

Long live Victoria!

She has been the great love of many a Matie, and her beauty is timeless. Marco Botha, a journalism student, is one of her current love-struck admirers.

There is something about her presence that is almost regal. Her name in all probability has something to do with this regal air. She inherited her name from the old Victoria College, which, in 1887, was named after the lady who ruled the roost in England at that time.

She held sway while big ones became bigger, and boys grew into men. She watched how young women wore hats, just to store it right at the back of the cupboard again. She observed how dresses became shorter, longer and shorter yet again, and cars faster and faster.

She probably witnessed and heard how apartheid was constricted in the ideological discussions between young Hendrik Verwoerd and his pals on their way to lectures. She may even have overheard when Frederik van Zyl Slabbert made his Dakar plans to trip apartheid with its own shoelaces. She stood in awe at every step Doc Craven took as he walked to Coetzenburg and she bore the consequences when Bliksem felt it time to relieve himself.

Her name is Victoria. Her surname? "Just call me Street."

It is early morning as our gaze meet on the prim balcony at Dagbreek. She is getting ready for new ideas, new feet, new relationship problems and pure student quirks.

"Some students return from the waterholes just before class starts, while others already have their noses in their books. That's just how students are," she says, like a lecturer who teaches because she enjoys working with students.

Like any stylish model, Victoria knows just how to make herself look good.

Autumn is the time for wearing warm colours and clothing, hence she dresses in brown, red and yellow plane leaves. She is, after all, the Victoria Street of all Victoria Streets. "To many people, this is their favourite time of year. At men's residences the rugby season gets momentum; in women's residences that new wardrobe is the hype."

Winter is a time for sleeping in, and although Victoria by now has the strict countenance of a formidable academic with Admin B only just peering over her shoulder, she is also well aware that students cannot possibly dry wet clothes every day. In any

case, classes seem much further away from one's res in the rain. Umbrellas, res jackets and gumboots had always been the standard attire of men in this season. "Women don the same these days, I see," the grand old dame remarks somewhat indignantly.

Victoria does not have a favourite season, but there is just that something about spring and summer that leaves her absolutely exhilarated. "It's fresh, it is new, it heralds a new year and students are at their happiest. I have experienced it time and time again for over a hundred years now. It doesn't change."

That is when she wears green ... just a bit to start off with, adding more and more each passing day. The accessories follow: cicadas with their incessant sis-sis-sis sound, proclaiming the good news of summer, sun and sapphire.

It starts raining again and the eight o'clock class has already started. Victoria also becomes quieter, and for a fleeting moment her gaze becomes deeper, serious and almost melancholic.

"Love is such an infinitely beautiful process. It starts with being in love. It becomes riveting, spellbinding, and infatuation turns into love ... and that warm, autumny fuzzy feeling nestles in your heart and envelops you in heavenly bliss. You feel immortal, but 'together forever and ever' becomes all too fleeting."

Victoria grows nostalgic about all her former loves, and disappointment gives her story a sad hue. Yes, she too had loved and had become intertwined with her soul mates, from playing among brown leaves, splashing in streams of water to contemplating a life of being together. Then, suddenly, the realisation that her presence is taken for granted and that the relationship had slowed down to a routine of walking to lectures and back. She is forgotten, until, years later, those lovers return and drive by with their families ... only then do they realise how strong love is.

She had loved many a time and had been hurt even more. But it served only to make her stronger. Year after year her beauty becomes more pronounced and she becomes even more formidable and more irresistible as time passes.

She has happened to be to a lover's lane to many and in her infinite wisdom, she shares beautiful moments of love with the young at heart.

Her quiet glory lies in what she had seen, what she had experienced, whom she had carried, and also in the lyrics that through the years had been dedicated to her.

Victoria recounts how young troubadours over the years had strolled up and down with guitar and

Photo: Anton Jordani, SCPS



Do you have a Victoria Street sotry? Please let us know!

trumpet to serenade at the windows of ladies.

Elvis' Love me tender was a firm favourite, she recalls. And if that cupid's song happened to be successful at winning yet another lady's heart, Victoria would bear silent witness as the singers ran past her with smiles on their faces and shining eyes. Then Victoria would fall silent at the sight of yet another love.

In 2005, Dagbreek indeed won the serenade event with "Meisie van Victoriastraat" - "Haar oë was sag en haar hare was lank, meisie van my hart. Haar lyfie mooi, soos haar lippies rooi, meisie van Victoriastraat."

Oh, Vicky! How will I ever forget you? 