

# Little, Big Dipper

*by* Jennifer Donnell

Christian brushed against the sleeve of my pink gingham button down shirt and pointed up, then up again. I squinted and saw it, the Big Dipper. It made me feel small, the two of us seated next to one another on a blanket, removed from the noise of the party. I didn't have the words to capture the infinite idea of space, even as the physical space between Christian and I was diminishing. Inside the party, Bill had started a drinking game, where people had to pound on a table and say a bad word. It sounded like a drinking game for five year olds, which didn't sound right either.

"I want to learn more about astronomy and mythology." Christian said, speaking thoughtfully, the thumps of our friend's Jagermeister intoxication reverberating through the night air. He stared up again, wistfully, as if the future was now. He smiled through the effects of the second beer on his skinny teenage frame and asked if I wanted to see the Little Dipper. He had brown hair and was cute, if I were drinking. I took a sip of my wine cooler. I giggled.

Alcohol seemed to make my peers act wild, silly. For me, I felt a grateful effect of being dumbed down. I could almost be vapid enough to be around normal guys. Guys who liked cars and watched sports. My dream guy, my future husband, was surely having intellectual conversation at a coffee shop somewhere, my favorite book in his lap. Meanwhile, the kind of guy who might kiss me was probably getting hammered at a party and would sleep the entire next day.

I considered kissing Christian. It wouldn't be terrible. I mean, it might be terrible, but it wouldn't be awful. His teeth were a little crooked but he didn't smell or anything.

He placed an arm around my shoulder and told me I had a pretty face. The compartmentalization of my face as a thing of its own made me feel ugly all over.

“Thank you.” I told him and wondered what I should compliment about him. He had a zit on his chin. His eyebrows reminded me of zombie caterpillars. His shirt was a little crinkled and his jeans were too baggy around the ankle. I looked at his shoes, they were Doc Martens, black, eight holes. He had a lock on the laces. I asked why.

“It means I don't have gay sex.” he said, matter of fact, as if that was the kind of thing shoelaces were supposed to announce.

I wondered if that meant he was gay, as wasn't it pretty defensive of him. He told me a lot of guys had it on their shoelaces. It seemed wrong, but I didn't know what to say. He put his hand on my knee.

I trembled, not out of desire but discomfort. I finished my wine cooler and he brought me another citrus flavored Zima, “Zomething Different.” he joked, like the commercial that aired on the television.

I drank half and then he kissed me. Our noses bumped and he slobbered on my chin. Maybe I was a little premature in assuming it wouldn't be terrible. He put his arm around me again, seeming more confident after our kiss.

“Yeah,” he turned and looked upward again. “I definitely want to learn more astronomy someday.”

“Me, too.” I agreed with a nod.

Someday was a popular concept.

