

September Dances

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For my senior year in high school, we moved to Maine. By then, I was used to a life on the move, because my dad was working as a project manager for some big company. They usually had huge those projects with their customers, which lasted several years, so every four or five years, during my childhood, we moved to another state. The upside is, you get to see a lot of the country. The downside is, the moment you found some friends, you gotta pack up and leave them behind.

Many of these friendships didn't last very long after I went away, some are still there, mostly over the internet, but I always have tons of places to go to for the summer.

Also on the plus side is that you get a clean slate. A new start, somewhere where nobody knows you, and nobody will mock you for the stupid things you had done last year.

That was just what I needed, when we moved to Maine. Coming to Maine felt a bit like coming home to me. Through primary school I grew up in Windham, Connecticut, so the

north-east was much more like home to me than South Carolina.

We arrived late in summer, so it was only days before school started. My new school was much smaller than the old one, and I liked the idea that it was not so crammed and a little less noisy.

I got there early on my first day, because I had an appointment with the principal. She gave me a pretty discouraging wanna-be-pep-talk, about the importance of high school and the senior year and left me with a few papers, and a schedule and no idea where to start. When I stood outside the principals office, all I knew was that I would start with chem-class. It took my until the bell rung, to ask my way to the classroom, and the teacher gave me a disgruntled look when I showed up late, and ordered me a seat, without even bothering to introduce me to the class.

I got a seat in the back row, and that was where I met September. She hardly looked up when I sat on the free seat beside her. I heard faint whispers, and people where staring and pointing. Someone was giggling. "Great start" I thought. I didn't know how to react, I was totally embarrassed, so I decided to play the politeness card.

"Hi!" I said to the girl beside me. "I'm Carla. I'm new here."

I bit my tongue. Of course I was new here. Stupid, stupid Carla.

She didn't answer right away, but turned her head a little

as if to look at me. She had thick jet black hair, that reached down to her waists, which she had carefully combed over her face, so I could hardly see it. Only her left eye and a bit of her cheek glimpsed at me through the veil of hair.

She wore a black turtle-neck sweater and a floor-length skirt, the overall outfit resembling Ally Sheedy's in *The Breakfastclub*.

When she finally spoke, her voice was no more than a whisper. "September," she said.

I was confused. "Um, what?"

"September," she repeated. "That's my name. September Evans."

"Oh, sorry. Nice to meet you September Evans!" I reached out my hand, and she reluctantly took it.

"Would it be OK for you to share your book? I didn't yet have to time to see the library."

September placed her book on the table between us. "Thanks," I said.

It turned out chem-class was about performing a couple of experiments over the term, and writing essays and protocols on the results. The experiments, my still nameless teacher explained, would be performed in class, while preparing them on paper and evaluating the results would be our homework. A homework we were supposed to do with our partner. A partner, I of course didn't have.

At last the bell saved us, and I stood outside the classroom wondering where my next class would be. September approached me. "Hey. Sorry to bother you." She talked hastily,

as if she was afraid she would not be able to finish, but her voice wasn't much louder than before. "I guess you don't have a project-partner for chem-class. Would you, um, mind working with me?"

I was actually relieved that someone wanted to work with me, or even talk to me, for that matter. And, although she was awfully shy, September seemed to be a nice girl. "Yes, I mean no, I wouldn't. That would be great!"

"But," one thing sprang to my mind. "If we are supposed to meet after school, can we go to your place? Mine's kind of under construction."

That was an understatement, actually. My room needed to be redecorated, so all of my stuff was still boxed and I slept on a mattress in the living room.

"No problem!" She nodded, and I think I saw her smile under all that hair.

Later on, I was headed off by a gang of cheerleaders. Their leader was a girl who obviously tried to win the All-American-Girl-Lookalike contest. She was tall, blonde and good looking, wore the schools jacket over her cheer leading uniform and had her hair done in pigtails, which I thought was ridiculous.

"Hey!" She greeted. "You're the new girl."

"Yeah. I'm Carla." I replied.

"I'm Miriam. This is Alissa and Melody." She pointed to her two friends. "I was wondering, are you a cheerleader?"

"I did some cheer leading a couple of years ago." I answered. "In my last school, um, the tryouts where over when I moved

there. My folks get around a lot.” That was a lie, but I didn’t feel like spreading my personal story to any passing stranger.

“They say you’re from South Carolina?” Miriam wanted to now.

