

I've only told two people about this ... My Mom and my Grandma. Mom said, "Oh, don't worry Trish. It's just an adolescent sort of thing. It'll go away."

Then later that day Grandma pulled me aside and said, "Trish, you know that other girl? That other Trish?"

Yeh, I'm sorry about that, Grandma. You probably think I'm crazy or something. Don't worry, she'll go away some day."

That's when Grandma grabbed me by the arm and said, "Don't you let her slip away, Trish! Don't you dare! I've had mine ever since I was a little girl. And she's my best friend!"

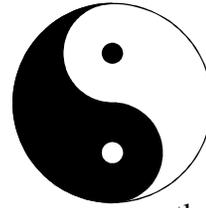
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"My Best Friend" is an excerpt from Forever, With Reservations, a play in two acts by Ken Bradbury and Robert L. Crowe. Copyright, Library of Congress, 2001. ISBN 0-9707173-4-2

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#120 - My Best Friend

by Ken Bradbury

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 she whispered, "I'll bet you could beat this guy in a race. Ask him to go outside and take him

on!” And other stuff like, “Come on, Trish. Take those dumb dress shoes off, run across the gym floor and do a cartwheel! Act crazy!”

It was like that all night! I mean it was awful! As soon as the big Hunk-O-Matic beside me would ask me to dance, Trish would whisper, “Look! The volleyball stuff is over there in the corner! Do you really want to dance when you could be slamming a ball across the net?”

And here’s the really weird part ... I mean the part that really gets to me ... Sometimes ... a lot of the time ... I agree with this girl! I mean, she’s right! I don’t want to do some of the things I’m doing. I don’t know how she got so smart but it’s pretty weird, I’ll tell you that. She knows ... I don’t know how she knows but she knows ... that sometimes ... Sometimes I just don’t want to grow up. Okay, there I’ve said it. Go ahead and laugh if you want to. Sometimes I just don’t want to grow up. *(to an audience member)* You tell anybody I told you, I’ll cream you. I swear I will.

I was sitting in church last Sunday and the preacher asked all the little kids to come up for the Children’s Sermon. Heck, I haven’t gone up there since I was six years old but suddenly Trish started nudging me. She said, “Hey big girl, don’t you lie to me. He’s giving out suckers again today and you know you want one.” She was right. There was nothing in the world that I wanted at that moment more than a strawberry sucker. I wanted to run up to the pulpit, sit cross-legged on the floor, put that sucker in my mouth and forget all about being a mature young lady in the back of the church.

You see that’s the trouble with this other Trish. She’s right a lot of the time. At least I think she’s right. At least I agree with her a lot.

For the last couple of years, school officials have been talking to the students about our future plans. Even in grade school they tell us we need to start thinking about college and jobs and families. Heck, I’m sitting there on the floor with my milk and cookies, wondering whether I should color the horses purple or green, and somebody’s telling me I need to be thinking about retirement. Gimme a break! I’m just getting started!

Last week we had a guidance counselor come in to talk about college. She kept saying, “It’s never too early to plan ahead! It’s never too early to plan ahead!” Then she gave us a paper where we’d list our ten most favorite jobs, and how much money we’d like to make, and how big a family we’d like to have.”

Then Trish ... the other Trish ... snuck up behind me and whispered, “Hey Trish!”

“Leave me alone!” I said.

“Hey girl! Put your pencil down! You’re still a kid! Let’s have some fun!”

“Trish, I’ve got to fill out this paper.”

“No, you don’t. I got a better idea. Let’s take our shoes off and run across the schoolyard! Let’s go down the slide like we did back when we were little! You still want to do that, don’t you?”

I nodded my head. I really did want to do that.

“Let’s get all gooey with finger-paint and make fudge brownies and play King of the Mountain on that dirt pile behind the grocery store. Then let’s go swimming down at the creek and throw mud balls up against the bridge! Let’s just lay on our backs in your grandma’s backyard and watch the clouds. You remember how we used to see ships and giraffes and horses in the clouds? Come on, Trish! Let’s do it again!”

And that’s when I did something sinful. I lied. I held up my hand and asked the teacher if I could go to the restroom ... but I really didn’t have to go. I went outside instead. As I walked through the doors I took Trish’s hand and we looked at each other a minute then just took off running. We ran fast and we ran hard and we ran until we were out of breath and we fell onto the grass laughing and rolling and then we rolled onto our backs and we just lay there, breathing hard and smiling.

It was cool. I mean, not the detention I got for leaving school without permission, but the rest of it ... the time I ran away with Trish.

And you know what? I think I’m a slow learner, because I think ... I mean, I’m not exactly sure of this ... but I think ... I just may do it again. In fact, I may do it forever.