, “no man is worth that much. Forget him. He’s not the only star in the sky.”

“I can’t forget him!” Cynthia wailed. “I have always loved him, and I always will!” And she ran into the powder room. Ella shook her head in pity.

Meanwhile, Ken and Sandra were playing a pretty big game of pretending. To the onlooker, they were enjoying themselves to the full. But Ken was concentrating on Ella, doing everything he could to make her jealous. And although it seemed pretty exciting to Sandra to be having a date with Ken—her very first date—she was secretly drooling over her childhood sweetheart from sixth grade. She had first gotten a crush on him at a party when they were playing Spin the Bottle and he had given her a peck on the cheek. On his part, the infatuation had lasted only a few weeks, but on Sandra’s part it still lasted, and her admiration had deepened. Now Jim Donaldson was having a good time with JoAnn and was totally unsuspecting of his secret admirer.

Just then Sandra’s thoughts were interrupted. “Sandra, look over there,” Ken was saying. “Do you see what I see?” He chuckled softly.

Sandra looked in the direction Ken was looking and saw what Ken was laughing at. Poor Julie had a problem. As the first banquet of the year for Riverdale High was for the junior high too, the place was swarming with seventh and eighth graders. And Julie was surrounded.

Two seventh-grade boys, Billy and Dennis, and an eighth grader, Eddy, had been secretly fighting over Julie. Now they were bringing the battle out into the open. They had all three endeavored to escort her to the table, all three had tried to sit by her, and now they were “discussing” who was going to “take” her home. And they were doing it in no uncertain terms. Julie’s embarrassment was written all over her face. After a long struggle, Eddy dropped from the race. Then Dennis came up with a bright suggestion.

“Wait a minute,” he said. “Why are we fighting like this? I think Julie should have something to say. After all, it’s a lady’s privilege to go with whoever she wants to.”

“That’s right,” agreed Billy. “Well, Julie, is it going to be me or him?”

Quite taken by this sudden announcement, Julie did not know just what to say. Hoping to stall for time to figure things out, she said, “Well, since you fellows have to be so formal, I will not cast a vote until I have heard a ‘campaign speech’ from both of you.”

So while they were throwing their line at her and making various and sundry promises, Julie thought. She could tell they meant business in their own small way, and she couldn’t just drop it then and there. Why and how had this all started in the first place? After all, seventh-grade boys don’t fight over freshman girls every day. Well, she was little for her age and a year younger than she was supposed to be for her grade because she had started to school in another state when she was

five years old. And her dimpled baby face didn't help matters much. But still—seventh graders? That was exaggerating a little too much.

She glanced at Eddy who was still looking on with amused concern. He was her age, even though he was an eighth grader. She looked back at the other two. Billy was a little doll, and Dennis was the “brainchild.” They were both pretty popular. She looked back at Eddy. He was a combination of them both. Oh, if only she were a couple years younger, she'd have it made.

“Aw, don't listen to him,” Billy was saying. “He'll never keep any promises.”

“He's the one who never keeps any promises,” Dennis insisted, “You know he's just a wolf, anyway.”

“Oh, yeah?” Billy retorted. “Well, you're just a gopher,” he said, knowing Dennis was sensitive about his slightly protruding front teeth.

Julie, recognizing the purpose of the remark, said sternly, “Now that's enough, both of you! Now tell me, Billy, what would your reaction be if I chose Dennis?”

“W-why, I guess I wouldn't like it very well,” he stammered.

“But would I still be your friend?”

“Any friend of Dennis is no friend of mine,” he bluntly replied.

“What about you, Dennis,” Julie asked, “if I should happen to choose Billy?”

“Well, I don't suppose I'd like it very well either,” Dennis said, “but I wouldn't hate you for the rest of my life if you did.”

“What would you do?”

“What could I do,” he said, “but go back to the girls in my class.”

“Without a fight?” Billy asked rather roughly.

“It wouldn't do me any good,” said Dennis.

“Oh, brother!” muttered Eddy, who had been silent up until this time.

Julie looked at him and smiled as if reading his mind. Then she turned back to the other two and said with a most sober face, “Just as I thought. Both of you show too many signs of immaturity to have a girlfriend.”

Billy and Dennis were a bit startled at this statement. But Julie was not finished. “This may come as a shock to you but, Billy, I am not a soft little thing who swallows flattery and a big line. Neither am I a hard-headed woman, Dennis, who won't listen to reason.”

“You see, fellows,” said Eddy, not boasting, “you just don't understand women.”

“Now just a minute, big brother,” said Billy, “who gave you a right to butt in?”

“This is a free country, isn't it?” Julie stuck up for him.

“Yeah, but he said—”

“Never mind what he said,” argued Julie. “I've made up my mind.”

“E-Eddy?” asked Dennis, wrinkling his nose.

“Eddy,” Julie answered emphatically.

“Boy, what a sneaky thing to do!” Billy mumbled under his breath.

Paying no heed to him, she turned to Eddy, saying, “It's getting sort of late. Don't you think we'd better start home?”

Eddy smiled. “Better luck next time, fellows,” he said. Then nodding to Julie, he said, “Okay, let's go.”

Since Julie's house was just three blocks east of the school and Eddy's house was one block north of hers, it did not take them very long to walk the distance. Most of the way they walked in silence, both of them too timid to talk. It was a beautiful night, however, with the full moon shining high above the treetops and casting a strange glow on the red, yellow, and brown leaves on the ground.

“How did you know the way I felt about you tonight?” Eddy said to break the silence.

“Well, for one thing,” she said, “fellows who really like a girl enough won’t do anything to embarrass her in public like Billy and Dennis were doing.”

“Yes, but I could have meant what I said when I said I would surrender and let the other two divide you.”

“Well,” she smiled, “I kind of had a feeling you didn’t.”

By this time they were on Julie’s front porch. Eddy didn’t know what else to say then but, “You’re sweet.” And he lifted her head gently with his hand. “I only wish we were a couple years older,” he whispered. But she pulled away.

“I think I see a light in the kitchen,” she said. Touching his hand slightly, she whispered, “Thanks for everything. I’ll see you.”

