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A man's memory has fundamental differences, is completely unlike ours—women. That is why of the exact same event we tell completely different stories.

The first time I considered this was when my husband, thanks to the internet, found his first love, Lina Sandler, on one of those social media sites. Thirty years ago Lina immigrated to Canada and is now teaching at a university and living near her children and grandchildren. Quite a successful fate...

After much emotional chatting and news sharing concerning how happy they were and finding out who was who and who had what and how—and believe me, a lot had accumulated over the three decades since they last spoke - Lina sent the friend from her youth a picture of herself.

Against the blue swimming pool on the terrace, overgrown with red roses, sat a plump, round-faced woman surrounded by grandchildren.

My husband was shocked.

“This is Lina!?” My husband ran around the apartment all night looking at the photograph again and again. “No, this can’t be her!”

“What?” I questioned, “She’s a nice looking woman, looks after herself, a little bit overweight, but that comes with age.”

“Ah, what do you know!” screeched my husband as he bitterly raised a hand to the sky. “Looks nice? She was an angel! A thin waist, long legs! And her eyes, a violet color, and bright red hair! You, you have never even seen her...” And as he spoke, there was such sadness in his voice.

“My dear, she’s already 58 years old, not 22, what do you expect after so many years...”

“What do I expect?” My husband froze, and turned away from me. He subconsciously rubbed his scruffy chin and replied, “I don’t know.”

“You don’t know?” I responded angrily. “Look carefully into the mirror and compare yourself with a photograph from 40 years ago.”

My husband pouted, sunk down and went over to watch TV. He stayed in a depressed and silent state for the rest of the evening.

Men—they're strange people. For some reason they think that their first love doesn't age, doesn't change, and is not affected, like everyone else, by time. Somewhere in the depths of memory, imprinted in the seat of their universe, she does not age, she is not covered in wrinkles, does not have folds of fat, and remains a young woman- thin, delicate, and with violet eyes.

25 years later at one of the literary gatherings held at the home of a writer in St. Petersburg, I met with a dear old friend completely by accident. 30 years prior when I had been a journalism student, this friend had headed the department of an important literary magazine. It had seemed like everything he did was completely unattainable, as if he were otherworldly. Now, he seemed an old, tired, and casually dressed man. And that day in his eyes, that was probably how I looked, flying in with the most elegant clothes and modern haircut from the prosperous West, just for this literary evening.

The old writers were yesterday's biggest influences, but now their barely disguised poverty struck and unsettled me.

Everything changed in this world. Ideals, illusions and values, which so clearly bloomed my youth, disappeared without a trace in a black hole of greedy capitalism. For whom were these things necessary in the "land of the victory bubble?"

The writers clearly had been eagerly awaiting the end of the high-profile, official reports to go to the table. And when, at last, a pause was declared and everyone started to grab cakes and sandwiches, I realized that many of them were just hungry.

"And how is that?" I asked bitterly, "I did not think that the writers of St. Petersburg were in such poor conditions."

"What did you think? Pension is small, books bring in practically no profits," my friend explained. "Maybe ten of the most established authors...but overall everything was taken over by the internet."

And at this point I saw my former boss.

"My God! Is that really you?" He called happily.

We walked together and talked on the evening promenade, illuminated by St. Petersburg's yellow lanterns.

"I thought you forgot me long ago...Who was I then? A very silly girl."

"You were beautiful," he said seriously, "however, you still are now. But then, just a simply dazzling beauty that you could not tear your eyes from. I was even scared at times to look at you..."

"Why didn't you say anything?" I replied, shocked. "What? Could I really come up to you?"

I began to remember myself and my first, naive steps in the literary field, following the guidance of this intelligent and talented man.

"Remember, how the poetry editor came and told us," I furrowed my brows, lowered my voice, and tried to mimic the familiar tone, "Dear, watch out for the writers. They are dangerous people. They won't even think and just lie with a woman to write about it.

"Of course I remember...you have no idea how well I remember it..."

And he began to tell me about it. In fact, he told me so clearly it was as if a full-length film unfolded in front of me with storylines, characters' remarks, landscape, and staging.

This is what is so strange about a man's memory—it keeps details, colors, smells, which would have already weathered out of a woman's head as time went on. This I clearly realized only recently.

We were with a friend at the Slavic International Conference, which was held in the beautiful resort town of Bavaria. The conference brought together teachers of the Russian language from around the world. Half of the day we listened to presentations, lectures, and participated in roundtable discussions; the other half of the day we walked along the clean German streets, looking into boutique windows and enjoying life.

My soul sang. I had lived so long among the cold ocean of another's speech, which turned into the usual annoying background, or among the Ukrainian and Moldovan simple words. But here with the proper, refined, literary language, I was in pure bliss. Just like in my youth, when I listened to the lectures of professors from Petrograd University about Russian and foreign literature.

So then, my friend, a teacher of Russian language, and I, in the company of the other participants went on a tour of the monuments in town. Here our guide, a youthful, intelligent lady, told about the famous Russians buried at the Wiesbaden cemetery.

Near us stood Simon Lenz, a man who used to live in St. Petersburg, but who is now a professor of Slavistic philology at an American University.

“Sorry, who else other than the blonde is buried in the cemetery?” he asked, “I did not hear.”

My friend, at the sound of his voice, strangely stopped, turned pale, then came quite close to the professor, looking intently at his face. She then said, “Simon, is it you?”

A long silence hung in the air.

The professor looked at the 60 year old woman standing in front of him. “Excuse me...I’m not sure I remember you...”

"Small Country," she said mysteriously. It was a reminder of their youth.

“Bella is that you!?” He shouted and instantly and joyfully hugged her. “Bella! My dear! Is this really you?”

The voice, it’s a tool of the soul, it does not get old. She recognized him by his voice.

My friend Bella turned out to be the first, main, and unforgettable love of the American professor. During their student years, they played together in the music institute ensemble "Small Country," went on walks along the Neva at night, kissed on the benches of the Summer Gardens ...

Oh yes—it was their bright and vibrant youth, against which anything after could not compare.

And after the two remaining days of the conference, the two would fly to opposite ends of the continent. The professor would go back, no longer the same youth he was back then. They would both be honest, aged and faded (and not even recognizable at first glance), but they would go on thinking, remembering, remembering.

His memory preserved incredible details—a narrow hammered bracelet on her arm: "My dad from brought this back from a trip to India, there’s not another one like it ..."

And he remembered her pantsuit, extremely fashionable in those years, the envy of the students, the chestnut curls of hair above her ear, the floral perfume, "Charlie," that she wore.

My friend was struck...In his hidden internal memory Bella remained the same charming girl that today, she could hardly remember herself.

Not that my friend could not restore the details of their youthful lives, of course should could, but they were very different. Much of her memory washed away, like fine sand on the sea cliffs, leaving only large boulders events. She remembered where she went, what she did, and whom she was with.

With romance and a bit of jealousy, I watched the exchange unfold before my eyes.

The blooming of a flower is so short lived, and only love and passionate memories leave us beautiful and young.

I would give a lot to be taken back in time with the wings of someone's memory, to relive youth as if it had happened yesterday.

And for some forty years later, someone to recount the smell of my perfume...