

### Black and White

What I see is the phone's receiver vibrating when it rings like it is part of a cartoon. The phone, black with white numbers, is a rotary unit which is outdated but tactile. I sit on the bed in the master bedroom and pull each number to the left, then let the circle roll back; 7 rhythmic cycles before the wait, a ring and a hang up on my end.

What I wear is black: a pair of shorts that match everything, high top Reebok sneakers that I pretend go with everything and what else I have on is some degree of black: black tank top faded from too many washings, especially along the ribbed lines of the textured fabric; my father's old slippery black dress socks rolled down to the tops of the shoes and plastic earrings of tropical birds or anchors or holiday themed – any that I can find at the jewelry counter of Woodard's Drug.

He is wearing white. I am at least 50% sure this fact is a product of my obsession with color theory. I am 13 when I make a crest for a club that no one belongs to called PRISM, when I read Mad Magazine mostly for the Spy Vs Spy comics and when I watch daily episodes of the classics: *I Love Lucy*, *The Little Rascals*, *The Dick Van Dyke Show*.

He has his neighbor, a girl, ask me to be his girlfriend. I don't immediately say yes because I haven't considered boys that way. I don't yet buy *Teen Beat* or *Seventeen*. I do not own make up, a curling iron or even a diary within which to declare my undying love. I do have a notebook in which I write songs and plays.

Michael and I are "going together." We are part of a water fight in his neighbor's attic along with my sister, his sister and the neighbor's sisters. When Michael chases all the girls down the stairs, his neighbor tells me Michael wants to kiss me. I say I am not ready.

Michael and I play basketball in his backyard or watch cartoons while his mother hovers between the kitchen and the living room. I think of leather furniture, central air conditioning, shades of brown and dim lighting. We don't have classes together. There are minutes when our lunches overlap. There are notes passed. Notes give me something to do because I rarely eat lunch. I don't like using my number to obtain my free lunch.

We don't talk on the phone much because we live near each other. He only calls me to invite me over. He never comes to my house, a white and yellow single wide trailer with a two room addition added on to the back. Anytime the phone rings after school, I start putting on my shoes while reaching for the receiver.

We don't talk long the afternoon when he tells me he can't hang out with me anymore. Can't or doesn't want to? I can't really hear it. There is someone else on his line, it sounds like his father, telling Michael to hang up now as I say words like, what, why? Later, my sister is crying. She has the same phone call from Michael's sister.

What I feel sure of, is that Michael is this nice kid who lived up the street in a really nice house and I am this other kid with divorced parents who lived in a trailer. About a year later, Michael's dad speaks at my church while running for a public office. Michael and I don't speak to each other. We don't speak even a few more years later when he drives up to the SAT testing site in a nice red car. He nods at me as he opens the passenger side door for a girl whom I remember as being a pretty blonde. I am sitting on the curb, where I have been for an hour because that is the only time I could get a ride to drop me off.

What I know is that we do speak when I am working in a bank teller line hours away from where we grew up. He greets me using my first, middle and last names but it takes me a while to place him. His gray eyes are a tip off. His name is on the tip of my tongue. Once he says his name, I am back to my room in the trailer addition when he stops by out of the blue during a time when we are both attending different junior highs. He sprawls across my bed as I stand on the other side of the room. It is a year before I will finally kiss anyone, but during that visit my eyes are attuned to the wide leg of Michael's shorts. I think I can see hair sprouting there, but I convince myself it is just shadow. It is a short visit. At the bank, we do not exchange emails or phone numbers. I don't ask him what he remembers.

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Michelle Montrose Larsen recently earned her BFA from Utah State University in Drawing/ Painting and Art Education. Ever since she was a child, she has been creating arts and crafts using found objects and collage. She has recently rekindled that desire to combine seemingly unrelated images and objects to form new and beautiful compositions. Michelle has a difficult time separating any of her interests from her artwork, so her work often reflects her interests in the written word, the human body, and even her addiction to thrift shopping. You can view more of Michelle's work at [www.mcollage.daportfolio.com](http://www.mcollage.daportfolio.com)