

POPULARITY

A COMEDY IN TWO ACTS

By Thomas Hischak

Loosely based on Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice

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CHARACTERS

Delia Connors	leader of the senior sorority
Patsy, Birdie, Candy	cheerleaders
Lizzy Bennet	a senior
Jane Gideon	a senior, Lizzy's best friend
Mary, Kitty, Charlotte	other members of the senior sorority
Gary	Delia's long time boyfriend
Fred 1, Fred 2, Ned	jocks
Will McHenry	part-time janitor
Dylan Atkins	a new student, a senior
Brent Thurman	his best friend, also new in school, a senior
Lydia Bennet	a freshman, Lizzy's sister
Caroline Thurman	a freshman, Brent's sister
Myron Collins	a rich transfer student, a senior
Ginny Atkins	Dylan's sister

PLACE

Ralph Waldo Emerson High School

TIME

Fall, Winter, Spring, 1957-1958

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

The action of the play takes place in several locations in and around Emerson High School so scene changes should be avoided. A unit set with separate areas will work best: a row of lockers in one part of the stage, a table in the cafeteria in another, and an open space to designate the gym and the other places. The best solution is to keep things simple and open.

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ACT I

At Rise: Lights up on DELIA CONNORS who addresses the audience. SHE is a loud, talkative, lively and somewhat overbearing senior girl - a natural leader.

DELIA: It is common knowledge that the aim of every senior boy is to get a popular senior girl as his date for the prom. Unfortunately, most boys are creeps and don't know that this is their one and true aim during senior year. So we girls get stuck doing all the planning and end up making all the arrangements. It is a sad but true fact of life and, consequently, good preparation for marriage or jobs in the real world. Things being that way, the time to start is not a few weeks before the prom in May but on the very first day of school in September. Like it or not, it takes that long. So I say, girls face up to the fact and get busy or weep into your pillow forever after.

(DELIA exits as lights come up on the gym where PATSY, BIRDIE and CANDY, dressed in cheerleader uniforms, are practicing. They are attractive, lively senior girls. CANDY is less sharp than the other two.)

PATSY, BIRDIE, CANDY: "We're the girls from Emerson! We don't give up and we don't give in! Tonight our victory we dedicate, to the class of nineteen hundred and fifty-eight! Rah, Rah! Go, team, go!"

PATSY: Birdie, you put the wrong arm up again!

BIRDIE: Did not. We changed that part.

PATSY: You're thinking of the "sink 'em - stink 'em" cheer. You're supposed to put the right arm up on "dedicate."

CANDY: I liked it better when we put both arms up.

PATSY: We gotta save that for "fifty-eight." You can't give away the ending.

BIRDIE: I don't know what difference it makes. The team will lose anyway... now that Moose Wilkins has graduated.

CANDY: I think I was in love with Moose!

BIRDIE: Me, too!

PATSY: Will you two stop talking like a bunch of rejects! Don't you know that being a cheerleader is the highest level a girl can reach in high school aside from Student Council secretary? Where's your pride?

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BIRDIE: The only reason we had a winning season last year was because of the Moose. We'll get clobbered this Friday night, I know it.

PATSY: Moose Wilkins was a hairy oaf with a glandular problem who took six years to graduate! Get over it! Now let's run the "class of fifty-eight" cheer again.

CANDY: I thought he was cute.

PATSY: "We're the girls from Emerson!"

ALL THREE: "We don't give up and we don't give in!"

CANDY: Patsy, does "don't give in" really rhyme with "Emerson"?

PATSY: It does in cheerleading. Now once again...

(CHEERLEADERS continue in silence as the lights fade on them and come up on DELIA with MARY, KITTY and CHARLOTTE in the cafeteria. MARY wears glasses and is never seen not reading a book. KITTY is dense but cheerful. CHARLOTTE is eager and excitable.)

DELIA: Where can Lizzy and Jane be? Kitty, didn't you tell them in math class that I had important news?

KITTY: I forgot.

CHARLOTTE: I told them! What is it, Delia? Tell us now! Those two slowpokes will take forever!

DELIA: I need the whole Senior Sorority here for news like this! Mary, put that book down and listen to me!

MARY: But you haven't said anything yet. Besides, I have to find out if Oliver Twist makes it to London.

DELIA: Oliver Twist! Sometimes, Mary, you worry me.

KITTY: Here comes Gary. Maybe he's seen Lizzy and Jane.

