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Three Journals

by Scott Thomas

Speaking from what I know of that long-ago era,
Life moved much too quickly, and people rarely
Kept accounts of their daily lives. Don't forget.
This was the time of commuter trains, the time
Of morning coffee gulped to the sound of a screen
No one was watching. For the most part, the details
Of their day-to-day existence are lost to us.
In the case of my current subject, we have only
A fragmentary record, and we see him first
At nine years old only because his mom bought him
This leatherbound diary for Christmas...*Go ahead.*
...I trust you. On January 1, as you can see,
He was filled with excitement. Here he scribbles
About ham, science books, and how he made
The control panel of a spaceship out of a thing
Called Lite Brite. Note how each day there is less
And less detail until, by mid-March, he is reduced
To entries like, "Dear Diary, Today
Was a good day," or, conversely, "Dear Diary,
Today was a bad day." While I am happy that
The good days outnumbered the bad in 1973,
Such brevity does little for my research.
Enough of that.

Next is this tattered, yellow
Legal pad. It picks up the story nine years
Later between his freshman and sophomore years
In college. He was bored at home that summer,

Cutting lawns. One afternoon, surveying the world
From a hillside of dandelions, he convinced himself
That a girl one hundred miles away, in the shadow
Of the farthest mountain range, was in love
With him. He was wrong. When the diary trails off
That September, he was sitting in his dormitory
In the shadow of the farthest mountain range.
Though disappointed in love, it seems
There were always friends knocking at his thin door...

...Which brings us to his last journal. He was 32,
Still without a girlfriend or wife: this diary,
Sometimes comical, often sad, documents
His desperate attempts at finding love in a cold,
Uncaring world. Then, as now, love was an
Elusive thing, and the questions he poses will be
Familiar to you: *Does love come through persistent
Effort like a Boy Scout lighting a campfire
With only a piece of flint and a pocketknife,
Or does it come, whether you deserve it or not,
Like a forest fire borne of a lightning strike?*
He has no answers for us. In the final entry,
The last time we ever hear from him, he is assessing
Yet another prospect. "We'll see tomorrow if she
Is the one," he concludes. Then, it is almost as if
The next day never came (though we know it did:
I checked the database. He lived to be a very
Old man.) Interesting, isn't it? What does it mean?
Could it be that she was indeed the "one" he spoke of,
That now, with the answer revealed to him, with love
Putting a final end to his quest, he had neither
The time nor inclination to write? Should I
Complain? After all, history's loss is his gain.