

November Saturday

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On Saturday morning the ringing phone made me fly out of bed from a sound sleep.

"I was just thinking that it might be fun to go bowling," my friend Judy said, "What do you think?"

"Sure. I have to wake up and do a few chores, then I'll meet you on Wellington in front of the bowling alley."

Soon, I was hurrying along Wellington, hands in my pockets, eyes watering from the chill wind. Dark clouds filled the sky and it looked as though it could snow any minute.

Judy, with another school friend, Dave, was already at the West Park Bowling Alley when I arrived. They had already reserved us a lane.

My first attempt at bowling, years before, had started with a strike, so I had thought this was the easiest game in the world. Only later I found out that my success was a total fluke and that strikes were few and far between. I had little skill, but it was always fun, and Judy was a fair bowler. We were no match for Dave though, who was good at most sports and very competitive.

When we were through, Dave thought it was time for a coke with french fries and gravy. As he started over to the snack bar, Judy stopped him.

"Let's get out of here." she said, "How about going across the street to see Fred and Eva?"

We all thought that was a great idea since the Aroma restaurant, just the other side of Holland, was one of our favourite hangouts.

The steamy little restaurant was noisy and crowded with kids from Champlain and Fisher Park High School. We slid into the last booth.

Grey-haired Eva, our favourite waitress came to take our order with her habitual scowl. "If I had known you three were coming I would have taken the day off," was her typical greeting. Burly, jovial Fred, the Aroma's cook poked his head out of the kitchen and rolled his eyes at us. "Don't antagonize her, she's in a mood" he yelled over the din.

"We need some music," I said as we waited for our food. Judy dropped a quarter into the tableside jukebox. "Here's the perfect song for today" she said as Simon and Garfunkel's "A Hazy Shade of Winter" filled the room, followed by "Paperback Writer and my favourite "96 Tears".

Soon our fries arrived, smothered in salty, rich gravy and were quickly polished off.

"I've got to work on an essay for English. What are you two doing tonight?" I asked as we piled out the door into the gloomy dusk.

"Toronto's playing Montreal so I'll be watching hockey" Dave said. "I've got a bet on with my dad. He's going for Toronto but Jean Beliveau and Henri Richard can beat them any day."

"I'm babysitting" Judy said. "I need some Christmas money."

"See you tomorrow then, maybe." Dave called out as we went our separate ways.

With my chin tucked into my collar I hurried along Wellington Street in the gathering darkness. Tiny flakes of snow began to fall and suddenly I felt the festive season and Christmas vacation approaching. That would give us all something to anticipate as the nights grew longer.