

## **Elaine (or; the lesser of the rosy childhood):**

By Greydyn Gildroy

1. When she was somewhere around six, her family went to the beach. This was a large endeavor, as they rarely left their home in rural South Dakota. They loaded up the Subaru Outback and powered their way through the 20-hour drive to the Washington coast. Upon arriving, they realized that it was, in fact, not all it was made out to be. It had just rained, and the sand was incredibly soggy, not to mention the fridity of the ocean was unexpected. I suppose it's common for those of us in landlocked states to overlook such things when planning a trip to the sea. Or it was just the Hardings. Either way, they drove up to Seattle and spent their week of vacation in the city instead—which was significantly more expensive.
2. Throughout the winters of her childhood, she became fixated on snow days. Ever an innovator, one Sunday afternoon she brought her four-year-old sister to the backyard and put her to work shoveling snow into a pile. The results were slow to come, but eventually they had enough to scoop it into their arms and walk it through the halls of the house, out the front door, and dump it in the road. They completed this ritual 5 or 6 times, until they were certain the roads would be too poor to get to school the next morning. Unfortunately, that night before bed, they heard the familiar roar of the city snow blower headed up their block.
3. It was well known amongst the elementary students in Custer, South Dakota, that in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade you had to complete an essay on a US president. She chose Warren Harding, largely because they had the same last name. She was disappointed to learn that he never really did anything of interest.
4. On her 12<sup>th</sup> birthday, her great aunt gifted her something so coveted, so special, that she hugged Patty Elizabeth Harding for the first time in her young life: CVS store brand mascara. That very next day, she closed herself off in the bathroom to get ready for school, but ended up stabbing herself in the eye with the mascara's wand. After a trip to the urgent care, it was determined that all that was really injured was the girl's sense of pride.
5. The summer before high school was a turbulent one. Occasionally, when particularly displeased with her current situation, she would gather up all her most important possessions and hide in the tornado cellar—only coming out for dinner and, of course, when it became too boring to stay in a hiding place where nobody was coming looking for you.
6. As a teenager, she didn't do much to cause a call for discipline. Her older brother was a different story. When he was 17, he snuck away from a class field trip to Mount Rushmore and tried to bribe a tour guide into letting him free-climb the rocks. When denied, he made a run for it into the trees, thinking he could make it to the monument before caught. From that point on, the family was denied entry into the state park every time Paul was with them.

7. The car was once again packed up, this time for the drive through the vast, devastatingly flat expanse between her childhood home and Boise, where she had chosen to go to college—near her aunt and uncle. She sat in the passenger seat while her mom drove away, waving with a sad kind of animation at her father and remaining little sister. That, of course, is not what was important. What was important was that approximately 2 hours later, pulling into a gas station in rural Wyoming, she realized she'd forgotten her phone charger.