



November Rain

Juliana Harvard

It Happened in Riverdale, Book 2

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NOVEMBER RAIN

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Also by Juliana Harvard

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That Morgan Boy

Beach City Breakup

To Allen Macintosh, my first love



The Acquaintance

“I sure wish we didn’t have to move.” Eloise stared down at the dusty road, partly to shade her eyes from the August sun which beat down upon the girls, and partly because of the fact of her statement.

“Yes, it’s too bad. Just when you get to know someone, it seems, they have to move,” said the older dark-haired girl. “It’s a shame they have to transfer our ministers so often. Who *is* the new pastor, anyway?”

“Macintosh, I think Daddy said.”

“Do they have any kids, these Mac— Mac —What was the name?”

“Macintosh,” repeated Eloise. “I think they have some boys about your age.” Her eyes were teasing.

“Really?” Julie’s eyes twinkled. Ever since June when Eddy had moved away, she had been lonely. She still remembered that last hayride.

“I don’t know,” shrugged Eloise. “I was just kidding you.”

Julie smiled even now as she recalled that scene, one of the last times she had spent with Eloise before the Tibbses had moved to Ocean City. Now Julie checked her errand list and entered the door of the five-and-ten, Sprouse-Reitz.

“Hi, Julia!” greeted a pleasant redhead.

“Oh, hi, Ella,” Julie returned. “What are you doing here?”

“Just getting some things for Mom,” Ella answered. “Say, have you met the Macintoshes?”

“Oh, are they in Riverdale now?”

“Yes, they were at prayer meeting last night. Pastor Macintosh is pretty nice, and Mrs. Macintosh is the sweetest person you could ever want to know. They’ve got three boys, but they weren’t there last night.”

“*Three* boys!” Julie was afraid to ask their ages.

“Yes. I hear the oldest boy—Allen, I think is his name—is going to Highview Academy.” Ella turned quickly. “Oh, there’s Mom! See you tomorrow night.”

Allen Macintosh—that was an unfamiliar name, at least in the Riverdale gang. *Highview Academy, huh? I wonder what he’s like.* But tomorrow night soon came.

He stood there all alone in the church’s hallway, looking through the window into the sanctuary. His blond hair, not cut short like most of the fellows’, was the first thing Julie noticed besides the neat blue suit he wore. And he wore glasses. “Probably the intellectual-type snob,” she thought. Then she hurried on inside to play the organ.

Allen could see her at the organ and soon heard her play. “She isn’t too pretty,” he thought, “but she plays well.”

The following day at church was the beginning of Julie’s acquaintance with the Macintoshes. Mrs. Macintosh *was* a sweet person. The two younger ones, Peter and Kenny, were typical boys. The pastor was a very congenial and handsome man. He and his family were recent converts from another popular Protestant denomination. His sermon that day was a “let’s-get-acquainted” as he told his story from the time of his teenage conversion and his restless longing, searching for truth until the present time. It was a wonderfully touching story to hear, and Julie’s eyes were not dry as the congregation sang the closing hymn. And thus was her first great impression of the Macintosh family.

“Julie, isn’t the new minister’s son—what’s his name?—Allen? Isn’t he supposed to be here tonight?” Sandra nudged her friend.

“I think so,” the other girl shrugged. Just then a station wagon pulled into the driveway and Julie heard familiar voices.

The teenagers, gathered at Ken Nelson’s folks’ farm, were eager to get started on the hayride. All the kids were there except Cynthia and her two brothers—and Allen Macintosh.

Now Cynthia appeared in the doorway with a cheery greeting and an apology for being late. Then, turning toward the boy who followed her, she announced, “Hey, kids, you know Allen, don’t you? Allen, you know Ella and my brothers, there’s Butch and Carlos, here’s Sandra and Julie and Ken...” She pointed to each one as she continued on around the room calling out each name.

“And here’s Steve!” bellowed a voice from the kitchen. The kids laughed to see the handsome, popular “life of the party” gulping down a cookie that just couldn’t wait for later.

Allen smiled, too. “Hello, Steve,” he said.

The Riverdale Youth Club social was a success. After the hayride, there were refreshments then a volleyball game in Nelsons’ driveway until, one by one, the teenagers went home.

Julie, timid and insecure, couldn’t help feeling just a little lonely since best friend Sandra was with LeRoy. With the full August moon above her, Julie half-wished Eddy hadn’t moved away. Then, from a distance, she got a good look at the new minister’s oldest son. He sure looked different in a T-shirt and jeans than he had in his suit. *He must be about 14 if he’s a freshman. And why did he come tonight with Cynthia?* But soon it was over, the weekend had passed, and school was about to begin.

The first day of school dawned bright and early, but Julie was up before the sun. There was that piano to practice. Then came the thrill of first climbing into the Emorys’ station wagon on a crisp autumn morning with all five or six books in one’s arms. This was Mrs. Emory’s last year at the dental hygiene school in Highview. Perhaps Steve, being sixteen next year, would drive to La Paloma Prep School for his junior year. Perhaps...but Julie determined to enjoy the present and not worry about the future.

