Tea Dance

Cynthia Martin∗

∗Iowa State University

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Abstract

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By Cynthia Martin
Spanish, Senior

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I went upstairs to dress. My dress was of red wool, a simple sheath that I wore with my gold baby necklace. The dress was a hand-me-down from my older sister, but in eighth grade almost everybody wore hand-me-downs.

“Susie, if you want me to do your hair, you’d better hurry! Dad’s leaving in 15 minutes.”

“I’m coming, Mother.” I slipped on my black Capizio flats. They were so neat that I loved just to look at them.

Running down the steps, I took out my rollers and hurried into the bathroom.

“Please, God, keep it curly till 4:00.”

“Now, Susie. Are you sure that you want your hair this way? Mother sounded unsure.

“Oh yes, Mom. I’ve got to. All the girls are wearing it like this now.” Usually I wore my hair in French braids, the kind that start at the hairline and work down, picking up hair as they go.

“Well, there you are. I just hope it stays curled.”

“Oh, thank you, Mom. It’s just beautiful. Are you sure that I can’t have make-up today?”

“Now Susie, lipstick is quite enough for a girl your age. Now hurry. Dad’s waiting in the car.”

I picked up my coat, pausing to look in the mirror as I ran past. Reflected was a short, plump girl with braces and curly hair staring in wide-eyed wonder, smiling happily.
“Move over, Hayley Mills. I’m beautiful today!”

“I’m beautiful today!”

I picked up my French horn, not daring to tell Mom that I wasn’t going to play that morning. The tea dance wasn’t until 4:00, but the horn always left a circular impression on my lips, and I couldn’t have that. Not on the day I was beautiful.

The band director crabbed at me for not playing, but I told him that my braces had just been tightened, so he let me sit out. I gave him a beautiful silver smile.

As on all vitally important days, the hours seemed to draw on interminably. Between each class I would run to the bathroom to check my hair and face. One couldn’t be too careful!

Finally it was 1:10, time for my English class. I took my seat and glanced at the door. He walked in, and my heart jumped. Tall for eighth grade, with serious eyes behind black glasses, he had all the girls following him, and he’d only moved here a month ago. He sat behind me in English. As he sat down I swung my hair so he’d be sure to notice it.

“Hi, Susie. How’s my favorite encyclopedia?”

“Oh, Greg!” I blushed madly. All the magazines said that it was becoming to blush. “Why do you have to keep calling me encyclopedia?” Everybody else called me that too, but I really didn’t mind when Greg did.

“Susie, any girl who reads encyclopedias for fun and even knows the name of Alexander the Great’s horse deserves the name.

I started to answer when the teacher came in, loaded down with books.

“Susie and Greg, would you please take these back to the library? Tell Miss Driscoll what class they’re from.”

Trying to act calm, I loaded my arms with books and trotted out the door behind Greg. I got to go all the way to the library with Greg, all by myself! I ducked my head to hide my excitement and followed him silently.
After delivering the books, we started back to class.
“Greg, are you going to the dance after school?”
“Yeah. Are you?”
“Oh, I don’t know. I’ve got quite a bit to do.” The magazines always said to play hard to get.
Greg didn’t say anything else and we returned to class silently.

When school finally ended I ran to the bathroom. My hair was wavy instead of curly and my lipstick had been gone since lunch, but everybody else had the same problems. I repaired what I could and went to the gym.

Girls on one side, boys on the other. We looked at each other warily. The girls pretended to be having a ball talking among themselves, laughing gaily and swinging their hair. I tried it and almost choked myself.

The boys just sat there nonchalantly, looking very secure in the knowledge that the first move was theirs.

The music had started. Andy Williams, the Beatles, and Gene Pitney filled the gym. I looked around for Greg, finally spotting him in the mob of boys. He was looking at me! And, wonder of wonders, he was walking toward me! After all my dreams of that moment, I didn’t know what to do. Trying to hide, I turned my back, but he kept coming.

“Susie, would you like to dance?”

“Sure, Greg.” I tried to float in his arms like they did on American Bandstand, but my feet were earth-bound. He didn’t talk for a while, then he cleared his throat.

“Susie, there’s something on my mind that I’ve been wanting to ask you for a long time. I hope you won’t get upset.”

“Why should I get upset? It can’t be anything too awful.” My heart was beating louder than the drums on the record, and my dress suddenly seemed sticky. “I must really be beautiful today,” I thought. Out loud I said, “Come on, Greg. What is it?”

“Well,” Greg continued, “what I wondered was this. Would your sister go out with me?”