

## **The First Date**

E. Hubert Bruton

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I asked a girl out on a date when I was 13 years old. It was my first date and it was a school dance. You can't imagine the pressure I was confronted with. First, I had to get up the nerve to ask CB Cute Face, my secret girl friend, to go to the dance. She was beautiful. She had shoulder length blond hair that always mysteriously looked like Veronica Lake's and sky blue eyes that could look into my soul. Some how, I bucked up enough courage to ask her to the dance and her mother, who was the real decision maker in our relationship, said "yes." I was happy to clear that hurdle when I realized the second, third and fourth problems I would face. I didn't know how to dance; I didn't have the right cloths to wear; and transportation had to be arranged.

After the good news, I ran home and sorted through the 45's until I found Elvis', "Blue Suede Shoes," and listened to it, really listened to it, for the first time. There were also some old Jerry Lee Lewis and Bill Haley records next to the \$25 portable record player in the living room. You know, the kind with a two tone blue fake cow hide covering glued on the base and lid. It was inexpensive but it was a good one because it could play not only 78's, but also 33 1/3's and 45's. I opted for Elvis and my feet started moving. The next thing I knew, I was dancing like those kids on Dance Party. I thought, "there ain't nothing to this dancing stuff." But, being an early aged realist, I decided that I would have to dance every day after I got home from school until the big event. I knew I could dance but I had to make sure to not embarrass CB. OK, with that solved my next concern was cool clothes.

The dance was still two weeks away so I still had time to pull together an ensemble of cool clothes to wear and I needed money. I grabbed the lawn mower and mowed the yard. I figured that would be worth about a dollar on Saturday. I needed more cash so I headed down the street looking for long grass. I mowed another yard that evening and one or two every evening for the next week. Finally, I had acquired about \$28 dollars. With this capital I invested in a mostly dark blue madras shirt and khaki pants. I slapped some cordovan kiwi polish on my fake Wiggins and I was ready to go. The logistical problems were now down to just transportation, I thought.

My father agreed to drive us in the '55 Rambler. It actually would be a triple date in the car because he and my future stepmother would be in the front. My friend Dennis Frisbee, no relation to the inventor of the great flying machine, with his date, Mary, CB and I would squeeze into the back seat. Then so it was on a late September evening in 1958, armed with a carnation corsage, freshly splashed on English Leather (I didn't shave yet) and trembling knees, I actually jumped into the car to head out on my first date. We first picked up Dennis and Mary at his house, and then we drove a few blocks over to CB's house.

Now it's important to know that nearly everything I knew about boy / girl relationships I learned by watching Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire, or Bogie and Bacall, or that Norwegian actress (Ingrid Bergman) who awakened a secret ache in me every time I

saw her on the screen. Despite all the misgivings, concerns, and mysteries of the world of the girl, I felt I was ready for the next great step in life, a date.

Arriving at CB's house about ten minutes late, I, so as to not appear too eager, climbed out of the car a little slower than I had climbed in, I strengthened my back, threw back my head and swaggered to the door. Dennis hollered in an unusually loud voice, "ugh, you forgot the corsage." I slinked back to the car for the carnations, all the while imagining her mother peeping out of the curtains and laughing at me. At the door I rang the bell.

Mrs. Cute Face opened the door and said, "hi, Eric, come on in. CB is almost ready." I thought, "I'm ten minutes late and she's ALMOST ready?" (Another lesson to be remembered often in the following years) When she finally appeared gliding in from the direction of her bedroom, she wore a sky blue satin gown, held up by spaghetti straps. The dress perfectly matched her eyes. I suddenly remembered the actress from Norway but couldn't remember her face. CB's mother asked me if I would like to pin the corsage on the gown. Sweat actually beaded on my temples as I must have blushed and sheepishly handed it to her mother. I stuttered as I said, "ah, would you mind?" CB and I both were relieved when her mother did the honors. The flowers in place, I opened the door for her and out to the car we went.

Just like Fred, I opened the door for her and when she slid onto the seat, I closed the door and ran around to the other side where I, as proud as a peacock, slid in next to ..

Dennis. When one is under such great pressure he has to be forgiven these kinds of faux pas. Realizing, that one had just been made I started to jump out when dad let out the clutch and off we went. I looked around the car. In the dim green glow of the Rambler's instrument panel I could see dad grinning from ear to ear in the rear view mirror, his date smiling at me. I could feel Dennis's body convulsing with stifled laughter, Mary just grinned at me, and CB peered through the darkness in wide eyed amazement. I sank deeper into my seat thinking, "Oh God, take me now," and wondered what Fred would have done. This is how we rode the 15 miles to the school.

I suppose I redeemed myself somewhat at the dance. I had regained some of my composure. I danced as well as any of the boys there, and certainly better than CB. On the ride back to her house I sat in the appropriate location. She held my arm and things were looking up, that is until the walk to the door. At the door Fred would have given Ginger a big ol' wet one underneath the porch light. But, Fred had let me down in a big way, never to be fully trusted again. With a car full of people, who would never let me forget the faux pas of the evening, watching, and a mother who was certainly peeping through the window behind the curtains, I opted for a peck on the cheek. A guy can't go to wrong with a peck on the cheek. I opened the door for her, she floated inside the house and my first date was over. Halleluiah!