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When I was 12: Love, or something like it

The Friday before that doomed weekend breakup I knew something was up. Even at 12, you just know.

By: Chantaie Allick Staff Reporter, Published on Fri Dec 30 2011

Twelve is a funny period. For many it's an age of awkwardness and middle school horror. A time you'd rather forget. You feel more grown up than you really are and lead a life more mature than any adult would believe.

I can't remember a better time in my life. Sad or not, it's a fact. Grade 7 was the best. It was 1997 and I was too young to know better and too smart to suffer consequences.

It was also the year I had my first real boyfriend. From the shock of finding out a boy (a boy!) had a crush on me came the smooth machinations of my friend Jermaine to turn that crush into a bona fide childhood liaison.

His name was David.

I don't know what he saw in the smart-mouthed, gangly tomboy I was back then, but I was willing to suspend my disbelief out of sheer curiosity. David used to chase me through the halls of our North York school after I'd stolen his cap or tripped him. I thought it was innocent fun.

This was before Facebook, or Twitter and even ICQ. We saw each other at school, hugged goodbye and went home to make phone calls on the landline (which we just called the phone).

There was no kissing or sexting or anything even close to that. I was still just a kid playing grown-up.

My mom never found out because boys were not allowed. I was always on the phone with some friend or other spending hours recapping the day's events and maligning our teachers. Now I just did it with a boy and my family was none the wiser.

I felt very grown up — having a secret often does that. My friends were all involved, offering advice and asking questions during class and at lunch. It was fun while it lasted. I had a boyfriend who was cool (he played hockey) and I was certain all my friends were jealous (though in retrospect I doubt it).

It didn't end well. In fact, he told Jermaine to tell me it was over when he and all the other boys were at Jermaine's house.

The Friday before that doomed weekend breakup I knew something was up. Even at 12, you just know. Things had kind of fizzled. We had run out of things to talk about on the phone and now I saw David so much that chasing me through the halls seemed a little silly.

To start a habit that would stick with me through adulthood, I tried to save something that had run its course. I offered to kiss him. He politely declined.

I had gone from being fun to being his girlfriend, perhaps how married couples feel after years together.

Simply put, it was over.

I cried. I couldn't help but cry, I was 12 and my emotions had only just started to consume me with their violence and volatility. My best friend made me feel better in the way only your 12-year-old best friend can. "Boys are stupid," she told me.

The next Monday, the whole school was talking about it. Some felt bad for me, some saw it coming and others (the mean ones) laughed. The way of life at 12 I guess, your life is not your own: parents, teachers, friends, classmates and acquaintances all own pieces of your experiences.

I got over it. Now it's a funny memory. Something there in the back of my mind to remind me that things are always complicated. Even with perspective, age and a modicum of wisdom, life remains what it was when I was 12.