

First Love

The wheel of fortune turns in the cosmos of our minds,
Endlessly revolving, tireless, silent in its objectivity.
Our lives rattle like roulette balls flung among the spokes.
And from time to time, we suddenly find
That our path crosses with another's, and our tentative lonely strides
Gain confidence as two lives intertwine.
Is it chance, or is it design?



We met one Sunday evening at a youth club,
Both seventeen.
Imagine the scene.
A dingy church hall, its stage framed by ancient, dusty curtains.
Chairs stacked in corners and the sound of ping pong balls punctuating the air.
No computers in those heady, Sixties flower-power days, no I-phones or video games.

We were introduced and there must have been attraction at first sight.
We do look a sight in those old photos.

You, tall and lanky with long dark hair, black-rimmed glasses and a flowery tie.
Me, fair hair tied back and blue-eyed, short skirt, and, oh, so not street-wise.
Grammar school girl with brains, but knowing nothing.
'You are the crème de la crème, girls', our teacher used to say,
Egging us on in our endeavours.
But faced with this unexpected attraction, what did I know?
And so we got to know each other against the brilliant Sixties soundtrack, our lives gradually mingling.



How I remember that delicious frisson of recognition
When I saw you on the hundred and twelve bus some mornings,
The bus that I didn't need to catch
on my way to school.
I could have easily walked.

And then there were the pubs we visited while we waited for my bus home after dates.
Remember *The Gate* on Mill Hill,
with the lugubrious man and his lugubrious, look-alike dog sharing a pint?

Then I went to university and you remained at home.
But you didn't let go, you came and stayed at the weekends.
Oh, and I'm whispering now, you stayed at my women's Hall of Residence.
Sunday morning breakfast was always a revelation-
men appeared as if from nowhere,
to have breakfast plates piled high by the motherly dining room staff!
They were growing boys, after all.



So, we travelled back and forth,
The threads of our lives, our families, our hopes sewing our paths tighter together.
I returned home, a fully fledged B. Mus
And we got married.
Soon we had a son, jobs, a mortgage, and a hamster,
Whose wheel became the soundtrack of our nights.

It's been forty years now,
Longer, in fact, since we met in that church hall.
We've trudged and raced, and skipped and occasionally slipped around our wheel,
As it turns, silently, tirelessly,

endlessly,

endlessly,

endlessly,