If Julie were timid and insecure, Allen could not detect it. *After all, wasn’t she going with the playboy, Steve?* This thought ran through Allen’s mind along with other confused things as he dressed for school. He shivered a bit—half from the chill of the early morning and half from the excitement of something new and unknown—as he waited on the corner. Then he saw the gray station wagon that pulled over to the curb. But as he got into the car, it surprised Allen to see only Steve, his mom, and little sister Sharon in the front. So Carlos, Julie, and Allen sat in the back. *Is Julie going with Steve?*

“Good morning, Mrs. Emory,” he greeted cheerily as he got in and closed the door. “And Steve, Carlos, Sharon, and Julie.” She smiled in recognition when he spoke her name. And she mentally noted his mannerly courtesy.

After the first few miles of normal chatter, silence grew. Allen settled back to relax and thought about the day ahead of him and this new way of life. It was his first day in high school, his first year in a Christian academy. He no longer missed the movies and school dances and pork chops on Sunday, at least not as much. He was a young Christian struggling to grow toward perfection, and he had a new vision of what God expected of him—his very best.

He would be a minister or a teacher, perhaps a teacher like Mr. Van Dyunen of his eighth-grade year. That was a good year. The scenes of his lovely eighth-grade graduation barely three months ago were still fresh in his memory. He remembered pretty dark-haired Nancy, the girl who lived up to the high standards he now believed in and made his own. And before that, in Arizona, was Jonelle he had met at the camp meeting where he first found his Lord. *I wonder if all Christian girls are the same.* He glanced at Julie. *Well, there was always Cynthia. But if only she wasn’t going away to boarding school at San Margo Academy. Well, that’s life. That’s a common saying, but what is life, really?* Life right now meant school as the faded yellow building loomed up in the distance.

So this is Highview! It was an adventurous day. For Steve, little Sharon, and Julie, it would be a renewal of old friendships with other Riverdale High students who had transferred to Highview Academy. For Carlos and Allen, both freshmen, it would be an introduction to new young people and teachers and a new classroom routine. With the passing days, the familiarity grew until school was well under way for another year.



A Friendship Begins

The weeks passed, and soon the schedule of getting up early and getting home late was a routine. The Macintoshes moved into a new house on the corner of Gilbert Street where Julie lived nine blocks away. Now Allen waited for Mrs. Emory on the corner of Devonshire and Gilbert Street, where Julie also waited.

Soon Allen concluded that Julie and Steve *weren't* going together, although she surely must still like such a handsome fellow as he. And Allen wasn't sure he could really blame Steve for liking Julie—if he ever had.

There was one unique feature of the program of the six who attended school in Highview—the town was located 35 miles from Riverdale, the longest distance any of the students had to travel. This meant leaving home at 7:15 a.m. and returning home after five every night except Friday. And because of Mrs. Emory's class schedule, this also meant breakfast in the Highview College Cafeteria on Monday mornings. But the kids did their homework after school in the College library. It was normal for the five to study at the same table: brilliant, unoccupied, mischief-loving Carlos; handsome, quick-tempered, good-natured Steve; studious, timid, and self-conscious Julie; this new personality, Allen; and Sharon, who after a short time, because of her restless lively energies, went to a babysitter's after school.

One particular afternoon, Allen and Julie just sat across from each other at the study table for the first time, but not the last. Engaged in a low-toned informal conversation, the two grew better acquainted, as is the natural course. Allen discovered that beneath her quiet reserve, Julie could be quite a friendly girl. And she discovered that although this pastor's son was different, he was a real wit and a ball to be with.

Then Julie left for home right after school on Mondays because of a music lesson. But Allen, who had made friends with Steve and Carlos, scarcely missed her until one day she spoke to him.

"Would you like a ride home early? My folks are here," she said.

Allen thought a minute. "What about the other boys?"

"Steve would rather wait for his mom," Julie continued, "and Carlos wants to stay with him."

It really didn't matter to Allen how he got home, but the sooner the better. "Okay. Thanks," he said hastily and followed her to the car.

But Monday after Monday, Allen continued to accept Julie's invitation. Then came that weekend, that Riverdale Youth Club campout at Pine Cove.

Dr. and Mrs. Emory were excellent as the RYC sponsors. The food was terrific, and the well-planned activities were spectacular. Perhaps Allen's younger brother Peter noticed more than Allen did that quite a few couples existed among the group. But Allen, too, silently watched.

Riding up to the mountain campsite late in the afternoon in the back of Emorys' truck, couples snuggled together because it was chilly. Peter had teased Allen, who became provoked, and Julie, who had turned red; but now Allen secretly observed her. There would be time, he figured, in the weeks to come to get to know Julie.

Mornings passed and mornings grew colder. And morning after morning Julie and Allen came from opposite directions and met at the gas station on the corner of Gilbert Street and Florida Avenue to wait for Mrs. Emory. This crisp cool October morning Julie's books lay on the cash box and Allen's books balanced on the hood of his father's Simca parked approximately 15 feet from where they stood.