There was a brief moment of silence as her pretty brown eyes gazed into his happy face. It was as if they were communicating with some strange kind of radar with a mutual message of, “I like you, too.” Then she turned and disappeared into the house.



Chapter 3. In the Park

THE NEXT DAY AROUND two o'clock, two girls could be seen walking in the park. They wandered to a secluded shady spot hidden among the trees.

"So you think he really likes you for his girl, huh?" Julie asked.

"Why else would he act the way he did last night?" Sandra asked.

"Sandra, I've got to tell you something," Julie said. "Ken didn't write that note. Ella and I did."

"I know," Sandra calmly replied. Seeing Julie's startled expression, she added, "Ken told me last night that you and Ella forged it."

"You're not mad at me for it, are you?" asked Julie.

"Mad at you!" Sandra exclaimed. "Mad at you because I got a date with Ken out of it? Or mad at you because he likes me now instead of Ella?"

"Well," laughed Julie, "I'm happy for you, but don't trust Ken too much."

"What do you mean?" asked Sandra in surprise.

"You just can't trust men too far," Julie answered.

"Well, Ken's different," answered Sandra. "You don't know him. He's just wonderful, Julie. You've probably never had a boyfriend like him."

Well, Sandra was right. Julie had never had a boyfriend like Ken. Every boyfriend she had ever had was either about her age or younger. She had never had one older than she was. That is, with the exception of Dick. He was five months, fourteen days, and seven hours older. They would still probably be going together if he hadn't moved away. They had lived next door to each other for as long as she could remember. They had grown up together. Then in the summer of seventh grade, his dad was transferred a thousand miles away. No one knew the childish agony Julie had gone through trying to forget him. It was not that she was so madly in love with him, but every place she went and everything she did brought back memories of days that could never be relived.

"Well," said Julie now, "good luck with Ken."

Sandra sighed and leaned back on the grass. After a moment, she sat up and said, "Oh, by the way, Julie, how did things go for you last night? I noticed Billy Kingston and Dennis Holman were giving you a pretty rough time."

Julie smiled then proceeded to relate the details.

At the same time, on the far side of the park, two boys were having a conversation, discussing women.

"Aw, Steve," Ken was saying, "you don't need to quit Cynthia just because I'm going with Sandra now."

"I'm not, honest," answered Steve. "I had been thinking about it for a long time before that."

"You didn't say anything about it until I got mad at Ella."

"Well, that's just the way it happened. I didn't drop my ring in the Snack Shop on purpose."

"I still think you should go and apologize to her. She's a real sweet girl."

"What about you making up with Ella?"

"Oh, look," Ken said, as he nervously whittled at a twig with his pocketknife, "it's not the same thing. Ella's just too independent for one thing. She's too sophisticated, too. I'm just not her type. I want a woman to be soft and tender and weak."

"And I take it Sandra's that kind of girl?"

Ken sighed. "At first, I only asked Sandra to the banquet because I wanted to show Ella she wasn't the boss. And I wanted to make her jealous. But, I'm telling you, she has the hardest head this side of the Mississippi. I just gave up on her. Now Sandra's more my kind of girl." And he sighed again. "Now I've given you my reasons," he continued, "and they're all perfectly good ones. Now suppose you give me your reasons for quitting Cynthia. I couldn't think of one good reason why you should stop going with such a cute girl as Cynthia."

"Well," said Steve, "she may be cute, but that's not all that counts, you know. She's cute, yes, but the trouble is she knows it. And she thinks she owns me. You may think that Cynthia never talked back and stood up to me the way Ella did to you, but Cynthia had her own secret way of getting me to do whatever she wanted me to. I was just getting a little tired of it. Anyway, a guy can have a lot more fun if he isn't going steady with just one girl."

Ken got up and stretched. "Let's go get a Coke or something, cat," he said. "But just wait until spring comes. You'll go right back to her or to some girl. You can't go without going steady for long. I know you!"

Steve said nothing but shook his head and thought, "I'll show you how wrong you are, Ken, old man. Wait until spring comes. Just wait." And he followed him to the hot dog stand.



Chapter 4. Trip to Pine Cove

IN THE WEEKS THAT FOLLOWED, Ella and Cynthia weren't any too happy about what had happened between them and the boys. However, Cynthia showed it more than Ella did. Steve had been going with Carolyn lately mostly because Cynthia would have been hot on his trail if he didn't appear to have a girlfriend. Cynthia knew enough to know that meant "hands off."

On the weekend that started Christmas vacation, the Youth Club of Riverdale sponsored an outing. It was to be a weekend in the mountains at the Riverdale Youth Camp, which was located a half mile north of Pine Cove Village on Pine Cove Hill about 24 miles east of Riverdale.

The snow had been falling every night since Wednesday, and on Friday morning it was about two feet deep. Ken took Sandra and Steve and Carolyn and Julie and Eddy with him in his dad's car. It took them about 40 minutes to arrive at the RYC Camp. After they had located their cabins, they all met back at the lodge and decided to take a walk in the new-fallen snow.

It was a perfectly beautiful day in the mountains. Around the lodge, the tall stately pines stood out like pretty candles on a frosted birthday cake. The swimming pool, so actively in use during the summer months, was now drained and covered. Here and there a gray squirrel chattered saucily and scampered up a nearby tree. Across the wooden bridge that spanned the frozen creek almost right for ice-skating, the pathway led through Hickman's Forest. Here, as far as the eye could see, over hill and dale, the snow lay like a frosty carpet.

As the six of them wandered among the trees, some without leaves and some evergreen, they came upon a pond where the icicles dangled their cold fingers in weird patterns. Here they each plucked a natural "Popsicle" to suck on. Beyond a nearby hill, they could see the top of an old, deserted cabin. The snow lay on the roof like a blanket and icicles hung over the edge like the fringe of a giant bedspread.

Before returning to the camp, the teenagers decided to hike to the top of the highest hill called Pintail Peak. From here they could view the whole valley. The air was cold and crisp, and their cheeks were turning rosy from the walk up the hill. There were a few silent moments as the group stood on top of the hill and viewed the scene below. When one is alone or with a loved one in a time and place like his, he is filled with a new awe and reverence for the Creator of this magnificent beauty.

