

First Dance

The three boys watched the back of their friend Kyle's head as he talked to Ginny on the other side of the dark high school gymnasium. His head moved animatedly, and they knew he was speaking enthusiastically. They were freshmen, and this was their first high school dance.

Meanwhile, Ginny's head was cocked to one side with an imperious expression and her arms folded across her chest. Though none of the boys was as yet formerly schooled in the psychology of body language, all could discern that things were not going well for Kyle. What did he expect? They tried to tell him.

Ginny was the most attractive girl in the 8th grade the year before and was now the most attractive in the 9th. She had a face that would not age well, but here in her youth her button nose looked cute. Her blonde hair cascaded over her shoulders in ringlet curls, and her body had developed nicely. In 8th grade, she was stuck with 8th grade boys but now drew the attention of upperclassmen two and three years older. She said she liked them because they were more mature, with the obvious implication that she meant emotional maturity. She did not. She preferred the maturity of other aspects of their personage.

Moments earlier Kyle had been speaking to the friends over the din of the music.

"There's Ginny Atherton by herself over there."

"So?"

"So maybe one of us should go talk to her," said Kyle.

"Yeah, right."

"What's that?"

"Kyle wants to go talk to Ginny Atherton."

"Yeah, right."

"Talk to her about what?"

"Says she's by herself."

"Well, first of all, Kyle, she's not alone."

"What?"

"He said she's not alone."

"She's got her friends Nan and Sue right next to her."

"That's not what I meant, and you know it," said Kyle. "There's no guys around her."

"What's that?"

"He says there's no guys around her."

"Oh, you mean Peter Tate, right Kyle? Supposedly Peter's been talking to her at her locker."

"My older brother's friends with Peter Tate. They play sports together."

"Who cares?"

"Hey, I just meant I know him, and he's an ok guy."

"I'm gonna go ask her to dance," Kyle said.

"Whoa!"

"Yeah, WTF, man?"

"Do you really think Virginia Atherton is going to dance with you?"

"Look," said Kyle, "she's been standing there at least since I first noticed her and that was over two songs ago. This is dance, isn't it? Girls like to dance; boys like girls. I'm gonna go ask her to dance."

"She'll never dance with you."

"Well, she won't for sure if I don't go ask her," said Kyle.

“Hang on, pal. You sure you want to do that? Has it crossed your brain that the only reason no one has asked her to dance is because everybody knows she’s waiting for Peter Tate to get here? That guy plays varsity football, dipshit. You want him to push your face in?”

“No one’s gonna push anybody’s face in,” Kyle said. “This is just a stupid high school dance. It’s a regular dance too, not a date dance like homecoming. I’m gonna go ask her to dance.”

Kyle broke from the pack, an act of singular bravery. The other boys spoke to his back, although he was quickly out of range of hearing them.

“She’s going to say ‘no.’”

“I still say Peter Tate’s going to kick your ass.”

“Hey, man, Peter Tate’s a nice guy.”

Across the gym, Kyle’s head stopped moving. He stood quiet with his arms at his sides. Ginny’s head was still cocked like a chicken’s. She spoke clipped tones, and the other boys could feel her disdain without hearing a word. When she stopped, Kyle turned and made a long, slow walk back to where he began.