The two stood watching the western horizon when suddenly Allen started. "Hey, here they come!"

Julie looked up. Sure enough, the gray station wagon was rolling through the mist. By this time, Allen had turned and headed for the cash box.

"Your books are on the car," Julie said, thinking he had forgotten.

He stopped and flushed slightly. "Oh, I was just going to get yours for you," he blurted.

"Oh." Now it was Julie's turn to blush. But Emorys had arrived, so there was no time for debate. And each grabbed their own books and scrambled to the car.

If Julie had suspected what was going on in Allen's mind, she might have acted differently. But she soon forgot this simple incident.

"So," said Sandra over the phone the next night, "you're almost 14, huh?"

"Just two more days!" affirmed her friend.

"Well, Julie—'sweet fourteen and never been kissed,'" she teased. "Allen will have to do something about that!"

Julie laughed, then said, "Oh, no. Allen isn't that kind of guy. Anyway, we'll probably be nothing more than just casual friends. After all, he *is* the pastor's son!"

"Well, I don't know," drawled Sandra. "After what happened yesterday with your books—"

"Oh," Julie interrupted, "that was nothing but an act of courtesy. Nothing in the way of romance will ever happen between *us*."

Sandra said no more.

Then Julie turned 14 on a Monday afternoon. By now, Allen and Julie felt quite at ease in talking to each other.

Prior to this, Allen had noticed that Julie wrote a lot in the car instead of taking part in the boys' conversation or listening to the radio or just plain enjoying the scenery (which, after several weeks, had grown quite familiar). After some time, he found out that what she wrote was stories, fiction or nonfiction, it made no difference as long as there was a girl, a boy, and a good plot. Allen had read some of her stories and became intrigued. This curiosity led to the general drift of the conversation that Monday afternoon. But somehow Julie got off on a tangent.

"You mean you write stories just for fun?" Allen asked.

She nodded.

"Well," he said, "where do you get all the ideas?"

She shrugged. "Oh, I get inspirations from my own experiences and from my friends' experiences." She laughed. "I remember the first story I ever wrote—'The Luckiest Girl in Town.'"

"Oh?" he said, laughing with her.

But the smile disappeared from her face. And somehow it slipped out, the story of her jealousy of Cynthia and Steve and their grade-school romance.

Now Allen understood. And somehow the fact that Julie had involuntarily taken Allen into her confidence made Allen want to understand her better.

Now Julie noticed little things more and more—the way he would always tell her how good her organ music was, the time he sat beside her in church, and the times he phoned for unimportant reasons. Then came the Week of Prayer at Highview Academy that directed the course of things for Allen and Julie.

"Looking at Life"—that was the theme of the thought-provoking informal talks presented in a teenager's language by Dean Alexander from nearby La Paloma College. This week was a turning point in many lives, including Julie's. She had been a Christian most of her life, but lately it seemed she had been almost asleep spiritually. But something happened in Julie's life as she made one of the most important decisions of her entire life—her decision for God. And in the days that followed, even Allen noticed the change. Julie was a dedicated Christian, the kind of Christian he wanted for a close friend.

It was November, and the weather was quite chilly. But to Julie everything seemed like spring—wonderful, exuberant, and unexplainable. Maybe it was her vows to God. Maybe it was a secret looking-forward-to of Monday afternoons. Maybe it was a subconscious intuition that something big might happen....

"Say, wasn't that an excellent program today?" Julie asked casually that November Monday.

“Yes, it was,” agreed Allen. “La Paloma College orchestra, huh? They’re pretty good. Are you going to their concert Saturday night?”

“Oh, I’d love to!” she said, thinking only of the music. “But,” her countenance fell, “La Paloma’s so far away from Riverdale, and I know my folks won’t take me that late at night.”

“I’d like to go, too,” Allen said. “Maybe I can get my folks to go. Would you like to go?” The question was casual, but for a moment their eyes met, and the magic sparkle seemed to spell one word—date.

“I’d be delighted!” she almost breathed. Looking out the window behind Allen, she said, “I-I’ll let you know.”



November Rain

It was Wednesday morning when Allen told Julie that his folks were going to La Paloma Saturday night. “Could you go?” he asked.

Julie wanted very much to say “yes,” but she quietly replied, “I don’t know for sure now. I’ll let you know Friday night, okay?”

Friday night came. As usual, Allen was the first to tell Julie he liked her organ playing. Then, “Tomorrow night?” he asked.

“We may go to visit my cousins,” she answered gingerly. “I’ll call you.”

So Allen waited. And waited until the next afternoon when he could wait no longer. He picked up the phone and dialed a number.

“Yes, Allen, I’ll go with you tonight,” was music to his ears.

“Fine, Julie!” Allen sighed inside. “I’ll see you about six, okay?”

But six o’clock came. And Allen, Peter, and Mrs. Macintosh were at Emorys’ house visiting. Allen looked at his watch nervously, although his mother knew what was going on in his mind. But Emorys weren’t people one could just leave.

