



Little Black Dress Orange Scarf

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Dementia, regardless of which specific variety, attacks the brain forever, changing, albeit sometimes slowly, brain efficiency and precision. Tragically, for example, Alzheimer's, one type of brain disease, carries the stereotype of lunacy largely due to symptoms all can see: forgetfulness and disorientation. Both the patient and those around assess the disease's effects in terms of mental health, not as a disease.

It is not Sally's fault that she forgets or falls; her brain is fighting dramatic change. Not any different from cancer, kidney, lung, liver patients, or any other disease. Despite memory lapses, treasures from the past reside comfortably, waiting for a cue: Anything that triggers consciousness of a memory. In addition to evolving loving, respectful relations since 1957, we amassed a remarkable number of memories together. All due to a Little Black Dress and a long Orange Scarf.

In the late fifties, Palo Alto, California, was a vibrant, formidable, and dynamic times for young teenagers. Pink and black cloths, butch haircuts, collars almost up on the boys' shirts, felt flaring wide poodle skirts, penny loafers, home-modified hot rods, wood and metal shop, homemaking and sewing all required classes. We attended a middle-class school with a large Asian population and a few black students, all excelling in academics and sports. Before it was silicon, the Santa Clara Valley attracted bright minds accomplishing incredible things; the first magnetometer in a US satellite, the laser, transistor, and computers are just a few examples. The parents of us kids did some unbelievable stuff. Little did we understand the world-changing magnitude of inventions all around us. We did know, however, the school's effort to keep everyone on campus, especially at lunchtime—the Sock Hop.

Take your shoes off so as not to mark up the gymnasium floor. Dance, we did, to Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly, Patti Page, Johnny Cash, Chuck Berry, Bobby Darin, Penguins, Little Richard, and others. Earth Angel, Mack the Knife, Maboline, Autumn Leaves, Great Balls of Fire, Tennessee Waltze, Blue Suede Shoes; the words lingered through the afternoon classes and PE. All preserved as good memories to this day, even when I forget them for a bit.



The school also hosted evening dances, including a Halloween-themed one in October of 1957. A tall, elegant girl with long dark hair dressed in a slim, black dress and a long orange scarf proved to be the only one I saw. We danced a lot.

Drugs were a problem we knew about, mainly from our parents, but the big issue was smoking—a big-time issue, especially in high school. With no age limit to buy a pack and parents smoking, this conflict zone was at school allowed on school grounds. The boys' and girls' bathroom sure smelled. There is no need to high-

light the difference over the last 67 years. We never did drugs instead, we focused on trips to the coast, "the City", mini golf, movies, and strawberry pie at Falimigos on the way home.

Trying to recall what you bought at the store or how to walk back home is considerably different than memory vividly wakened by a cue appearing to enjoy. The latter is cue-driven. As Sally courageously deals with early dementia, we look at photo albums, books, talk about trips, and dwell on the good things we share from all the years together. We are not trying to remember anything specific beyond closing out the current blizzard of stuff to enjoy together. Old books, photo albums, art, and textiles we accumulated are all potential cues for unleashing fond, warm memories.



All the memories we gathered from those special times are still there. Sally is still Sally. Access blockers like protein growths burst micro veins are roadblocks to easy on-demand access. It is one thing not to remember if I took my thyroid pill this morning and quite another enjoying Carnival by looking at our photos from Carnival in Rio de Janeiro. It is much nicer to trigger fun times sitting in the Sambradrome with feelings, smells, sounds, and friends. We know not what we face next, but for now, we choose quiet time for the long-stored memories to bring joy again.

If it hadn't been for that Little Black Dress and long Orange Scarf, we might never have started our journey together. By the way, the length of that stunning orange scarf gets longer each year. Today, I believe it touched the ground. More likely, my fashion-savvy lady wore it shorter, looped around her elegant neck down to her slim waste. Memories are imperfect, but they are welcome even if all the details are still safe in the brain's hiding place.



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