

stop, *look*

AND **listen.**

Paying attention
to sights and sounds

By Bobby Hawthorne
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PAY *Attention* TO

Setting, environment

PAY *Attention* TO

Clothing, accessories
(or lack thereof)

PAY *Attention* TO

Body, body language
and non-verbals

Listen FOR

Dialogue

Look FOR

- symbolism
- irony

SEARCH FOR *Meaning*

Ask yourself:

- what does this mean?
- what truth does it represent?

GO TO A *place*...

- Sit and watch.
- What is happening?
- Who is there?
- Why are they there?
- What are they saying?
- What are they doing?

TOUGH *Love*

It is 7:30 Thursday night, and the Presbyterian Church of Utica is deserted except for its well-lit cafeteria.

Slowly the straggle in, singly or in pairs. They are a friendly yet haggard group, bearing the signs of a long emotional struggle.

They are the parents of problem teenagers. There are no straight A honor roll students here, no football captains or cheerleaders — only drug addicts, alcoholics and runaways.

This is the weekly meeting of “Tough Love,” the parent support group that has recently been started here. According to Agnes Stevens, one of the driving forces behind this program, “Tough Love” is a disciplinary method that involved setting limits for children and making them responsible for their own actions.

"Soft Love is what most parents use," Agnes said. "It's where you can more or less trust your kids and set easy limits. Tough Love is when you have to set harder limits. What we try to do is enforce these limits and make our kids aware that they are responsible for their lives."

The meeting begins with Don Stevens reading a blurb about problem children and the Tough Love method. The 40 or so parents are seated in metal folding chairs, smoking, drinking coffee and leaning over to exchange greetings now and again.

The Stevens are amiable hosts, quick putting newcomers at ease.

"Hey, did I tell ya' about the three punks they had up at the police station the other night?" Don asks. "Yeah, they'd been hauled in for smoking pot and were hanging around feeling pretty loose."

"Feeling good, man," Agnes cuts in, grinning and dragging on an imaginary joint.

Don continues. "So they take the stuff down to the lab to have it analyzed. In a little bit the police officer comes back and says, 'Well guys, how do you feel?'"

"We feel g-o-o-d!" Agnes counters, "That was good stuff, man."

"And the officer says, 'That's good, because we just found out that you've been smoking horse sh*#.'"

TO LEARN HOW TO *Love*

I'm picking my way through the muddy grassless Senior Square during a chilly, windy afternoon following yearbook when I see them, her arms circling his waist, her hands stroking his back while she gives him a notorious "under the jacket" hug (reserved only for the romantically involved). I'm trying not to stare, trying not to invade their privacy, but then I realize they won't notice me anyway. My steps slow to a shuffle and then I stop. How can they do that, just stand next to the picnic table and ignore everything: the conversation of their friends standing three feet away, the argument taking place across senior square, their test in geometry next period? I guess when they are together everything else stops.

His hands are joined tightly at the base of her back, returning her hug and letting her lean into his arms ever so slightly. Her face is upturned toward his, a clear invitation for a hasty kiss when no one's looking. She smiles and murmurs something near his ear. A secret smile. I guess it's kind of like an under the jacket hug. It's a smile that comes when you have somebody, and at that moment that's all that's important. He smiles back, the same secret smile.

This is the third day I have watched them, and everyday it's the same thing: exchanging under the jacket hugs and secret smiles. I look at them and think to myself, "Do they really think that they're in love?"

Love!? More like hormones and Lucky jeans. They can't possibly think that they are going to stay together and get married, can they? What would happen if they broke up? Will she suffer from a secret smile withdraw? Will he die if she doesn't warm him with an "under the jacket" hug? The average relationship in high school, it seems to me, lasts for about one school dance and four dates. It's foolish for anyone to believe that's enough time to fall in love, or for that matter, out of love.

Yet look around campus. What do you see? Endless tiny soap operas. Some teenagers constantly whine about finding a date to homecoming. Yet as the dance ends they complain about trying to dump their date. Do high school teenagers even know what love is? I know I don't.

I watch them caught up in their own little couple world, whispering couple things and exchanging couple glances. And I notice something-something different, something that isn't quite an "under the jacket" hug or a secret smile. It's not an action, or a look, or the way they hold hands. It's something special, between just the two of them, and no one else.

I think then that if I asked them about this something they have, they wouldn't know what I was talking about. Maybe it's respect, or maybe it's friendship or love. I don't know, but they have it. And it makes me think then that maybe it isn't so silly to have a relationship in high school. I think it must be nice to be together with someone. She doesn't have to think about getting a date to homecoming. She already has one. He doesn't have to worry about anyone not being there to cheer him on at his football game. She is his biggest fan.

Well, I wonder, why shouldn't they be together? No matter how bad their days are they know that there is someone who likes them even if they fail their geometry test, or forget to do their Spanish homework. I wonder to myself, is high school such a bad place to learn what love is? To fall for that gorgeous blond who sits across from you in economics and flashes you that perfect smile. To learn how to care and be cared for.

The bell rings, and it's time for me to go to physics. The couple quickly kiss and hurry in different directions, one toward the B-wing, the other toward the F-wing. I finish picking my way through the muddy, grassless Senior Square and smile when I realize that tomorrow they will be there, underneath the tree, leaning against the picnic table, exchanging secret smiles and under the jacket hugs.

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THE *Radical Write*

By BOBBY HAWTHORNE

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