“How would you like to go over to La Paloma with us to a concert tonight, Steve?” Mrs. Macintosh asked.

So when Allen finally knocked on the door of Julie’s house, where she had been ready for a half hour, they were on their way. *Some “date,”* Allen thought—*escorted by Mother, with best friend and little brother along!* But once Allen and Julie were together, it didn’t really seem to matter.

This was so new and exciting for Julie. And everything was happening so fast. Ever since grade school days and Riverdale and Eddy and graduation night, life had been uneventful. Now she wondered if she could be good enough company for Allen to want to go with again. And again.

But Allen never knew what Julie was thinking. The night was pleasant, the melodious strains of wonderful music floated lightly through the silent hall, and an attentive, prettily shy girl sat by his side. And he was enjoying it all.

Soon, too soon, the program was over. And Allen, Julie, Steve, Peter, and Mrs. Macintosh started toward the car. But the clear November skies had clouded over, a chilly breeze rustled, and they felt a light drizzle. November rain! The first rain of the season!

“Oh, my hair!” Julie exclaimed almost delightedly.

Spotting a newspaper under a tree, Mrs. Macintosh picked it up and divided it with Julie to hold over their heads. “Here, let me do that,” Allen offered, taking the paper. And together they walked out to the car.

A tired but happy couple was glad to see the lights of Riverdale. Mrs. Macintosh left Steve off at his ranch. Then there were three more miles to Julie’s house. Silently and quickly Julie felt a soft warm hand over hers. Her eyes met Allen’s, capturing the magic sparkle as if to echo the words of the popular song, “Somethin’ good’ll come from this.”

It was still raining when the Simca stopped at Julie’s house. Allen was *so* sleepy—and quite embarrassed when his mom had to say, “Why, Allen, walk Julie to the door.” And it was all Julie could do to conceal a little giggle.

But once out of the reach of the car’s parking lights, Allen slipped his arm lightly around Julie’s waist.

“Thank you,” she said at the door. “Good night.”

But “good night” did not mean “goodbye.”

Early Sunday afternoon Julie’s phone was ringing, and Allen was on the line.

“I just wondered if you have any poems I might use in my scrapbook for my English project,” he said.

“Oh, yes. You asked me about that last Friday, didn’t you?” Julie recalled. “I think I said I’d try to bring some to you tomorrow, didn’t I?”

Perhaps Allen thought Julie had a poor memory. But he said, “Well, I had to have an excuse to phone you!”

To Julie, this was the first sign she might mean something special to Allen.

Monday came and was soon over. Nowhere but in Riverdale Valley were November evenings so beautiful. The long ride each day and the waiting after school grew monotonous. But to Allen and Julie, to travel those last few miles over the rolling hills planted in wheat and melons and watch the road like a long black ribbon stretching around the purple hills and past picturesque farms and cottages, then to glimpse the tall slender palm trees on the outskirts of Riverdale silhouetted against the inspiring November sunset—all this seemed to compensate for the long day. And, one by one, glittering stars appeared in the velvety sky. And a particular one in the southwestern sky seemed to glow brighter than any of the others.

“Venus!” Julie whispered delightedly.

“Starlight, star bright...” Allen replied with a tender smile. And once again, Julie felt a soft warm hand over her own.



Teenage Romance or Realism

Excitement filled the crisp morning air as the students of Highview boarded the buses soon en route to Irving Park for the annual school picnic. Julie, especially, wondered about what this day might be like. Allen was sitting beside her, and she knew they had not been unnoticed. And Julie's new pride didn't cease as the day passed. They were in activities together. Even the splattered yolk on her white shoe from Allen's getting too nervous in the egg-throwing contest didn't matter. Julie loved every moment.

Later in the afternoon, Allen and Julie were just walking around when he dared to take her hand. But no sooner had he done so with an air of confidence than she slipped it out. "Mr. Wesley," she said in a low voice.

Allen looked around in embarrassment. *But teacher or no teacher, Allen wondered. Was that the real reason?*

But it was a proud and happy Julie who boarded the bus that afternoon with egg on her shoe, Allen's watch dangling on her arm, and many beautiful memories to treasure.

The days passed, and Allen and Julie felt they belonged together more and more. There seemed to be something new and exciting every day—a rainbow or a cloud—but Allen and Julie shared it.

Everything was so perfect. Allen and Julie could be together every day, to talk, to share their ideas and dreams. Then every weekend was special, too, just because they were special to each other. There was Young People's meeting and church when Allen and Julie could worship together, sharing a simple faith. Then the afternoon walks, hand in hand, through the country streets of Riverdale. And when Saturday night came, Allen and Julie were together again.

It was at a church social when Allen and Julie sat with Cynthia and Steve. During the moving picture, Allen quietly took Julie's hand. But she was afraid. *Not at a church social, Allen. What will they say?*

But Steve and Cynthia had already gone outside to play basketball with the younger kids. Allen and Julie went out, too. Soon, however, interest in the basketball game faded, and it left only the four of them.