CHARLOTTE: Gary! Come here Quick!

(GARY enters. HE is a quiet, gentle senior with a wry sense of humor.)

DELIA: Gary, where were you this morning? Didn't I tell you to meet me before homeroom by the trophy case?

GARY: Did you? Sorry, Delia. I can't be expected to remember everything you tell me.

DELIA: Don't be silly. You're a national merit scholarship finalist. You can remember as much as you like!

GARY: Sorry to disappoint you, Delia. What did you want?

DELIA: I didn't want anything. It's just that with you taking all those scary college prep courses, we don't have any classes together this year. When else am I going to see you?

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GARY: Maybe you can still get in the calculus class.

DELIA: I'd rather go bald. Just remember the victory dance Saturday night.

GARY: This Saturday? Okay. I guess I can make it.

DELIA: Good.

CHARLOTTE: Gary, have you seen Lizzy and Jane?

GARY: Lizzy and Jane? I don't think so. I can't remember. I gotta get to the library before physics. Bye, Delia.

DELIA: Don't forget Saturday! I'll call and remind you!

GARY: You always do. **(exits)**

DELIA: I swear, that guy knows the entire periodic table by heart but he can't remember anything important. We've been going together for three years now and I have to remind him of everything!

KITTY: I see Lizzy over there.

CHARLOTTE: **(stands on chair, shouts and waves)** Lizzy!

DELIA: And Jane is with her. Good.

CHARLOTTE: Jane! Lizzy! We're over here!

MARY: Why doesn't she just announce it on the PA system?

(LIZZY and JANE enter. JANE is strikingly beautiful, good-natured and sincere. LIZZY is not so attractive, has a quick mind and, at times, a sharp tongue.)

DELIA: What took you two so long?

CHARLOTTE: Delia's got news!

LIZZY: Is the home ec room on fire again?

KITTY: Very funny, Lizzy. That fire was not my fault! Everybody knows the timer on my oven was broken and -

LIZZY: Six months later the room still smelled like tuna casserole.

JANE: What is it, Delia?

LIZZY: Did Gary get another scholarship or did your parakeet get a date for the victory dance?

DELIA: Sometimes, Lizzy, you are too smart-alecky for your own good!

KITTY: Yeah!

CHARLOTTE: I want to hear the news!

JANE: Yes, Delia. I'm sure Lizzy can be quiet long enough to hear why you called this emergency meeting of the Senior Sorority.

LIZZY: I'll shut up.

DELIA: Thank you, Jane. Well, here it is only the second day of school and already there are some interesting developments regarding P Day.

MARY: P Day? What do you mean?

DELIA: Oh, Mary, get your head out of a book and get help.

KITTY: Prom Day!

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LIZZY: The prom? That's seven months away!

DELIA: And the time will pass like wild fire if we don't start planning now.

CHARLOTTE: The theme this year is "Love Letters in the Sand." There will be hearts and pink envelopes everywhere! Mr. Stanton won't let us bring sand into the gym but we're gonna have beach scenes on the walls...

DELIA: I'm sure you and the rest of the committee will do a terrific job, Charlotte, but we have more important issues to deal with than decorations. Now everyone knows that prom night is the culmination of four years of high school -

MARY: It is?

KITTY: Yes, it is, Mary! Look it up in a book!

DELIA: My older sister has always maintained that her prom night was much more fun than her wedding.

LIZZY: There's a terrific advertisement for marriage.

DELIA: So we must start the ground work now. I want every one of the Senior Sorority girls to have the dream date of all time for the prom, except for me, of course. I'll be going with Gary.

LIZZY: If we're aiming that high, I suggest we start looking for someone from another school. Emerson isn't exactly crawling with either the James Dean type or the Pat Boone model.

DELIA: But that's what I've got to tell you! It will be!

KITTY: James Dean is coming to Emerson?

CHARLOTTE: He's dead, Kitty. I've told you a dozen times.

LIZZY: But Pat Boone is registered for my British lit class.

JANE: Please explain, Delia. What is going on?

DELIA: I have found out that two boys from Hutchinson have transferred to Emerson!

CHARLOTTE: From the military school?

KITTY: Oh, I love soldiers!

DELIA: And that's not all! They're both seniors!

CHARLOTTE: No!

KITTY: Senior military boys! I can't believe it!

JANE: I'm sure they're not in any of my classes. I would have noticed two new boys.