“Well, actually I’m from Connecticut, but we lived in South Carolina for a while. My Dad does some sort of field work, so we move a lot.”

“Cool.” Miriam didn’t sound too enthusiastic. “Are you going for the tryouts?”

Actually, I had no intent to do so. Last year, I was kicked from the team after I became *persona non grata* in my school and I was not keen on repeating that experience.

“I don’t know yet.”

“Well,” Miriam continued. “We could use some reinforcements on the team. You seem kinda cool and look capable, it would be, like, great if you showed up! Well, I see you around!”

She headed for where I thought was the cafeteria, but suddenly turned around. “Oh, by the way,” she added casually. “You wouldn’t wanna hang with Twoface. She’s a major loser.”

“Um, you lost me here.” I added. “Who?”

She rolled her eyes. “Twoface Evans. I saw you, like, talking to her earlier. She’s a major loser, and if you wanna hang with the cool crowd, you’d better avoid her.”

“You mean September?” I was confused. “She seemed OK to me.”

“She’s not!” Miriam sneered. “Twoface has issues. Big time.”

That sounded all too familiar to me. I felt anger well up and folded my arms in front of chest. “Why do you call her

Twoface?” I asked, with a hint of hostility in my voice.

Miriam noticed that, and took a step back. “You haven’t seen it yet? Oh, never mind. You will.” With that, she turned and walked off, her entourage following her.

I know from first hand experience, that teens can be cruel, but a few days later, I got a lesson in how cruel they can really be. And if you think bullying is mostly a boys sport, well think again.

I was on my way to find September, for our first assignment in chemistry was due, and I wanted to ask her when I could come to her place to prepare it. It happened that when I found her Miriam and her stupid friends were already at the scene. Miriam saw me, stopped and talked to September. I was too far away to hear what she said, but as I drew closer Miriam turned to me and called: “Carla! You wanted to know why she is *Twoface?*”

At that moment her two friends grabbed September by the arms and held her, while Miriam violently pulled back September’s hair, and revealed her face.

I admit for a moment I stared. Part of her face was actually quite pretty. She had soft white skin, beautiful lips and enormous brown eyes, or better one enormous brown eye. The right eye was milky white and blind. From her forehead downwards, three deep large scars ran over her eye, cheeks and over her neck, where they vanished under the fabric of her turtle-neck-sweater. Between the large scars, lines of scar-tissue criss-crossed the skin. The right side of her lower jaw seemed a little

displaced, and the skin around the scars was pulled way too tight. It looked as if her skull had been split apart and put back together.

I forced myself to stop staring at September, and looked around. The other students had stopped. “Twoface! Twoface!” Some boys began to chant. Miriam was looking at me triumphantly, as if she wanted to say: “Told you so!”

A wave of anger and shame crashed over me. Memories of my own experiences came back, and without further thinking I leaped forward, pulled Miriam away from September and slapped her. Hard.

Miriam’s head was thrown backwards, she lost balance and landed on her butt. For a second I thought she would start to cry. But she didn’t. Instead she yelled at me. “You bitch!” And: “I hate you!”

Her two dull friends had let go of September, who now fled down the hallway. I hesitated for a moment, then went after her, but I wasn’t fast enough to catch her in the unfamiliar halls of the school.

A little later I was sitting on a bench in front of the principals office. Mum and Dad had been called and they were in there. The principal had told me I would be suspended at least for the rest of the week, because I refused to write an apology to Miriam. When Mum and Dad came out, they didn’t look very happy. Mum shook her head. “Was this really necessary? On your third day of school?”

I had indeed be suspended. Fine with me, I could use the time to continue unpacking my stuff.

At home dad led me into the kitchen. “Sit!” He pointed to the kitchen table. I sat on a chair and waited for his sermon. Instead he went to the fridge and grabbed himself a beer and a can of soda for me.

Then he sat on the opposite side of the table and looked at me for a moment. “You know,” he began. “I cannot sanction violence. You cannot run around and beat up other girls.”

“I know.” I defended myself. “But did they tell you my side of the story, or only Miriam’s?”

“Yours, actually.” He said. And then. “The slapping aside, I’m proud of you.”

I was puzzled. “What?”

“You stood up for someone who needed your help. You spoke up against cruelty. You knew there were consequences, but you did it anyway. I think your mum and I have gotten something right in raising you.”

