



AUGUST # 1—Fireworks Night with Classmates

Visuals: photographs of daytime view from Burrard Bridge, sunset fireworks crowds and fireworks

Wanting to participate in a Vancouver summer tradition, my classmates and I decided to view the fireworks from English Bay Beach.

Throughout the day and as Mary and I were finishing supper, we saw from the window multitudes of people walking on the street with coolers, picnic supplies, and loaded baby strollers. They were heading to English Bay to view the fireworks on the second of three nights of this “festival of lights.”

Soon my classmates arrived at the apartment to do the same. I had invited them to come early to wait until dark. Fernando and Nicole came in holding hands and then sat together with the rest of us at the dining room table.

Mary offered us juice and snacks.

“After the fireworks are over, you are welcome to come back for popcorn to wait for the crowd to disperse.... Oops, just a minute,” she added, in searching through a kitchen cupboard with some packages falling out.

“I seem to be out of popcorn.”

“Let me go and get some,” Noboru instantly said, as he stood up to go. “I’ll just go to the closest store.”

As he left, Claudia looked at me knowingly as if to say, "While he seems to be helping Mary, he is really doing that for you, Erika, or at least he's showing you what a decent person he is."

Despite having to battle against oncoming pedestrian traffic on his return trip, Noboru safely arrived back from the store with the popcorn and some butter "just in case."

Taking them out of the bag and setting them on the counter, he commented, "There were more security guards in that supermarket than there were customers."

"Local businesses worry about potential threats with such a huge number of people on the streets," Mary said, as she mixed herbs, finely ground onion, and Worcester sauce into ground beef and, with her hands, was forming it into hamburger patties—to have something to cook for spontaneous barbecues with her neighbours.

"But I have never heard of any major incidents occurring during the fireworks," she added.

The phone rang and Mary asked me to answer it. I picked it up (cordless) in the dining room and then carried the receiver into the living room to get away from the chatter of the group at the dining room table.

It was Sandy!

I was truly glad to hear from him but again felt the timing was unfortunate, not being able to focus on him exclusively.

"Saturday is the final night for the fireworks," he said, "so I am wondering if you would like to view them from the house with Larry and Leah and me."

"Yes, most definitely. I'd love to." (Finally some time to spend with each other!)

He added, "Good. We can all make supper together."

"So should I bring something?"

"No, there's enough food here to cook. But bring your bathing suit if you'd like to go into the hot tub."

I was excited and would have liked to talk further but, to keep the conversation short, I asked directly about practical matters—time, getting a ride with Leah and Larry, etc.

"I am sorry, Sandy, but it is awkward for me to talk now as I have a room full of noisy classmates who are almost ready to walk down to the beach to watch tonight's fireworks."

"That's okay. I'll see you Saturday then."

I went into the dining room and replaced the receiver of the phone. Smiling, Nicole asked, "Anyone we know?"

"Sandy," I said quietly, but everyone heard and knew.

"Ah, ha," she responded. "And?"

"I have the chance to see the fireworks from a different perspective Saturday night."

"Different?"

"From a mountain."

"Oh. Sandy's house," Nicole translated for the others.

Why was I sorry that Noboru was hearing all this?

After a few minutes, Fernando, Nicole, Sumi, and Bae said they would walk to the beach to look for and hold a spot for us to watch from and Fernando would come back before the display started to lead us to where they were sitting.



The rest of us stayed at the dining room table as the sun started to go down. As Song and I refilled people's glasses of juice and set out some snacks others had brought, Marina and Daniel picked up a magazine on the sideboard and were looking at an article that compared Whistler with some multi-season ski resorts in Europe. Soon they realized that they often ski on the same mountain, on the eastern border of Switzerland.

"How can you two, in the presence of this beautiful summer sunset, be talking about skiing?" asked Juliana.

"It's just that we have discovered we both ski in the same area," Daniel and Marina defended themselves.

"Yeah, and what are the chances of that? Pretty high, aren't they?" Noboru commented.

"No, Switzerland has lots of ski areas!" Daniel stated.

"But Liechtenstein has fewer and eastern Switzerland is the next closest choice, right?"

A little later, Se-Eun arrived alone. Interesting. Now what is going on between her and Barry? Does Barry think that Se-Eun is over breaking up with her boyfriend, so she no longer needs Barry as her "comforter"? Or are they trying to quell any rumours regarding their connection, whatever that is? She did appear noticeably more upbeat than I had seen her since her breakup.



Just as Mary was finishing in the kitchen, she received a short phone call, and then admitted that she, despite being indifferent to fireworks, had finally agreed to watch them with an old friend from his balcony that overlooks the fireworks barges. She grabbed a sweater and left immediately as the first warning shots went off.

Fernando returned from the beach and led us back through the crowds to join our group. So many people had blankets and towels spread out on the sand from early in the afternoon and were entertaining themselves in so many ways. We would never have been able to find our classmates without being escorted right to them.

When we sat down in the dark, Noboru was beside me and, as the crowds around us moved closer and closer, his shoulder was soon pressed against mine. This did not feel, to me, any different than anyone else's shoulder. But I did wonder, after another of Claudia's "knowing" smiles, what that might feel like to Noboru. Could that touch be as charged for him as it would be for me if it had been Sandy this close to me looking up at the sky ready for each burst of light?



There were lots of “oohs” and “ahs” as the fireworks changed colours or morphed into identifiable shapes such as hearts, diamond rings, waterfalls, palm trees, and weeping willows. These images kept time with the music that we heard from the radios playing around us and from the radio station van near the bandstand a little further down the beach.



After all those wonderful bursts of light finally came to an end, a solid mass of pedestrians took over streets that are usually busy with cars and buses. Yet despite the excited drone of people and the whirl of their feet as they rushed to get out of the West End, the spectators behaved in an orderly manner. Thousands of them headed away to get on public transportation or to find where they had parked their cars.

To go other than in the same direction and at the same pace as the mass would be almost impossible. We struggled even to weave our way from one side of Davie Street to the other over a couple of blocks while moving with the flow of the crowd.

When we arrived back at the apartment to eat popcorn, I noticed that Se-Eun had singled out Song again and, sitting in the living room, was communicating quietly with her. I wish I could understand the apparently big-sister advice Se-Eun tries to give Song.

Is this similar to what Noboru is advising his younger sister?

Is Se-Eun again warning Song against an involvement with Daniel by reminding her of what that might do to her reputation when she returns to Korea?

Would that make more of a difference for Song, being relatively young, than it would for Se-Eun?

And how am I feeling about this for myself? Are my original assumptions changing somewhat?



All photos by the author; my thanks to John F for enabling me to routinely photograph the fireworks from his unobstructed view on the 17th floor of his condominium overlooking English Bay



AUGUST # 2—Fireworks from Sandy’s House

Visuals: photographs from British Properties, of fireworks, and West End crowd after fireworks

Wow. Sandy and I have finally broken down the barriers between us. Now I’m looking forward to finding out where a relationship for us might go.

Larry and Leah and I drove from of the apartment at about five o’clock to leave the West End before the police started to block off streets. They do this to keep out of the West End the cars of the 300,000 spectators who might otherwise try to drive to English Bay for the fireworks.

Greeting us at the door of his house, Sandy looked so good in comfortable cutoff jeans and teal blue t-shirt. Such an appealing guy. I re-met Sandy’s parents. They seemed even happier to see me this time than they had been the first time I visited their house. Could this be true?

We went into the kitchen. Sandy took a casserole out of the oven for his mom. Then she left the still-bright room. Alone there, I helped Sandy bring out of the fridge and put on a trolley some snack foods (hummus, sweet carrots, cut vegetables) to serve as appetizers until he and I and Leah and Larry would be ready to cook supper.

