

# Crush landing

In the early 1970s, in common with a screaming multitude of other teenage girls, **Allison Pearson** fell head over platform heels for David Cassidy, and would have sacrificed anything to meet him. Thirty years on, can her first date with her first love ever live up to expectations? Photographs by **Lisa Kereszi**

**First love is the deepest, they say. It feels like drowning, but the thought of rescue is unwelcome. Other loves come along, but the first breathes on inside you, the sigh of a ghost. So when you are offered the chance to meet that ghost, the man you were in love with 30 years ago, there is only one sensible thing to do: smile politely and say, thank you but I am a happily married mother of two. Yet it's startling, the force with which the memories come back. The things you still know about him: the month of his birth, his stepmother's name, his passion for horses, his beach hideaway (Hawaii), the instrument he learnt to play when he was lonely (drums). The ways he would not be lonely, thanks to you.**

Besotted? I wore brown for two years because it was his favourite colour. Chocolate pointy-collar shirt, brown polyester Marks & Sparks trouser suit with tabard top worn over ribbed roll-neck, cinched in with a belt (borrowed from old Brownie uniform), a brown velvet choker and those bitterly contested maroon platform shoes. I was a sallow, peaky teenager, I looked terrible in brown. I looked *yellow* in brown. But it was a small sacrifice to make for pleasing him. For he, I knew, would be pleased.

In the early 1970s, David Cassidy bestrode my world like a colossus wearing a white catsuit trimmed with silver studs, its bootlaced front wrenched suggestively apart to reveal a waxy torso. My bedroom was, to all intents and purposes, the Church of the Blessed David. Plastered with posters, the walls were frescoes of scenes from the life of a saint: David strumming the guitar with uptilted gaze, soulful as any quattroceto Madonna; David almost naked on a beach, that trademark necklace of pooka shells at his soft brown throat; hippie David, the only human being on the planet who looked good in a feather-cut; David in a crisp white shirt gazing out levelly, but with infinite understanding, at me from the sleeve of the *Cherish* album. Under the bed, meanwhile, was a cache of vital research: pages of

photographs and vital statistics torn from magazines like *Jackie* and *Fab 208*. I handled the cheap pulp paper like papyrus. It was from these fragments that I learnt David's likes and dislikes. Of particular interest were articles such as 'How You Know Your Love for David is Deep and True' (multiple choice), and 'David Waits for the Right Girl' in which the star revealed that the qualities he was looking for in his ideal woman were 'honesty and simplicity'. That didn't seem too hard: I could be simple, honest. How thoughtful and sensitive David seemed compared with the boys at school who sniggered when they found out in biology about the symptoms of menstruation – 'Are you in a bad mood, then?'

I played Cassidy's records over and over. *How Can I Be Sure*, *Cherish*, *Could It Be Forever* (later, when I realised my dream and attended a Cassidy concert, I noticed that his delay on the word 'but', hanging there for a few tantalising seconds before surging into the title line, was the moment that got the loudest screams). Secretly, my favourite song was the exquisitely dolorous *I Am a Clown*, never to be disclosed to another girl, lest it cost me some crucial competitive advantage when David and I finally took our walk on the Hawaiian beach. ('Gee, that's amazing, Allison. No one else even noticed that song.')

There is still a certain kind of torpid Sunday evening in high summer, when I can be transported back to that small bedroom with the posters and the little grey transistor tuned to the Top-20, waiting impatiently for the only entry in the chart that counted: 'Life is much too beautiful to live it all alone/ Oh how much I need someone to call my very own./ I'm just a Daa-aydreamer...' I reckon you haven't fully understood the term 'by heart' till you've heard a song so many times it feels as though it's plaited into your DNA.

Although I remained 100 per cent faithful to him, there was certain evidence to suggest that David Cassidy was not mine and mine alone. *Cherish*, his debut solo album, left the shelves

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