



Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

At 16 and entering her junior year in high school, Robin is a beautiful girl. Her long brown hair, which falls below her shoulder blades, frames a delicate face with high cheekbones, sparkling eyes and an ever-present soft smile. Willowy and graceful, she is an affectionate girl. She loves to come up behind her dad and put her arms around his waist, or just sit quietly beside him on the sofa as he reads the paper, resting her head on his shoulder.

Like many of today's youth, she is a strange mixture of liberalized womanhood and Victorian purity. There are little battles occasionally which ensue between her and her mother over driving the car or the length of her skirts, yet more and more she is catering to full-length granny dresses which seem to go well with her wire-rimmed glasses and almost total absence of make-up.

For two years she has been badgered by boys of all sizes and descriptions who have wanted to date her. Yet like a ripe apple on the top branch of a tree, she has managed to gracefully dodge every attempt to pluck her, remaining en garde and parrying each thrust with the adroitness of a fencer waiting for just the right moment to make her move.

"I want my first date to be with just the right boy," she told her daddy who asked her why she had just turned down her third invitation in a week.

Her older brother, a freshman in college, accused her of holding out. Non-plussed she just swished her hair back over her shoulders and said with a twinkle, "Why should I go out with some pimply-faced boy just to say I've had a date? I've got plenty of time, and I'll just wait until the right one comes along."

Last week "Mr. Right" finally came along. The night of the date there was the inevitable talk with her dad, whom she seemed to trust more than any other living creature. He, of course, entertained fears that this

particular boy wasn't good enough for his daughter, but he never expressed these to Robin. Instead he gave her a little speech on how to resist any untoward advances and then stretched out the curfew, originally set by her mother at 10:30, to 11:30. "Any girl who voluntarily waits until she's 16 to go on her first date deserves our trust," he said.

Mr. Right arrived promptly at 7, just as the rest of the family was sitting down to supper. Robin, the palm of her hands moist with excitement, kissed her mother and dad goodby and moments later was smiling into the face of her escort as he opened the car door. Inside the house, supper was forgotten as the rest of the family leaped from their chairs and crowded to the windows to peep through the curtains as the car drove away.

At 9 p.m. her parents heard the front door open. It was Robin. "Mr. Right was all wrong," she said, a bit embarrassed. "We're just not on the same wave length. I told him to bring me home."

There was another long talk with dad, this time the two of them sitting on the side of the bathtub as Robin brushed her hair before going to bed. "I just want it to be right," Robin said. "And if that means waiting, I'll wait." Her dad nodded, too choked up with pride to say much at all.

Later that night her father stole into her bedroom and tucked her in, stroking her long brown hair and planting a soft kiss on her warm cheek. And he remembered . . . 25 years ago and another beautiful 16-year-old whose cheek he had shyly kissed. The same girl now waited for him in the upstairs bedroom. He breathed a prayer that his daughter would find a man who loved her as much as he loved her mother.

~~I know all this, you see, because I was there. And no daddy is as proud of his daughter as I am of my Robin.~~