Standing together unloading food within the space of the open fridge door felt pleasantly domestic. Close. In finishing this, I stepped toward Sandy in shutting the fridge door behind me with the palm of my hand. Unexpectedly Sandy touched my face and kissed my mouth at the exact moment that I reached for the bowl of hummus that seemed dangerously near the edge of the trolley. Simultaneously Sandy’s dad came into the kitchen, startling me by saying, “Erika, would you like to look through the telescope? We’ve spotted something that’s a bit unusual.”

In a rather confused state, I answered, "Yes, I'd like to."
"Just when you're ready then," he said and turned and left to go back to the deck.

I would gladly have gone without looking through the telescope if I could have continued that contact with Sandy but the moment had passed. To make up for my non-response to Sandy's attempted kiss, I said, "I hope we can try that again."

"Yeah," he smiled, adding salt and pepper shakers to the stack of plates in his hands.

Then he asked, "So are we ready to go out now?"

Fleeting I wondered at this and then realized he was just referring to having everything we needed to go out on the deck.

"We seem to be."

Just beyond the open, glass living room doors, Sandy's dad was helping Leah look through a large telescope pointing across the city to a stand-alone mountain. Sandy unloaded the snacks from the trolley onto a low table and then returned into the house.

As Leah stepped aside, Sandy's dad said, "Erika, you might be interested in something a little further afield."

He adjusted the telescope to show me two planets appearing unusually close, almost overlapping.

Larry then asked him about a particular landmark down in the city, so he helped him refocus on that too. As we took turns looking through the telescope, Leah, Larry, and I sat in comfortable chairs just appreciating the view and the warm air while munching on the hummus and raw vegetables.

After a few minutes, I went back into the house to find Sandy. I could hear him and his mom talking in the kitchen. As I rounded the corner into the hall I heard her say, "Have you told her yet?"

I felt like something struck me in the stomach. Struggling to define the assumption, I wondered if Sandy's mom was referring to an aspect of what Sandy admitted to me in Victoria.

But he said, "No, not yet."

My heart turned into a tight mass. What hadn't he told me?

I couldn't back away, but I didn't want them to know I'd heard them, so I cleared my throat to signal that I was returning to the kitchen. But really, how effective could that be?

Standing at the open fridge door, Sandy's mom said, "What about shish kebabs? You could cube some beef and make a marinade. There are lots more vegetables and rice."

As Sandy took some cutlery out of the dishwasher, he said, "We'll figure something out later."

Was his mom was trying to get Sandy to make something special for my sake? Apparently he is a good cook.

His dad came into the kitchen too. "So, Robyn, are we ready to go?"

Robyn touched the covered, still hot casserole dish sitting on a pad on the counter next to a box with potholders beside it. Sandy lifted the casserole into the box. She checked a bag beside it and then said, "Yes, we're good."

Sandy's father picked up the box.

"So enjoy yourselves," Sandy said. And his mother responded, "You too."

They went out the main door. They were going to have dinner and watch the fireworks with friends a few houses along. Through the tall kitchen windows that surround the nook, we could see them start climbing the cement stairs at the edge of the steep driveway.

Leah and Larry came into the kitchen.

"Should we start cooking now in case we take longer than we expect?"

"Okay," Sandy answered.

Leah, who apparently has been in the house often, felt comfortable enough to start unloading food from the fridge and suggested what we could make. Seeing familiar ingredients, I agreed to make the salad that Mary had taught me to make using blueberries and strawberries in it instead of tomatoes. I also made our salad dressing.

Sandy made spaghetti sauce thick with vegetables. Larry spread garlic butter on bread and put it in the oven and then, on Leah's instruction, whipped cream to put over some plums that she was preparing to bake in the oven. When he finished this, Larry entertained us with his various techniques involving throwing spaghetti at the side of the fridge to determine if it was cooked (is it ready when it sticks or when it slides down the side?). Then Leah got him to be a little more useful by starting to clean up as we finished the rest of the preparation.

We set the larger table on the deck with four red placemats and blue plates and serving bowls of food. We ate slowly, savouring our culinary efforts. Delicious.

What a wonderful view in the changing light! Helicopters whirred around over the city; one streamed a lettered advertisement behind it and others were apparently providing security for the crowd or were about to televise the fireworks. It was still early when we were all too full to eat anything more.

I helped Sandy clear the table and take food back into the kitchen. Leah and Larry didn't offer to help us. Rather than getting out of work, I think they were trying to give us time to be alone. As we finished loading the dishwasher, without thinking about what I was about to say, I blurted, "Sandy, what haven't you told me?"

"Oh, so you did hear that?" he laughed. "Come and sit down a minute, Erika."

In the kitchen nook surrounded by those large windows, he reached across the table and put his hand on my wrist.

"I'm going back into architecture in September."

"Are you? Are you ready to do that, Sandy? Is this your own decision?" I asked quickly, worrying about potential pressure from his father.

"Yes, it's my decision alone."

"And are you certain you are happy about that? To return to the architecture program?"

"Yes, I am. And I want to acknowledge the part you have played in that decision."

"My part? No, Sandy! No. I have never tried to sway you."

"I know. And I respect you for that."

"But..."

"The last time you were here and you let me show you how to improve your lettering and we went over some architectural history, well, I felt how much I have been missing all that. Sharing that with you made me realize I want architecture to be central to my life."

"But what about music? You love that too."

"Yes, I love that too. I'm not saying I will give up song-writing entirely. I think I will always do some of that. And playing with friends. But I don't need to perform routinely, and I certainly don't want to tour."

"But..." I started to respond.

"Let me explain," he said taking both of my hands. "Wanting to spend time with you and not being able to, I've come to realize there will always be a problem while I am in the band. Touring and all. And even if it's not you in my life, as we assume, it would be the same for any relationship I might try to have."

My impulse was to say something, but I was unsure what that might be, so I stayed silent.

"I've decided it's simply not worth the sacrifice. Also, staying in hotels, always being tired and run down from being on the road on impossible schedules, lugging all that heavy equipment around, eating poorly, and travelling to some not particularly inspiring places.... Well, I'm glad I've had this year to experience that as my life. To find out if this is really what I want. And it was originally. But that's not what I want for the long term."

"You came to this conclusion recently?"

"Yes, but I wanted to talk to my parents about continuing to live here with them while I complete my architecture degree and qualify for my licence to practice."

"So they both know."

"Yes, they do, and of course they are very pleased. And they credit you partially with my decision."

"But they mustn't, Sandy. I didn't influence you."

"Erika, it's fine. Let them see you in that light."

"When exactly did you decide?"

"I had made the decision just before we talked in Victoria."

"You knew then? In Victoria?"

I tried to remember how our conversation would have sounded if I had known then.

"Yes. Knowing I will be leaving the band in September enabled me to think we might spend some time together even if it isn't long term."

I tried to assess how I felt about this.

Sandy paused before saying, "So you see how important you have been in my life?"

"Such a responsibility...."

"Not at all. You've just created a situation that has made me decide this without your ever having said a word. You've made me understand how difficult any relationship will be for me while I'm in the band. It's different for Leah and Larry. They have each other. That makes being on the road bearable for them."

"Perhaps you should be looking for someone willing to go on the road with you."

"But that's not a lasting solution either. You know Gordie? Our drummer? As a new father, he now wants to be at home too. So it's not just me. I think the band, if it is to survive, will have to re-configure itself. It's a good time for me to get out."

"Have you told Larry and Leah?"

"Yes. This morning."

"And their response?"

"For sure they're disappointed. But we all care enough to want the best for each other. They see the constraint that touring places on me."