“You’re not mad?” I asked cautiously.

“No. To be honest, I would have done the same thing. But don’t tell your mother I said this. You did right.”

“Then why am I punished and Miriam isn’t? She clearly did wrong.”

Dad took a sip from his beer. “Sometimes people get away with things. Because they lie, because they are rich, or just because nobody gives a damn. That’s how it works.”

“It’s unfair.” I claimed.

“Yes, it is” he agreed. “But who says life is fair? You have to stand up and fight for your rights. But who am I talking to.

You already know that.”

“Thanks, dad!” I thought for a moment. “Do I really have to write an apology letter to Miriam?”

Dad shook his head. “No. And if I have to go to the school board with this.”

It turned out to be unnecessary to go to the school board. I was allowed back into school the following Monday. My guess is, Miriam’s parents had intervened after it was clear that I wouldn’t give in, because in an official hearing some light would have been shed on their own daughter’s role in the whole affair.

When I returned to school it turned out I had made a couple of enemies. Most people turned their back on me. Some of the boys looked as if they wanted to beat the crap out of me. Miriam, after all, was the alpha girl at this school, and everyone who wanted to be in the popular zone better be good with her.

What I didn’t expect was that I would get approval too. All the geeks and nerds at school, male or female, suddenly looked at me with admiration. Several people I had never met before, told me that I was rad, and that it had been about time someone showed Miriam and her gang some limits.

It took me a while to get to my classroom and the bell rang just when I arrived. September was even more monosyllabic than usual, and didn’t even look at me once through her carefully combed veil of black hair.

I thought she might be mad at me, but during class I didn’t have any chance to talk to her. I tried a different approach.

“We need to work on our assignment.” I explained. “Unless you don’t want me to, I’ll come ’round your place tonight.”

She didn’t look up. “Whatever.”

After school. I went to September’s house. I rang the bell, and her mother opened. It was easy to see that she was September’s mum, she had the same black hair and an almost identical mouth and nose.

“Hi Mrs. Evans!” I greeted. “I’m Carla. I came for studying with September.”

“Hello, Carla! Come in!” September’s mum invited me. “September is upstairs. Here, give me your coat.”

I was already half way up the stairs, when she called me back. “Carla! Are you the one who hit that Miriam?” She wanted to know.

I blushed. “Yes. I guess that’s me.”

Mrs. Evans just nodded, and headed off into the kitchen. I think I saw her smile.

I found the door to September’s room by guessing it was the one with the *Emily the Strange* Poster on the door, and knocked. It took a moment until September opened the door. Her hair was a bit untidily combed over her face, and I suspected, she had taken the time to cover her face before opening the door to me.

“Can I come in?” I asked.

She stepped aside and nodded. Her room was spacey, and looked unlike any girl’s room I had seen so far. She had the usual stuffed animals on her bed, and posters on the walls. Op-

posite to her bed was a picture of beautiful a woman I didn't know, who -as I later learned- was one *Lisa Gerrad*, the lead singer of the band *Dead Can Dance*. The wall over the desk was plastered with pencil drawings. Most of them showed everyday situations, but all of them had an eerie feel. One picture showed a group of cheerleaders cheering in an otherwise empty gymnasium. Another showed a mall full of people happily shopping, while roots and vines grew through the windows and the shops looked as if they had been abandoned for years.

But the thing that made this place so weird was not that September had a different taste in music than most people or the strange pictures on the walls, but it's tidiness. I have never seen a teenagers room so carefully cleaned and sorted. Everything here had seemed to have a distinct place, and no single speck of dust was to be seen. My room usually looked as if a bomb had gone off inside it even after I had cleaned up. And ground zero of it was my desk. September's desk was clean. Papers were neatly stacked and her pencils where sorted orderly. Had it been someone else, I surly would have been mocking her, but this was September and somehow it seemed normal, that she needed a sense order in her life.

I sat on her bed, and she sat down beside me. There was an awkward silence between us.

"Nice room." I tried to start a conversation. "Your drawings?"

She nodded.

"You're good." I said. It was honest. These drawings were good and I really liked them, maybe even because they were so disturbing.

The awkward silence still between us, I felt more and more uncomfortable. I knew however, if I left now, things would never be alright. And I wanted them to be alright.

“OK. We need to talk!” I stated. “If you don’t want to talk about what happened, I will.”

I took a deep breath.