"Oh, let's not quit now," Steve said. "Come on, Allen, you and Julie against Cynthia and me—'Lovers' Teams!" And so the evening passed. But Allen did not forget what Steve had said. Allen knew they accepted him and Julie as a couple.

But all too soon the honey and roses wilted. Allen's eyes filled with stars, seeing no girl but Julie. He looked forward every day to riding to school beside her in Emorys' car. But one morning when Emorys arrived at the corner, Steve and Carlos sat in the back. So Julie climbed into the front, leaving Allen to sit in the back without her. Allen said nothing then, but it deflated his ego just a little. *What could he do to prove to Julie that he really liked her?*

The day could not pass fast enough. And the minutes after school seemed to drag. Where *was* Julie? Just then her best friend at Highview passed.

"Bobbie!" Allen called. "Where's Julie?"

"Oh." Bobbie smiled warmly. "You're waiting for her?"

Allen nodded. "I suppose she's already gone?"

"No, I think she's just fooling around some place. I'll go see if I can find her and tell her you're waiting for her."

"Well, I-I—" But Bobbie disappeared.

In a few minutes, Julie appeared. Together they walked to the College library as usual. Then Allen said, "Julie?"

At first she did not sense the tenseness in his voice. "Yes, Allen?"

"Why did you ask Steve to sit in the back seat this morning?"

Julie started. "I didn't, Allen!" But why *had* Steve sat in the back seat, instead of in front with his mother and sister, as usual? It wasn't long before they found out.

Arriving at Emorys' car, a very facetious Steve, Carlos, and Sharon greeted the two. Giving a couple of young lovers a bad time might be inevitable, but Allen didn't like it. *What right do they have to intrude?* Allen should have expected more, much more. But, for the present, his security was in Julie.

Julie, too, found her security in her relationship with Allen. When the kids gave her a rough time, she always knew Allen would understand. After a Saturday night party at Macintoshes' house, Julie had sat down to play the piano when Allen snuggled up beside her.

"Play this," he said, placing sheet music in front of her. She played, and they sang it softly.

"Our song," he whispered, holding her close. "My Happiness."

Every afternoon Mrs. Emory let Allen and Julie off on the corner right across the street where they met every morning, and where another gas station stood. But every afternoon the goodbyes took longer and longer to say. And soon a half hour seemed like only a few minutes.

One day Allen seemed quieter than usual. *I hope he isn't mad at me*, Julie thought.

She spoke kindly. "What is it, Allen?"

"Nothing," he replied, looking down. *I don't want to tell you, Julie*. But he looked at her questioning face, her brown eyes reflecting her wonder. "You aren't mad at me, are you, Julie?"

"No, of course not," she smiled a little. "I thought you...well, why should I be?"

He shrugged. "I don't know, Julie. I guess I've been acting dumb today." Now he would not let his eyes meet hers. "You might as well know. Mr. Conrad had a talk with me."

"Oh." Julie's smile faded. "About—us?"

"It was nothing, really, I guess. Mostly teasing and stuff. But in front of the fellows in the shop. Especially Otto and Karl." He looked at her now. "They give us enough trouble at school."

"Oh, I know." Julie smiled in sympathy now. "But at least Mr. Conrad wasn't mad, was he?"

"No, not exactly. It's just—" Allen shook his head. "Oh, forget it, Julie! I-I'm sorry."

Julie said no more.

But Allen's turn to be sympathetic soon came. In the College library after school, Julie had gone to lie down in the ladies' lounge. Allen missed her smile from across the study table. "I'm tired," she had said, but was that all? Allen seemed to sense there was something more.

Five o'clock came, and the kids picked up their books and started toward the parking lot. But Allen refused to let Julie carry her books.

"I'll take them," she said weakly. "I-I'm all right."

"No!" Allen was firm. "Don't argue with me!"

But Allen wondered as he sat in the car waiting for Mrs. Emory. There sat his Julie, laughing and talking gaily with Steve, much more than usual. Then, at the corner gas station, it was the same quiet Julie who stood talking to baffled Allen.

"What's wrong, Julie?" he finally asked. "Aren't you feeling well?"

"I'm just a little tired," she said.

Allen took her hand. "Julie, may I ask you something?"

"Go ahead, Allen."

"But—but please don't be offended—or even feel you have to answer—"

"What is it, Allen?"

"You still like Steve, don't you?"

"Steve is a very nice person, Allen."

"Yes, I know he is. And I don't blame you—"

"But"—she paused only briefly—"not as nice as you."

Allen sighed just a little as he put his arm around Julie and squeezed her. “Oh, Julie, you don’t have to say that just to make me feel good.”

“I mean it, Allen.”

Just then a black Simca appeared, and Allen jumped a little. “My mother!” he said.

“Hi, Mrs. Macintosh!” Julie called, feeling just a little foolish.

“Hi, Julie!” Mrs. Macintosh returned. Then, “Ready to go home, son? I called Julie’s house to see if you were there.”

Allen, also feeling foolish, said nothing except, “Goodbye, Julie,” as he climbed into the car.