LIZZY: Has anyone seen these two John Waynes?

DELIA: Marcia McCaffey has and she says they are both gorgeous!

CHARLOTTE: It's too good to be true!

KITTY: I've got to change my schedule! What classes are they in?

MARY: Hutchinson Military Academy is not known for its high academics. Perhaps they aren't all that smart.

KITTY: Who cares?

DELIA: I'm not promising anything but the prognosis looks very good.
Two dashing seniors -

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CHARLOTTE: From military school!

KITTY: Brave young soldiers!

LIZZY: Fresh blood. That's the best we can hope for, I'm afraid.

JANE: What are their names, Delia?

DELIA: The tall blonde one is called Brent Thurman -

CHARLOTTE: Brent! What a romantic name!

MARY: I believe the Thurman family has money. I was reading in the newspaper that...

CHARLOTTE: Money!

JANE: Hutchinson is a very expensive school. Both boys must be very well off unless they had a scholarship of some kind.

DELIA: The dark-haired one is named Dylan Atkins.

CHARLOTTE: Dylan...

KITTY: It's just too, too wonderful!

CHARLOTTE: Dreamy!!

DELIA: They could be just the ticket to a perfect senior prom!

LIZZY: I hate to throw cold water on your cozy little plans, but has anyone asked themselves why these two Romeos are no longer at Hutchinson but at a public high school? **(pause)**

DELIA: Uh... maybe they got tired of an all-boys school.

MARY: Or... maybe they wanted a more rigorous academic program.

KITTY: Maybe they wanted a change of pace.

CHARLOTTE: Or maybe they got tired of rifle practice.

LIZZY: Maybe. Or perhaps their families went broke and they couldn't afford Hutchinson. Or they were kicked out for setting fire to a general or someone. Or maybe they transferred because they heard the Senior Sorority was looking for hot dates for the prom!

KITTY: Sometimes. Lizzy, you can be so... so...

MARY: Negative.

LIZZY: All I know is it seems pretty suspicious that these two war heroes are now coming to Emerson.

JANE: We shouldn't judge them on such little information. Once we meet the two of them and get to know them better, then we can see what they're like.

DELIA: Jane's right as usual.

CHARLOTTE: Okay then, how do we meet them?

KITTY: Yes! That's the first step!

DELIA: I've already thought about that. Now here's my plan...

GARY: **(entering, to LIZZY and JANE)** Here you two are. Delia is looking for you.

DELIA: Thank you, Gary. Always on top of things.

GARY: Just trying to help.

DELIA: Move along now, Gary. We're busy.

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GARY: Okay. I gotta run anyway. Mrs. Feenster in the library wants me to show these two new guys how the card catalog system works. It seems at Hutchinson they use the Library of Congress System rather than the Dewey Decimal System.

MARY: They do? How fascinating!

GARY: Bye, Delia. See you girls later. **(HE exits, all the girls but MARY are stunned into silence)**

MARY: Imagine that. The Library of Congress System. It sounds like Hutchinson is more modern in their thinking than I thought...

DELIA: Girls! No time to lose. Come on! **(starts to exit)** Gary!!! **(Rushes off followed by all the girls except LIZZY who remains a few seconds, laughs, then goes off in the other direction. Lights come up on PATSY, CANDY and BIRDIE in the gym.)**

PATSY: I don't care if you're late for study hall, Candy. We've got to try out this new cheer.

BIRDIE: All you ever do in study hall is your nails anyway.

CANDY: Not today. I have to do my homework. I'm getting my hair done right after school and tonight Fred is coming over to study.

PATSY: So do your homework then.

CANDY: Do you think we're going to waste time studying?

BIRDIE: Which Fred?

CANDY: The not-so-smart one.

PATSY: Enough chit-chat! Now girls, check out this new cheer I made up. **(goes through routine)** "Give me a W. Yes, W! Give us an A. Yes, A! How 'bout an L? Say L! Then add a D. I said D! Cap it with O. Yes, O! What have you got? Waldo! Say it louder! Waldo!! One more time! Waldo!!" **(a pause)** What do you think?

CANDY: Who's Waldo?

PATSY: Ralph Waldo Emerson!

BIRDIE: I don't know, Patsy, Waldo is such a... goofus sort of name.

CANDY: Ralph isn't much better.

PATSY: But it's who we are!

CANDY: Yeeeuch!

