

ALMA MATTER

by

Eric Coble

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CHARACTER:

ROB: A former student, 30's-40's.

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ROB

Absolutely.

This is my Alma Mater, baby.

Well, if by "Alma Mater" you mean the place where I strutted across the stage at a pre-ordained time in my cap and gown, well, no, this isn't it. But if by "Alma Mater" you mean the place that sculpted my thinking, my very eyes, the way I intersect with every new fact, every new human being I come into contact with on a daily basis... again, no. But if by "Alma Mater" you mean the place where I got blind drunk and vomited on the steps of the Student Union, then yes, absolutely, this is my Alma Mater.

You may not understand this -- you're what, 19? 20, okay, 20, Jesus, you look so young, you're glowing, you don't know it yet, but you're glowing. It's only after you're me, you're my age, and you see pictures of you, how you looked then, how you look now -- that you realize that glow, that sheer calorie-burning vitality... Poof!

(Looking around)

Where'd it go? You know? Is it just a question of chemistry, metabolism? Or is there a spiritual component, the constant slicing, slicing, slicing of the waves of life just wears the halo off you -- erosion is a cruel sonofabitch, am I right? Ask Mount Rushmore about that -- Lincoln's nose is loose, did you hear that? Mom, Dad, Susie, and Billy, first trip outside of Nebraska and BOOM! Crushed by the nostrils of our 16th president. But what a way to go! We all gotta go, right? The clock's ticking, I hear it every hour now, every goddam minute sometimes, especially at night, especially when whole world is asleep and I'm not, but that, Lincoln's nose, that would be a doozy of a way to bow out.

But my point is you're still non-eroded, your triceps, your hair, even your toes are still non-repulsive, look at them, lovely sandals, very cute, your breasts - and I'm not coming onto you, I'm just acknowledging the reality that your breasts are startling examples of non-erosion. Give'em time, right?

(Shaking fist at the ground)

Damn you, Gravity! Am I right?

But my point is you're too freshly-minted to get this, probably, unless you're an old soul, and from the look in your eyes I don't think you are, but there is something about these years, your years, the ones you're still living, when the brain, and this is scientific fact, the brain is just so fucking aware. Everything, every little detail, the brain still doesn't know what's important and what's not, what it might need to file away in the "vital" file, so it burns everything in, every friendship, betrayal, new philosophy, taste of a lover's tongue, sports statistics, the line-up of shows on the goddam TV for god's sake, smells you can't even name, it all sticks now, vivid, bright, indelible, it's gonna be with you for-fucking-ever.

Me now, my brain's just PFFFT, blowing off every goddam thing, dates, names, what I ate for breakfast, where my kids live, my dad's pill schedule, it's all frictionless, like trying to grip a bowling ball with mittens.

So my point is, time is precious, don't take it for granted, except you will, you can't help it, blah blah blah, but if I want to regain some small slice of those Adonis years, of being truly alive by owning a some piece of this school, I am thinking that should be my right as much as the next slob, to own one small scrap of cloth from the corpse of the man I used to be, and so to answer your original question: do I have proof I went here? Do I have proof I exited my mother's womb? I barely have proof I woke up in my car this morning, but this is my Alma Mater, I was birthed from the loins of this fair citadel of higher learning, and I am asking for the goddam 15% alumni discount on this fucking extra-large hoodie with the school logo!!

Thank you.

(Pulls out wallet. Sees he has no cash...)

Don't suppose you take credit card?