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Well, of course, the memory of men has its principle differences; it's completely unlike that of our female memory. Which is exactly why we recount identical stories from opposite points of view.

The first time I really thought about this was when my husband, thanks to global interconnectivity, stumbled upon his old classmate and first love named Lina Sandler on some social network. Thirty years ago, Lina immigrated to Canada and at the same time was a professor at a university nearby, living with her children and grandchildren. Life had been very kind to her...

After an emotional catch up and a frantic exchange of the latest news, after all of the who, what, where, when and why—of which quite a bit had accumulated in three decades since they had seen each other—Lina sent the most recent photo of herself to her childhood friend.

Posed on a terrace in front of the glimmering, blue water of a pool and surrounded by roses sat a very well fed, round-faced mother amidst her grandchildren.

My husband nearly fell into shock.

“Wait, that's Lina?!...” He rushed around the house all evening in a strange, worrisome, panic, peeking at the photograph over and over again, “How...that's not possible!”

“What's wrong?”—I kept wondering—“A very attractive woman, well groomed, maybe just a bit plump...with age.”

“What do you understand!”—my husband exclaimed as he raised his arms to the sky, pleading. “Attractive! She was an angel! With a slim waist and long legs! Softly colored eyes with ginger-like colored curls! You've...You've just never really seen her...”

Such a sorrow could be heard in his voice.

“She's 58 my dear, not 22, what do you expect from her, after so many years...”

“What do I expect?”—He froze, rubbing the scruff on his beard in deep thought. “I really don't even know...”

“How about you, yourself,” I angrily said, “Look at yourself in the mirror, very carefully and compare yourself to your 40 year old past self...”

My husband took a deep breath, sighed, and proceeded to go watch television. All day he remained in an uncomfortable, silent state.

Men—a strange species. It seems as though they expect their first love to be immune to age, that she should experience no change and avoid all of the unforgiving affects of time, unlike everyone else. Deep within themselves, lodged somewhere in the crevices of their old memories, she’s there—untouched. She does not age, doesn’t get wrinkles, or gain any unwanted folds from weight, she is preserved in her youth—thin, gentle, with soft eyes...

About 25 years ago, at some literature themed event at the House of Writers, upon which I stumbled accidentally as I was shortly visiting St. Petersburg, I ran into an old acquaintance. Thirty years ago, when I had been a journalism student, he was a department head of a literary journal and appeared untouchable. Now, a modestly dressed, tired old man was standing before me. And on that day, I was the untouchable one to all of my old idols, dressed in elegant clothing with a trendy haircut, hailing from the successful West to this event.

Old writers, masters of yesterday’s thought, baffled me with their unkempt and bleak manner.

Everything changed in this world. Ideals, illusions and valued riches, which in my youth shined so bright, had all been lost in the black hole of capitalism. No one was interested any longer in hearing their discussions on the eternal future of the world.

The writers were obviously longing for the end of the long and formal speeches so that they could approach the already table. And when a pause was finally announced and everyone in attendance began to feverishly lunge at the sandwiches, I reminded myself that most of them were simply hungry in reality.

“How is it that,” I sadly asked one of my fellows with whom I arrived, “that these writers from St. Petersburg find themselves in such a shambled state...”

“What are you expecting? Their retirement is worthless, and their old books are even worse off—practically making nothing,” he explained while

chewing energetically. “Well maybe about ten of the most popular authors do, but, the Internet ate everything up...”

And at that moment my former idol, the department head, noticed me.

“Oh my God, it can’t be you!”—he exclaimed excitedly.

We walked and conversed together during the evening, on a boardwalk dimly lit by the yellowish streetlights of St. Petersburg.

“I thought you had forgotten about me long ago...who was I back then? A completely foolish girl.”

“You were a beauty”—he said in a serious tone—“Actually, you most certainly still are. Just back then, you were practically blinding with beauty, and one could not keep their eyes off of you. Even I was afraid to really look at you...”

“Why didn’t you ever approach me and say so?”—I asked sincerely.