“I’m sorry for what happened there. It wasn’t right. But I have the feeling that you’re mad at me, and I don’t know why or what I did wrong or what I can do to right it. I don’t want you to be mad at me, and I swear I didn’t know what Miriam was going to do.”

“I am not mad at you.” She interrupted my senseless flow of words. “It’s just: You shouldn’t have done that!”

“Slapping Miriam? Well, she had it coming!”

“Don’t misunderstand me. I appreciate what you did. It’s just... Now everyone hates you too, and you came here to tell me how sorry you are, and I don’t want that. Everyone always pities me. I don’t want your pity.”

“Actually, I came here to do the chem-class assignment.” I returned.

“And you were suspended from school because of me!” She insisted.

“Who said that I did it because of you?” I shot back. “I actually did it for myself much more than for you. You may not believe it, but I have a pretty good idea about what place you are in, ’cause I’ve been there too. I spent the most of the last school year being the outcast, asking myself what was wrong with me.”

“You really think you know?” She snapped back at me. I think now she was mad. “What do you know, you are pretty. You don’t have to walk around with a face like mine!” Although she was upset now her voice was only slightly louder than usual.

“No,” I retorted. “I may not have scars on my face. But you don’t need those to be targeted at school. They came after me, because I’m gay!”

“Oh!” She fell silent.

“It was partly my own fault. I hung out with a group of girls then. They were a bit, well, superficial, but I wanted to be with the cool crowd, and they were OK. One of them was a girl named Annalena. I had a heavy crush on her. We had been friends for most of the year, and so I decided to tell her. Boy, was I wrong.”

“She was not interested?” September presumed.

“Not at all. Instead she ran around and told everyone what I had told her in secret. She outed me in front of the whole school.”

“That’s mean.”

“All people I had considered my friends turned their backs. Most people in school avoided me, as if I had some infectious disease. They called me names.” I took a breath.

“Some boys from the football team even threatened, they’d gonna come and *cure* me, if they ever met me alone. Dad called the police, when I told him that. Police didn’t do much though.”

“What did the teachers do?” September wanted to know.

“Mostly nothing. Many of them silently agreed to the bullies, I think. This was South Carolina after all.”

“And your mum and dad?” She asked.

“Mum was totally freaked at first, but dad was cool about it. He said I need to find out who I am, and if that’s what I found, he’s totally fine with it. After a lot of discussion, it turned out mum’s major concern is, that she would like to have grandchildren one day, and with a lesbian daughter, that becomes a bit unlikely.”

“Your parent’s seem to be really cool.” September noted.

“Yeah, best parents ever. But don’t tell them I said that.”

“Is this why you came here, to Maine?” September wanted to know. “To get away from your old school?”

“Well, it was the positive side effect of dad getting a new assignment.” I answered. “We are moving a lot. But I’m happy that this is my last year.”

“You’ll go to college?” She asked.

“Yes. I still don’t know which, but hey, I have the whole year to decide!”

After my confession September seemed to trust me a little more, and told me the story of how she got those gruesome scars. At the age of eight, she had been riding the bike along the road near her grandfathers farm, when she did not watch the road carefully enough. She had been run over by a passing harvester, falling into the blades. Had they been rotating, she told me, it would have ripped her apart.

She had to endure plastic surgery eight times until now, and a lot of her face had been restored.

“It’s a lot better, but really: I don’t think it makes a much difference. People keep staring at you.”

For the remainder of the evening, we managed to actually get some schoolwork done before I went home, feeling a lot better

than before.

The following weeks I spent a lot of time at the Evans house and September came over to help me decorate my room. Her passion for order turned out to be quite helpful, although it was a bit annoying from time to time.

The weeks passed by and November came, and with it the annual Sadie Hawkins Dance. Everyone at school was excited about it and soon I found myself affected too. Everyone but September, that was. I had on two occasions been asked by boys, if I would consider asking them to go. Something which I thought was somewhere between funny and cute. I turned them down, because I already knew who I wanted to go with.

September, on the other side, tried to ignore the whole event as best as she could. We were sitting in my room, eating licorice, when I dared asking her.

“Have you asked someone to go to the dance with you yet?” I asked casually.

“And why would I do that?” She tried to look more annoyed than she was. “Those formals suck. It’s all just see and be seen, so some people can brag with their dresses and stuff.”

She sighed. “Plus, who would want to go with me? No one wants a date with Twoface Evans.”

