

# JORDON JORDON

By Mike Hopper

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JORDON JORDON

A Student's Tale

By Mike Hopper

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# PART ONE

## Prologue I

### Sand Dunes Retirement Village, Sefton, Merseyside. Good Friday 2014

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Augustine Jordon sat pensively in his armchair. The morning sun was blazing through the window of his bungalow and providing the 68 year-old with a warm glow and a nice frame of mind, so much so, that he was minded to attend to some work.

He turned on his laptop. His written project had been ongoing for the three years he'd lived alone.

And while his intention for writing this labour of love was never to make money, the satisfaction he was gleaning from this true story was indefinable.

Indeed, in many ways, it was his final 'raison d'être' and there was no way he'd ever give up the ghost until he was satisfied the work was complete.

There was a knock on the door and his kindly nurse entered with a cocktail of medication and painkillers. He swallowed them swiftly with his glass of water and after a short, polite chat, he was left on his own again.

He went to his bedside cupboard and took out the bottle of Bells Whiskey, his favourite, pouring himself what was supposed to be a double measure. It was far more than that, but it helped him concentrate with his writing.

He flicked back through the pages of his document. They were not numbered, so he could only estimate how many hundreds there were.

He opted for the part that concerned the year 1980, because that was his favourite...

# Prologue II

## Good Friday 1980

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Augustine Jordon (Jordon to his friends) was strolling along Allerton Road, a small linear shopping area in a middle class district of South Liverpool.

School had just broken up for the Easter holidays and, feeling a touch fragile after the staff end of term 'do', he thought he'd get some fresh air to clear away the cobwebs.

Not all the shops opened on Good Friday, but the bigger stores had tended to do so more recently, with the result that the smaller ones were beginning to follow suit.

There was a fair degree of activity.

He had no real reason to enter WH Smith but he had a fetish for stationery, so he thought he'd have a browse, if only out of habit.

He was by the card stall (Whose birthday did he have to remember?) when he became aware of a young woman standing next to him.

Was it instinct or intuition which made them both react? Because, almost simultaneously, they turned to look at each other.

Jordon's mouth was agape; his expression one of astonishment.

“Annie?”

“Jordon?”

“Oh my God!”

There was a pause.

“How are you?”

“I'm well. And you?”

“Great!”

“And where are you living now, Jordon?”

“A few minutes away, just round the corner. What about yourself?”

“I've had a temporary teaching post in a town in Cheshire; in a Primary school. Nice children.”

“But I thought you were abroad, somewhere in Africa.”

“Oh, I finally ended my contract there. I felt it was time to come back to the UK. That was only this January.”

Jordon was tongue-tied, indeed lost for words. He was out of practice when it came to talking to women on his own and this seemed to transmit itself to this very attractive female standing next to him.

They were both clearly struggling to break the ice at this surprise encounter and small talk was all they could muster. It was as if they were both desperate to say something constructive, but didn't know how.

Jordon resolved the awkwardness by breaking off nervously.

“Well, Annie, nice seeing you,” he said. “Look after yourself. Bye!”

And with that, he strode out of the store and into Allerton Road. He was genuinely bewildered at the turn of events, before it slowly registered in his brain.

What was he doing? After all this time. Get back to her, man!

He got as far as the big roundabout known as the Allerton Maze, when he turned around and strode back, breaking into a trot, and then almost racing into the Smith's.

But Annie was nowhere to be seen.

He looked throughout the store, then raced outside again, looking first one way then the other, then down each side street.

Nothing. She'd gone.

"Shit, shit, shit!" he murmured to himself.

"You stupid, stupid man!"

There was no sign of Annie and after wandering around aimlessly for several minutes, he gave up and returned to his large Victorian terraced house ten minutes' walk away.

Jordon sat down in his armchair and opened a can of beer, reflecting on what had just happened and the catastrophic error he'd just made.

Why had he frozen like that? It was like history revisited.

He turned to his cassette player and placed his recent Electric Light Orchestra purchase inside it, before identifying his favourite song, its implications obvious.

He closed his eyes and began to reminisce.

As each year had passed, his best memories had seemed longer and longer ago, blurring more with every new calendar that hung from his wall. Yet that chance meeting with Annie had brought them all flooding back as if every single incident had happened only yesterday.

He leaned over and opened his desk drawer, carefully taking out his prized photograph from the College Leavers' Ball of 1967.

He stared at the two of them, Annie and him. Everyone had always said how they resembled the perfect couple, but he'd felt compelled to hide it away to ease the torment.

And then the eerie sounds of Jeff Lynne and the ELO began to play...