All too soon they had to start back to the camp for the Campfire Program at sundown. In the winter, however, the program was held around the big open fireplace in the lodge. Ever since Ken had broken up with Ella, Eddy had become quite fascinated with Ken's new "heart throb" as he called it. And ever since he had started going with Julie he had not been so quiet and conservative as before. Ken, who was a wolf, had become Eddy's teenage idol. Everything Ken did Eddy tried to copy.

On his way to the lodge from the cabins earlier in the day, Eddy thought he heard Ken say something "suggestive" about Sandra to Steve, and he had exaggerated upon it in his own mind. Now as they sat watching a moving picture, Eddy thought he had to do everything Ken did. And he was getting a little too fresh with Julie for his own good.

When the picture was over, some of the kids decided to take a moonlight stroll before turning in. The full moon, new-fallen snow, and young lovers made quite a combination. Pine Cove Village was not far from the camp, and before long they had wandered into Pine Cove. So why not have a hot chocolate or something before starting back out into the freezing winter night?

After a half-hour or so at the Pine Cove Sundae Shoppe, the kids decided that had better start back. Or before they knew it their moonlight stroll would be turning into a midnight stroll. On the return trip, the couples walked four abreast along the deserted road. Some of the fellows, like Ken, thought it necessary to help keep the girls warm. Sandra and Julie were not ordinarily the kind of girls who let boys put their arms around them every day. But tonight was an exceptionally cold night.

Sandra and Ken and Eddy and Julie were walking together, the girls on the outside, when Eddy started whispering to Ken. "Why don't you go ahead and kiss her?" it sounded like to Sandra. Julie thought he said, "I'll kiss Julie if you'll kiss Sandra."

When they reached the outskirts of the camp, lights were on in only two cabins. One was that of the camp director and his wife; the other was the cabin of Ella and Cynthia. All the others had either turned in early or had gone on the moonlight walk. There was a twelve o'clock curfew, and now the young people had exactly 13 minutes to midnight, at which time the camp director checked each cabin to make sure the lights were out, and the occupants were sleeping. If anyone was missing, the Pine Cove police were ready to aid. However, Mr. Marcos, the Camp Director for the past three years, usually gave five or ten minutes grace. But if you were a bit careless and stayed out too long, he could cause quite a raucous.

When Eddy and Julie and Sandra and Ken came to the gate of the camp, they paused for a moment under the star-filled sky and let the others go on ahead. Sandra and Julie looked at each other, wondering what the boys had up their sleeves now. Ken looked at Sandra as if to say, "This wasn't my idea; it's all Eddy's planning." Just then Eddy broke the silence.

"Well," he said, giving Julie a wolfish look and then glancing toward Ken, "how about it? It's nice and dark over behind the craft building."

"Eddy!" Julie spoke in a tone of reproof and broke away from him.

"Aw, doll," he tried to argue, "just this once. They won't see us. Nobody will ever know."

"Listen, Eddy, you're a real swell kid. I like you a lot; at least, I thought I did. But there is a limit. If you want to make out, that's your business, but not with me. As much as I like you, I mean what I say."

"Aw, baby, please," he pleaded, "just one itsy-bitsy, teeny-weeny little kiss."

"No!" persisted Julie. "N-O, no!"

But Eddy refused to take a hint. "But you've done it before," he kept on. "I've heard all about that graduation night."

At that remark, a strange look came into Julie's eyes. "Please, let's not talk about graduation night," she said, her voice sounding as if she were almost ready to cry. With that, she turned and ran toward her cabin.

Bewildered, Eddy looked helplessly at Ken for a second. Then he ran after Julie. But she had slammed the door and locked it before he could reach her. Giving Ken and Sandra one last glance, Eddy slowly started toward his own cabin.

Now in the starlight, Ken gazed at Sandra's lovely face. "Sandra," he began softly, "there's something I want you to know. When I first started dating you, my sole purpose was to just make Ella jealous. But she started getting too high-toned, thought she was just too good for me. Anyway, I've found out she isn't my type. Maybe you didn't know it, but Ella and I had only been going together for about four months, not nearly as long as Steve and Cynthia had been together. Since Ella is her best friend and Steve is mine, we four always palled around together. But," he paused, "let's talk about 'us.'"

Sandra smiled, half in amusement and half in contentment. As she said nothing, Ken went on.

"Since I've been going with you," he said, "I've discovered you're the girl of my dreams. Tell me," and he winked, "where have you been all my life?"

Sandra only smiled and blushed. There was a moment of uncomfortable silence on Sandra's part, for she was very ill at ease, not knowing what to say or do. For Ken, it was a moment of decision. He sighed then said, "Sandra, all those things

I said to you the night of the banquet and every Saturday night since then, well, most of the stuff was just mechanical, but—but, Sandra, what I'm saying to you tonight, I really mean it.”

She looked up into his face. He was serious. She could tell by his expression. He had never been like this before. His deep blue eyes seemed to tell her that he, Ken Nelson, belonged to her if she would only take him.

“Sandra,” he said, “will you...will you go steady with me?”

Sandra was speechless. “I—I don't know,” she stammered. “Please give me some time to think about it.”

“All right,” he smiled, “but please accept this token of our friendship.” And from his pocket he brought forth a sterling silver chain to which a silver heart was attached. As he held out the gift before her it glistened in the light of the now-descending moon. It seemed to compel her to reach out and take it. With a nervous hand, she touched it lightly. The words, “Love, Ken,” were inscribed on its face. It was so beautiful in its simplicity, so significant of love, “...of our friendship,” Ken had said.

She smiled tenderly and nodded slightly.

That was what Ken had been waiting for. He fastened the chain around her neck, and they started walking slowly away. This time, her arm also was around him. They stopped in front of the door of her cabin and reluctantly said good-night.



Chapter 5. Dawn of a New Day

THE NEXT MORNING DAWNED bright and cheerful. Sandra, Julie, and Carolyn were staying together in the same cabin; but Julie awoke to find herself alone. Glancing at her watch, she knew the reason why. Hurriedly she washed and dressed and was combing her hair when Sandra came in.

