



Paper Mill Press

Catherine Adelaide

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When I was living home in St. John's after an unproductive attempt at University life, I was introduced by friends to an attractive girl who was new to town. Her name was Catherine Adelaide, a sweet, worldly soul who seemed to fit flawlessly into my childish concept of love.

Catherine was working as a waitress downtown when I first met her, she was originally from Northern Ontario and lived briefly in Toronto for a few years of schooling. Her slim pale figure was not short of absolutely stunning, while her face complimented her mess of tangled strawberry hair.

Catherine and I never dated, but we were close. She was one of the only girls that I can recall who was actually interested in me. At the time, I was also a slim pale figure and I attest to you defiantly not as good looking. I usually wore a brown tweed jacket, at the time I thought I dressed like a novelist but now looking back on it I'm sure I looked like a vagabond.

Catherine brought a strange excitement into my life and she enjoyed my company, I felt I had a close companion who I could share anything with. There was one conversation in particular I remember quite well.

As I recall it was after dinner. The Italian pasta she cooked had slowly vanished and all we were left with was an old red velvet couch, pleasant conversation and yesterday's wine. We sat in her small snug home on Queens Road, discussing passions that were significant then but ended up getting misplaced on the road to old age. Soon enough we hit a point in our conversation that has stuck with me my entire life.

"What do you want to do with your life Oliver?" Her question took me off guard.

"Well, I haven't really thought about it." I lied, but she didn't buy it. I had my entire life planned out, I was going to leave St. John's as soon as I could and begin my life as a writer in Toronto. First get a few short stories published, then novels and soon I would travel the world. Spain, Italy, France, Africa, I wanted to be

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a great literary figure that had everything: cultural and historical knowledge, deep political affiliations, a sense of personal enlightenment, and an ideal beard. But Catherine encouraged me to tell her, she knew that I would crack after some nagging. I would have probably told her anyway but I wanted her to at least fish for it.

When I told her of my plans, moving to Toronto and such. She sat there for a moment, sipped her wine and never said anything. I raised my eyebrow and she finally spoke. "You'd give up anything to know your future, wouldn't you?" I never answered. "Why do you want to leave this place?" She asked. I thought about it for a brief second, I had a million reasons but I didn't want to share, because not one of them involved her.

She shot a stern look, it was cute so I spilt. "St. John's isn't the place for me. I feel like there is something out there better and I need to go and find it." She looked at me in a disappointing silence, so I continued. "Listen I want to write. But I don't just want to do that, I want to be someone in this world, I want to count. I want people to read my work and get inspired to write their own stuff or to change something in their lives that they don't like. I want to be a great literary figure, like Fitzgerald, Wilde, Dickens, or Hemingway." She then promptly informed me that although Hemingway was a great writer, he ended up shooting himself in the face.

I looked at her passionately and said "There is so much out there Catherine that I haven't seen. I feel sheltered here, I've been here my whole life and I've seen all that this town has to offer. And I just want to see more."

"Okay, but this greatness that you speak of, what makes you think that you can't find it right here in St. Johns?" Again I was silenced into thought, "Remember the night Oliver, where we walked the streets of town and we ended up at Signal Hill at around three o'clock in the morning? You had that flask of rum hidden in the breast pocket underneath your coat and we sat there drinking it, undisturbed. I remember that our conversation passed but the time stood still and we just sat there, looking at the lights, listening to the wind, smelling the salt from the sea and feeling the cold but beautiful breeze. You kissed me that night and I will never forget that. You had everything that you ever needed at that moment, we both did." She stopped her alluring and beautiful rant to look at me





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and I stupidly answered her.

“Look that’s beautiful, you are right. But don’t you see? When I travel I’m going to experience more things like that. I need to live through more stories like that one.”

“Not even with me?” Her dark sunken eyes were as green as emeralds. I knew we both loved each other, but she knew we both wanted different things. She was smart and I was dumb. She wanted to get lost and find herself on that rock while I wanted to follow my dreams and try my best to live my life exactly the way I planned it. But sadly at the time, only Catherine knew that our dreams aren’t quite the same as our reality. An unsatisfied smile rose across her face and she spoke, “There is no breeze from the sea in Toronto.” I knocked back the rest of my wine, I didn’t want soberness anymore, I wanted to be in a state where I could forget all my dreams and problems so I could live my life that night, with Catherine.

Years later I eventually moved to Toronto. After my first play was published I was encouraged to get a job out there. However, I would always find myself reminiscing throughout the day, but most often my mind would cast itself back to the year I hung around Catherine. Her face, her figure, her eyes, like a precious photograph that was preserved in my head.

One morning during a breezy June day, I was walking down Yonge Street with plans of meeting my editor. As I kept to myself and walked through the bustling horde of unfamiliar faces, I noticed a tattered book fall from someone’s opened book bag. I don’t know if it was the interesting cover of the book or the way I was raised, but I picked it up. I glanced at the cover, *The Old Man And The Sea* by Ernest Hemingway. I thought of Catherine, it was one of her favorites. I turned back and called to the woman who had dropped it, it took her a moment to realize that I was actually talking to her but she soon turned around. She looked like a deer in head lights, like she wasn’t expecting anyone to speak to her. I felt a sense of awkwardness from this good deed. In a meaningless way, she thanked me and we both fixed ourselves back on to the track of morning commutes. It was then I noticed, I had a love hate relationship with the city of Toronto.

I didn’t know what it was. This city was where I always

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thought I wanted to be and it gave me endless possibilities for my career, but this wasn't happiness. Now I know that it was the haunting words from a dear old friend. As I walked I remembered what she had said to me all those years ago and I stopped. I stood there in the middle of the sidewalk. I closed my eyes and thought of hers, finally I was back home with Catherine. We were in St. John's on Signal Hill, looking at the comfortable boats docked on the water. She smiled at me and like waking up from a long night of slumber, she lifted her arms and stretched into the wind. I did the same. I felt the cool breeze surround my body, I was comfortable. Unexpectedly I was nudged by a passerby and as quick as my eyes opened the moment vanished. I looked up at the towering valley of modern concrete that was before me. Catherine Adelaide was right, there is no breeze from the sea in Toronto.

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