“You haven’t even tried!” I threw in. “You just assume everyone will just stare at your face, and run off.”

“Because that’s what people do!”

“I don’t.” I returned.

She had nothing to say against that, so she fell silent.

“Maybe,” I tried to make my move carefully. “we could go. We could dress up, have our hair done, and have some fun.”

September looked at me quizzical. “You realize how pathetic showing up on the Sadie Hawkins Dance without a date is?”

I blushed. “Actually, um, ah, I though you maybe wanna be, um, you know, my date.”

September just stared at me for a long while. “Are you asking me out?” She finally asked.

“Yes.” I managed to say.

“Are you serious?” She asked. “I had no idea, that you where, um, interested in me!”

I blushed even more, if that was possible. “I thought that was obvious.”

“Are you freaked?” I asked.

“Maybe, a little, well yes. You’re not doing this just to make me go, are you?”

I felt a bit insulted. “Of course not. September, I like you. A lot. And I want to got to the dance! With you!”

September began walking up and down the room. “I, oh god, I need some time to digest that!” She said. “Can I tell you later?”

“Of course. I’m sorry I threw that at you like this. I thought you’d already know by now.”

September hurried out of my room, slamming the door behind her. and I had the bad feeling in my stomach that I just screwed up again.

It turned out I didn’t. September called me later that evening to tell me her decision.

“Yes,” was the only thing she said.

I felt not only relieved, but my stomach was tingling. “Great! We will have the best of times, you’ll see!”

The following week went by with preparations. My mum had scheduled an appointment for the hairdresser on Friday and we had to go shopping for dresses. In the meantime I had a hard time stopping Mrs. Evans to get too involved. Even though September’s parents seemed a little uncomfortable with the thought that their daughter was dating a girl, Mrs. Evans was clearly enthusiastic about the fact that her daughter finally began to gain an interest in social activities.

When I came to pick up September for our shopping trip, I spent the better part of half an hour persuading her that it was better for September if she didn’t come along.

Finally, we made it to the mall and into the store. First priority was finding something fitting for September. She was reluctant to even enter, let alone trying something on. We browsed around for a while and I found two dresses I liked to try on: a navy blue strapless cocktail-dress and a grape-colored one shoulder floor-length which I thought to be daring for it’s color.

For September, things were a little more difficult. This years fashion was mostly strapless or one shoulder, which almost always equaled *left shoulder*. That, of course, would give extra attention to September’s scarred right side; not exactly what we were aiming for.

I asked a shop assistant for help and described the problem to her as best as I could without mentioning the scars.

“How much of your arms do you want to be covered?” She asked.

“Just the shoulder, and here.” September ran her hand from her left shoulder over her chest.

“Excellent!” The shop assistant smiled. “Just a moment!”

She disappeared between the racks and we heard her rustling for a while. Then she came back with a white dress which was, in one word, perfect. It was a floor-length V-Neck with ruffle beading.

“That’s perfect!” I said.

“You think?” September was not convinced.

“Try it on!”

“I have it one size larger if necessary.” The shop assistant informed us.

While September vanished in the changing cubicle, I interviewed the shop assistant on the price. It turned out to be expensive, but within our budget.

September stepped out of the changing cubicle, and I had to draw breath. The dress fitted perfectly, and the V-Neck was just enough to cover her scars. On her back, some of were still uncovered, but invisible under her hair. The stark contrast between the white dress and her black hair made her look a little pale, but I was confident that this was nothing a little make-up couldn’t resolve.

“What do you say?” September turned to me. I had said nothing so far, I was still busy keeping breathing. “Awesome!” Was all I managed to say. She smiled.

“I’ll take it.”

I tried on the two dresses I chose, and ended up with the grape one. The cocktail-dress looked really cute, but it turned out it was designed to show a lot of cleavage, a thing I was not overly blessed with.

After I chose the dress September went with the shop assistant to take measure, since the V-Neck needed a little hemming. Meanwhile I tried to find a pair of matching shoes. I got myself some three-inch high heels that where hell to walk in, but made me almost as tall as September, and which matched the color of my dress.

I looked for September after buying the shoes, and found her in the costume section. She was looking at Venetian carnival masks, and my heart sank.

“You’re not actually thinking about wearing one of those?” I asked her.

She turned around and looked as if she felt found out.

“I used to wear these on family celebrations.” She explained.