“So you finally decided to get up, huh?” asked Sandra.

Ignoring the remark, Julie just said, “And where have you been so early?”

“Oh, just out messing around mostly, I guess,” Sandra answered. “Ken and I took a walk up Strawberry Creek as far as—”

“Hey, wait a minute,” interrupted Julie, just noticing the chain around Sandra’s neck. “Where and when and who and how?” she asked, pointing to the heart.

Sandra laughed. “It’s Ken’s,” she replied. “We’re not going steady, though”—then she added—“yet. It just means we’re good friends,” she explained, “real good friends. He asked me to go steady last night, but I told him I’d have to think about it. Anyway, what I came in here to tell you is—”

“Oh, sorry to interrupt you, but have you seen Carolyn?”

“Oh, yes, she’s out there working on Steve.”

“And how is Steve reacting?”

“Well, the normal way boys react to Carolyn Bullenhacker. But I don’t think she’ll go too far with Steve because he’s just not that kind.”

“Well, what’s the news that was so important when you came in here?”

“Oh,” said Sandra, “Eddy wanted me to tell you that he’s sorry for everything that happened last night, and he doesn’t want you to be mad at him.”

“Oh, really?” said Julie. “What else is new?”

“Oh, Julie, he didn’t know that you didn’t want graduation night brought up. He asked me why you acted so funny about it.”

“And just what did you tell him?”

“I told him it wasn’t fair to bring up mistakes of the past.”

“What did he say?”

“He said that he really didn’t expect you to kiss him last night although he really wanted you to. He was sort of testing you in a way, he said. He wanted to see if you would finally give in under great pressure.”

“Well, he pushed it just a little too far.”

“He said he realizes that now, but he just got carried away last night.”

“When did he tell you all this?”

“This morning. He tagged along after Ken and me until he made me promise I’d tell you he was sorry.”

“Well, if you see him again, tell him that it takes a man to apologize face to face, will you?”

Sandra smiled. “Okay. Are you coming out now?”

“In a few minutes,” she said.

Five minutes later, Julie arrived at the mess hall in the lodge where a lot of the kids had gathered waiting to hear “Come and get it!” from the camp cook. She wandered over to the fireplace and was gazing at the burning logs when a gentle hand touched her shoulder. She turned to see Eddy. But before he could say anything—

“Okay, kids, breakfast’s ready!” Mr. Marcos called. In the same instant, all the kids scurried to find a place in line where they each, in turn, got plate, cup, and silverware and helped themselves to the steaming hot pancakes with maple syrup and butter. From there they found places to eat along the rows of tables and benches.

Somehow, in the crowd, Julie and Eddy got lost from each other. By the time Julie had gone through line, there wasn’t room for her at the table where the rest of the gang was sitting. So she sat at the next table. All the time while she was eating, she could feel Eddy’s eyes penetrating through her. He didn’t say anything and didn’t attempt to say anything. He just sat and stared.

By the time breakfast was over, Julie was a nervous wreck. When she had taken her dishes into the kitchen, she looked around for Sandra. Most of the kids were migrating outside to join the snowball fight, so she figured Sandra possibly had gone outside. She was getting ready to go outside when she heard someone call her name. She turned, and there stood Eddy. She turned back toward the door.

“Julie,” he called softly. “Please don’t be mad at me. About last night—I’m sorry, Julie.” He paused. “I don’t know what else to say, but I don’t want you to go and...and...” His voice trailed off. Then, seeing the piano at hand, he sat down and started to play. Looking at Julie, he began to sing, “I’m Sorry I Made You Cry,” his voice echoing in the empty hall. When he was finished, Julie smiled warmly at him.

“Okay, Romeo,” she said, “I get the point.”

When they walked outside together, Ken who stood with Sandra on the porch, remarked, “Oh, did you two kids finally make out, I mean make up?”

Julie glared at him in mock disgust. Ken laughed. “Oh, by the way,” Sandra said to Julie, “are you guys going with the group at ten to Pine Cove to go sledding or are you staying here and going ice skating?”

“We’re going to Pine Cove, aren’t we, Eddy?” she said, looking at him.

“I guess so,” he said, “but we, I mean all four of us, if we’re going, had better get into the kitchen and get busy. We’ve got KP duty this morning, you know.”

“Oh, Eddy,” said Julie, “don’t be so dramatic. What’s a few dishes to wash?”

“A few!” exclaimed Eddy. “A hundred and twenty-seven people ate breakfast in there this morning, and you say we’ve got ‘just a few.’”

“Well,” said Julie, “what are we standing here for? Let’s go get busy.” She started inside and Eddy followed her.

“We’ll be there in a minute,” Ken called after them. When the door was shut, Ken chuckled softly. “Those kids,” he said, shaking his head.

“They aren’t so much younger than we are, remember,” Sandra said. “Julie’s a freshman, and we’re just sophomores.”

“I know,” said Ken, but they just seem so juvenile, ‘cause Eddy’s just an eighth grader, I guess. I don’t see why Julie doesn’t pick on somebody her own age.”

“Well, confidentially,” Sandra said, “she has sort of an inferiority complex.”

“But why should she?” asked Ken in surprise. “She’s just as good as anybody in the school. And when she isn’t around some squirt like Eddy, you could never tell by her actions that she’s not 15—or older.”

“It’s a long story,” sighed Sandra. “Remember when Miss Delavin taught seventh grade?”

“How could I ever forget?” said Ken, throwing his hand to his head.

“Well, you came here in the last semester of that year, didn’t you? At the first of the year, someone spread some nasty little rumors about Julie. I’ll give you the details some other time, maybe. Anyway, Miss Delavin was Ella’s second cousin, and she believed practically anything Ella and Cynthia said. You can imagine Julie had a pretty hard time. And to make things worse, Dick Clarke’s dad was transferred to New York that summer. Dick had been the one who always stuck up for Julie, you know. And then, to top it all off, Miss Delavin was made eighth-grade teacher for the next year. So no wonder Julie broke down and did what she did graduation night. And ever since then, Julie’s not been the same vivacious, gay girl she used to be.”

