

Life in Black and White

By: Lindsey DeLaughter

She was young when she had discovered her love for older films. There was something about the contrasting scenes in black and white and the way an actor's eyes could convey the human spirit. Past the colorless irises she could see love, loss, passion as if there was a never ending spectrum of emotion in their pupils. For a girl with dreams of becoming an actress, to believe in such passion was essential as breathing. Katherine Sanger, a girl who believed she was untouchable, who unfortunately woke up every day in a sleepy coastal town, wanted to experience fame. She had longed for change for a long time but the only thing that ever did were the chilling gusts of wind in the bitter winters and the warm wispy breaths of the sea in the summer. Always looking toward the future, even on clear summer days when the sun was at its highest point and one could see a variety of ships resting in the harbor. But she never looked to the seemingly constant sea. She had looked to the screen for the freedom she desperately craved. The mere thought of having a chance to be one of those beautiful faces gave her a sense of hope and pride. Her parents, a boat captain and a teacher, disagreed with Katherine's vision and urged her to go to college when the time came. Her father, a burly and tired man with muddy eyes, once remarked with whiskey on his breath, that the closest she would get to being an actress would be her job at the local movie theater; a hole in the wall, two screen space across from the harbor where the stench of fish overpowered the savory smell of the popcorn inside. Now that it was summer, she had to walk past those crude fishermen who reeked of cigarettes and saltwater on her way to the theater. They probably didn't even know a single Humphrey Bogart movie, she thought one day, looking at the men climb onto their toy boats. The very same day, on her

way home from her shift, one of the older fishermen who had worked with her father but whose name was irrelevant to Katherine, kindly smiled at her. Katherine looked at the old blue-eyed gray man with eyes of disdain and quickly looked away despite knowing she had been caught. She walked faster and a loud “Hmph” came from behind her. She ignored him and kept walking back to her house hoping to escape the awful attack on her senses. The summer had dragged on as it always did--languid and tepid without any semblance of life other than the harbor and the theater who had its attendance doubled one week from the usual average of ten. Only after the boring month of June did the town show visible activity. When July started all work was dedicated to prepare for the annual Fourth of July fireworks show where some of the fishing boats fired off rockets while the rest of the townspeople sat in lawn chairs and all grazed on the rare delicacy of fish and beer. During this time no one went to the theater so when Katherine was there it was to watch the passing cars and the scurrying wives on the street from the ticket booth. Two days before the show, however, a boy dressed in black that Katherine had never seen before approached the theater. Who was he? Where did he come from? He was absolutely stunning--mysterious brown eyes with a shining pale complexion that covered his entire body like a birch tree in full bloom. In that moment, she wanted the glass to fall away so she could touch the untainted face and tell him to take her away from all of this, take her far to the West. They looked at each other, blissfully suspended in time until he smiled, an all-knowing smile, as if he knew the effect he had on her and purchased two tickets to see a movie she could not remember the name of. He asked her if she wanted to come see it with him and she eagerly agreed and met him inside, putting the ‘Closed’ sign on the glass window. He told her his name was Samuel and while he watched whatever film was on the screen Katherine’s eyes were on him looking for any sign that he could have possibly been a fisherman. When the movie had

ended and Katherine decided he was anything but common, she revealed her desire to be an actress and Samuel asked her if she would like to come over to his house to watch some of his favorite films. Who was she to deny this angel? His house was a perfect white two story home without parents around or a view of the harbor. In his bedroom, Samuel spoke of his desire to be a director. Katherine listened only to hear Samuel speak; such a handsome man was a perfect match for her gorgeous self. He could direct her Hollywood debut! How wonderful their meeting was! Yet, he spoke about foreign films mostly and Italian directors with names that reminded of her different kinds of pasta and wine--the fine foods she would eat when she was an actress. The day before the show Samuel played a black and white film that she thought was Italian and completely absurd--it wasn't Hollywood--but she watched it anyway. Samuel abruptly paused the movie after one scene she was not listening to and turned to her with the faintest sign of a grin.

"Isn't it beautiful?" He asked her quietly.

"What?" She looked at him confused, waiting for him to tell her with curious anticipation. His content face fell and was replaced with a serious look, his mouth was a thin line of expressionless flesh.

"That one line, 'Oblivion shall own me and death alone shall love me.'"

"It's depressing," she said.

"Isn't that what makes it beautiful?" He asked standing up with a sudden vigor and walked toward his window. "We only tolerate that fact that we'll all die but we forget that despite our dreams, in the end it's all we'll have. It's the only thing that loves us in our mortal lives from start to finish. And even while we're living we are just the flickering light of a candle, free but never knowing when that inevitable darkness comes." He spoke with such care and

thoughtfulness it was like he was directing a movie scene in his head. She couldn't see his face when he spoke but she could see the way the sunlight ran through his golden hair and illuminated his pale cheeks. He looked strangely peaceful in that moment despite his previous statements. That was the only clear image of Samuel she wanted to remember.

"It doesn't have to be that way though." She said at a loss for words, trying to alleviate the air of despondence in the room. His comments didn't prompt concern in her for Samuel as much as the slightly tainted image she had painted of him in her mind. He turned his head from the reverie he was in and stared at her with a smile on his face before sitting back down and resuming the movie without saying another word. On the night of the fireworks show, Katherine was walking to Samuel's house hoping to see her cherub before the colorful chaos that was about to happen. No light came from his bedroom window, but the rest of the house glowed with the light that reminded her of dreams. After knocking on the front door, a tall woman with blond hair flecked with gray answered and Katherine assumed it was Samuel's mother.

"Is Samuel here?" Katherine asked after being momentarily stunned by the beauty of the woman. Almost as beautiful as her son and herself.

"I believe he went to the harbor to see the fireworks. His father and I were just about to go ourselves. Would you like to come with us?" Samuel's mother spoke gracefully, every syllable like a feather on the ear. Katherine could only nod her head in agreement and his mother smiled before shutting the door, leaving her to wait on the front porch for them. She grabbed the skirt of her white dress and twirled around to the music in her head, thinking only of Samuel's sweet face when he would see her at the harbor. Suddenly, a loud firework had gone off. Katherine looked up at the darkening sky but there was no color to be found. She knew it wasn't time for the show to start yet; perhaps they were starting early? From inside the house

she heard a shrill scream and the sound of footsteps running up the stairs. Katherine opened the door and the screaming had become louder, or was it quieter? A screen began to appear in front of her eyes as she walked slowly up the stairs feeling as if a camera were on her and all other noise dissipated in her ear. Somewhere an orchestra was building up the sought after suspense in movies as she neared closer and closer to something that called out to her. There were hundreds of eyes watching her on a screen already seeing what she had not seen. The door to Samuel's bedroom was wide open but there was no light coming out into the hallway. When she stopped in the doorway she saw his mother and a blond haired man standing across from Samuel. What a beautiful family, she thought, watching the mother's mouth gape wide open but Katherine heard no sound. The orchestra had reached its climax--the strings were about to break, the horns cried out like a ship from the harbor on a misty day. She only saw her eyes full of anguish and the silent tears that fell from them. The moonlight fell onto the floor and onto Samuel's hair, giving it the brilliant shine that Katherine loved so much. She felt her future with Samuel be taken away, like the waves at night pulling back from the shore. Was he even real? Was any of this happening real? He looked at her, realizing she was standing there, and smiled before she turned away hearing the music grow quiet then silent. Katherine looked at the camera, facing the audience below her and then heard Samuel's voice behind her. She turned back around and he was gone, but she was now awake.