

# Incipient lust leads to class action

Remember the thrill of that first kiss behind the shelter shed? Jillian Abbott recalls a schoolday romance without a happy ending

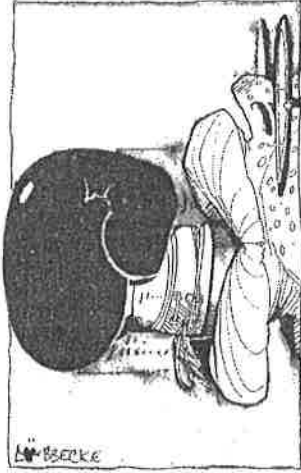
**E**ARLY in Grade 6 I fell madly in love with Rodney. One day when I was walking to school with a group of girls, Graham Wilkins came running up to us excitedly and sneered, "Rodney wants to kiss you." Though he pointed directly at me, we all greeted his announcement with scorn.

Once Graham had disappeared, I was set upon by my girlfriends. They began a series of authentic-looking mock kisses complete with sound effects. Then they all demanded: Was I going to let him kiss me?

Now along with almost all the girls and perhaps even some of the boys, I was smitten with Rodney. But the thought of this indirectly proposed kiss left me cold. Yes, there was something appealing about it, but it also repelled me. I just didn't warm to the idea of consummating my desire with something as concrete and wet as a kiss. How could I explain that my feelings for Rodney were abstract, soaring and definitely not tactile?

As rumours of the impending kiss spread far and wide, my disquiet grew. I was offered any number of bribes to tell if I intended to "do it" or not.

Meanwhile, direct communication between Rodney and myself had ceased. Not that we'd ever had much contact; ours was a relationship based on signifi-



cant looks and the occasional thump. Finally, I told one of his more persistent messengers to inform Rodney that if he wanted to kiss me he'd have to ask me himself.

This challenge was greeted with glee by both boys and girls.

One lunchtime, though no words had been spoken, no invitations sent, waves of children could be seen disappearing under

the bridge by the local creek. When at last we had assembled in sufficient numbers, Rodney emerged from the throng of boys and I emerged from the ranks of the girls. We stood, two lone generals at the heads of our respective armies. We stared at each other in silence.

"Give us a kiss," issued the elegantly articulate Rodney.

A gasp of excitement escaped our collective audience.

I stood mute, not knowing how to respond. The hopes and joys of the girls weighed heavily. I was expected to acquiesce, and in so doing, attain womanhood. More than that, through their empathetic participation in the rite, the other girls could also enjoy maturity. It was all up to me.

"I wouldn't kiss you if you were the last man on earth," I said.

Sighs of disappointment escaped from all and sundry. Rodney's expression betrayed his disbelief and momentary confusion. He turned to his troops for inspiration.

"Do it anyway."

"Punch her in the nose."

"Go on, kiss him you gutless wonder," from one of the more disappointed girls.

"C'arn," said Rodney, still willing to rely on his considerable

charm. "It doesn't hurt."

"No," I said, more determined than ever, though in truth he was still in with a chance.

Then one of Rodney's more influential friends moved forward to advise. Rodney emerged from this conference with renewed confidence. "Look," he said in conciliatory tones, "it doesn't hurt. I'll kiss one of the other girls and, if she likes it, then you can kiss me."

Before I had a chance to protest, the call for a volunteer had already been issued. My friend Pam emerged from the pack of girls. Pam was rather plain and dumpy, though lusty. She moved forward, intoxicated by her moment in the spotlight.

Rodney strode forward to meet her, gripped her arm in much the same way my mother gripped the shank bone when carving a leg of lamb, and hit her with a sloppy kiss on the cheek.

"That was all right, wasn't it Pam?" he asked, imploring both her and myself simultaneously.

"Yeah," she said. "You can do it again if she's still not sure. Didn't hurt a bit."

I was horrified. Before I had a chance to act we heard the distant school bell. None of us was supposed to be there at all,

let alone at lunchtime. Quickly we all dispersed.

The possibility of my kissing Rodney was gone forever. Not only had he insulted me, he'd degraded my friend Pam. I couldn't blame her for succumbing. He was, after all, very handsome. His most heinous crime, however, was that he had proved my mother right. "Men only want sex," she told me several times a day from the day I was born until yesterday afternoon. By kissing Pam he had vindicated my mother. For this he must die a thousand deaths — but how?

**T**HAT afternoon I was moping around the sports equipment room when I happened on a girly magazine Pam had stolen from her brother. It was stored at the bottom of the vaulting horse.

Alas poor Rodney, he crossed me before I'd had a chance to mellow with age. I could hardly contain my excitement when I realised this magazine was the perfect instrument for revenge. I opened it to the page with the largest pair of tits. Carefully and in disguised handwriting I wrote at the top of the page "This book belongs to". Then, around the

right nipple I wrote "Rodney", around the left nipple I wrote his surname.

Next morning I stole into class before anyone arrived. I couldn't afford to be too obvious, so I settled on leaving it sticking out slightly from the desk of the kid who sat directly in front of the teacher. He was a slow-witted, sweaty kid who dribbled. He had to sit up the front so Sir could "keep an eye on" (read persecute) him. I didn't think he'd cop it — Sir had been itching to get at Rodney for some time, so this boy would be safe.

When we all filed into class that morning I knew by the red-faced and pacing Sir that my mission had been accomplished.

Without much in the way of preliminaries, Sir marched up to Rodney's desk, grabbed him by the ear and dragged him to the front of the class. Shoving the magazine under Rodney's nose, he demanded an explanation.

Poor bewildered Rodney stood in horrified silence. As he was led from the room, most likely destined for the strap, he looked longingly and helplessly to me. I flashed back a hard, unyielding look that left no doubt as to who was responsible for his demise.

He learned his lesson and never tried to kiss me again. Now that I think of it, it was quite a while before any of the boys tried to kiss me after that.