

# “WISHES”

by Bunny Schulle

When Danny Cutler walked into my history class, I wish I'd looked the other way. Instead, I felt my heart flip-flop as I stared at the most gorgeous guy ever to grace drab old Edison High.

After he told his name to our teacher, Mr. Sellers asked Danny to take the empty seat behind me! I was thankful I'd taken extra time with my hair that morning. After all, the back of my head was just a foot away from those gorgeous blue eyes.

The next day, Danny wasn't in class when the bell rang. Finally he came in, mumbling an excuse. He didn't look nearly as good as he had the day before. His eyes were red, and his face was ashen. He stumbled as he made his way to his seat, and the rest of the class snickered.

The rest of the week Danny was fine and even impressed all of us with his intelligent answers to some of Mr. Sellers' questions. So when Friday rolled around and he asked me if I'd like to go out with him Saturday night, I was delighted to say Yes.

My parents liked Danny. They gave him the usual “third degree,” and I could tell that they were satisfied with his answers.

Danny's car was just like him – excellent! It was a new Fiat, and he kept it clean and shiny. I noticed a cooler in the back seat. “Just a few beers for later on,” he explained. I felt disappointed. I knew a lot of boys who drank, but I was hoping Danny wasn't one of them. “I don't want any,” I murmured.

I almost felt apologetic because it seemed so important to him. He was quiet for a moment and then said with a shrug, “That's cool.”

I forgot all about the beer when his hand reached for mine later during the evening. But Danny hadn't forgotten. Toward the end of our date he “popped the brews,” as we sat in the parking lot of the dance with the car windows down and Danny's tape deck softly playing his collection of jazz. But I was worried about all the beer he was guzzling.

When I noticed his words slurring, I said, “Danny, I think you'd better drive me home. In fact, maybe I ought to drive.”

He stared at me long and hard. Finally he smiled and said, "OK, I'll be good. I'll take you home, and next time I promise not to drink in front of you."

I was elated at the thought that there would be a "next time." In fact, there were many more. We became an "item" at Edison High.

I knew he drank when he went out with the guys and perhaps after our dates when he went home. But around me he was always straight.

I was sure Danny cared for me as I did for him, so I thought that somehow I could convince him to quit drinking.

That is, until last Saturday night. One of our friends, Joe Baldwin, was having a party. On the way there I made Danny promise that he wouldn't drink.

There was a keg of beer at one end of the patio, and all the guys were standing around it. Joe's girlfriend asked me to help her fix some snacks in the kitchen. When I finally returned to the patio, I heard Danny laughing loudly. He was pumping the keg and filling a large mug until the foam poured over its sides. He gulped the beer down and was about to refill his mug when he caught me eye. I was hurt and angry. I didn't want to nag him in front of the others, so I waited until he ambled over to me.

"Don't be mad," he slurred, spilling beer on my blouse as he tried to put his arm around me.

"You promised," I said coldly.

"So, I lied," he retorted. "I'm sick of trying to please you and your high standards."

He was immediately sorry and started to apologize, but I turned away so he couldn't see the tears stinging my eyes. I ran into the house. I wanted desperately to leave and finally found a friend to take me home.

I wish instead that I'd stayed with Danny. I would have insisted that he let me drive. I wish someone had taken Danny's car keys from him when he tried to leave the party. But most of all, I wish Danny had realized what his drinking was doing to him and had quit.

Wishing won't help though. Danny's been in a coma for five days. It's a wonder he's alive, considering what was left of his Fiat after it crashed into the concrete buttress wall of an overpass.

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