BIRDIE: Let's stick to the other cheers. I think we'll get laughed off the field with that one.

PATSY: But...

(FRED 1, FRED 2 and NED, three jocks, enter. They are barely distinguishable from each other.)

BIRDIE: Here come Fred, Fred and Ned.

CANDY: Hi, Fred. You too, Fred and Ned.

FRED 1: Ain't you supposed to be in study hall, Candy?

CANDY: Sure. I'm getting there.

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FRED 2: What are you girls up to?

PATSY: Cheers. Big game Friday night.

NED: That's right!

FRED 1: Oh yeah? Where?

NED: Us, you blockhead!

FRED 1: Oh. Sure. Emerson versus... uh?

BIRDIE: The Lincoln Polecats.

FRED 1: That's right.

FRED 2: They'll be the ones not dressed like us. You can't miss 'em.

FRED 1: Sure.

CANDY: Isn't he cute when he's confused?

BIRDIE: All the time.

NED: You got a date for the victory dance on Saturday, Patsy?

PATSY: What kinda cheerleader would I be if I didn't?

NED: Oh.

BIRDIE: You can ask me, Ned. I'm not so particular.

NED: Really? Well...

BIRDIE: It's a date! I just hope you'll be in physical condition to dance.
Those Polecats are pretty rough, I hear.

NED: We'll cream 'em!

FRED 2: We'll make cat food out of them!

PATSY: Hey, that's a great idea for a cheer! **(improvising a cheer)** "Cat food! Cat food! Turn 'em into cat food! Cat food! **(the others drift away as SHE continues, unaware of their exit)** Give me a C. C! How 'bout an A? A! Give it a T. T!" **(WILL MCHENRY, an older teen wearing work clothes and carrying a broom enters the gym and watches her)** "What kinda food? Cat food! Cat food! Cat..." **(realizes the others have left and that WILL is staring at her with a smirk on his face)**

WILL: I'll bet you won the spelling bee.

(PATSY stomps off in a huff and WILL laughs as HE starts to sweep the gym floor. Lights fade on him and come up on some lockers where DYLAN ATKINS and BRENT THURMAN are putting away their books at the end of the day. BRENT is tall, blond and agreeable. DYLAN is dark, shorter and moody.)

BRENT: Not bad for only the second day of school! Nothing like being attacked by a bunch of girls in the library to make a guy feel welcome.

DYLAN: Nothing but a gaggle of geese looking for some new boys to honk at.

BRENT: Lighten up, Dylan. Relax a little. We're not in military school any more. You can even smile if you want!

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DYLAN: This place is as bad as I feared.

BRENT: Now come on...

DYLAN: Eight hundred idiots in one state asylum, that's what it is.

BRENT: Dylan Atkins III, your snobbery is showing.

DYLAN: Be honest, Brent. They're all so...

BRENT: Common?

DYLAN: You said it, not me.

BRENT: I think their friendliness is refreshing, and as for those girls...

DYLAN: Geese. No... ugly ducklings!

BRENT: I think you forgot what girls look like while we were at Hutchinson. There were some lookers in that gaggle. Especially the quiet one, Jane, her name was. Remember her?

DYLAN: If she was quiet, then she was the best of the bunch.

BRENT: And that one with her nose in a book. Take away those glasses and she's not bad looking herself, and a real intellectual. Just your type!

DYLAN: Don't you ever get tired of teasing me? I sure do.

BRENT: Hey, pal, I know what the problem is. **(seriously)** And don't think I don't feel the same way at times, but we're here and we ought to make the best of it. It's only one year anyway. Let's enjoy it!

DYLAN: I think it would have been better if we'd just been court martialed. **(slams his locker shut)**

BRENT: Don't talk that way, Dylan. Put it behind you.

DYLAN: Let's go.

BRENT: Sure. **(closes locker)** Now you're coming to that dance on Saturday, do you hear me? I don't want any excuses. **(they start off)**

DYLAN: I've got about a dozen, starting with...

WILL: **(comes down the hall sweeping and all three stop when they see each other; a deadly pause, then WILL smiles broadly)** Well, well, well...

DYLAN: What are you doing here?

WILL: Sweeping, just sweeping. **(laughs)** Quite a coincidence.

BRENT: Come on, Dylan! Let's get out of here.