Ken was silent for a moment as he stared blankly at the white ground. He nodded slightly to himself then turned to Sandra. As though awakened out of a dream, he said, "I guess we'd better get in there and help those kids, huh?"



Chapter 6. On the Slope

HOURS LATER, DOZENS of happy kids were at Pine Cove. Some had sleds, others pulled toboggans, and a few brave souls were trying their luck on skis. At the moment, Ken and Eddy were trying to persuade Sandra and Julie to muster up enough courage to take the half-mile toboggan ride down the hillside. Steve and Carolyn were piled onto a little sled making its way down the hillside, she displaying all the charms she possibly could, and he trying his best to resist her and failing every minute. Jim Donaldson and JoAnn were on skis, racing down a clear mountain slope, the cold wind blowing through long blonde wisps of hair that had escaped from under her wool cap. Ella and Cynthia were just taking a walk by themselves. Sledding, they thought, was too juvenile. And as for skiing, well, uh, they'd just rather take a walk.

Whoops! There go Ken and Sandra and Julie and Eddy down the hill on a toboggan. Finally got up enough courage, eh, girls? Minutes later, at the bottom of the slope where the toboggan had overturned before coming to a complete halt, Sandra and Julie, red-faced and breathless, brushed the snow off themselves.

After regaining his composure, Eddy announced, "Wow, that was fun! Let's try it again."

"No, thank you," spoke Ken from where he still sat in the snow. "You kids can, but I think I've had enough for one day."

"What did you have in mind?" asked Sandra. "Going back to the camp so we can go ice skating on Strawberry Creek?"

"Yeah!" put in Julie. "That's a swell idea!"

"Well," said Ken, "not exactly. I was thinking maybe the four of us could take a little drive. We could walk back to camp first—it's not too far—and maybe you girls could fix up a lunch. And, if Mr. Marcos would let us, we could go up to Crystal Falls for a couple hours. Maybe Steve and Carolyn would like to go along, too."

"Man, where does he get all the bright ideas?" Eddy said.

"Well," continued Ken, "if it's okay with you girls, then let's take the toboggan back and go find Mr. Marcos."

"Fine with me," said Sandra.

"Sure," agreed Julie.

When they reached the top of the hill, Mr. Marcos informed them that no other plans had been made for the afternoon. They could go to Crystal Falls on the condition that a responsible adult went along. At that, Ken and Sandra looked at each other. Then Julie had a thought.

"Mr. Marcos," she said, "didn't I see Paul and Donna Mott's car in the camp this morning?"

"Why, yes," said Mr. Marcos. "As a matter of fact, they drove up after breakfast this morning. Why?"

Julie looked at Ken, and Ken looked at Sandra; and they both looked back at Julie. They knew what she had in mind. Paul and Donna were a young married couple who also belonged to the RYC, as the Senior Youth Division ranged from ages 18 to 25. They were a lot of fun to be with, and they were adults, weren't they?

At that moment, who should happen by but Paul and Donna! Before Julie could answer Mr. Marcos, Ken turned to Paul and Donna with, "Say, how would you two like to go with us for a picnic this afternoon up to Crystal Falls?"

Paul and Donna looked at each other for a moment. Then Paul said, "About what time, do you know?"

"Just as soon as the girls can fix a lunch. We should be back before dark." He looked at Mr. Marcos, who in turn looked at Paul and Donna as if to say, "Okay, Ken, it's up to them."

"Well," said Paul, "how about it, honey?"

"Fine with me if you want to," she replied.

"Okay," Paul said to Ken and the others, "it's a deal!"

With Donna, Sandra, Julie, and Carolyn all helping, it did not take long to fix a little lunch. They rode up to Crystal Falls in the Motts' station wagon. Paul, Sandra, and Ken who drove, sat in the front seat. Eddy, Julie, and Donna rode in the middle seat; Steve and Carolyn rode in the back.

The group spent a very pleasant afternoon together. They found a nice spot in the Crystal Falls Park with a good view of the falls. Beside the table where they sat, a babbling brook made its way downstream. Although the altitude here was higher than Pine Cove, due to some climatic difference, the water here was not frozen.

Once in a while, a squirrel would timidly venture quite close to the table to see if anyone had dropped any crumbs. But soon the lunch, which the girls had thrown together in such a hurry, was taken care of. It had been delicious, and the scenery here was absolutely beautiful. What more could a fellow ask for than this?

For a long while, all was pleasantly silent, the only sound being that of the icy water plunging over the cliff. Paul and Donna were reliving the first precious moments of their honeymoon as they had stood side by side at Niagara. To Ken and Sandra, it seemed like one of those storybook lands where their story would end, "...and they lived happily ever after." They possessed that mutual feeling of togetherness that only two can share. To Steve and Carolyn, it was just a background for making out. To Eddy and Julie who were both art-minded, it was an inspiration for them to want to portray their innermost thoughts on canvas or a sheet of music paper. But all good things must come to an end, and the afternoon passed quickly. Paul was the one to break the silence.

"It's almost five o'clock," he announced grimly. So, reluctantly, the kids stirred from their places and piled into the car.



Chapter 7. Campfire

AFTER SUPPER, MR. MARCOS built a bonfire on the bank of Strawberry Creek. In the twilight, skating forms could be seen gliding across the cool smooth ice. When the skaters grew tired, they came to rest in the glow of the flickering fire where they could roast marshmallows or join in the singing of the campfire songs accompanied by Ken on his guitar. For a long while, the hard ice was crowded with the silhouetted figures skating to and fro. Then, one by one, as the shadows deepened, the skaters dropped out and came to join the ever-increasing number around the bonfire.

“Why don’t you and Ken come on and skate?” Julie called to Sandra once or twice as she and Eddy whizzed by the group. “It’s lots of fun!”

Sandra made no reply. She didn’t want to embarrass Ken in front of everyone. But when Julie stopped to rest, Sandra told her the plain truth. “Ken can’t skate. He doesn’t know how.”

Later, when Sandra and Julie were sitting side by side, Julie looked around the group. Then she nudged Sandra.

“Are Ella and Cynthia still skating?” whispered Julie.

