

There are glitches in every story. The magic of disappearing. Ivan and Cheryl's love lay hopeful in the context of a Donovan song - Colours. They heard it first the day they met. They sat, his brother Sean and Sean's girlfriend Stella put them in the back seat; they all went fishing together. Sean had the eight-track. He played the song over and over. At first it was just a song, but repeated listening made it an anthem. Ivan could never, from that day, separate the subtlety of the tune from his desire for Cheryl. Cheryl knew this.

Her heart dropped when she saw a copy of the same eight-track on the table at the garage sale. She paid the quarter, bought it. She wanted to tell the old man why she was buying it, why it meant something to her, but she didn't. She figured it wasn't his anyway. Surely, it belonged to his son or daughter. Besides, admissions of worth cut against the decorum of the junk industry. She slipped it into her purse, got into her car and drove. As she drove, for the first time it occurred to her strange that she and Ivan had never owned a copy of that song, the song that meant so much. She kept driving and thinking: She should buy an eight-track player. Or should she? She considered: was it enough to just take the thing to him now, present it to him, hope for a power in association? But without music...She decided to buy a player.

She stopped at a thrift store, one she visited to leave donations. It occurred to her as she entered that some of her own stuff was probably there now. A blouse, an old set of dishes, maybe her father's bound copies of Reader's Digest. She didn't want to see any of it. The first person she saw she asked,

"Could you tell me where to find an eight-track player?"

This person, a Mexican, understood most of what she said, but painfully repeated, "eight...track?"

"Umm," she smiled. "Nevermind."

She walked towards the back. At the center of the store were clothes. She guessed the accessories were on the periphery. She found a wall of records. Noted Neil Diamond, The Mormon Tabernacle Choir. She looked left. There, behind her on a shelf were scattered eight-tracks. At the top of the shelf were the dusty players. She chose one, the least gummed, the least abused, and she walked to the register. The cashier, an old woman in pigtails, smiled at her.

"How are you?"

"I'm fine thanks."

Cheryl was rummaging through her purse, searching for a coin pouch. She found it and looked up at the old-girl cashier,

"Could you tell me, do these eight-track players have a warranty?"

The woman was puzzled. Cheryl rephrased it:

"If it doesn't work can I bring it back?"

"Oh, yes, yes, sorry. I didn't understand you. Just bring it back, and if we can't fix it, we'll return your money."

Denise, the name on the tag, exchanged a paper bag and a receipt for Cheryl's two dollars in quarters.

When Cheryl got back into her car she sat for a few minutes, her hands on the steering wheel. She reached into her purse, pulled out the cassette, flipped it over, studied it. She smiled, reached into the paper bag, pulled out the player, stared at its opening. She blew into the slot, stirred up months, years of dust. She wasn't sure why she hesitated. But she was still for a moment, the cassette in one hand, the player in the other. Then, slowly, she brought the two together. She would test the fit. With a pound from her palm, the cassette popped in. She shook the thing. It was secure. She smiled. She thought she might go see Ivan now, surprise him, but instead she went home, set her purse and the paper bag on the kitchen table.

Ivan would be home in a couple of hours. She wanted to plan things. How she'd do it. How she'd give it to him. Finally, she turned on the TV, deciding she'd first let him find the player. When he'd asked about it, she'd pull out the cassette, surprising him.

There was a movie on the TV, one with Richard Benjamin and Ali MacGraw. Cheryl had seen it, but never remembered its name. She fell asleep as Richard Benjamin helped that black boy find the book. Her dream: it was a variation on a theme. Always she was creative: a musician, a composer. This time she was in a rock band, or maybe solo - she struggled with the details. The meat of these dreams, the weight that sunk her for hours afterwards, was in the music. There was always something sublime in her compositions. This time it was a mid-tempo number. It was beautiful. Beautiful: her subconscious would never let more than a perfect ambiguity through. Always, when she'd come to, she'd feel the warmth of the blanket without texture, the individual notes and their symphony lost with waking. This time she awoke to Richard Benjamin's indignation. He couldn't believe Ali let her mother find their diaphragm. It was a sour ending. Cheryl wished she'd awoken minutes later.