"So they accept your decision."

"Yes, they do."

After a pause ending this topic for now, I finally dared to say, "There's something I never told you."

"What's that?"

"I went out to the department of architecture at UBC but was afraid to tell you."

"Afraid. Why?"

"I didn't want to be prying. I mean I was interested firstly for my own sake. To get some insight into how architecture is taught in Canada. But I could feel your presence there."

"Really?!" he smiled.

"I could imagine you there and your work being part of what was displayed there."

"So maybe this is proof that this where I should be. That I really do belong there."

"I hadn't thought of that. So I'm glad I didn't tell you this before you had a chance to make up your own mind."

"Let's go see Leah and Larry."

We went back out to the deck where we joined them sitting in the comfortable chairs. They gave us a knowing look and smiled. In good humour Larry asked, "So have we cleared the air?"

"Yes, we have," Sandy responded happily.

I smiled too.

The night was still warm, despite the sun now being below the horizon. When some fireworks went off as warning shots to indicate that the display would start soon, Leah suggested we should get ready to go in the hot tub at the far end of the deck. The two of us went back into the house to change into our bathing suits.

"So what do you think about Sandy's decision?" Leah asked when we were alone in the guest room taking our bathing suits from our backpacks.

"I'm still trying to process it. I just want him to be happy. He's such a wonderful person, he deserves to go after what he wants."

"Yes, he certainly does."

When we changed and returned to the deck, Larry and Sandy were already in the hot tub. The radio was tuned to the station carrying the music designed to accompany the fireworks.

Walking across the deck to join the guys, I was self-conscious in being seen in a bathing suit despite having my large beach towel draped around my neck. I admit, however, I liked the chance to see Sandy's shoulders. Very touchable-looking shoulders.

The fireworks looked much different from above than they did sitting under them with my classmates on the beach. They appeared as small bursts of colour, some barely clearing the lights of Kitsilano behind them.

But there were distractions in the hot tub. Like when Sandy held my hand or touched his foot on my foot and when

he finally put his arm around my shoulders. Leah and Larry cuddled too and seemed to approve of Sandy's and my increasing closeness.



I wished we could have gone on forever sitting there in the warmth. I was sorry when the fireworks were over and it was time to get out of the hot tub and get ready to go home. That was especially hard in knowing that Sandy wouldn't be driving with us. Leah and Larry from the front door headed for the car. As I finished repacking my bathing suit in my daypack, Sandy took my hands.

"Can we do something together before you go to Galiano?" he asked.

"I'd like to."

"So I'll phone you tomorrow."

"Okay."

Then he drew me closer and we kissed.... (Yes, Yoko, are you listening to this? He kissed me.) Slowly and with his whole being he kissed me! Definitely not gay.

Perhaps I was glowing as much as I felt when I wordlessly joined Leah and Larry in the car.

With a knowing smile, Leah asked, "Everything all right?"

"Yes. All right."

I couldn't help it; I spilled out, "Sandy kissed me."

"Finally," they laughed.

"Finally?"

"Well, he's wanted to do that for a long time."

"Did he say that?"

"It's been pretty obvious," Leah said.

"It has?"

"Yes, pretty obvious."

"So was that okay?" Larry asked, smiling at me in the rear view mirror.

"Yes, okay."

"We've been hoping that the two of you might hit it off," Leah commented.

"From when?"

"From the night you came to the band rehearsal."

"From when I first arrived?" I asked, somewhat incredulous.

"Shall we confess to her, Larry?"

"Confess what?" I asked.

"Well, part of the reason that we asked you to the rehearsal that night was that we knew you have at least one interest in common with Sandy—architecture. Well, actually two, since you play an instrument."

"That made us hope that the two of you might get along. So we asked you both to come to the rehearsal a little earlier than the others."

"You did this on purpose? Getting us there early.... Did Sandy know that you were plotting this?"

"No, he was totally innocent."

"And had you told him about my interest in architecture?" I asked, trying to think back about how that had first come into our conversation.

"No, not at first. Not until after the two of you had met and you and the others had left the rehearsal."

"Then Sandy asked about you. That's when we mentioned architecture and music."

"He asked about me? Without you prompting him?"

"Yes, Erika, he asked about you," Leah stated, "And he was totally amazed when we told him that you are planning to go into architecture."

"Amazed and pleased that you have this shared interest," Larry added.

"You forgive us for this?" Leah asked, smiling.

"Of course I forgive you, but do you think Sandy and I might not have talked to each other if you hadn't arranged those first few minutes for us to be alone?"

"Hard to say. This past year Sandy has been painfully shy, withdrawn even, when left on his own near an attractive, apparently single woman," Leah answered.

"Do you know why?"

"We don't want to betray any confidence, but I think it is all right for me to say.... Larry, how should we put this?"

"Well, as a result of his last unfortunate relationship, Sandy may be slow to... trust."

"To trust...."

"Yes."

"He really shouldn't have trusted his last girlfriend. We mustn't say more."

"Then I am astonished that Sandy and I managed that first conversation that you set up, as short as it was."

"Seems to be have been enough to break the initial barrier. You did talk."

"And what if you hadn't encouraged our first conversation?"

"But we did, so there's no problem."

Leah smiled at me through the mirror.

We drove slowly back across the Lion's Gate Bridge and through the West End where street crowds were still enjoying being out in the warm night air.

I can see why Mary loses her patience somewhat during the two weeks of fireworks nights when regular life in the West End is interrupted by traffic congestion and spirited, noisy crowds.

I am back now, sitting in bed taping this. The memory of Sandy's wonderful, fitted kiss will stay with me a long time.

What a perfect, perfect day!





AUGUST # 3—Pride Parade and Visit to Lighthouse Park

Visuals: photographs of Pride floats and festival site; images of Lighthouse Park—sign, beach, lighthouse

Mary was participating in the Pride parade with her church and urged me to join in. Sandy said if he were not working with his dad, he would have attended. He said everybody is in such a great mood, and the costumes are humorous and outrageous and the music rousing.

He added, “Besides, it is a true privilege to be able to participate in such an event without fear. Just think of all the countries in which you still cannot openly support gay rights.”

My classmates went hiking in Lighthouse Park instead. Nevertheless I rode with Mary (almost out of sight) on the church’s float, a large vehicle decorated with “stained glass windows” to suggest a church. By the time the float proceeded a few blocks, I knew most of the words to the three, spirited gospel songs that the church’s participants belted out along the route that followed Robson, Denman, and Pacific streets to the lively festival site at Sunset Beach.





Mary had said she would drive me to Lighthouse Park after the parade to catch up with my friends. Well, using a co-op car, she did, and she hiked with me, but we never did find my classmates. Mary admitted there must be more trails than she knows. Still we did enjoy eating our rather hastily put together lunch while sitting in the sun on a wild beach in what looked to be a sheltered cove. The shore was piled with rough, splintery driftwood that has obviously been tossed there by high waves during winter storms.

Still feeling Sandy's kiss as Mary and I sat eating, I couldn't help admitting to her what had happened last night and in Victoria. I guess talking to Mary proves how much I am missing you, Yoko. Dictating these tapes to you is definitely not the same as having two-way conversations. Noboru has complained that I am always talking about my "big" sister. I hadn't been aware of that. There's definitely a lot that I would like to be discussing with you.

Mary seemed not to be at all surprised at what I told her about Sandy and me. She said that after hearing some of my comments and then seeing Sandy and I together those few times, she could feel our attraction. (I am that transparent!) Mary is a very intuitive person. I'm glad she knows about Sandy's and my mutual interest and intention to make some time for each other.