“Your parents made you wear a mask?” I was surprised, because I had thought Mr. and Mrs. Evans more sensible than that.

September shook her head. “It was the only way mum could make me come out of my room. Back then, my hair wasn’t long enough to cover the face.”

“Don’t even think about wearing one of those, when we go to the dance.” I warned her. “We spent ages finding the perfect dress, and it would totally ruin your looks. Plus I want to look at you, when we dance!”

“No you don’t.” September turned away. I gently grabbed her head with my hands and made her face me.

“Yes, I do!” I assured her. “And why wouldn’t I? Scars aside, you are a damn beautiful girl.”

I brushed away the hair that covered her face, and gently put my hand on her scars.

“And if you would look into a mirror for once, without staring at these scars, you would see that too. I like you, and not only because you are the gentlest person I know, have a great sense of humor and, sidebar, are a brilliant artist, but also because of your looks.”

“You’re biased.” She stated.

“OK, a little. But that is not the point. Have you seen your reflection wearing that dress? I will have to fight for my place beside you on the dance floor!”

She grinned. “You would?”

“Teeth and claws.” I assured her.

Friday came and my schedule was packed. We were home from school early; gym-class was canceled, since the gymnasium was already being prepared for the great event.

I had my appointment with the hairdresser an hour before September, and she would use the time to pick up her dress while I was under the dryer. Surprisingly, she refused my offer to wait for her at the hairdresser’s.

“Mom says it’s bad luck, if you see your date before you come to pick her up.” She told me in such earnest that, for moment, I thought she was being serious.

“I don’t wanna ruin the surprise.” She grinned. “I don’t wanna see you half ready. I wanna enjoy the show, when you

come to pick me up!”

Then after a pause: “You do come to pick me up, do you?”

We had never talked about who’s picking up who. On Sadie Hawkins Day it was usually the girls picking up the boys, reversing the traditional roles. With us being both girls, there was no traditional role. But, since I had been the one who asked, I thought it was appropriate if I took her. Plus dad had said I could have the car, which was exciting. I guess it was also exciting for dad, since I only recently got my license.

“Yeah, I’ll be at your place at seven!”

Before I headed off to pick up September, I had to attend to my parents, who wanted to see me in my dress. Mom took a photo and I saw how she shed a tear, although she tried to hide it.

“Look at you!” She said again and again. “So beautiful! All grown up!”

I was pleased that the one and a half hours I spent in the bathroom hadn’t been in vain, but really: It’s embarrassing when your parents act all proud. Finally they let me go, not without dad reminding me to drive carefully, and under no circumstances drive in my three-inch high-heels. As if I would. These things looked awesome, but they were uncomfortable as hell and I was happy for every minute I did not have to wear them.

Because of all the fuzz they made, I arrived five Minutes late at September’s place. Her mum opened the door. “Hello Carla!” She greeted. “You look amazing!”

“Sorry, I’m late. Mum wanted to take pictures of me.” I was a bit embarrassed.

“Honey, your girlfriend is here!” Mrs. Evans called up the stairs. “You have to come down now!”

And to me: “She has been hiding in her room, ever since she put on that dress. She is a little shy, you know her.”

I heard rustling upstairs. It took a minute or so until September appeared at the top of the stairs. Slowly, she came down, and my heart missed a beat. The dress looked amazing on her. It fit beautifully around her curves, and the V-Neck revealed enough cleavage to be sexy without losing any of it’s elegance. Around the neck she wore a necklace with pretty garnet stones in it -her grandmother’s, as I later learned.

The hairdresser had done a great job of bringing my hair into a fashionable knot -with what felt like a dozen of hairpin’s in it, but for what she did with September’s long, thick hair, she should have been awarded an Oscar. The right side of September’s face was carefully combed over with hair to hide the scars beneath. It’s extraordinary length had been brought to good use by draping it from her left side around her neck and over the right shoulder like a scarf. It made a fine contrast to the white dress, and looked absolutely stunning. If you didn’t know what it was hiding, you would never have guessed that it was not just a very classy way of draping such long hair.

I was speechless. September looked at me anxiously, and for a second I had the feeling she would turn tail and run up the stairs again.

I swallowed. “You look amazing,” I managed to say.

Mrs. Evens looked rather self-satisfied. "Told you, she'd be blown away!"

"Still in mid-flight." I confirmed. "September, you. . . wow!"