But the discussion was unfinished. “There are lots of things I’d like to know, Julie,” Allen said the next day. “But I don’t want to put it into words. It sounds pretty stupid.”

“Don’t be afraid to talk to me,” Julie said. “I’ll understand.”

Finally, Allen wrote three questions in a note. And it was at the corner gas station when Julie tried to answer them.

“My folks didn’t say too much about last night except I should have been doing my homework,” she began. Then, “Allen, I think a *lot* of you. There is absolutely nothing between Steve and me. A sixth-grade romance.” She laughed.

Allen smiled. “Okay, Julie,” he whispered. “Okay.”

The days passed. One evening Allen said, “Julie, I’ve lost my English book. Do you have yours from last year?”

“Yeah, I’ll bring it tomorrow.”

“Oh,” Allen interjected, “I’ll walk home with you tonight and get it if—if it’s okay.”

“Sure!” And so began the tradition of Allen walking Julie home every night and carrying her books every day.

But the talking and teasing of Allen and Julie had not stopped. The half hours at the gas station had become hours. The starry-eyed romanticism—plus their understanding of each other—had grown. But the antagonism from Carlos and Steve, and especially from Otto and Karl, grew. And Allen’s occasional moodiness came at the wrong times. It was late one Friday night, after an especially awful week, that Allen wrote a letter.

He had talked about this to Julie before. “That Otto and Karl really don’t know when to stop teasing, do they?” Julie had observed.

Allen shook his head almost hopelessly. “It’s not only them, Julie. It’s all over school! Why do they talk about us like this?”

“Well,” Julie tried to rationalize, “I guess most couples get talked about, eventually.”

“But we have done nothing to deserve it!” Allen defended. “Why is the gossip just about one couple—you and me?”

“Is it?”

“Yes! What right do they have to do it?”

Julie, too, had shaken her head. Now Allen wrote, “Julie, even though my father has reasoned things out with me, I still have somewhat of a feeling of anxiety.” And then, “You know, Julie, you’re the first girl I think I ever *really* liked—with all my heart—and it’s wonderful to have a girlfriend like you that really, really understands me. Yes, you’re the one I’m sure I can always trust....”

To Julie, that letter was worth more than gold. Somehow she had to let Allen know how much she appreciated him, too.

Then after church Allen invited Julie home with him, the first of many, many times that Julie would eat with the Macintoshes. That day, too, was very special because Allen and Julie were together working for God. In the afternoon, they went on the usual young people’s singing bands, visiting shut-ins.

Then that night they went Christmas caroling, going from door to door collecting funds for missions. And Julie did everything she could to tell Allen in a thousand little ways how much she really liked him.

“You’re wonderful!” Allen kept whispering into her ear as he hugged her tightly....

But when the weekend was over, Julie sat down to answer Allen’s letter. She felt guilty. They *had* gone too far Saturday night. Why did she ever let herself get out of control? Why, letting Allen put his arms around her right in front of Ella’s

mother and the other church people! And the way he had snuggled up in the car! She knew she must never let it happen again. She tried her best to put her feelings into words as she wrote to Allen.

Their relationship was the same; but in a day or two, Allen gave her his reply:

“There is no reason in the world for you to feel ‘wicked’—I’m the one who should take all the blame. And I’m sorry...

“You said you felt that Saturday night was your fault because you were afraid to say ‘no.’ I disagree with you on this point (now this is what’s harder to put into words!)—but don’t ever be afraid to tell me ‘no’!

“What is your view now (as of 6:30, December 12, 1960) about holding hands; about the times I put my arm around you Saturday night; what exactly did you think when I first put my arm around you?

“And also, you’ve never told me just how you feel about going steady.

“Oh, yes, one more thing. I think you’re pretty, even if you don’t think so.”

It was in that weekend that Allen and Julie grew up. They narrowed the gap that had been between them before. They could really talk things over, to talk about their growing affection. And Allen and Julie, each in their own mind, began to ask the question that neither dared say out loud: *Could this be love?*



Could This Be Love?

The next weekend found the Riverdale youth on Mexico's border. It was the annual Youth Congress held at the mission school in Calexico, just on the northern side of the border. Many young people from all of southern California had come for inspiration and a little deeper insight into mission work. Among them were Allen and Julie.

Such an experience! The meetings were wonderful—God was so near—and Allen and Julie shared it all. They went with a group to a boys' home in Mexico where they sang songs and gave Christmas packages. Then Allen and Julie ate their supper together in the plaza, or park, just at sunset.

But about halfway through the meeting that evening, Allen and Julie and two others, Gloria and Ken, went on an excursion in downtown Calexico. The streets were all decorated in Christmas fashion, and bright signs of "Feliz Navidad" were everywhere. Neither Allen nor Julie felt exactly right about ditching the meeting, but for a while neither spoke.

Then Julie said, "Allen, we shouldn't have come."

Allen, who wasn't acting as gay as he had when they first started out, looked at her. "You know, Julie, that's just what I was thinking. Let's go back."