We sat there talking long enough that it was actually growing cool by the time we headed back to the car.

Shortly after getting back to the apartment Sandy phoned me to see how I liked the Pride parade.

"You were right. It was so much fun! I can see why Mary says that her two hours in the parade make her feel more proud of being Canadian than any other time all year."

"She's absolutely correct about the parade making us feel proud to be Canadian, to be from a progressive, rational country that cares about rights for all."

"Have you been in the parade?"

"Yes, I played the drums a couple of times on a float that was representing my fraternity house when I was a UBC undergrad."

"Your fraternity took part?"

"Yes, we wanted to be generally supportive, but we also wanted to get out the message about being inclusive."

"Inclusive...."

"Yeah, that it is okay to be gay and still be in our fraternity. That gays are welcome. We also wanted to suggest something of the community service projects we were involved in. To help dispel the image of fraternity brothers just being party people, a group of drinking buddies."

"What kind of costumes did you wear?"

"Nothing totally outlandish. Just cut offs and our regular Greek letter tee shirts. But our hats were huge and as over the top as we could make them."

"Such as?"

"Covered in plastic fruit, fake flowers, and streaming with colourful ribbons."

"I wish I could have seen that. You played the drums...."

"Yes, I told you I used to do that, didn't I?"

"But I thought that was only in high school."

"Not just. Being the drummer was my role in the small occasional band that we had within the frat house."

"Speaking of your band.... You never mentioned you were on CBC radio on Canada Day."

"Well, we knew some of the CBC crew were there recording our Surrey concert; we just didn't know that so much of it was to be carried live that night. A few days later several people told us how much of the concert they had heard."

"When I mentioned the name of your band to Mary's nephew the next day, he told me it sounded familiar and then he realized he had just heard you on CBC's Canada Live the day before."

"Really. That's interesting. You know you can listen to the whole concert on the CBC archive if you want to."

"Oh, I'd really like to. Can you show me how to do that sometime soon?"

"Sure."





AUGUST # 4—Classmates’ Suspension from School

Visuals: Photographs of Lost Lagoon marsh, raccoon, Canada goose, aquarium sculpture, old tree in rose garden, West End streets

Well, I have quite a drama to report involving Daniel and Marina being “lost” for a day in Stanley Park and Song nearly dying of worry.

Daniel and Marina often travel on the bus together as they live near each other on the North Shore. Yesterday morning they apparently arrived at the school before anyone else, so they were sitting in the lounge. Because they had been speaking Swiss-German on the bus, they forgot about the school’s English-only policy. Besides, they weren’t aware of a near invisible, substitute teacher overhearing them. In an officious manner, he commanded that they get out and not come back to school for 24 hours. They didn’t question his power to bar them, nor wonder about the usual procedure for suspension, so they left the school as they were told.

Once outside, realizing what a beautiful morning it was, they decided to go to Stanley Park rather than simply going home. With no one else around, they left without telling anyone.

When the rest of us gathered in our classroom, we were all surprised to find that Daniel and Marina were apparently late. The class started without them. When they didn’t show up, we began to worry as to what might have happened to them.

Apparently Barry had no idea why they were away, as the substitute teacher hadn't reported suspending them.

By noon Song was almost sick with worry because she knows that Marina, and even Daniel, would never miss a class without a very good reason. As soon as the class stopped for lunch, she had Noboru try to reach Daniel on his cell phone, but there was no answer.

"Did the bus go off the road on the way down the hill from Lynn Valley? Should we phone the hospitals? The police?" Song asked fearfully. She found someone with a radio and switched stations until she heard one with local news. No indication of a massive traffic accident....

Soon after Noboru got a static-laden message from Daniel saying they were in Stanley Park and that his cell battery was almost dead so he couldn't talk. Then there was a dial tone again, so Noboru hung up.

"What did he say? What did he say?" Song demanded urgently. "Why didn't you let me talk to him?"

Noboru repeated that they got cut off because Daniel's cell phone was almost dead.

"Call him back," Song stated, sounding like a demand.

Noboru dialed Daniel's number but, as he expected, there was no response.

"Maybe they just don't want us know what is going on," Song added, being uncharacteristically suspicious.

So that was that—no explanation as to why they weren't in class or why they were in Stanley Park. Well, that changed things considerably for Song. As serene and positive as she usually is, she became angry and even jealous.

"How could he do this to me? How could Marina go off with Daniel?"

In dwelling on this, she was soon in tears. I tried to reassure her that Marina is an honourable person and that there must be some logical explanation as to why they were together in Stanley Park.

"On fireworks night, Marina and Daniel talked a lot about skiing on the same mountain."

"But they weren't talking in any intimate way," I tried to reassure her.

"But maybe now they realize they could be more than friends when they get back to Europe."

Trying to be helpful, Nicole took a different tact saying, "Maybe they went for an early morning jog and got lost there."

"So now they are threatened by vicious bears, cougars, and coyotes," Bae joked (unsuccessfully).

"I don't think there are any bears or cougars in Stanley Park and very few coyotes," Noboru stated.

I silently hoped this was true, especially on the well-used trails.

"Yeh, just those pesky raccoons, hissing Canada Geese, and smelly skunks, and they could easily handle them," Bae smiled, as if imagining such confrontations.



"And what if they are totally lost?"

"Of all people, Marina would be the most capable of surviving several days in the bush. I know that she camps every year in northern Italy with her family," I said.

"Yeah, I wouldn't be surprised if she could start a fire by rubbing two sticks together," Nicole added. "My Dawson Creek host family told me about that."

"Could they do that?"

"No, but..."

"And I bet Marina could make an awesome lean-to, especially with Daniel's help. Even though he isn't experienced in the woods, Marina could direct him," Fernando commented.

"What's a lean-to?" Song asked.

"A hut or some kind of shelter to keep them dry and warm if it should rain or get cold."

"So don't worry, they'll be okay if they are lost, and that's not very likely," I tried to reassure her.

It was apparent that continuing this conversation was not helpful. Besides, we had to go back to class. In her state of alarm, Song wasn't fit to learn anything that afternoon. Even the rest of us were distracted in just looking at her.

At the end of class for the day we gathered and discussed everything again. We decided that Song should go directly home so that Daniel could contact her there as soon as he was able. Looking somewhat unconvinced, Song hesitated and Bae asked anxiously, "Do you want me to come with you to look for them in Stanley Park?"

Nicole said, "Yes, let's all go look for them!"

The rest of us realized, however, that to look for them was not feasible, especially since Stanley Park is so huge it would take a large team of searchers a day or two to cover the

whole area. I kept trying to reassure Song that there could be a hundred logical reasons for Daniel and Marina to be together in Stanley Park rather than their being dishonorable or in danger.

“Let’s all go home and stay in touch. I’m sure this will soon be resolved,” Se-Eun added like the responsible big sister that she is.

Well, Yoko, if I were a good suspense writer, I would probably tell you more about Song’s distress and about the frustration we all felt based on not being able to get through to Marina’s homestay family. Butapparently this is what happened, as the many telephone calls later last night revealed.



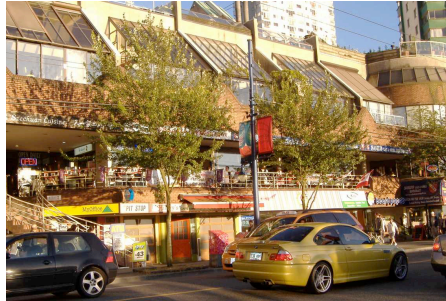
After being asked to leave the school and deciding to go to Stanley Park, Daniel and Marina strolled around the rose garden with huge tree trunk. Then they walked to the totem poles and explored the Brockton oval area. They ate their lunch looking out over the harbour.