September blushed, but she smiled.

I took September's hand, but before we could leave, Mrs. Evens also wanted to take a photo of us.

"Mom, this is not the prom!" September pleaded. But it was no use.

"Have fun!" Mrs. Evens said after she had taken what felt like a dozen pictures. I took September's arm, and together we walked to the car.

Because of all the delay, we were among the last to arrive, and the music was already sounding from the gym. Since only a few couples arrived with us, we had all the attention as we entered. I could feel September's hand clutch around my arm.

"No worries, you look beautiful!"

I heard whispers and people were turning their heads. I wasn't sure, whether it was because of September, or because there were two girls entering arm in arm.

When people stopped staring, I had a look around. The ball committee had done a great job turning our rather boring gym into a real ballroom.

"Want a drink?" I asked September.

She just nodded, still overwhelmed simply by being where she was. I made my way towards the lemonade stand, where I had to pass by Bobby Parker and some of his friends. Bobby was on the football team, and proudly claimed to have *scored*

on Miriam, as he put it, to anyone who didn't want to know. I doubted any of that talk was true, but I couldn't help, but smile, when I overheard their conversation.

"Isn't that Carla?" Bobby's friend Lou, a lanky blond boy with freckles, asked.

"Yep." Bobby confirmed.

"Have you seen the girl she came with? Man, she's hot!" Lou said.

"What? Didn't she get a date?" Some other boy wanted to know.

"The hot one *is* her date, dumb ass!" Lou said.

"Carla's a Lezzie?"

"That's Twoface Evans!" Bobby spread his wisdom.

"No way man, no way! I mean have you seen her?" Lou couldn't believe what he just heard.

The rest of the conversation was drowned in the noise.

When I returned to September I told her what I had overheard.

"Don't look, but Lou Milham is totally checking you out!" I said.

"He's not." September looked disgusted. "He's a moron!"

"Yes, but a moron, who has the hots for you. Oh my god, he coming over, I bet he asks you to dance!" I found this incredibly funny, but September was seriously scared now. Lou really came over.

He was quite nervous himself. "Um, hi September!" He said. I think it was the first time he addressed her using her name instead of calling her *Twoface*. "Um, wanna dance?"

September looked as if she would be sick any moment, so I thought that was enough fun for me for the time being.

“Sorry Lou, first dance is reserved for the date. And that would be me.”

I dragged September to the dance floor. She looked incredibly relieved. “I really thought I had to dance with him!” She confessed.

A little later from my point of view I could see Lou in a discussion with Alissa, who obviously was his date, and little amused about the fact that he had asked September of all people for a dance.

The music changed, and with it the mood, as the *Secret Sisters* hoped that *Tomorrow Will Be Kinder*. Couples gathered around us, and I pulled September closer. She claimed she couldn’t dance, so I took the lead, and she followed quickly.

I raised my head to look at her. We danced so close, that I could feel her breath on my face. I found myself drowning in her huge brown eye. Then she smiled. I hardly noticed how the music changed. Time seemed to have stopped, and all there was was her smile and her wonderful scent.

We were among the last to leave, and it was a little past eleven when I pulled the car in front of the Evans house. I had promised Mrs. Evans to have September home by then, and I hoped we would not be in trouble for being late.

I told September that when we stepped onto the porch.

“I don’t think mom will make a scene, if it’s less then half an hour.” She answered.

I looked into her face. “Thank you for going with me.” I said.

She smiled. “Thank you for taking me.”

There was a long pause, and then we kissed. It wasn’t planned, it just happened, because the moment was right.

I don’t know how long we stood there on the porch in the cold, but eventually we parted. My lips prickled from the sensation. Eventually, she had to go inside, and I walked back to the car, being the happiest girl on the planet.

It turned out this would be the only kiss we ever shared. After that night, our relationship gradually shifted back towards friendship. The strange thing was that none of us noted this while it happened. I still love September with all my heart, but it’s not the kind of love that makes you want to make out with someone. Maybe that was because in the end, September was more interested in boys than in girls. By the end of the year, we both had dates for the prom, but we went there all together.

After graduation I stayed on the east coast to study medicine at the University of Connecticut, while September went to Washington to study fine arts. She lives with in Seattle with her boyfriend, who is a weird artist guy who always wears black, but otherwise a great guy.

I don’t know what life has in store for me, but whenever I feel sad, I close my eyes and remember the night September danced.