

## The One

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Inks Lake State Park. 1959. I'm 15-years-old and there's a really cute boy camped two spots from us. He's taller than me (I'm already 5'10) and he has pimples, but so do I. He wears his hair in a flattop and mopes around his campsite all day. His parents fish and cook their catch on their Coleman stove. My dad has a boat, so our family spends most of the day on water skis; then we come back to camp and barbeque. One night my dad introduces himself to cutie-pie's dad and they come over. Cutie-pie's name is Tommy, and he is from Bay City. I start to calculate how many miles is that from Deer Park in case we fall in love and Tommy can drive.

"Where is Bay City?" I ask my dad.

"Oh, not too far; a little south of Houston," he answers.

Nice, I think. Maybe cutie-pie can take me to the prom.

We are introduced, and he barely smiles.

"Hi."

"Hi," I say back.

Then we look down at our feet and ignore each other. Tommy's dad starts talking about Bay City and football and that his son plays on the team and how proud he is of his boy for making the A team at age 16.

I start to wish I was 16. Fifteen sounds so young, but my dad blurts out, "Susie's just 15 and twirls a baton at halftime."

I cringe. Now he knows I am only 15. Plus, he knows I'm just a baton twirler and not a cheerleader. I'm doomed.

"So, what position do you play?" I ask him.

"Halfback."

"That's really cool."

Then he asks, "Do you want to walk over to the pavilion and listen to the music?"

The pavilion is around the bend and is basically the marina where boats are docked, and bait, ice and groceries are sold. They also have a jukebox.

"I have to ask my dad," I tell him. But dad has overheard and says it's okay, but to be back at 10 p.m.

We walk over and along the way, talk about The Platters, Elvis, Little Richard, and Brenda Lee. Tommy asks me if I can do the bop, and I tell him, sure, my older brother taught me. He says he can bop, too.

So, we get to the dance pavilion and Fats Domino is singing *Blueberry Hill*. We listen to the words and sway to the tempo. The breeze is skipping gently off the lake, and a few lanterns are hung sporadically about giving off a soft glow. I try to remember the perfect way to part my lips should cutie-pie want to kiss me. I've seen how it's done in hundreds of romance comic books and have even practiced on my fist a few times, but have never had a real, true "lips on lips" encounter. This might be the night.

When the song ends, we wander over to the jukebox and pick out some tunes. We stood there, tapping our feet when appropriate, commenting on the songs, the artists and how our parents hated rock 'n roll. Tommy said his parents thought the music was a product of the devil. I said that my parents just didn't like it because it was so loud.

"So, what's there to do in Deer Park?" he asks me.

"Probably about as much as there is to do in Bay City," I answer.

"Yeah, it's a small town."

It is getting close to 10 o'clock and very few people are left at the pavilion. A few couples are dancing, mere silhouettes formed in the glow of the green and red jukebox lights. The lanterns are growing weak, the breeze has died down and I start biting my nails.

"Guess we better head back," I say.

Tommy nods and puts his arm around my waist, but the gesture is stiff and awkward. The moon and stars are the perfect setting when we hear *One Summer Night* on the jukebox as we take the dirt road back to our campsites. Then, *there's a Moon Out Tonight*, can barely be heard, as we get further away from the pavilion.

As we get near my campsite, Tommy's arm is no longer around my waist. He tells me good night but doesn't look me in the eye. I say, "Yeah, good night, see ya tomorrow," and walk toward the tent where I plop down on my cot and listen to the mosquitoes sing me to sleep. I dream of lips, football, dating and going steady.

Next morning, I look over toward Tommy's campsite and it's empty. They've already left. My heart is broken. He doesn't know my last name and can never find me. I remember his last name, but what good will it do me? I'm only 15; too young to track him down and see if he might be "the one."

Years would go by and countless times I would meet guys whose last name I knew all too well who were not "the one." I may have thought they were in the beginning, but they were not.

Maybe Tommy was "the one." But I add up the amount of time we spent together and the conversation we exchanged. Doesn't seem like that would be enough information to determine if someone was "the one" or not. Of course, in third grade, I was pretty certain that I would marry Clayton, who sat next to me during math. Then in fifth grade, Ricky was "the one." Even after that summer in 1959, looking for "the one" would become a major undertaking. In junior high it was Jerry. In high school it was Garland. After that, a few more came and went; I even married one or two of them.

Eventually I concluded that maybe there was more than just one "one." Maybe there were several who qualified, so you had to choose wisely.

I cautioned my children about the importance of searching for "the one," and hopefully they will tell their children. After all, it's a lifetime commitment, or at least, is supposed to be. Chances are, Tommy never spent much time wondering if I was "the one" or not. More than likely, Tommy's recollection of me that summer is buried deep inside his subconscious, along with the sounds of yesterday's music and be-bop steps.

But a part of my 15-year-old brain still hides behind that other part called wisdom, still wondering, was he "the one"?