"But Gloria and Ken—"

"Hey, kids!" Allen called to the couple ahead of them. "Don't you think we should go back?"

"Oh, we just got started!" exclaimed Gloria gaily. "Not now!"

"But—" Julie spoke.

"You two go on if you want to," Ken said.

"Well—" Allen and Julie looked at each other and then back at Ken. They hesitated. But they both knew what was right.

"Okay," Allen said, "we'll see you back at the school."

And with lighter hearts, the two started back. High above the town of Calexico, the moon glowed in a sky full of stars just for Allen and Julie. On the way back, they passed a magnificent old Spanish mansion made from white stone. And from somewhere in the shadows, someone strummed a lone guitar. Neither spoke for a long while, and Allen held Julie's hand tightly in his own.

"Julie, will you go steady with me?" Allen whispered at last.

Arriving back at the meeting, they heard the strains of the closing song, sung by the mission school chorus, floating through the quiet night. "Mas alla del sol..." "Far beyond the sun..." Standing in the back door of the auditorium, Allen and Julie hummed it softly while they blinked back the tears.

Morning came and the Riverdale youth were really excited. They were going Christmas shopping across the border in Mexico!

"Gloria," Julie said to her as they were getting dressed, "I want to get Allen a real Mexican wallet for Christmas, but how can I if he's with me all day?"

"I know," said Gloria, who was just as excited, "you let me 'borrow' the money to get Ken a wallet. Of course, Allen will be with us. And when we're in a leather shop, I'll just ask him to help me pick out a wallet for Ken. And won't he be surprised on Christmas morning to find out he picked out his own present!"

"Ooh!" squealed Julie with a delighted giggle. "Okay!"

And so the "inseparable three"—Allen, Julie, and Gloria—had a wonderful time in Mexicali that Sunday. Gloria purchased the wallet with Julie's money, and Julie was happy. Allen was happy, too, because he had figured out Julie and

Gloria's little scheme. *She thinks I'll be surprised*, he thought. *Just wait until Christmas Eve!* And he thought again of the present he already had for her.

Coming home in Macintoshes' car that afternoon, Allen and Julie were filled with an ecstasy that only young and first love knows. His arm was around her, and they sat in silence, basking in the warmth of their embrace. She was close enough to kiss. Should he? He touched his lips to her cheek, but then he pulled away. No. But didn't he love her? He knew he admired and respected her very much. Now he pressed his cheek lightly against her own. He was sure....

It wasn't easy to get back into the school routine for just one week before Christmas vacation. But if Allen had moods, so did Julie. It was the last day of school before vacation, and Julie snapped at her parents in front of Allen. She immediately felt bad. When she was alone with Allen, she broke down and cried on his shoulder. Allen understood.

"Oh, Allen!" she sobbed, shaking her head. "Why, why am I so awful?"

He patted her gently. "Julie," he whispered. "Nobody's perfect."

"But I'm so far from it! I—I guess I'm just too worried."

"About what?" He squeezed her hand.

But she only sobbed and shook her head.

"Look, Julie," he said. "If you're really troubled, why don't you talk to my dad?"

Julie looked blankly at him. *Your dad? A minister? Never!* "I—I couldn't," she stammered.

"Why not?" he queried. "Dad's a wonderful person to talk to—to understand you. I've done it and—"

"But you're different! You're their son."

"But he and Mom like you a lot, Julie. They would be so happy to know you trust them, too. Give it a try."

Julie started thinking. Meanwhile, she forgot her tears. Pastor Macintosh—understanding—wonderful to talk to. Well, if he was anything like his son... Why should she be afraid to talk to a minister, anyway?

"I'll go with you," Allen was saying. "That is—if you want me to."

Julie only looked as if she were going to speak, but she didn't.

"Well, think about it," Allen whispered.

Julie *would* think about it. Maybe someday she would just give it a try.

Soon a smile broke on Julie's face, and things were back to normal once again.



The Magic of Christmas

December 24 fell on the Lord's Day. In the afternoon, Allen and Julie helped deliver food baskets to needy families. Then late afternoon found Julie and Allen and the other Macintoshes on their way to the country to visit the Jacksons, friends of Macintoshes.

The two small Jackson children were excited to have visitors on Christmas Eve. They had to take Allen, Julie, Peter, and Kenny on a tour of their farm, to see their goats and calves and puppies.

It was nearly sundown when Allen and Julie stood on a flat rock looking down into the green valley below and across the misty blue hills to the fading sunset. They stood there for a long time, whispering to each other.

Soon the stars came out, one by one. Julie pointed toward the sky. "There it is!"

"Venus?" Allen looked, too. "Yes," he repeated, "there it is."

"Our Christmas star," she said.

Then, hand in hand, they walked back to the house. Inside there was a warm fire that glowed in a rustic stone fireplace. By the flickering flames, Pastor Macintosh told the Christmas story, and they all sang carols softly. Then the Macintoshes headed back to the city.

In the darkness, soft music came through the radio. There was a light chatter in the Macintosh station wagon. Allen held Julie's hand.