They had a leisurely visit to the aquarium, as there weren’t that many people around at that time. On the way out of the aquarium they decided to encircle the entire park. But on the spur of the moment, in seeing the path and the sign, they went into the forest to see Beaver Lake.

They had no idea that doing all of this was so far and would take so long.



When they finally got back to English Bay and the bus route on Davie Street at Denman, they realized that it was almost 5:00 pm and that Marina needed to get a bus connection to Skytrain immediately. She had made a previous commitment to meet her homestay sister in Metrotown to go shopping and to a show.



Daniel decided not take the bus with her, as he wanted to avoid travelling in rush hour traffic. Instead he walked back along Denman Street to write an aquarium postcard to a friend while sitting with a leisurely coffee. After completing the postcard, he headed into the mall to buy a stamp. But at the side door of the mall, he noticed a marquee listing a movie he had wanted to see. It was only \$6.00 and it was about to start in five minutes. He paid and went in.

He wasn't concerned about contacting anyone because his homestay family is casual about meal times. If he isn't there when they sit down, they make a plate of dinner for him to put in the microwave to eat when he returns. So Daniel went in and enjoyed the movie. He was unaware that Song was at home sitting by the phone imagining all the ways that he could be dying in the park or being unfaithful to her. In short he didn't know she could become distraught by his absence and lack of communication.

Unaware of time after he came out of the movie, Daniel strolled up Robson Street and arrived at the Burrard bus loop just as the North Shore bus was pulling away. He had to wait half an hour for the next one. By the time he got home it was after 9:00. His homestay mother told him that Song had phoned several times and was anxious to hear from him.

When he got through to Song, he was alarmed that she was in tears and consumed by both worry and anger. He thought he had communicated more to Noboru on the phone about their getting suspended than what Noboru had evidently heard.

Anyway, Daniel was surprised that Song didn't know why he was in the park with Marina. He felt he was being treated unjustly when Song raised her voice and, sobbing, finally hung up on him. He phoned back immediately but only got Song's homestay mother saying Song was too upset to take his call.

Daniel borrowed his homestay brother's car and cell phone and drove to Song's homestay. But Song refused to leave the house to talk with him. On the phone he told her he was going to stay in the driveway all night if she didn't come out and sit with him.

Finally Marina and her homestay family (who had also been away for the evening) got home. Telephone calls flew back and forth. Contacted by others explaining Song's distress, Marina phoned Song explaining what had happened and she tried to dispel any suspicion of her attempting to attract Daniel.

"We talked about you the whole time, Song. Daniel seems unable to think about anyone or anything else. He is totally yours."

Providing this reassurance, Marina eventually talked Song into going out to the car to talk with Daniel. Apparently there was a cloud burst then. Later in explaining, Song said that she ran out the door holding a jacket above her head and yet she still got drenched. Daniel leaned over and opened the car door for her while she got in. Without turning on the motor, he backed the car down the sloped driveway onto a flat parking space protected on three sides by a tall hedge. Still in tears, Song could hardly talk rationally at first, but Daniel was patient as he tried to calm her. He revealed to Song that he was totally moved that anyone could care so much about him as to be upset by his actions or his absence. Apparently he was overwhelmed by affection.

Returning to school this morning, Daniel did not leave Song's side all day.

So yes, Yoko, this story has a happy ending. Daniel and Marina are safe, and Daniel and Song are closer than ever.





AUGUST # 5—Sing-along on English Bay Beach

Visuals: views of beach with logs, people, heron; pool, lookout point, and ocean at sunset

Even though Sandy and I wanted to be together, it was still difficult for us come up with a time.

"I need to keep the week nights free to continue to work with my dad."

"How is that going?"

"Very well. He's had a major shift in his attitude to me."

"As someone he is taking seriously?"

"Yes. As an emerging architect, someone who might be able to take over his practice some day."

"Incredible."

"He really is making an effort to listen to my ideas and help me develop them."

"So it's been worth being in the band this year, just so he didn't assume you'd automatically follow in his footsteps."

"Exactly."

"Specifically, how is this different than before?"

"Well, he's always had me doing the lowest level tasks. Photocopying, filing, delivering plans, getting permits."

"And now?"

"Well, he's let me take the lead on one private residence, allowing me to work directly with the client to come up with the concept and approach. He's critiqued my sketches. Given me technical advice. It's been wonderful. And also, on a much larger scale, he's enabled me to work as part of a team undertaking an innovative, combined commercial and residential project."

"Sounds good. When do you have time to work together?"

"Mom is away. So Dad and I stay late at the studio every night. He sets aside the time after 5:30 just to work with me."

"Wonderful, but where is your mom?"

"In Ontario at a cottage with my eldest brother, Lauren, and his family."

"Has your Mom gone there specifically to give you and your dad time alone?"

"No, she goes every summer to help with the kids."

"How long will she be with them?"

"A couple more weeks."

"Will you be working with your dad on Saturday night?"

"No, I have a band practice Saturday night at the apartment."

"So could we get together after that? I will be going to dinner with my classmates and then to English Bay Beach for a sing-along."

"That sounds like fun."

"Could you come down to the beach after your practice?"

"Sure, although I can't promise an exact time."

"That's okay. Will you bring a guitar?"

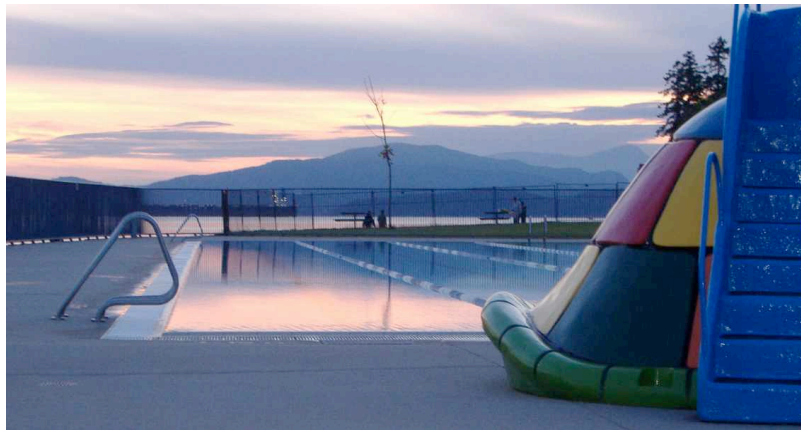
"You want me to?"

"Yes. Then maybe we can have some proper music."

"All right."

In agreeing to this, Sandy had said perhaps after the sing-along he and I could go for a snack together. Assuming this, I only ate a small salad with the group rather than a full meal.

Sitting in the restaurant, I was worrying that Nicole might say something to Sandy later that could embarrass me. So I mentioned that the only other unmarried man in the band has a girlfriend. I was momentarily forgetting that, in her increasing closeness with Fernando, Nicole has toned down a lot. Even in class she isn't still idolizing Barry.



After leaving the restaurant, we all walked along Denman Street that was humming with the quiet conversation of people sitting at sidewalk cafe tables in the warm evening air. Then we walked along the seawall past the pool.

Just beyond that we settled on a part of the beach where there are groups of logs. There we were able to sit as two groups facing each other. The general conversation meant no one seemed in a hurry to start the singing and no one particularly noticed that Bae managed to seat himself between Song and Sumi, smiling contentedly. He teasingly put his arm around both of them again saying, "You are the two most important women in my life."

Taking Bae's lead, Noboru put his arm around Sumi on one side and Juliana on the other. Although I still don't think Noboru and Juliana have any romantic attachment, I was glad of their apparent closeness, as that ensured that Noboru and I wouldn't look like a couple.

