

Grant's Big Dance
September 21st

As I'm sure you've gathered by now, Grant is kind of shy. But this week, timidity is going to be a major problem...

Washington High, Grant's school, is having its Homecoming weekend in five days! Last night at dinner, Grant told our family that the fun begins on Saturday morning with a huge football game. All the students dress in the school colors and cheer in the stadium while eleven big guys crouch, grunt, then slam into each other over and over again for about two hours.

My dad smiled cheekily and said, "Aw, that's great! But, isn't there something after that?"

Grant hesitated for a second, then quickly explained, "Yes, actually, afterward, there are hotdogs and burgers in the parking lot."

Then my mom chimed in, "And is there another event *after that...*?"

My parents were hinting at something, and I could tell Grant was becoming embarrassed—his cheeks had changed color. He looked down at his plate, shuffling his spaghetti with a fork. We all stared at him until he finally raised his head and expressed exasperation, "Yes! There's a dance. Okay?"

I decided to stay silent, but Ty felt like this was the perfect time to ask Grant if he had a secret girlfriend, and Ruby accompanied his question with kissy noises. Grant put his head in his hands and pushed back his bangs. He seemed too stressed to be upset with Ty and Ruby's immaturity.

"That's the problem," Grant grumbled, "I don't have a 'secret girlfriend', or really any girl-friends."

"Well, what about Sarah?" My mom offered politely. (Sarah is a very pretty girl Grant's age who lives in the house next to Clare.) "You could ask her to go to the dance with you, couldn't you? I'm sure she'd say yes. When you were toddlers, you asked her to marry you! Do you remember that? You said, 'Sawah, will you mawwy me?' Oh, it was just adorable!"

"Mo-om!" Grant said, turning redder as if this was the world's worst suggestion. He lowered his voice but heightened the emotion, "Now she's taller than me!"

It was quiet for a moment as even Ty and Ruby felt our brother's turmoil.

"She's cool! I'm sure she won't care!" I offered. Grant didn't say anything.

"Well," my dad piped up, "this may be hard to believe, but I haven't always been this tall." This lightened the mood as my dad's head brushed the light hanging above the table. "In fact," he

went on, "I was your height all through high school, so I came up with a little trick. But—it will involve getting in touch with your roots!"

"Roots?" Grant asked, partially nervous, partially hopeful. "But dad...you're from Texas?"

Halfway through the week, a big package arrived in the mail from Houston, Texas; it was for Grant. Before we could sneak a peek, he intercepted it and brought it to his room.

The next few days went by slowly for Ty, Ruby, and me as we waited for information. Finally, I got word from Clare!

Clare told me that she talked to Sarah, and Sarah said that Grant had called her on the phone and—after a lot of nervous mumbling—asked her to the dance. Sarah told Clare she agreed to go and showed her the dress she would wear (which Clare said was "the most beautiful dress" she'd ever seen), and the plan was for Grant to pick Sarah up at 7! (Exciting!)

On the night of the big dance, at 6:45 p.m., our family waited for Grant to come downstairs. We heard a clunk as he took each step. Then, there he was, in a gray suit and tie and a brand new pair of manly leather cowboy boots with three-inch heels at least.

"Howdy, partner! Ready to roll?" Our dad warmly exclaimed.

"You betcha!" Grant responded as he confidently clunked out the door, down the street, and over to Sarah's house.

Your Friend,
Joanie