

Sing, Dear Gemini

STEPHEN DAVID GROVER

THE OTHER DAY ASH, Steve, and I were dinking around the office when someone brought up the idea of dating people with your same birthday. On the one hand, it was suggested, it could be neat and really, really convenient (as far as memory is concerned¹). On the other hand, pointed out Ash, it might be dangerous, a form of “cosmological incest.”

As the only one in the room with any experience in this area, I assured them it did have a certain creepiness to it. I once dated a girl exactly one year younger than me, and it was weird, but not in the way you might think. The thing was that we had way more in common than just our birthday.

For one, we met at a concert. A concert we were both performing in. I was standing in the wings after doing my song when I noticed that the girl on stage was pretty good. I mean, I don't want to rag on girls or anything, but the truth is that it's

¹ My sister got married on my birthday, which has been great for me. I'm thinking of doing the same thing myself.

kinda rare to meet a guitar-playing girl who actually has good technique, good rhythm, *and* a good voice. And good song-writing skills.² This girl had all that plus red hair, and a pink light was shining down like magic, making her all strawberries-and-cream.

Which brings me to the next thing we had in common: our good looks.

A few days later my brother got her number for me³ since they worked in the same building, and we went out a few times. I remember we went on a walk once early on and we were asking each other questions—you know those first-date-ish questions like “What's your favorite ____?” or “If you could change one thing about yourself what would it be?”—well, I'd ask her one of those and silently be thinking up my own answer, and then she'd say exactly what I was thinking. It was weird. I asked her when her birthday was, and when she said, “June 11,” I died. It was like I was falling in love with myself: it felt vaguely wrong—but I was just so damn attractive.

Once, we sat in my living room and sang “Somethin' Stupid,” crowding together around a sheet of lyrics as I lightly shuffled out the chords. I did Frank Sinatra's melody and she took Nancy Sinatra's dark, low harmonies. We blended so naturally that my bones tingled, and I was afraid to look up at her when we got to

² Before you jump to conclusions, let me explain. It's rare to find *anyone*, male or female, that combines all these skills. It seems like no one gets through college without learning a few chords and how to play “Free Fallin'” or that Green Day song that was the emblem of everyone's senior class a few years back. But so few ever take it further, ever learn how to really play. And given that the proportion of guitar-playing males to the skilled guitar-playing males is completely bonkers, and taking into account that there are that many fewer girls than boys picking up guitars to begin with, it follows that there are very very few girls who can do more than play third-rate Jewel covers.*

³ Actually he got a whole date with her. For me. What a bro.

* If you were born after, say, 1989, change “Free Fallin'” above to “Wonderwall,” “Green Day” to “Dashboard Confessional,” and “Jewel” to, I don't know—“Michelle Branch”?

the refrain: “And then I go and spoil it all by saying something stupid like ‘I love you.’” I walked her home and gave her a quick hug at the door.

That night and on into the next day I felt a dim uneasiness, a sensation akin to hearing the alarm while still too deep in a dream to register its meaning.

Sometime midweek I realized that her initials were S. G. My initials, not counting my middle name, are S. G. Walking to pick her up for our next date, I reeled off D-names in my mind: Danielle, Darcy, Daphne, Deborah, Diane, Dawn, Dorothy, Drew. SDG: Stephen David Grover. SDG: Super Dateable Girl. June 11. June 11.

SDG: Sensible days gone.

She was either the perfect girl or I was doing something *really* stupid. I knocked on her door, and practically before saying hello I demanded to know her middle name, sure it was Desdemona or Delilah or Davida.

Sense of Doom Growing.

“I don’t have one,” she smiled, curious.

“Oh,” I said.

Sudden Death, Grover.

So we were just S. G. and S. D. G. 1981 and 1982. We went out a few more times, but nothing ever really happened. Perhaps we would’ve been star-crossed, ill-fated, cosmologically unsuited—we never got far enough to find out. Perhaps it was the lack of a D that did us in. That’s always been the real mystery for me anyway: how some loves catch and some don’t. How all the tumblers can line up but still the key won’t turn.

How, sometimes, Something Doesn’t Go.