

Aunt Dorothy told me not to worry about helping after dinner. She wanted me to go upstairs and get ready for the dance. I decided to wear the new talent show dress with my garnet earrings from Tom. It felt strange not to talk to him for so many days. He had gone to Canada for spring break to visit Laurent. It seemed like he was a million miles away.

I applied a little extra blush and my whitish-pink lipstick and then Aunt Dorothy called upstairs, “Mimi’s at the door.”

Mimi was wearing a pale peach matching skirt and sweater that reminded me of the outfits I’d seen at her country club. I noticed she was wearing different glasses that matched her outfit.

“Who’d have ever thought we’d be going to our first dance together?” she asked me, as I took her overnight bag and set it by the stairs.

Mimi was right, I wouldn’t have guessed we’d be doing this, either. I felt a little nervous in the car as her dad drove us to the Y. Wilma had phoned and told me that her niece, Paula, would wait for us in the front lobby with her friend. We spotted two girls on a bench with their heads together after we walked in the front door. They got up and walked toward us when we caught their eye.

“Hi. Are you Ruth Ann? I’m Paula, and this is my friend Ellen. Aunt Wilma has wanted me to meet you forever.”

“Hi. This is Mimi. She lives in Saginaw, too.” I felt really dumb as soon as I said that.

I noticed that Paula and Ellen were both wearing very short skirts and squashed heels. Paula had chin length brown hair and Ellen had a scarf tied around her ponytail which made me think of Mary Lou.

“This is a good night for you to come because the best DJ is here. They hardly ever get him.”

“Do you come to dances here a lot?”

“They have dances here once a month, but we also go to this place called Daniel’s Den.”

She looked at Mimi. “Do you go to the Den?”

Mimi shook her head and looked kind of scared. I was starting to wonder if coming to this dance was such a good idea after all, and then we entered the auditorium. Groups of kids were clustered here and there, some standing, some sitting on benches. Mimi sat on the only empty bench that was left. I sat next to her and Paula stood by us. Ellen had stopped to talk to some other kids.

“Ellen’s probably trying to find out if Brian’s coming,” Paula said.

“Is Brian her boyfriend?”

“She wishes. She’s been in love with him for two years. But he’s in love with Penny Donaldson and she breaks up with him all the time. It’s like *Peyton Place* around here. Is it like that in Grand Rapids?”

I thought of Cathy’s friends who were in love with Tom.

“Yeah, it is sometimes.”

The first two songs the DJ played weren’t ones I particularly liked, so I wondered why Paula thought he was so great. Then *A Girl Like You* by the Troggs came on.

“I love this song,” I said to Paula and Mimi.

“Wanna dance?” Paula asked us.

I got up right away. Mimi shook her head and Ellen was off dancing with two other girls. So, Paula and I went out on the dance floor and began dancing. Colorful circles swirled on the

wall behind the DJ and sometimes on the other walls and the floor. The next song was *96 Tears* by ? Mark and the Mysterians.

“Oh, they had to play this, didn’t they?” I said to Paula. “I always tell my friends that they’re from Saginaw since it’s my home town.”