Nicole said, "Maybe we should practice singing before Sandy gets here."

She and Fernando brought out some shakers and a tambourine. Others, including Noboru, revealed pop cans and sticks as their version of an improvised percussion instrument. Fernando and Nicole got us playing, chanting, and swaying to a repetitive, easy-to-learn song. I joined in with my flute.

Why did I stop playing when I saw Sandy, guitar in hand, approach from the other side of the pool? And did my face reveal my happiness in seeing him? Everyone turned to watch him approach. Poor Sandy. Would he have been embarrassed if he'd realized that all eyes were on him from his first moment of being within sight? I felt very proud of him (do I have any right to be proud of him?). He spotted me, waved, and walked over to where we were seated.

Those around me moved aside so Sandy could sit down beside me. I moved over as much as I could to make room for him, but our knees were pressed together. Sandy didn't seem to notice or didn't mind. Nicole started the introductions. When the circle of introductions came to Bae, still sitting with arms around Sumi and Song, Nicole said, "This is Bae, and Song, his best friend, and Sumi, his lover."

"Lover!" Sumi protested.

"Would-be-lover?" Nicole added and everyone laughed.

"Yes!" Bae smiled his impish smile while looking at Sumi.

When the introductions were finished, Fernando said to Sandy, "We have been warming up, but if you'd heard our first attempts, you'd realize we need considerable help."

"Okay. So what do you like to sing?"

We started brainstorming songs most of us might know or could learn easily. As we were about to begin, Sandy looked approvingly (and a bit surprised?) at my flute. We started with rousing songs and turned to mellower ones as the sun fell below the horizon.



As the mood got quieter, Juliana suggested to Sandy, “Why don’t you choose something you like to sing? To sing on your own.”

I thought Sandy might be too shy to sing alone, but he said, “All right.” He smiled at me, as if to say, ‘Well, they’ve asked me.’

He strummed a few bars and then, focused on me, he sang as if he and I were the only two sitting there. I had never heard the song he sang before, but I heard it deeply.

*I like the path you’ve chosen,
May I walk along with you?
And if the way gets closed in,
We could cuddle just us two.
And when there’s fairer weather,
We could set out once again,
To pursue our goals together,
You seem more than just a friend.*

Sandy kept his eyes on mine while strumming. Was he asking me to respond? It took more nerve than I thought I had to put my flute to my lips and play the same simple melody back to him. He continued looking at me while playing backup chords.

*C a g gf d c a
C c d ff a g
C a g gf d c a
C c d f f a g
C a g gf c a
C c d f f a g
C c g f gf d c a
C d f e g f*

After my musical response, Sandy sang two more verses.

*Yes, I'd like to travel side by side
With interwoven hands
For each other be a counsellor
And together make some plans.
We seem to have so much to share
I cherish my time with you.
To discover how to be a pair
Would make my life feel new.*

*So could we be a couple
while you're living in this land?
To make rewarding memories
I'll even leave the band.
We could stroll along the shoreline
or hike on higher ground.
I'd love this year together
wherever we are bound.*

Everyone had gone quiet, but at the end they all clapped, as if confirming that they thought Sandy had been singing this as a love song to me. I may have looked self-conscious, but it didn't matter. The light was turning mauve.

After the others broke into several conversations, Sandy squeezed my hand and continued to hold it. I looked down and saw a child's blue plastic shovel at my feet. I picked it up and wordlessly showed it to Sandy. He smiled. I decided to keep it. It is as if that whole, wonderful evening was contained in that child's toy.

When it was time for the others to go home, Sandy suggested the two of us walk along the seawall. In the pale light, we headed toward the five benches lookout, a location I will always have a warm feeling for as the place Sandy and I first touched.

We sat there a few minutes in the last glow of sunset.



"Did you compose that song you just sang?"

"It is a work in progress," he smiled. "Do you think you will like it?"

"I like it already, a lot."

"I'm glad."

"Is it about us?"

"You know it is."

"I hoped it is."

"And what about this flute you play? You never told me you play the flute."

"It never came up."

"But you found out I used to play classical piano. And you probably play classical flute, right?"

"Yes."

"So why didn't you mention it?"

"It didn't seem important."

"It's not whether it's important. It is about something else that we can share."

"Sandy, I don't think we are short of things we can do together."

"You know I agree. I said that in the song."

"I thought that was to be my verse, the second one."

"So you got that? And you're willing to take on that part?"

"Yes. I want that role."

"Next time we can sing it together then."

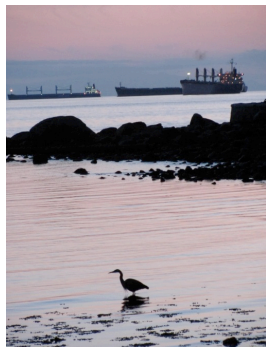
"So you assume I can sing."

"In some manner. Yes."

"We'll have to try singing together sometime."

"I'd like that. But shall we set out now?"

Thinking we would be going to a restaurant yet, I readily agreed. In the waning light, as we headed toward the main beach, we could have appeared as two silhouettes, one with a guitar slung from his shoulder and one with a flute hanging from her wrist in a flannel bag. Again we saw a heron patiently trying to fish in the last glow of evening light.



We walked a block up Davie Street where Sandy went into a convenience store.

"I'll just be a minute," he said.

I stood at the open door of the store, happy to watch him go to the dairy section, take out a carton of milk, and then approach the cashier. He spoke to her, paid for it, and declined a plastic bag. I appreciate the way Sandy treats people as human beings rather than just as functions. And he's concerned about the environment. I like him.

Glancing at the milk, I thoughtlessly asked, "For your mom?"

"No, for me. I look after my own groceries."

"But sometimes you eat with your parents?"

"Sure, often we eat together. But they expect me to be independent. Cope for myself. Not make plans around them."

"So that's why you are such a good cook."

"Well, you do get better with practice."

We walked back to Sandy's car near the apartment. I thought Sandy was just going to drop off the milk and guitar and maybe even my flute and that we would walk to a restaurant. But when we reached the car, he just set these items on its roof. He leaned against the car and took my hand again.

"What do you think? Shall we call it an evening?"

It's true that we were both surprised at how late it had become. Still, I was disappointed. And I would have been happy just to sit in his car with him, but he was reminding me about how little sleep I would be getting. He knew I was to be picked up about 7:00 a.m. by Mary's sister's family in order to catch the 9:00 ferry for Galiano.

"Do you have anything to get ready yet?"

"I've already made the sushi I'm contributing. I just have to gather up my bathing suit and beach things."

"Which is going to take a bit of time."

"Sandy, I wish you weren't a realist."

"So I am a realist now?" He laughed, "I'm not sure anyone has ever labelled me that before."

Smiling, he lightly kissed my temple, and felt the shovel.

"What's this?" Looking at it, he teased, "Some little kid may go back to the beach tomorrow and expect to find his toy still there."

"Not so likely."

We smiled in agreement.

He took the shovel and put it in the side pocket of my open jacket. He took both my hands and then drew me close. I put my arms him. We kissed again. I was surprised at how comfortable this felt. As if we have been kissing for months—not just our third time (if you even count that first try at the fridge!).

At that moment I didn't care about how late it was, or how much sleep I wouldn't be getting, or who might be seeing us. I just wanted us to be close. I was sorry when we drew apart.

Finally he walked me to the apartment building and helped me open the front door with my key.

"Have fun tomorrow at Galiano," he said, this time kissing me on the cheek in a very casual way.