*'She gives me love that I could never hope to have,*

*She tells me that she needs me, she tells me that she's glad;*

*And if she goes away, I'm like someone who's left out in the rain,*

*I need, I need her, I need her love."*

It had all started sixteen years earlier...

## PART TWO

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# Chapter 1

## Arrival 1964

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Green Lane Christian Teachers' Training College opened its doors to its first ever intake of students in October 1964. There were 210 in all, the vast majority fresh-faced 18 year olds whose experience of life was more than limited.

At that time, the site was only half-ready with building work still ongoing and dumper trucks noisily passing by windows during daylight hours.

Seminars and tutorials took place wherever there was space and indeed if the weather was nice, some of the few grassed areas also got used.

Annie Foster had attended a girls' convent school in the Midlands and was the only student from there, while Augustine Jordon arrived with a group of lads who'd all attended the same grammar school near Doncaster. He lived in the mining community of South Emsall. Both he and Annie were only children.

Annie was a petite girl with collar length black hair; nice complexion; pretty as in young; a shy, quietly spoken and polite 18 year-old.

Augustine Jordon, known to all his pals as Jordon, was of slim build and above average height; his adolescent face was typically blotchy without being spotty. He laughed a great deal, which suggested a happy disposition and he could be quite loud, so that those folk who didn't know him well, even thought of him as a bit full of himself.

Though Jordon had gone out with a few girls during his sixth form days, it was fair to say that his sexual experience went no further than French kissing and some cumbersome groping in dark doorways and, when lucky, in the back seat of a car.

Annie had never had a date. Such was convent school education.

The period of the early 1960s was a time of change, but promiscuity was, for the most part, just a word in the dictionary. In fact, had a secret poll been taken of the first students at Green Lane College, the percentage of those who were still virgins would likely be in the nineties.

As the students came together for an opening service of thanksgiving, spontaneous segregation was an instinctive as

well as a conspicuous feature. It was more than any lad's standing was worth to be seen making a play for a girl.

And it was definitely not the done thing to admit being 'serious'.

Both sexes found it difficult to overcome these traits. A macho instinct prevailed amongst the males, while many girls, having encountered the most enclosed, even secluded, schooling from convent nuns, were petrified of even talking to lads on their own.

And yet, beneath that laddish culture amongst many men, lay a well camouflaged reticence to admit liking any member of the opposite sex. Feelings of sexual inadequacy were not only rife, but went a long way to actually holding back some relationships.

There were plenty of lads who'd not go near some girls for fear they were too worldly for them.

Jordon would never openly admit that he was in that category.

Green Lane had been promoted nationally as the first mixed Christian college of its kind, but those who'd sent out the prospectus would likely have been dismayed to see a

natural segregation taking place amidst the lines of tables in seminars.

With the strictest of moral codes in place, mixed visiting was forbidden to the point of instant dismissal as punishment. All the churches were adamant in forbidding sex outside marriage and deeming it a sin.

Jordon's name had followed him from sixth form, where his friends couldn't be bothered trying to get round the mouthful which was Augustine. His immediate pals were Henry Forbes, Jerry Jones, Barry Kimberley and Dominic Hines. The first three were from his school but Dom was from South Wales and someone Jordon had only palled up with since arrival. They quickly became close friends.

Annie meanwhile, had established friendships with a couple of equally shy and polite girls in Amelia Page (Amy) and Isabella Smyth (Izzy). After the evening meal it became their style to have a coffee in one of their study bedrooms. Likewise, before sleep they'd gather in their housecoats and sit on the bed to drink a Horlicks or a hot chocolate.

As time went on, the trio might sometimes increase in number to several more. For the girls there was a limit to their feelings of independence. They tended to feel better with a security in numbers.

Neither was it just the girls who were adept at having a natter. Jordon and Dom would regularly discuss their backgrounds and other things too in their rooms; sometimes with other pals. The atmosphere would often be heavy with cigarette smoke, though Jordon had never been a smoker. He'd grown up watching his father's chest problems.

Dom wanted to know how Jordon was called that, so he explained that his real name, Augustine, for reasons he didn't know, had been passed down through several generations.

“Even dad, who's called Walter, has it for a second name,” he told his mate. “I mean, can you ever think of a worse handle, for God's sake?”

Jordon's dad was an ex-miner, retired through ill health even though he'd only just reached 50.

“He's got some lung disease with a funny name that I can't remember and his breathing is awful,” he explained.

Dom was able to empathise, having come from South Wales, another area rich in coal mining.

“My dad's a docker, still working in Swansea, where we live,” he told Jordon. “We're a family of five kids and I'm the eldest.”

