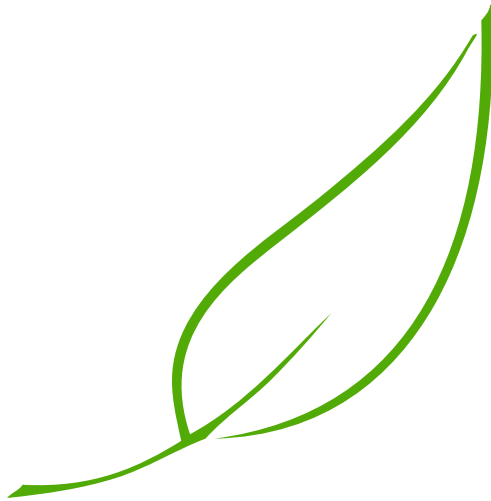


MY BEST FRIEND

by Ken Bradbury



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Okay, sometimes she hides in the dark for ... I don't know ... Like months at a time ... then suddenly Poof! There she is! Standing right in front of me! I'll be sitting somewhere like in math class or church or at a family reunion, just minding my own business, and bang! She appears!

Her name's Trish, the same as mine, which makes it even more confusing. And here's the really weird part ... I mean, you're just not going to believe this, but sometimes ... sometimes she even looks like me! I'm not kidding! There's this girl who looks just like me!

Okay, like I was at a school dance last fall. It was one of those formal things where you had to dress up, and the boys got the girls flowers and they wore their new underwear and everything ... really fancy stuff. The gym looked like an explosion in a crepe paper factory and everybody's mother took their picture at least a hundred times before they left the house. Sort of like a funeral but the music was faster. I was sitting there in the gym beside this really cool guy who'd asked me to be his date. I mean this guy was to die for! A hunk! He had his hair gelled so stiff he popped a balloon that was hanging over the punch bowl. He had on his dad's really expensive after shave, and even had a tiny little moustache if you looked close enough.

It was the kind of moment that you read about in Sixteen Magazine. "Night of Ecstasy!" or "I Found Heaven at the Punchbowl!" I'd done everything that Mom told me. I'd talked softly, I didn't pop my gum or my knuckles, and I sat with my legs crossed like a lady.

That's when She showed up! The other Trish. She sat right down beside me and started whispering stuff like, "The basketballs are behind the drinking fountain. Come on! Show this guy how you can shoot!" Then pretty soon



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