AUGUST # 6—Trip to Galiano Island

Visuals: Montague Harbour Provincial Park beaches and trail

Today—another fun mini excursion, with Mary and her family, to Galiano Island. For them this is a yearly tradition. Because Daphne is back from Toronto to attend another wedding, she joined the group including Mary (her mom) and her grandparents, and Mary's sister Cynthia and her two kids, Alisa and Robert, and me. To carry the seven of us as well as two bikes, we drove two vehicles about 30 kilometres to the ferry. Then Alisa and Robert, in their early 20s, walked their bikes onto the ferry so only the van needed to go aboard. The other vehicle stayed behind in the parking lot.

Once on the ship, we all met in the cafeteria (including our cyclists), as we had when I went with my classmates on our ferry trips. While we ate breakfast, we talked about meeting up near what the family calls sunset beach picnic site (not sure if this is its official name) in Montague Harbour Provincial Campsite. While we approached Active Pass, we went up on the deck. This is the ocean route where several ferries pass in the narrow waterway with islands on both sides. In fact, in order to turn to go into the dock at Sturdies Bay, our ferry had to manoeuvre around to let another ferry pass by us first.



When we docked at Galiano's Ferry Terminal, the ship unloaded the foot passengers first. We drove off the long pier from where the ferry was moored. Being low tide we could see striated rock formations with boulders strewn around as if deposited from an ice age. Visible sea life included a bank of starfish. Going up the narrow sloping road, we passed Robert and Alisa walking their bikes. We honked and waved.

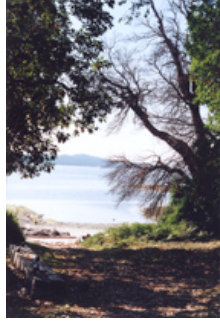


The road on the Island winds its way through forested area, meadows, and past small ocean coves. Fairly small cottage-style houses predominate. Mary said many houses on the island have been there many years, but some are still only inhabited in the summer. Realizing the twisting road we were driving along was very hilly, I was glad to be in the van rather than cycling with Alisa and Robert.

The family tradition is to go to the General Store and have an ice cream cone. It is an old store made of logs and inside has rough wooden shelves and counters. The place feels like it could have been there for 100 years. We chose a flavour of ice cream from a freezer having six different tubs of hard-to-scoop ice cream.

Then we sat outside on benches leaning against the front of the store as we licked our cones. It was so peaceful. Hard to think of cities even existing while hearing only birds. Apparently there is very little traffic other than at times when cars are coming from or going to the infrequent ferries.

Back in the van, we drove to the entrance of the Montague Harbour Provincial Park. The gate marks the entrance to the campground, which is a forest with a road winding through it. Tent sites are located on both sides. The flat side of the road is dense with shrubs and the upper side, an embankment, has tall evergreens without much vegetation between them. In one empty campsite on the low side of the road, we spotted a small deer.



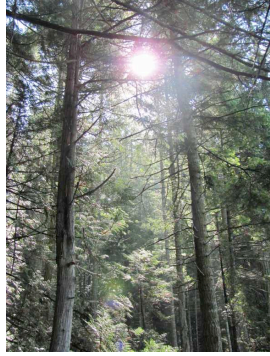
When we saw ocean again, we pulled up to a grassy area just up from a beach. There are picnic tables and three or four barbecue pits in this open area with a water tap nearby. We claimed a table close to a footpath leading to the beach and started unloading and walking the lunch materials to the picnic table that we set with a red, checkered tablecloth and white plastic cutlery. I noticed that this grassy picnic site is near a boat-launching ramp to the beach, but no one was putting a boat in the water while we were there.

By the time all our food was set out and we were ready to eat, our cyclists arrived. They were happy to have made the trip on the bikes but admitted to being somewhat hot and exhausted. We settled into a delicious shared meal of green and potato salads, sliced meats and buns, cottage cheese, tomatoes, juices, and my sushi (which the group appreciated) followed by grapes and slices of watermelon and cantaloupe and Mary's mom's homemade chocolate chip and peanut butter cookies.

When we got up from the table, we were ready to tour the peninsula and explore the beaches by walking along the seashore or on the trail if it got really hot. We planned to return to the sandy beach, close to the picnic area, to go swimming later in the afternoon. Mary's parents intended to sit on the beach reading and relaxing under the trees until we could rejoin them then.

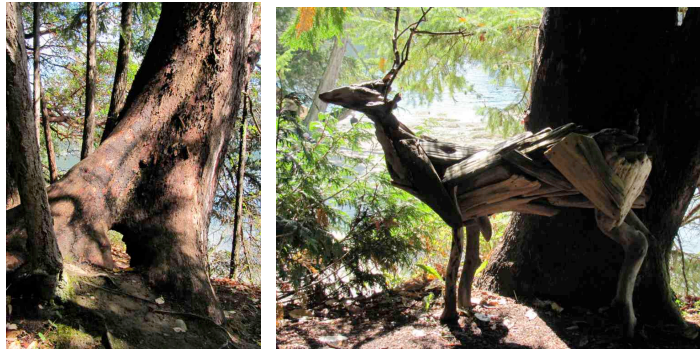
We all headed south along the beach, climbing over the barnacle-exposed rocks of low tide that are home to magenta and lime-green sea anemones, purple starfish, red-orange jelly fish, and blue mussels. Where the beach is rough with barnacles on shoals or large rocks, or where old fallen fir trees were difficult to climb under or over, we walked along the forest path that is parallel to the shore and provides a view of the water.





The coolness of the forest was a welcome break from the heat and glare of scrambling along the beach. In a few sections of the path that are high above the beach, the bank has eroded away so that it is hazardous to get by without holding on to a tree or branch to keep one's balance and avoid falling over the edge.

The vegetation along the path includes lush moss, trees shaped by winter storms, and many other forms of nature's art. In one secluded spot, the appearance of human art (driftwood assembled in the shape of a deer) was a pleasant surprise.



By the time Daphne and I reached what her family calls white shell beach, Alisa and Robert were going around the next corner a long way off, and Mary and Cynthia were dawdling along some distance behind us looking into tidal pools. We sat at the top of the beach, where the shells were intermingled with rust-coloured dry leaves from overhanging trees (arbutus, Daphne said).

We each brought out some cookies or fruit and some juice to drink. In hearing only the seagulls, crows, and the gently washing waves, I was thinking how I wished Sandy were with us. I was still feeling his presence from last night, sitting along with my classmates, on English Bay Beach, Sandy's and my thighs pressed together to fit into the circle, and later the two of us leaning against his car and each other, kissing.

I was trying to understand the way that he responded to realizing I play classical flute. That seemed to mean more to him than I expected. Sure, playing classical music is something that we might do together as a variation on the music he plays with his band. But did it mean more to him than just that?

He has said he likes to play music with someone else rather than alone. Maybe he understands that when he is no longer in the band, I could fill that role. Or maybe he sees me as someone who can help him reclaim a bit of himself—the classical pianist part—that he possibly regrets having abandoned.



The occasional sailboat passed between this beach and the island across from us. I was pleased when Daphne began to talk of having recently given up a boyfriend because of lifestyle differences that seem to make a shared future impossible.

With a wave of her hand indicating the seashore, Daphne said, “While all this is marvellous to visit on a holiday, I want to live most of my life with the conveniences and culture of a city. My ex-boyfriend, however, prefers to live in the country—the more rugged the better. His idea of a perfect vacation at the cottage, for instance, involves repairing a wharf, fixing a boat motor, or blazing new trails through the bush. And, to him, cold rainy weather is fine.”

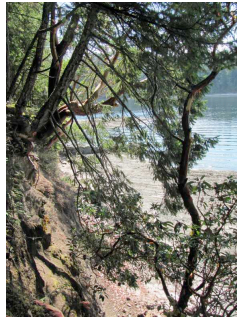
“Literally and figuratively, I assume,” I added.

