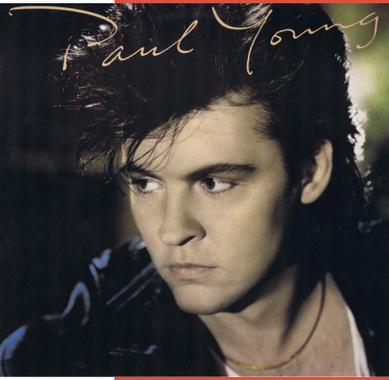


# Cusp

Jennifer Smith Gray

We were trying to catch lightning in a snapshot. It was the kind of summer night where a new layer of stars revealed itself every time you looked up, and the moon lit the beach, and the leaves on the birch trees were still. Some voices bounced off the water from either side of the bay, and loons called out to each other. But it was mostly just us. Tanned limbs greased with Skin So Soft to repel ravenous mosquitos, futile against the sweet-tangy lure of Aussie Sprunch Spray, Obsession, Sun In. Our clan of girls, classmates since kindergarten, grade eight grads now, celebrating. The end and the beginning. And there was lightning. It was far off in the middle of the lake, and it was wild and bright and forked and forceful and neat. And we tried to capture it on film. To look back at. To preserve. To hold still and timeless. Skeptical that our shutter fingers were quick enough, but maybe. Embers danced near our feet at the edge of the firepit where we roasted wieners and marshmallows. Sticky. Greasy. Sweet. Paul Young crooned and we swooned, and rewound the cassette, and rewound it again. *And like a dream, a life, a reason, everything must change.* Ageless, young, growing up. Children and teens and women at once. *And like a world, this earth and seasons, everything must change.* Handstands in packed wet sand. Arguments over pimple-faced boys. Giggles as we passed the Howie Mandel tape, stolen from an older brother, from Walkman to Walkman. Parents are divorcing. Spine-tingling tales of something other than the dog licking the man's hand as he slept. Someone is moving away. Silly songs of meeting bears in the woods. Troubles at home. Musky smoke clouding eyes. Who can be the last to drift off in their satiny sleeping bag on planked wood floor? Some never felt they belonged. Some might never again. Different high schools. Contagious tears. Knowing hugs. *Everything must change*, and we wouldn't all be together as one group again. We knew with each attempt we were seconds too late to catch that bolt of lightning. Film developed weeks later showed only blackness.



Paul Young

"Everything Must Change"

*The Secret of Association*

03/1985

Columbia