"Are you happy tonight, Julie?" he whispered.

"Oh, yes! Very happy. Aren't you, Allen?"

"Julie, I think I'm the happiest boy in the world! Everything's so, so perfectly wonderful. Because you're so wonderful."

Julie sighed. "That's a pretty song. What is it?"

"Tenderly," he answered. "Kind of like...our friendship."

There was a brief silence.

"Everybody knows it—and accepts it now, Julie," Allen was saying.

Everybody knows what? Julie wondered.

"Yes," Allen repeated, "everybody knows—we're in love."

In love!

"I love you, Julie," he spoke gently.

And her hand tightened over his.

Back at Macintoshes, around the Christmas tree, there were presents. Without a word, Allen walked over to the tree, picked out a package tied with delicate blue ribbons, and placed it in Julie's lap.

She looked up at him. "Allen! You didn't."

He smiled. "For you. Open it."

"Now?"

He nodded.

"Open yours first," she said.

"Well—okay." He found his present from Julie, and with great gusto he tore off the paper Gloria had wrapped it in.

"A wallet!" he exclaimed. "The one I picked out in Mexico! Why, you wonderful little sneak!" He gave her a quick hug. "Thank you, sweetheart," he whispered.

Now it was Julie's turn. Carefully she undid the ribbon and took off the white and blue snowflake paper. Inside, she found a gold box. Her mouth flew open and she could not get the lid off fast enough. A beautiful white Bible! She looked first at the Bible, then at Allen and his family, who were all watching her. Then she picked up the Bible reverently and opened it.

"Presented to Julie Scott by Allen Macintosh, December 25, 1960. 'Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.' II Timothy 2:15" was the inscription.

Julie was really speechless. "Oh, it's the most wonderful present I could have ever asked for! Oh, Allen! Oh!" was all she could say.

And when the others were opening their gifts, Julie and Allen were still thanking each other. Julie handled her new Bible carefully. Here on this Christmas Eve was the very essence of everything good and beautiful, everything their love stood for.

In the living room confusion of opening presents, Julie squeezed Allen's hand. "Allen, I love you, too," she said.

Christmas day dawned over Riverdale, and the Macintoshes had their Christmas dinner at Julie's house. Then they would go on a one-week vacation. This would be the first time since Allen had known Julie that they would have ever been apart for more than a day or two.

"I'll write, sweetheart," he said at the door. "Goodbye."

Julie stood by the door long after Macintoshes had left. She thought about all that had happened and wondered just what would happen from now on. She smiled as she remembered the night in November when it rained and where it had all started. She thought of the weeks since then, as they had grown to know and love each other. Now it was Christmas. *A new year was soon to begin. What would this year bring? And what about the years after that? In just three years, she figured, the Macintoshes would be far, far away from Riverdale since they transferred pastors to a different church every three years. But just what did the future hold?* Soon she turned from the door and got busy doing things in the house.

Allen, too, as he rode along with his family, was thinking about the wonderful Christmas Eve he had spent with Julie. Then he remembered the weekend at Pine Cove where it had all begun with Peter calling his attention to Julie. And the days after that, walking Julie home, taking teasing from Otto and Karl, and learning how to understand. *Will I ever kiss Julie? I know I want to, and I'm sure we're in love.* But he kept remembering everything his dad had told him about things like that. "A kiss is a beautiful expression of affection." But Julie was pretty special, too. He would never do anything to spoil that.

As so, soon the year closed, and the world—Julie and Allen's world—stood on the threshold of a new day. Who could imagine that a day could ever come to separate Allen and Julie with inhumane cruelty? Who dared to think that Allen and Julie would ever fight? Who could even predict the coming Valentine's Day or foresee a certain May night, a school banquet, and a white orchid? Who could know about the very next Saturday night finding them again with Gloria Martin and her boyfriend Ken Nelson? But that was the unknown, the yet-unrealized future.

New Year's Day came. Allen and Julie were in a wonderful world, real as the sunrise, romantic as springtime, but all their own and very, very special. This was young love. No one could tell when—or if—it would ever end. But it existed in the present. And it began in the November rain.

Don't miss out!

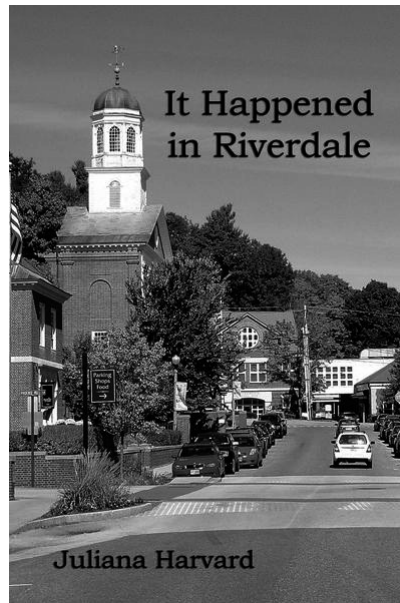
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Also by Juliana Harvard

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.

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–Stephen Minot, *Three Genres*