“No, I don’t think so,” answered Sandra.

“I don’t see them any place, do you?”

Sandra looked around. She, too, could not see them anywhere. She looked back at Julie who was staring blankly into the blazing fire.

Just then Julie saw a lone figure dart from behind a tree. But she said nothing because it could have been a shadow. Later, however, when Julie looked up she saw two familiar faces in the glow of the dying coals. She nudged Sandra and nodded lightly in that direction. Sandra saw Ella and Cynthia, who had not been there before. She looked back at Julie, a suspicious look on her face. Julie returned the glance. But Ken had strummed the last chord on the lone guitar, Mr. Marcos smothered the dying coals, and Sandra and Julie made their way to their cabin.

The morning dawned all too quickly. This was the day of departure back to Riverdale. While everyone was busily packing, an atmosphere of gaiety seemed to prevail. Then all of a sudden, a cry of dismay came from the little cabin.

“It’s gone! It’s gone!” gasped Julie.

“What’s gone?” asked Sandra.

“M-my story,” said Julie. “Our door was unlocked last night when we were skating, wasn’t it?”

“Why, I guess so, but—”

“And remember last night when Ella and Cynthia were missing?”

“Well,” said Carolyn, “what are your conclusions?”

“I’m not accusing them,” said Julie, “at least not yet.”

“What was the story about, anyway?” asked Sandra. She knew how Julie loved to write.

“It was really very harmless, but in the hands of Ella and Cynthia, it could be a very dangerous weapon. You see,” Julie explained, “the title of it was *One More Night*. It was about two extremely jealous rivals. The story begins in their childhood and finishes when the girls are old ladies. Anyway, some of the incidents were similar to things that have happened between Cynthia and me. One of the girls is a very pretty strawberry blonde and very rich. The other is a little girl from the other side of the tracks. Of course, the rich one has an advantage over the other. In later life, the fellow whom they fight over is rich society man. But in the end, he chooses the poor girl, and the other has a very horrible defeat.”

“Oh, I see,” drawled Sandra, with a very understanding look. “Are you sure you’ve looked every place?”

"I'm positive," Julie assured her. "The only reason I brought it with me is that I was supposed to stop at the house of the magazine editor who lives halfway down the hill and give it to him. They were going to publish it in the February edition of 'The World and Its People.'"

"I bet you they did take it," said Carolyn.

Julie shook her head sadly. "Well, hope for the best and expect the worst."

"What are you going to do?" asked Sandra.

"I don't know," said Julie. "But just pretend you don't know anything has happened. And if you two, either of you, see anything of it, well, let me know."

Both girls nodded.

Hours later, Ken and Sandra and Eddy and Julie were in the car waiting for Steve and Carolyn. Soon Carolyn appeared but without Steve.

"Where's Steve?" asked Ken.

"He'll be here in a minute," answered Carolyn coolly. "He's talking to Ella and Cynthia." At that statement, Ken and Eddy looked at Carolyn in surprise for taking it so lightly. But Julie and Sandra only gave her a look as if to say, "Smart thinking!"

When Steve finally came, he had a large envelope in his hand. When Eddy questioned him about it, he replied that it was some kind of a business letter from Dr. Donaldson for his dad. Carolyn only looked at him in her own sweet way, then settled back on the seat beside him.

Halfway down the hill, Steve spoke to Ken, who was driving. "We need to stop here," he said, pointing to Ken's left. "Turn right there on Anchor Court."

There was a small metal sign on an old building. It read simply, "The World and Its People—Editorial Office." Julie secretly breathed a sigh of relief.

"I'll be right back," Carolyn announced, getting out of the car, envelope in hand.

"Hey, where is she going with Dr. Donaldson's letter to Steve's dad?" Eddy asked. But no one answered, so Eddy just scratched his head and shrugged.

Carolyn gave Julie a quick wink as she was coming back to the car. "Thank you," she whispered to Steve, snuggling up beside him again. But only Julie ever found out what Carolyn had promised Steve if he would get Julie's story from Ella and Cynthia's cabin when they were out. It would be Julie's very first published story, and she knew she would be forever grateful to Carolyn Bullenhacker.



Chapter 8. Christmas Eve in Riverdale

DAYS PASSED, AND BEFORE anyone knew it, it was almost Christmas Eve. As was the tradition, the kids met on Christmas Eve to go Christmas caroling. This year they met at the Emorys' large estate, which they called The Rolling Hills Ranch. Dr. Emory was a Professor of Dentistry at the University of Riverdale, and Mrs. Emory was a real society lady. Steve was their only son, and some even said he was a bit spoiled. The Emorys were pretty well to do, but they were generous and pretty nice people once you got to know them.

It was a tired but happy group who arrived back at Emorys' about 11:30 for hot chocolate and gingerbread, as was the custom. Everyone gathered around the big fireplace in Emorys' spacious living room to sing a few of the favorite old carols before departing to their various homes.

As Julie and Sandra were going home in the latter's car through the crowded streets of Riverdale, soft white flakes began to fall from the sky. It was a cold, crisp night in the city. Store windows were gaily lighted and decorated, and cheery Christmas bells were jingling everywhere. Unlike in other cities, in Riverdale Christmas Eve was the only night of the year that the stores all stayed open all night long.

When the girls finally made their way out of the traffic jam, Sandra prepared to turn on Sunset Lane.

"Why don't you keep on Main Street until we get to Seventh?" asked Julie. "It's quicker than turning here."

"I know," said Sandra, "but we'd have to pass Marsha's house."

"What does that have to do with it?" asked Julie curiously.

"Well," answered Sandra sheepishly, "I don't want her to see us together. She's probably still up."

"But, why?" asked Julie, now more confused than ever.

"Well," explained Sandra. "Just don't say anything about it. You see, Marsha doesn't quite understand the way we've been friends since fourth grade. She thinks because you're younger you should run around with kids your own age. Like Eddy. Don't get me wrong, Marsha's a real nice person and a good friend, but...well, she's kind of sensitive about our friendship. Do you understand?"

