



## **Forever Changed**

*Renée Pipitone*

May 5, 1970. A horrible tragedy had occurred only a day earlier at the nearby Kent State University campus. At first, four were reported dead—then later, a shrill rumor spread that five were dead, then six. I dutifully reported to my 8:00 a.m. freshman English class, as it did not occur to me to stay home or join the agitated throng of students in front of Buchtel Hall. The freedom of choice that college life allowed had not entered my consciousness yet. The absolute disbelief and horror of what had just happened to fellow students at a neighboring university had not sunk in—nor had it for the other twenty-seven kids in my class, for we were all in attendance that morning. Our

college instructor, a younger man, probably a graduate student, entered the room, slammed the door behind him, and leaned against the desk at the front of the room, glaring at us as we opened books and dug out paper and pen from purses and briefcases. He wore a casual shirt and jeans, shoulder-length hair and well-worn tennis shoes. He listened for several minutes as we chattered on about mundane things. Finally, he spoke. "You are disgusting," he said in a quiet voice, and he walked out without closing the door behind him. We sat, stunned and ashamed, and eventually filed out into a world that was forever changed.