

He's a Rebel

Me and Angela, we were tight. Best friends, like, forever, even still in eighth grade. So when she dared me, I had to do it. It was a Monday after school. We were walking the six blocks to her apartment, past shady magnolias, gnarled oaks and weedy lawns—her scruffy part of town—when she threw me the challenge.

“Noooo!” I gaped. “Not Frankie!” I shook my head madly. My Cher bangs swung side to side, tickling my forehead like tawny-brown tassels.

That's right, Cher. Sonny and Cher. Me and Angela, we were huge fans. We wanted to be Cher. Like on that album where they're wedged in that tree and Cher is peering past her jungle-bangs, her raven Rapunzel hair cascading beyond her boobs, and Sonny's in this furry, he-man vest with his feral eyes fixed on a distant storm. Wow. All paleo. Like back-to-nature freaks.

It was 1966. The Beatles had landed, and boys were shaking their shaggy mop tops, frolicking with Frisbees and dispensing daisies. But not everyone. There were a few hold-outs.

“Come on, Sarah. You heard me right. Frankie.”

I gasped.

Angela smacked her gum and forged ahead. She walked fast, despite her snug mini-skirt and skinny gold sandals. I tripped on a broken sidewalk slab and shuffled to catch up in my own too-tight mini-skirt, amid a flood of blood-red leaves and the musty scents of September. She slowed. I scurried to her side.

“Oh. My. Gosh. He is so fab,” I blurted.

Angela had picked Frankie for the dare. Of course. It was easy for her. She was diving into her teens now and all its secrets still hopelessly out of my reach. Her stubby buds from last year had inflated to balloons that she could barely squeeze into her black lacy bras, while my so-called boobs lay lean—barely half a handful.

One day, in the school restroom, Angela lifted her shirt.

“Look, Sarah—”

“Angela!” I yanked her blouse down. “Christ.” I scanned the stalls for witnesses. She laughed.

Angela made out with this boy named Gary last summer. He actually drove a car, an old green Chevy sedan. One night they parked in an empty lot. And you know what that means. The next day in the hallway at school, Angela leaned close and whispered, “Don't worry. He didn't get past second base.” But, wow. The guy was, like, old. Maybe 16. “Here we were, necking.” She peered around, then fixed her eyes back on me. “Then he leaned back and sucked in his breath, and the window was, like, all fogged and dripping and he rolled it down and lit a cigarette.”

Man. And I was still waiting for my first kiss.