“Yes. Whereas, if I can’t be in a gallery or at a concert or lecture in the city, well, let me at least recline on a dock, in the sunshine, reading a biography.”

Of course it didn’t take any more encouragement than hearing Daphne’s story about this boyfriend for me to tell her about Sandy—about how we enjoy each other’s company and are attracted to each other despite different cultures, different countries, and different languages, and despite knowing we will have to break up when I return home.

She sympathized with my wanting to spend time with Sandy, despite potential heartbreak, but she did include a warning about how difficult all this could be.

We continued the discussion even after we got up and started walking again. Daphne and I kept up our progress of circling the peninsula, mostly on the beach, but partly on the path, after arriving at eastern point where steep rock cliffs rise directly from the water not providing any space to walk below.



I was jolted somewhat when Daphne finally said, “But perhaps you are thinking you might not have to part with Sandy, that indeed it could be feasible for you to stay here and build a life with him.”

She did not ask this as a question, so apparently she did not expect a response from me. I was glad that I was not forced to comment on this, as I am certainly not willing to admit, even to myself, that that such thoughts have crossed my mind. Is this indeed what I am thinking? That this could be a possibility? I am self-conscious in even writing these words here.



As we came down from the trail to the sea level of Montague Harbour, we walked past the tidal basin that we had seen from its other side earlier on our walk. This wetland resembles a marsh at low tide but looks like a cove or a lagoon at high tide. From the western side of this marsh, you can see

Galiano Mountain in the distance. At least this is what I assume from the map of the Island that I picked up on the ferry.

After passing the eastern side of the tidal basin, we climbed a treed hill to the backpackers' /yachters' campsite section (not accessible to cars), and then we walked downward again to a white beach next to a government dock. Daphne says that beach is the best place to swim early in the morning since it faces east directly onto Montague Harbour.

She pointed to some antique fruit trees and told me this was an old orchard before the area became a provincial park. At one end of that flat grassy area there are roughly constructed benches and a makeshift projection screen painted white. Daphne said that when she camped here with her family as a child, the Parks Board gave evening slide shows about nature here. She laughed in saying the one that she remembers most clearly was titled, "The Secret Sex Lives of Spiders." After seeing slides identifying the types of spiders that live in the park, the park instructor led participants, with their flashlights, around to the outhouses searching for cobwebs containing live, in action, examples of such spiders.



Knowing I would be writing about this park made me more perceptive about what I was seeing in touring the peninsula. I conclude now that writing for me has become somewhat like drawing. I draw when I want to see more fully, to grasp something visually. Am I now writing to become more observant, to understand more clearly? Seems to be working.

We cut back through the regular campsites and rejoined Mary's parents on the sandy beach. After getting into our bathing suits, we waded along the shore expecting the water to eventually seem warmer, but it didn't. Daphne confirmed that the ocean is colder on Galiano than on most Vancouver beaches.

We lay on beach towels waiting for the others to join us in our attempt to go swimming. Already in their bathing suits, Robert and Alisa approached us. They walked right into the water as if it were as warm as any indoor swimming pool. They soon even had their heads under the surface and were swimming and laughing and encouraging us to join them.

Somewhat reluctantly Daphne and I did get in. It was just as cold as before, but we were able to swim fast enough and long enough so that it seemed bearable. By the time we walked back into the shore, the water's edge did feel almost warm. We lay down on towels on the beach in the sun to dry off.



Setting their books aside, Cynthia and Mary went back onto the grassy picnic site where we had eaten lunch. They said they would start supper and we could help them as soon as we felt warm and dry enough to do so.

When we arrived back at the picnic table we could see that they had already brought out the supper food from the coolers that were in the van. They started a fire in the pit near the table and soon we could smell beans cooking and wieners roasting. Daphne and I made an interesting salad.

Mary's parents joined us too after their short walk, and we all had a leisurely, fun supper—laughing a lot. After encouraging Mary and Cynthia to return to the beach, Daphne and I put the food away while we did the rest of the clean up.



Soon it was time to get everything back in the van and leave for the ferry. I think we all wished we were camping there for a few days so we didn't have to miss the end of what was starting to be a wonderful sunset.

The return trip to the ferry dock seemed shorter than the same ride from there on our arrival trip. Once in the ferry line-up, we got out of the car and walked around. Many others did the same or were lounging around leaning against their vehicles. Others waited inside them with their windows or even their doors open. There was the murmur of quiet conversation.

Robert and Alisa arrived on their bikes. People came and went with ice cream cones and other snacks bought at the small, unique concession stand (a converted car trailer).



When the ferry arrived, it proceeded to unload and reload. In boarding, we went directly to the deck to watch the shoreline as we pulled out of Sturdies Bay. Daphne pointed to Bellhouse Park at one side. It is a small park on the shore, which is a huge rock, where picnickers walk on trails across this rock and down to the waterline. Apparently it is possible to see whales from this site as they travel through Active Pass.

Daphne said when she was small, the kids in the extended family enjoyed finding what they named "Lucys." Exposed at low tide, these kelp plants have a large bulbous head, enabling them to float on the water's surface, and a long root to keep them firmly attached to the ocean floor no matter how high the tide is. She said whoever in the family found the biggest Lucy of the day won the contest. Some of these sea plants could have roots that are longer than a van.

We stayed up on the deck for most of the voyage toward the far-off (but visible) Tsawwassen Ferry Terminal, an hour away. I mentioned how much we had seen in one day, but Daphne told me that we had actually seen only a small portion of Galiano Island.

She mentioned some of her childhood adventures on the scary top of Bluff Park with its high-up, incredible view of

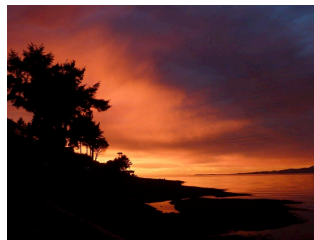
Active Pass. And she talked about visiting the Great Beaver Swamp (which she showed me on my map), a marsh created by beavers damming a wetland area so that water-dependent mammals flourish among yellow skunk cabbages and twittering birds flit around overhead in deciduous trees.

Just slightly further north, on the opposite side of the Island, Bodega Ridge is apparently a hiker's paradise with its wildlife, birds, and incredible views high above the ocean. And, Daphne added, the drive to the north end of the Island is also worthwhile for visitors who wish to feast on live crabs bought directly from fishermen on the wharf.

Our passage back to the Mainland was complete with a deepening sunset. Sunsets always make me think of Sandy, but I had been thinking about him even more during this trip as a result of our romantic time together last night. I had been so moved in hearing the love song he has written for me and in realizing that he intends to continue the song as our relationship unfolds. Also I still can't believe that I had the nerve to respond with my flute to reveal that I understood that the song is about the two of us.

Also I am amazed that I admitted that I want to be the person that he has described in the song as someone he wants to make plans with. And, yes, I totally agree with the sentiment that "to discover how to be a pair would make my life feel new." I want to get on with that.

When we all got off the ferry and were back on the Mainland highway again, I was struggling to stay awake after all that sunshine and fresh air. It had been a very long but satisfying day. I had to agree with an advertising slogan on a billboard we passed that said, "Super Natural British Columbia."



Photograph of path to beach (p. 243) and sailboat in sunset (p. 248), at Montague Harbour Provincial Park, courtesy of Gail (Bullen) Baker, Vancouver, Canada; "Supernatural" sunset courtesy of James Freeman, Nanose Bay, B.C., Canada; other Galiano photos by the author

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