

# Sandra

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*(Based in a true story.)*

I first saw her around September 1969, at the start of my third year of high school. She walked into the classroom one morning, the new student just introduced by our teacher.

Silence invaded the room as soon as she entered, for no other reason that she was uncannily beautiful. Slim, black hair, tanned skin, bright blue eyes. Most of us had never seen such a beautiful person so far. Aware and annoyed by our stares, she quickly walked up the alley between the desks and sat at the far end of the room, next to a friend of her who she knew from outside school.

We were together in the same class for the next two years, until I left to Europe in 1971. We never exchanged much during that time. I was the nerd of the class, buried deep in piles of books, a living version of an encyclopedia able to memorize any kind of useless fact. She was the smart, witty, pretty girl, the popular cheerleader. The one that would usually be portrayed by Megan Fox.

No, scratch that; although Sandra looked eerily like Megan, this girl became my own personal Susan Glenn, decades before the meme.

I dreamt of her, even long after I left to Europe. She was my very idea of physical beauty, that which fueled my fantasies and my desires. She became a gauge, a model to which I compared every girl I saw in the street. My male mind was blurred with appearances, fed with memories and hormone spikes.

I desired her like I had desired few women in my life. She was unattainable – and quite literally so, given the thousands of kilometers that separated us. We weren't even exchanging mail (you know, the old-fashioned kind, with stamps and envelopes.) We just weren't friends. She barely acknowledged my existence in the classroom. I was nobody to her.

Come August 1971, a plane took me and my mother to a new country, to live a new life.

Fast forward July 1977, when I returned to Mexico for holidays, my first trip back to my birthplace since I had left.

To make a long story short, in a rather unexpected sequence of events, one morning I woke up and I saw the naked body of Sandra lying asleep, next to mine. I remember staring at her that morning, still in awe and thinking that this was just a dream, one which I would probably wake up from in any minute. She was intelligent, hotter than a supernova, elegant, sensual, and much to my disbelief, eager to spend a night with me.

I grudgingly smiled and came to the conclusion that it was not a dream.

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Rewind to a couple of days earlier. Sandra and myself were having a barbecue, with our old friends from school. It was a beautiful starry night in Cancún, we had gone to spend some days in the beach.

After a couple of beers I gathered enough courage and started talking to her. God was she beautiful. Her eyes. Oh. My. God.

She kept staring at me silently. I suddenly noticed that she was not drinking. I told her (in French) how much I was enjoying being with my old friends tonight (we were together in French class back in high school, hence the language choice.)

She answered to me in French: “je ne veux pas être ton amie.”

I shut up and leaned back in my chair. I did not understand at first. I saw her staring at me. I did not want to believe in anything, and the beer suddenly jumped to my head; I felt dizzy. I excused myself and walked to the balcony nearby to see the sea at night and catch my breath.

She came behind me. She grabbed my arm, turned me around and kissed me softly, quickly. Then she walked away.

The scene appears to me now as if it had been a dream. I do not remember going to bed that night.

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The next morning we went to the beach, just like every other day, and she kept silent watching me the whole time. I felt embarrassed. I did not remember properly what had happened the previous evening, so I was keeping a certain distance with her.

On the way back to the hostel, I clumsily started apologizing for the night before. Yes, I truly did that. She listened to me in silence, both of us walking slowly behind our group of friends. I was somehow expecting her to be mad at me.

As soon as our friends walked around the corner of the hostel, Sandra suddenly pushed me against a tree and kissed me. Rage, passion, strength, sweetness, silence, her body and mine.

Pure latin cliché. True story.

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I stayed glued to the tree, first with my eyes wide open, and then, for the first time in my life, I let go all of my fears and embraced fate, realizing that one of my dearest and strongest childhood dreams had, for some unknown reason, become a reality.

Remember what Coelho used to say, about the Universe conspiring to help you reach whatever you want most? Well, I felt that in person. I let go all of my rationality for a few seconds, maybe a minute, and I felt lighter. It felt so good. I had never experienced that before.

We stayed glued to each other for a little while. She then opened her eyes and told me to shut up. Staring at me from centimeters away, she told me that she could not take it anymore, that she had wanted me since I had walked out of that airport. I shut up and listened, my eyebrows raised, still not totally believing anything of what had just happened there.

We kissed again.

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My holidays stretched until the end of August 1977. I returned to Mexico twice that year, mostly to spend time with Sandra.

I wanted to marry her. We even exchanged rings. We talked about living together. She helped me trace plans for a new life in Mexico. She got me back in touch with being a Mexican once again.

I finally decided to go back to live in Mexico in June 1978. I was going to leave everything I had in Europe behind; a crappy job, an alcoholic mother, a botched attempt at university, and a good group of friends.

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The Friday before the final flight back she called me. Her voice was broken and sad. She told me that things were not going to be the same upon my arrival. I said, of course not, because I'm not leaving anymore.

No, she said, you don't understand, I will not be there.

I stayed speechless. After a few seconds I asked why.

She told me she did not love me anymore.

I felt my feet shaking. I wanted to breathe the air of Cancún once again. A film played in my head at high speed, the first frame being her eyes in that classroom in 1969.

I did not tell anyone about this phone conversation. Not even my mother. I kept it to myself. I still do not know why.

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After a dreadful weekend, Monday came and my flight, too. A few friends and my mom came to the airport to say goodbye.

One of my friends, who worked at the airport, walked me to the boarding gate. She looked at me and asked me what was going on. She told me I looked pale, as if somebody had died.

I told her everything. She put her hand over her mouth, horrified and in disbelief. “Why don’t you stay then?” she asked me.

I did not know. I felt I had to go back to Mexico anyway.

The flight was boarding. We hugged. I climbed for the second time of my life on a plane that would take me to a new life on the other side of the Atlantic.

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As soon as I arrived I tried to talk her back, a few times, to no avail. She avoided me. I fell into depression. I asked myself what I said or did that triggered such a reaction.

As you can read in the previous paragraph, for years I thought this separation was solely my fault. Rather, it was both our fault. I am not perfect and I know I made mistakes. But I did not deserve to be ditched like a broken toy.

We met a couple of times in gatherings and parties organized by friends in common. She was there with her new boyfriends. Note the use of plural here.

That was painful to see, of course. I felt emasculated, it is as simple as that. Maybe it is hard to understand for women, but that is exactly what I felt. Rage and pain and the urge to kill. I understood why since the times of Troy, wars had exploded over the lost love of a woman. I understood the thousand and one Boleros singing about the one that went away.

We are not in contact anymore; I think I last saw Sandra in 1980, and we did not even talk that time.

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Through her I understood many things about love and life.

I am not that different from her, actually. I just had a wrong idea of love, a twisted, romantic desire that had the shape of a never ending story, something that does not exist. She was free; polyamorous, driven by desire and sure of herself and her aura, bundled with matching beauty and a wicked spirit to go with it. But she was, dare I say, imperfect, like me, like we all are.

Maybe the lesson I should have learnt by now is that I too have been assertive, have desired and have found what I truly wanted, against all odds. She.

I still have shivers down my spine when thinking about her. I wonder how much I have learnt. I try to reconstruct my own puzzle every day.

I look back at that moment and figure out that maybe, just maybe, we loved each other for a few minutes against a tree in Cancún, and that only because of that, being with Sandra was totally worth it.