Julie was silent a moment. "Of course, Sandra," she replied softly while still looking straight ahead. *So that's why all the mystery*, Julie thought, *why Sandra never invites Marsha and me over at the same time*. Marsha had graduated last year and was now working in the Riverdale beauty shop. But she was so gay and seemed so young, as young as the kids in Sandra's class. She oftentimes came to many of the sophomore class parties. But lately Marsha had not been coming to so many things because of her job, Julie had supposed. "Oh, well," thought Julie, "here I am at home."

"Goodbye, Sandra," said Julie as she got out of the car. "Merry Christmas!"

"Merry Christmas!" returned Sandra.

Christmas day was a festive occasion for the people of Riverdale. Around four o'clock that day, Julie was washing the dishes from Christmas dinner when she saw a moving van pull up in the driveway of the empty house next door. As she watched, a man, a woman, and a girl whom Julie thought looked about her own age, emerged from the cab. When she looked again, she saw it was not really a moving van, only a large truck. The three people seemed to be dressed rather poorly. But, although their clothes were patched, they were neat and clean.

Julie resolved to herself to get better acquainted with the new family. However, she was very busy during the next week and did not get a chance to meet them. The next time she saw them was at church. They sat in the back row looking very timid. Their best clothes, Julie saw, although clean and pressed, were faded and worn. But Julie bore no prejudice,

and she greeted them with a warm smile. During the sermon, however, Julie could not keep her mind on the sermon for thinking of those people. She made up her mind to talk to the pastor as soon as church was over.



Epilogue: The Big Day

[EDITOR'S NOTE: THE narrative stops abruptly at the end of Chapter 8 and resumes several years in the future with the Epilogue.]

Sandra smiled to herself as she watched the sleek Emory station wagon peel out of the driveway. Steve was the same ol' playboy, grown up physically, cute enough to make any girl swoon, but still as mischievous as ever. He was a flirt and a tease but actually bashful when it came to asking for dates. He was a college man now but far from serious. Steve would make good, she knew, when he got over being torn between dentistry and politics. Or perhaps he would incorporate both into his life. Only time would tell.

For some reason, her thoughts drifted toward Cynthia. She hadn't changed much either—especially as far as Steve was concerned. Of course, Carolyn the “wolverine” had long since disappeared from the scene. There had been Phyllis and Diana and Suzi and who knows who else? But for seven long years, Cynthia had not given up. Sweet, sophisticated Cynthia was still chasing Steve.

Then there was Ella. She now thought Riverdale was such a dead town, and she had gone out of state to college. Boyfriends? Sandra didn't know. But surely Ella was a part of Riverdale, and Riverdale was still a part of her. Ella would be moving back to California, to New City to work as a dental hygienist. But there would always be those childhood memories of the swimming parties and hayrides and weekends at the RYC—and of Ken.

Ken! Sandra closed her eyes for a second. She had Ken's wedding invitation in her scrapbook. That RYC! It was in RYC that Ken had given her that silver heart, and it was in RYC that vivacious Gloria Martin had taken him from her. But through the months, Gloria—like Carolyn—had disappeared. And Ken had met Rebecca. He had been only eighteen when they got married, and Sandra didn't envy Rebecca. But she was happy for Ken, now a father-to-be.

Sandra turned from her window to answer the telephone that was now ringing. Her startled expression turned to laughter as she recognized the voice on the other end.

“JoAnn Cunningham! What are you doing back in ol' Riverdale?”

The girl laughed. “Oh, Sandra, I just had to see you. I heard about the special occasion, so I came to stay the weekend with my aunt. If you could come back to Riverdale after having gone away to Pacific Christian College up north, I guess I could drive over from New City.”

Sandra laughed. “JoAnn, it's been so long—nearly five years. Say, why don't you come over and we'll talk over old times?”

“Fine with me! But aren't you too busy today?”

“Oh, not now,” Sandra said. “I've been in a mad rush for the past two weeks. But everything's all ready now, and I've got all afternoon.”

“Okay!” agreed JoAnn. “Be right over!”

So in just ten minutes JoAnn was at Sandra's front door. When they saw each other, the surprise was even greater.

“Little Sandra with the pigtails!” JoAnn exclaimed. “Wow!”

Sandra laughed. “And what's happened to ‘freckle face’?”

JoAnn stretched out her arm, smiling. “This is what happened.”

“You're engaged!” Sandra cried. “How wonderful! Who is he?”

And so the afternoon passed, the two girls sharing future plans and reminiscing about past years.

“And how are the Donaldsons?” JoAnn asked presently. “Cynthia and Jim and Bruce?”

Sandra's eyes twinkled. "Especially Jim?"

JoAnn blushed. "Well, we did spend a lot of time together the few months I lived in Riverdale. Working on the paper, going to banquets, spending time at Riverdale Youth Camp—"

"Oh, the RYC!" Sandra sighed. "Too bad Mr. Marcos got transferred. We had such good socials. But then the kids started moving away and going away to school. By the way, how are Paul and Donna? Didn't they move to New City?"

"Yes, but we don't see them too often. New City's a big place. All I know is that their little girl will start Kindergarten this fall."

"Their little girl! Why, JoAnn, they were only newlyweds when they came to Riverdale. Time really flies, I guess."

"Speaking of time," JoAnn said, "look at the clock. I'd better be going. Just two hours, Sandra!"

The girls rose to their feet. "It's been a lovely afternoon, JoAnn. Thanks for stopping by."

"Thank *you*," JoAnn said. "You can meet my husband-to-be tonight when I meet yours. See you there. And, Sandra, calm down!"

Sandra giggled. "Bye, hon."

Too excited to eat, Sandra showered and dressed and waited. Then an old scrapbook in the corner of her closet caught her eye. She sat down and began to thumb through it. There were pictures of a high school banquet and very familiar faces. The snapshots were candid shots Jim had taken, and now Sandra laughed out loud at some of the scenes.

There was best friend Julie, perplexed and surrounded by three boys—Dennis, Billy, and Eddy. Sandra remembered that banquet well—and afterward. Julie had probably long since forgotten the dilemma of choosing between Dennis and Billy since both fellows had disappeared from the Riverdale group. Not long after Dennis moved away, Eddy and Billy Kingston's family had moved away, too. Now they lived in Riverdale only in memory.