(BRENT pulls DYLAN off as WILL watches them go. HE laughs again and continues sweeping as the lights fade out. In the darkness the sound of a pop song from 1958 is heard. Lights rise and we are at the dance. DELIA, GARY, and the Senior Sorority are grouped together on one side of the stage. LYDIA BENNET, LIZZY's younger sister, has joined them; SHE is an excited, impetuous freshman. CHEER-LEADERS are with JOCKS on the other side. FRED 1 has a bandage on his forehead and one black eye. The boys all wear jackets and ties and girls semi-formal dresses.)

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PATSY: Some victory dance. We got clobbered!

NED: Those Polecats just sorta squeaked by us.

BIRDIE: Thirty-five to seven? That's an awfully loud squeak!

CANDY: How's your eye, Fred dear?

FRED 1: Okay, I guess, but I keep getting headaches when I think too hard.

PATSY: I could say something here but I won't.

CANDY: Come and dance with me, Fred. You promised.

FRED 1: Okay, but be careful of my jaw.

CANDY: Relax, I ain't no polecat. **(FRED 1 and CANDY dance.)**

NED: Hey, Patsy. What happened to your date?

PATSY: He couldn't make it. At the last minute he decided to have brain surgery.

FRED 2: Captain of the cheerleading team stood up at the victory dance! What's this country coming to?

PATSY: Ask Eisenhower.

BIRDIE: Come on, Ned. Dance with me.

NED: Oh. Sure.

BIRDIE: Fred, be a martyr and dance with Patsy before someone sees she's all alone.

PATSY: I don't need your sympathy. I'm going out to the parking lot for a smoke.

FRED 2: Oh, come on, Patsy. Just one dance?

PATSY: Okay, but it's just because I'm taking pity on a half-brained halfback. **(FRED 2 dances with PATSY as NED dances with BIRDIE.)**

DELIA: I didn't know you'd be babysitting tonight, Lizzy. What are the guys going to think when they see her in our group?

LIZZY: Most of the guys here don't know how to think. I promised mom I'd take Lydia to her first high school dance. Any problem with that?

LYDIA: Yeah. Any problem with that?

DELIA: Just what we need - another smart mouth in the group. Well, just because you're with us tonight, Lydia, don't think for a second you're a member of the Senior Sorority.

LYDIA: Who'd want to be in that group of scrawny virgins? **(moves off)**

CHARLOTTE: Wow, she has a mouth on her! Does she talk like that at home, Lizzy?

LIZZY: She's nothing but talk. It's all bluster.

JANE: Lydia has always been... impetuous, even as a little kid.

DELIA: Gary, time to dance. Come on.

GARY: If you think so.

DELIA: Yes, I do, and try not to be so aggressive, Gary. You frighten me. **(GARY and DELIA dance.)**

JANE: Poor Gary. I don't know why he puts up with it.

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MARY: He's such a smart boy, too. Did you know he's read every volume of Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*?

CHARLOTTE: Never heard of it, or if I did, I don't remember.

LIZZY: This is going to be one God-awful night; I can see that. Why did we come, Jane?

JANE: To celebrate our victory over the Lincoln Polecats?

CHARLOTTE: Wasn't that an awful game? I cried every time those Polecats scored another first down! Nearly ruined my pink scarf.

MARY: I know why Jane came tonight.

JANE: Oh?

MARY: To see that Brent Thurman.

JANE: Who?

LIZZY: Brent Thurman. The boy you talked to me about for two hours yesterday.

JANE: Did not!

CHARLOTTE: I hope those two military boys like to dance. Otherwise we'll never get them to the prom.

MARY: Well, they're not here tonight. At least I don't see them.

LIZZY: You should know. You're the one with glasses. What do they look like?

CHARLOTTE: One is sorta tall with blondish hair and the other is short with dark hair and kind of a serious look about him. Like... what's-his-name in that book we had to read last year in English class. The one who loved Cathy what's-her-name...

LIZZY: Quasimodo?

MARY: Heathcliff!

CHARLOTTE: That's the one!

(BRENT and DYLAN enter with CAROLINE THURMAN, BRENT's younger sister who is a freshman. They remain on the opposite side of the stage talking together. CAROLINE is delicate, well dressed and quite a snob.)

LIZZY: Don't look now, Emily Bronte, but two guys meeting that description just came in.

MARY: Where!

JANE: It's him! I mean, that's them all right.

CHARLOTTE: Who's that girl with them?

DELIA: ***(sees them enter, stops dancing and drags GARY back to LIZZY and the others)*** Disaster, girls!