The similarity of their backgrounds created an instant rapport between the two.

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Jordon first struck up a friendship with Annie in their Geography seminar when they were paired together by the tutor.

Thereafter, they'd often sit amongst the same common room friendship groups at break times, as well as in the local pub, the Halfway House.

However, though Jordon liked Annie, it never really entered his head that she was somebody to go out with.

Love was the last thing on Jordon's mind, though his fuddled brain was ever ready to lust after many a female, even though his hang-ups and inadequacies in the sex department were numerous.

In truth, he'd never even seen a female totally naked, not even in magazines. He knew all the dirty jokes but half the time, couldn't fully comprehend them. He had some vague idea as to what sex entailed, but in truth was petrified of getting it wrong.

For her part, Annie liked Jordon a lot. He was a good friend, a kind of male ally and someone to turn to in study groups. Whether she fancied him was irrelevant since it was not something that seemed to have entered either naïve head. Jordon had never shown the slightest inclination to ask her out and, even in those supposedly enlightened times of the 1960s, role reversal was unheard of.

Indeed the girls were under strict orders never to go alone into a public house even if it were to read a book.

There was a dichotomy in Annie and Jordon's friendship. She was content to get on with her studies diligently, while he was increasingly desperate just to have a proper girl-friend with whom he could walk about hand-in-hand, preferably to the pub!

For him it was about status.

One night before bed, Amy, Izzy and Annie were together, in housecoats as usual, sipping their bedtime drinks, when the issue of boys came up. Izzy had started going for a drink with a handsome lad called Tom from her science class, which started the talk rolling.

“Annie, don't you like Jordon?” the other two queried.

“Of course I like him, but I’ve never thought of dating him,” she replied, with a hint of irritation.

Which was the truth; not that the others believed her. She flirted with the thought for a few seconds before the conversation turned back to Izzy’s new relationship.

Like typical teenagers, which they were, there were questions asked about first kisses and cuddles, though they never thought to widen the conversation to anything beyond that.

“Have you ever touched tongues?” asked Amy.

Izzy laughed but amidst her innocence, Annie stayed silent. In her secluded world, kissing simply meant lips and that was it!

Still, when the time came for geography class the next day, Annie did look across the room at Jordon and for a few seconds considered their friendship in a slightly different way.

Then the moment passed.

As for Jordon, at that moment he was being mesmerised by a girl called Zoe who’d just entered class wearing a somewhat provocative jumper; leastways, it was to him. The poor girl

probably hadn't the slightest notion that what she was wearing was having such an effect on any member of the opposite sex!

## Chapter 2

### Autumn 1964

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There had been several college dances during that first term, but Jordon had never been lucky enough to meet anyone. His prevalence for keeping male company in the pub had made his approach to girls appear macho and inappropriate.

On one occasion, he'd danced with the same girl for the whole of the last hour.

In the ways of the world of youth, 1960s style, such a 'staying together' was taken as an indication that it would be in order for the boy to walk the girl home - or in this case to see her to hall. After the final dance, Jordon asked accordingly, assuming the walk to hall would be a formality, only to be turned down.

It felt like a rejection.

Increasingly, his personal morale was waning.

That night he sat up until the early hours chatting dejectedly with Dom, who ironically had just escorted Amy Page back to hall.

Why don't you ask Annie out?" he enquired of his pal? "You know she's fond of you."

"She's not my type," was the reply.

"Well, what is your type?" said a bewildered Dom.

There was no answer forthcoming.

When he returned to his room, Jordon put head to pillow and assessed himself dejectedly. He actually felt lonely, but such a show of emotion was for the privacy of his bedroom and tomorrow, the brave, cheerful facade would be on show once again.

The next day being Saturday, a group of the lads, including Jordon, would lie in and miss the early breakfast. Later, nearer lunchtime, they'd wander down to Groppy's Butty Bar at the Childwall Fiveways, where bacon sandwiches were the order of the day.

After the previous night, banter was prevalent and at some point, the chat centred on Jordon and his extended dance with a certain young lady. All heads turned to him and his acting skills were tested fully as he said he didn't want a steady relationship.

Dom caught his eye but said nothing; his expression smacked of 'liar!'

It was a confusing first few weeks with so many teaching rooms not ready and in the midst of this confusion, the students had to go out on their first teaching practice. Because of these site limitations, TP had been brought forward and virtually everyone was in the dark when it came to facing a class. Indeed, the two weeks consisted almost wholly of observing qualified teachers.

“We’ve spent all our school life doing that,” observed one wag.