Julie had grown up very much since that banquet. She had known the childhood agony of young and foolish first love, the excitement of dating an "older man" when she was a high school junior, the heartbreak and insight into the problems of going steady, and the phases of retreating then "playing the field" and then beginning to settle down and grow up.

"Sandra, honey, are you ready yet?" The voice broke her thoughts.

"Yes, Daddy," she called. "I'll be right there."

Sandra smiled inside as she walked out to the car with her new family. It had been so hard for so long after Mom had died, but Sandra and her father shared a strong faith in God. Now he was happy with the new Mrs. Lee and the son he had always wanted. And, of course, he had his only daughter Sandra.

The 17-year-old boy climbed into the back seat beside his stepsister. "Hey, Sandra, why does an elephant have flat feet?"

Sandra looked at her little brother Joe. "From jumping out of trees," she answered in mock nonchalance. "Why does an elephant wear tennis shoes?"

"Because he has flat feet," Joe returned. "And he floats downstream on his back so he won't get his tennis shoes wet, and you can tell if an elephant's in your bathtub because you can smell peanuts on his breath."

Sandra sighed, looking at Joe from the corner of her eye, trying hard not to laugh.

Joe giggled. "Now that I've wrecked all your elephant jokes—"

"Oh, yeah?" she retorted. "How do you get down from an elephant?"

Joe was stumped. "Aw, come on, sis, tell me!" he pleaded.

"After the honeymoon," she teased.

While Sandra waited for Julie to arrive in the bridal room at the church, her mind began to wander again. Riverdale, like the people who lived in it, had changed too. The "little kids" who once had been so unimportant to Riverdale were now the center of everything. There was Cynthia's younger brother Bruce, Ella's little brother Frank and sister Judy, and many more who had moved in and grown up. Beth and Fred and Carole and—Sandra couldn't possibly name them all.

At that moment, Julie appeared, duly excited. "Well, Sandra, it's almost time for the big moment!"

Sandra could not hide the anticipation. “Oh, Julie!”

“Oh, yes, I meant to tell you—Marsha’s here with Larry!”

“Oh? Did you talk to her?” Sandra remembered for an instant the trivial childhood jealousies that had long ago been forgotten.

“Just for a few minutes. She was so sorry I wasn’t able to go to her wedding, but I told her you said it was beautiful.”

“Speaking of weddings, Julie, didn’t Sarah get married recently?”

“Yes,” Julie answered, “she married a very fine Christian man. I’m really happy for her. You know, everybody was worried about her for such a long time. But no one could blame her much for running away from home—if you could call it a home. She’s had such a hard time in life. I’ll never forget that Christmas when they moved to Riverdale, right next door to us—”

Sandra nudged her. “Excuse me, but isn’t that Darlene?”

Julie looked. “Say, it is! And that’s Dr. Smith’s son she’s with! She’s doing pretty good, I guess.”

Sandra smiled. Then she sighed. “Oh, Julie, just think. In just a few minutes, Bob will be standing up there on the platform just waiting for his bride..”

“Oh, Sandra! How could things be any more perfect? You know, when I first met Allen at Highview, I had wanted to be a minister’s wife for as long as I could remember. And we made all those plans for when Allen and Bob would finish seminary then the four of us would be an evangelistic team. But I never dreamed that I would meet my best friend and soul mate Howard at La Paloma College, much less be getting married to him this summer. God has been so good to us both. Sandra, we’re the luckiest people in the whole wide world!

“Julie, our cue’s coming pretty quick,” Sandra whispered. “This is it!”

It was just a few seconds until the Wedding March began, but in that few seconds, Sandra’s life seemed to pass through her mind. The summer after Ken, there had been LeRoy Chester who moved next door. They, too, had planned to be married—until he moved away. He was gone completely from Riverdale and from Sandra’s heart. Then there had been George, rich and romantic. George’s wedding had been two years ago.

Then there was the schoolteacher, Raymond Pierce, eleven years older but full of life and living it to the fullest. He had proposed to Sandra and promised her a nice home, prestige, and a way through college with all the trimmings. To Sandra, it was wild and exciting, but not exactly what she wanted to live with 24 hours a day.

But it was through Raymond that Sandra had met Bob, the Bob she was going to marry very, very soon. She remembered the Christmas Eve they spent with Allen and Julie and the plans they had made for the years at college and seminary and the evangelistic team, but especially for Sandra and Bob’s life together for God. Of course, their courtship and engagement had been long. She had even had a brief fling with Kurt Gaston and Bill Johnson, who were so much a part of Riverdale. And, of course, things had changed a lot for Julie, too. She had finally gotten over Allen Macintosh and had found the love of her life in Howard Davidson.

Now Sandra and Julie were grown up women, not little girls of Riverdale. The *Wedding March* had begun, and Julie as maid of honor had started down the aisle. A little nervously, Sandra smiled at her father and took his arm. Then they started down the aisle toward the minister on the platform where Bob stood, waiting for his bride....

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A mini-novella describes the first relationship of main character Julie Scott with boyfriend Allen Macintosh, a character who will appear again and again throughout the Riverdale series. Both are attending a private Christian day school, Highview Academy, in a town 35 miles away from Riverdale. Allen and Julie's first date is to a concert at nearby La Paloma College in November 1960. These stories were written in an era when the word "gay" meant "happy" or "joyful," nothing more.

1. <https://books2read.com/u/31YDVM>

2. <https://books2read.com/u/31YDVM>

Also by Juliana Harvard

It Happened in Riverdale

It Happened in Riverdale

November Rain

That Morgan Boy

Beach City Breakup



About the Author

Juliana Harvard's writing spans more than five decades, from her adolescence until well past midlife. It is reflective of her most emotional moments, sometimes of ecstasy and wonder, sometimes of sadness and pain, and other times of sweet melancholy and contentment beyond words.

DISCLAIMER: "These are works of fiction. Any similarities to persons and places are frequent, intentional, and occasionally brazen, but generally fragmentary, inconsistent, and disguised with fanciful invention."

–Stephen Minot, *Three Genres*