“And why, was I able to approach you and say such a thing?”

I started to reminisce and recall my first and very naïve steps in the world of literature paved by the intelligence and leadership of this man.

“Do you remember when the head of the poetry department would come by and say”—I focused my eyebrows and lowered my voice, trying to find the exact tone to mimic the particular memory:

“Stay away from writers, my dear. Writers—they are a dangerous people, they not only think about how to sleep with a woman, but more so about how to write about it later.”

“Of course I remember...you have no idea how well I remember it all...”

He began to tell me more about the past in such great detail that it was almost as if there were a film playing in front of him consisting of all of the various persons involved and he were simply narrating the events he saw before his eyes.

This is the strangeness of the male memory—retaining all of the slightest details, the colors and scents that have long expired in the female mind after such long periods of time. I realized this not long ago.

My friend and I once found ourselves at an international arts conference occurring in a gorgeous vacation city in Bavaria. The conference attracted the presence of professors of the Russian language from all over the world. We listened to lectures and participated in seminars and

discussions for an entire half of a day, and the other half we spent enjoying ourselves by taking leisurely strolls and taking in the sights of the town.

My soul was singing. I had lived for so long amongst the cold ocean of strange conversation, which slowly evolved into an unsettling reality that when I finally awoke in this intellectually saturated and flourishing environment, it felt nothing short of a miracle, like in my youth, listening to the lectures of the professors of the university in St. Petersburg, about the spiritual and authentic existence of Russian literature.

So, my friend and I, alongside many other professors of the Russian language, set out to discover the highlighted locations of this town. The tour guide, a young and intelligent woman, told us of the famous Russians that were buried in a graveyard nearby.

Next to us stood Simon Lentz, previously an individual from St. Petersburg and now a professor at an American institution.

“Excuse me, who else is buried here of a high stature?” he asked, “I could not hear very well.”

Upon hearing the sound of his voice, my friend seemed to freeze in place, growing pale, and then approaching the professor very closely, she looked up at him and uttered: “You are Simon?”

A long pause hung in the air.

Fate strangely looked at the 60-year-old woman standing before him.

“Forgive me...you...I don’t understand...”

“Small world”—she spoke the curious words, a password to their youth.

“You, Belka?!”—he cried joyfully, and immediately curtailing his excitement—“Belochka! My dear! I cannot believe it...”

Voice—an instrument of the soul, it does not age. She recognized him by his voice.

My friend Bella turned out to be the first, most important and unforgettable love in this American professors life. In his years as a student he played in the same band as her, “Small World,” walking the nights alongside the St. Petersburg boardwalk, kissing her on the benches of the Summer Garden...

Until the last two remaining days of the conference, on which they were supposed to fly apart to the opposite sides of the continent back to their

well-balanced and established lives, the grey haired professor strolled around, youthful and charmed. Looking for peace, and though old and withered (perhaps this is why he could never immediately recognize), remembering the woman over and over again.

He had saved particular memories—a certain bracelet around her arm: “As a matter of fact, my father brought this back for me from his business trip, something that no one else had at the time...” And the denim outfit, at that time very fashionable, making the rest of her friends jealous, and the particular hairstyle with some tucked away behind her ear, and the floral scent of her perfume, “Charlie.”

My friend was absolutely dumbfounded. In Simon’s memories, she remained the youthful spirit that she had always been in her youth, something that she had a difficulty recalling herself.

But it wasn’t that she was unable to reconstruct the details of their romance; she was able to remember in her own way. But there was a lot that had faded away from her memory, like sand on the shore being slowly drawn back into the sea over many years leaving behind only the most prominent memories. She remembered where they had gone, what they had done, with whom they had interacted.

I watched the romance rekindle before my own eyes, and could not help but be a bit jealous.

The flourishing of a woman passes so swiftly...

And only the male memory, that which is completely in love, leaves us eternally beautiful and young.

I would give a lot just to feel lifted back up by a memory, to feel as if all happened just yesterday.

And for someone to recount, forty years later, how hard working my spirits were...