

The Parkdale Dance

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The phone rang on Thursday after supper. "So, can you go to Parkdale? Did you even ask yet?" Karen's excited voice demanded. I answered with a little reserve, "I haven't asked yet. Our report cards just came out, remember? Mine was just medium. My dad might make me stay in and study. I'll ask right now and call you back. Cross your fingers."

My dad, comfortably settled in his recliner, was reading the obituaries in the Ottawa Citizen with great interest. "Hey Dad," I began nervously, "Karen and some of the kids are going to the Parkdale dance tomorrow night. Can I go?" I knew he was frowning behind his paper but he said mildly, "Shouldn't you be studying? Math in particular?" When I assured him that I'd spend all day Sunday immersed in algebra, radicals and exponents, he agreed that I could go.

Friday dragged along until finally school was over. At home, I flipped through the paper to see which group would be playing that night - Don Norman and the Other Four, The Scoundrels, The Esquires, Thee Group, The Staccatos? Ottawa had many aspiring stars.

It was the Stacattos! Could things get any better? After dinner I changed into my new green paisley dress, carefully applied eyeliner and mascara, and smoothed my bangs. When Karen and Mike rang the doorbell, I grabbed my coat and rushed out the door.

The dance was a sellout with a large group of teenagers lined up in the chilly night waiting for the doors to open at Parkdale United Church.

Leaving our coats in the cloakroom, we pressed into the large hall to check out who was there. When the Staccatos started playing, the dance floor was packed.

A short boy, sporting an uncool brush cut approached Karen, and asked her to dance. She went off with him, rolling her eyes back at us. "One dance is enough," she giggled when she came back, "he's a real fink."

Next, he asked me to dance; I couldn't refuse, painful though it was. Mike spotted Nancy, his classroom crush, and quickly swept her on to the dance floor. "We won't see him til the night's over" I said.

Karen and I scanned the crowd intently. Last week I'd met a tall blond guy who was a sharp dresser, and hoped to see him again, but after circling the room twice, I gave up, disappointed. Karen was hoping to see Gary, one of the

Champlain High School boys, another Parkdale regular.

She hadn't been able to get up the nerve to talk to him then, but was determined that this week would be different. All of a sudden she elbowed my side and exclaimed "Oh no! Look!" Gary sailed by with a brightly lipsticked beehive blonde, and they floated on to the dance floor together. Karen's dreams wilted in an instant.

"We're just two losers," she moaned. I agreed, "I should be home doing geometry. Maybe next week ..."

Just then the sound of "Let's Run Away" filled the room. "My favourite song. Let's dance." We crossed the room to where some boys from our school were clustered in a tight group for safety, and pulled two of our friends on to the floor to dance with us - an act which loosened up the others, so we had no lack of partners for the rest of the evening.

At the end of the night after one last slow dance, we filed out into the mist on our way to Jimmy's Restaurant on Wellington Street, where chips and soft drinks would mend bruised egos and broken hearts while the music of the Staccatos played on in our heads.