

Terms of Endearment ...

I'm walking on the prairie path on a windy early morning. Leaves fall around me though this is a late autumn, color-wise. I'm searching for materials to make an arrangement. The golden rod have dried to a nondescript brown, and the Virginia Creeper has not blazed brilliant on many trees as yet. But the sumac is perfection. Its colors range from green, just tinted with the first signs of orange to a delicious aubergine. I carefully pick a variety of perfect specimens. My creative heart beats a little faster as I anticipate floating these in a bowl with bright red geranium heads, hydrangeas, and hosta leaves.

I'm thinking of Bob and how he used to admire my creations. "That's beautiful Babe", he'd say as I was putting it together. Or, on another day he'd walk by the coffee table in the living room and intone, "nice, Louie, nice". Yes, "Louie". Sometimes he called me Louie.

Like all relationships there are special names that become a part of the family's vernacular. In our family Tessa is known as "T", Eleanor Anne is called "Eunice" and Jonathan Alexander, Jack, is AKA "Jackquino". We've got an "MC" for Mary-Claire, a "Bubs" for Robbie, a "Cams" for Cameron, "Krish" for Kristian and a "JB" for Johnathan Brooks. And then there is "Haydo" for Hayden, "Mer" from Meredith and "Lizzer" for Elizabeth. And between Bob and me the somewhat obscure but to us not so much, "Louie" and "Clark".

We are sophomores in high school. He's a new driver and we're at the Arboretum. It's fall and the leaves are at their peak. We're hiking in and out of this wonderland, holding hands, stopping to steal a kiss behind a generous oak. Exploring. One or the other assigns us the monikers "Louis and Clark". I get to be Louis and he's Clark. These long-ago assignments become a humorous part of our future outdoor adventures. Louis and Clark walk Illinois prairie paths. Louis and Clark hike Colorado mountain trails. Louis and Clark trek around Lake Geneva. Somewhere along the line "Louie" becomes an in-house term that Bob uses occasionally. It is almost more dear to me than "Hon" or "Babe".

Now I'm home. I've got my large fluted bowl on the counter filled with water. And materials: sumac, geraniums, hosta, a few burnt orange mums and some straw colored grasses. My fingers fly. I, the creature, taste a bit of my Creator's joy in this small creation. I touch His handiwork, relish His colors. I do this unto Him. There is only one thing missing as I stand in my kitchen, hands flying, heart beating a bit faster on this windy morning in October.

I want to hear my best friend say, "that's beautiful, Louie". I just want to hear him to call me "Louie" one more time... 