Annie chatted with Jordon and swapped notes on how they’d fared. Theirs were contrasting experiences since she was in a primary school and he in a secondary Modern. They were together for the best part of an hour and their relationship, for what it was, had become quite natural. They were good pals.

Two nights before the end of the autumn term, the whole student body was invited to a large hotel in the city centre, courtesy of the student union. Coaches were laid on, which was good thinking since, being so close to the end of term, most grants had disappeared and bank accounts, if not empty, were definitely low.

It was a semi-formal affair with collars and ties and some long dresses but as Jordon looked around at the many couples who'd got together during the previous weeks, it was not lost on him how alone he felt at that moment.

Annie was with her cluster of friends and at one point, she came across to chat with him. However, he never considered for a moment that he should ask her to dance even though that was what she was clearly hoping for.

As the end of term celebration drew to a close and the many lads and lasses spilled out of the hotel and wandered towards the waiting coaches, Jordon's eye caught Annie. She was with a guy he knew as Neil Craven from the PE group and they were holding hands and laughing.

And at that very moment, the strangest feeling came over him. It was an almost instinctive jealousy. Having rejected every possible opportunity to establish a relationship with the girl, suddenly, as he stared at her, looking happy with another man, a realisation set in.

Didn't she look mighty attractive in her black dress?

To add insult to injury, Annie waved at Jordon. She looked exultant!

## Chapter 3

### Spring 1965

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The Spring term continued in much the same vein as the previous one and feeling flush with a new grant, Jordon was again a regular in the pub. His money wouldn't last long at this rate.

Local education authorities paid for all college training in full and sent out a means-tested cheque to students at the start of each of the three terms. Costs relating to food and accommodation were taken out at source and paid direct to the college.

Annie was now in a steady relationship with her PE student Neil and, while it could hardly be called intense, it was good for her self-esteem. She now felt much more like a young woman.

Along with Izzy and Amy, the late night girls' chat was more on a level footing, as each of them now had a boyfriend.

Then, somewhat out of the blue, Amy mentioned Jordon.

"You know that Dom's getting a bit worried about Jordon," she said.

“Why’s that?” said Annie, picking up on it right away.

“He’s drinking heavily and hasn’t got much money,” was the reply. “He’s often scrounging and he got into bother last week because he failed to hand in two straight essays on time.

“Dom said he could be up before the senior lecturer if he isn’t careful.”

The conversation went on for a little while. It was clear that Annie was concerned and as she went back to her own room, she wondered whether she should have a chat.

A couple of days later, early afternoon, the opportunity came about when the two of them were in a group in the coffee bar common room. Her boyfriend Neil was at the swimming baths and she went over and broached the subject of Jordon’s wellbeing.

They moved to one of the cubicles and sat side by side. Annie touched his hand affectionately.

It was like an electric shock to him but, needless to say, the brave-face act he’d perfected came into its own.

“Annie, I’m fine,” he declared.

And for the next few minutes his acting prowess was so persuasive that Annie was convinced by it.

The truth was that she'd probably done more harm than good. Her concern for Jordon and the touch of her hand had opened up the wound he'd managed to cover over after the shock of seeing her with that Neil bloke at the end of last term.

Now the pair were near inseparable and he'd learned to accept it

He'd blown his chances with Annie and that was the end of it!

As she wandered back to her friends, Jordon stayed where he was and reflected on those last few minutes. She'd grown up so much and what a lovely person she now was!

In the background a Roy Orbison record was playing and for once the words struck a chord:

*"Oh, you wished me well; you couldn't tell*

*That I'd been cry...ing over you;*

*Cry...ing over you..."*

He got up before the rest of the song overwhelmed him. One of his mates, Jerry, passed him on the corridor.

"Fancy a pint, Jordon?" he asked.

“Yeah, why not?”

And five minutes later the two of them were midday drinking in the Halfway House...

## Chapter 4

### Easter 1965

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Towards the end of the Easter break, the whole geography department went on a field trip to the Lake District, staying in a hostel called Newlands, a couple of miles outside Keswick.

For many, it was the first time they'd had such an experience, since sixth form geography had been studied exclusively through text books.

One day the whole group undertook a climb to the summit of Helvellyn. What an effort, especially clambering along the deceptively dangerous ridge called Striding Edge!

It was gruelling and when the party eventually got back to Newlands, to a person, they were all exhausted.

On another day, Annie and Jordon were in the same group of four and, after they'd completed the designated fieldwork, there was just the two of them strolling together down a wooded valley back towards the hostel.

It was a warm afternoon with the sun beaming through the trees and foliage.

