A Simple Day

Simplicity. While it seems as though simplicity cannot offer much in the way of illustrating ideas, I have found that simplicity in fact brings a lot of meaning to ideas and feelings. One way to exemplify this theory is to look at common actions and emotions, viewing them through a common, simple form. I chose to use the form of hands. Whether wringing in nervous anticipation, calmly performing a task, or making a caring gesture, hands are a window into our lives. Looking through this window, my project focuses on the window of a day; more specifically, the preparation for and actual occurrence of a first date.

By using hands to look at this first date, one can see the anticipation as one prepares, and all the small tasks that somehow seem so very important. Rather than looking at facial expressions, which do not always truly exhibit felt emotions, hands are a simple thing to look at that cannot be changed. The development of this first date, seen through hands, shows how simple and hopeful love can be.

To present the whole series of images for the first date, I decided to show a portion of a contact sheet- this shows a sort of chronological documentation of the date, allowing the events and actions to be easily followed. It is also a memento one might have of such an event, reminding them of the beauty felt that night. For the contact sheet I actually took a contact sheet I had made of a roll of film I developed, and I scanned it, cropped and rotated it. In photoshop I then removed the pictures already in each window (polygonal lasso tool), and created a white paper edge to contrast an off-white table the contact sheet is lying on. The right edge of the image was damaged, as the edge of the contact sheet was not developed well, and so I used the Clone tool to recreate the black contact sheet edge. There were a few imperfections to the contact sheet, such as negative scratches and slivers of un-fixed portions that I decided to keep in the image to add to the authenticity of the contact sheet. Finally, I adjusted the brightness/contrast with the curves tool, to darken the contact sheet (the contact sheet I was using was an early work not exposed for a long enough period of time when it was developed).

There are nine main images to the sequence, with three additional picture portions (approximately 1/3 of a photo) due to the angle of the contact sheet. The three additional images were chosen in the hopes of not distracting from the main view of the project, but due to the small nature of the space, were not supposed to be integral images. The first main picture is of a girl painting her fingernails. This photograph was a color photograph of which I scanned the negative. There appeared to be some scratches on the negative, which I removed with the clone tool. I wanted to draw attention to the action of painting fingernails in preparation for the date, and so I isolated the fingernail polish with the polygonal lasso tool, created additional layers, and converted the rest of the image to grayscale. This was then resized, rotated, and added to the contact sheet (as were all of the images).

The next photograph is of the girl clutching a telephone. This represents the confirmation of the evening plans, and is a digital photograph. I used the curves tool to alter the brightness and contrast in a way to emphasize the hand. The next image, of the boy preparing for the date by shaving, is also a digital image. As it was posed and the boy was not actually shaving, I used the
clone tool to cover up the small amount of stubble peeking through the wake of the razor. I then used the blur and smudge tools to make sure the skin looked smooth and okay in that area. I then removed the color from the image by converting it to grayscale, and performed an autocontrast to optimize the shades of black and white in the image.

Next are the two images showing the girl and then the boy buttoning their shirts/jackets for the evening. The image of the girl buttoning her shirt was printed in the darkroom. The photograph was taken on a sunny day, and as such, shades and shadows on the right side of the jacket caused it to be a bit faded in detail. After several attempts at perfection, I finally created the image I wanted, by burning in the jacket details on the right side through extra exposure to light, and also to the bottom of her shirt in the lower left corner. This required extra burning because the folds of the shirt were so unobtrusive in the image. Once printed, the image was scanned and cropped a little to bring full attention onto the action of her hands buttoning her jacket. For the boy, the photograph was taken digitally, and color removed through conversion to grayscale. I then used the curves adjustment to make sure the shadows emphasized the hands enough.

Finally, the date begins. It starts out with the exchange of flowers. To draw attention to the hands making the exchange, I used the polygonal lasso tool to trace the hands, created an additional layer which remained in color, and then I converted the rest of the image to grayscale. We then move to the couple sitting, most likely at the movie theatre, legs close together and hands in close proximity. This image was also a digital image, and converted to grayscale. The curves tool was used to alter the brightness and contrast to again emphasize the hands, and how close they were, while still not touching, an attempt to show the nervousness that accompanies making a move on a first date. The clone stamp was used to remove distracting chairs from the upper right portion of the image, with blur and smudge tools used to touch it up. The next image shows the move for the hands actually being made. When I took this picture, I saw and really felt in it a sweetness and innocence of that first hand-holding action. I wanted to alter the digital image as little as possible, and so I kept the color, to keep the bright and hopeful feeling in the picture. I then only employed the clone tool to remove the chair from the background.

The final image shows the completion of the date, with the couple joined in hands walking home. This image was developed in the darkroom, actually being enlarged and cropped so as to alter the image from vertical to horizontal. It was then scanned, adjusted for brightness and contrast, and added for completion of both the date and the series of images. I feel that the image shows a feeling of hope and new love, a happy ending to the simple story of a day seen through hands.