They chatted so freely, so naturally and at one point they paused and rested on a grassy area, their bodies close enough to create a current of awareness.

They were lying on their backs soaking up the sun, arms at their sides. Their fingers could have been but inches apart. One tiny movement and they would touch.

There was the most powerful urge for Jordon to make contact; his inside tingling at the thought of finger against finger.

“Go on, Jordon, do it! Do it, man!”

But then, he reminded himself that she was taken. Or was that his excuse for a complete lack of bottle?

It was only a matter of seconds, but the instance could have been ages. And then it had gone; in a twinkling the moment had passed as Annie stood up.

There was immediate regret; self-reproach and condemnation; anger with himself. All those feelings were there together, boiling over in the big melting pot that was the pit of his stomach. Now the two continued back to the hostel.

He cursed the very mention of the name Neil. He'd actually come to despise it!

Increasingly, Jordon's reaction to most things became self-centred. Rather than be glad for any of his friends who were in relationships, it was more a case of how it was he couldn't find somebody. Why didn't he have what others had?

Indeed, Jordon's demeanour had altered significantly and hardly for the better.

Then he was shocked to hear that Dom and Amy had broken up. He'd not had chance to talk to his pal about it, but it was understandable Dom felt down and Jordon thought it best not to mention the subject.

"He'll tell me if he wants to," he reasoned.

And yet, rather than feel sympathy, he was secretly glad about the split. Dom was back in the same boat as he was and single again! Things were as they used to be.

He was standing on the mezzanine floor, looking over the balcony down on the library below. It was surprisingly full, which made him wonder whether an essay might be due. The fact he didn't know spoke volumes.

He looked at who was there. Were there forty, fifty, even more?

He was about to do a count when it dawned on him that he knew the names of every single student sitting at the tables. Every one of them!

He considered what a closely-knit society the college was.

And then he thought about Dom and Amy. Despite their break up, they'd have to see each other every day of the week, look each other in the eye and put on a brave face.

“Was this healthy? What if they wanted to date somebody else?”

That last thought would soon come back to bite Jordon.

About a fortnight later, there was a folk night concert in the lounge common room. The lights were dimmed and the atmosphere light hearted, to the extent that for the last half hour or so, there was some impromptu dancing.

The next thing was that Jordon was dancing casually with Amy. It was a gentle Irish waltz, or something like that.

As the concert drew to a close, he turned to her and asked if she'd go out with him. Surprisingly for Jordon, straight out.

It was immediately obvious that the girl was taken aback and when she replied that it was too soon after her break up with Dom, Jordon wasn't surprised. He knew it was an error of judgement, but then why did he ask in the first place?

Still, he wouldn't have reneged if Amy had said yes.

As soon as the very next day, Annie was before him. He just stood motionless and took it face on, as she tore a strip off him for being so insensitive in making such an advance.

“Do you have no feelings at all?” she said, before storming off.

But it was to get worse.

Within a couple of weeks, Dom and Amy had patched things up and were an item again.

Whether or not Jordon was to feel happy for his pal became irrelevant when Dom barged into his room and confronted him eyeball to eyeball.

“You fucking asked her out! You bastard! We're supposed to be mates! What sort of a pal does that? Just piss off! You're no mate of mine!”

And with that, he shoved Jordon in the chest causing him to fall on the bed. Then he was off, slamming the door behind him!

Jordon reflected on Dom's tirade and his words: 'What sort of pal does that?'

"He's right!" he thought to himself and sat at his desk. Could this place get any worse? Then, an afterthought: "I suppose the whole world will soon know about what I did!"

Meanwhile, Jordon was amongst the vast majority who'd emerged as satisfactory through the academic year. He'd had a couple of scares along the way with a severe warning across the bows from a senior tutor, but he'd sorted himself out, probably just in time.

He was doing reasonably well in his geography and history, but education was really painful. All that philosophy and psychology; Plato and Piaget.

Jordon was struggling to fathom it out and was relieved to have got through his first year.

###

As the first year drew to a close, there was to be a formal end-of-term dinner and dance.

Everybody wanted to attend but the need to find a partner beforehand was paramount and to this end, a kind of unofficial internal clearing-house came into operation.

Jordon was still a 'single' person, but then one of the girls approached him to see if he'd accompany her friend Sami to the ball. Jordon retained an outward nonchalance but inside, he was relieved to think that at least he would have a partner, albeit for just one evening.

There was never going to be a relationship. That had been made clear, since Sami had a long-standing, long-distance relationship, but in the circumstance, Jordon would at least be at the formal.

For all the provisos, Jordon felt good. It would make a change just to be in the company of an attractive young woman like Sami

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