JANE: What?

DELIA: The military boys are here, but one of them brought a date!

MARY: She's awfully young.

CHARLOTTE: But look at that dress. I'll bet it cost a fortune!

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DELIA: Think fast, girls! Which one do you think she's with?

LIZZY: She seems to be interested in the dark one.

MARY: But she sticks close to Brent.

JANE: Really?

DELIA: We've got to find out who she's with, separate them for a bit, then work on both guys!

LIZZY: Too bad I left my crowbar at home.

DELIA: Who can she be? I've never seen her before!

LYDIA: ***(has wandered back to the group and overhears DELIA's last line)*** That's Caroline Thurman, biggest snob in the freshman class.

DELIA: One of the seniors is dating a freshman!

LYDIA: The tall guy's her brother. They both are new. He's okay but she's a pain in the butt. I have her in two of my classes.

DELIA: Thank God! He's just babysitting! We're okay, girls.

LIZZY: False alarm. You can relax, Jane.

DELIA: Now girls... here's my strategy! ***(They gather around DELIA and continue in pantomime.)***

BRENT: Your first high school dance, Caroline. Pretty exciting, huh?

CAROLINE: They're all dressed up but they still look like the same idiots I see at school every day.

DYLAN: Couldn't have put it better myself.

BRENT: Listen up, you two. This is a dance, not a pedigree dog show. It's just a bunch of kids having fun. Take the hint.

CAROLINE: I never should have left boarding school. I don't know what I was thinking.

BRENT: You hated that school, Caroline. You only started there because dad wanted you to. You'll be much happier staying at home and going to Emerson.

CAROLINE: I wonder...

DYLAN: Oh, no. It looks like the gaggle is heading this way.

BRENT: There's Jane!

DYLAN: And all the rest of them.

DELIA: ***(leads JANE, MARY, CHARLOTTE, KITTY, and LIZZY to them; LYDIA has left the group and is flirting with the three jocks)*** See, Jane! I told you they would show up! Hello, Brent... Dylan. Jane was saying military boys don't like dances but I...

JANE: No, I didn't. Hi, Brent.

BRENT: Hi, Jane. This is my little sister, Caroline.

DELIA: Not so little, Brent! Hello, Caroline! Your first dance at Emerson?

CAROLINE: What do you think?

JANE: Lydia told us you were a freshman and are in some of her classes. How do you like Emerson so far?

CAROLINE: Can't say.

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BRENT: Everything being so new and all, Caroline is a little nervous.

CAROLINE: No, I'm not.

JANE: Brent... Dylan... you didn't get to meet my friend Lizzy with the rest of us the other day. Lizzy, this is Brent and...

LIZZY: And you are Dylan. I figured it out. What do you think of Emerson so far, Dylan?

DYLAN: Can't say.

DELIA: Another one! So mysterious!

LIZZY: Can't say... or won't say?

DYLAN: It comes down to the same thing, doesn't it?

BRENT: I don't know how much of the dance we missed but here we are! Jane, will you show me how they dance at Emerson High?

JANE: The same way they dance everywhere else, I expect. Come on!
(BRENT and JANE move off and dance.)

DELIA: They must teach good manners at Hutchinson! Brent is so polite.

CAROLINE: Brent didn't need military school. He was always a goody-goody.

DELIA: Well, that's nice.

MARY: Did they have many dances at Hutchinson?

DYLAN: Only one a semester, and they were very selective about who was invited.

MARY: Oh.

KITTY: I'll bet you wore uniforms and everything!

CHARLOTTE: Dress uniforms, I'll bet!

DYLAN: It was required. It seemed that some foolish people are impressed with such trivial things.

KITTY: Oh...

CHARLOTTE: I guess so... **(awkward pause)**

DYLAN: I would love to stay and continue this stimulating conversation, but I promised Caroline I would dance one dance with her and this seems to be an ideal time. Caroline?

CAROLINE: Sure. **(DYLAN and CAROLINE move off and dance.)**

KITTY: I may be wrong, but I think he's the biggest snob I've ever met!

LIZZY: For once in your life, Kitty, you're right on target.

DELIA: The nerve of that creep!

CHARLOTTE: That Caroline is just as bad!

KITTY: And to think that Brent is so... the opposite.

MARY: Lucky Jane!

DELIA: I sensed the other day that he liked her. Look at them. Girls, I think we have landed one of the military boys.

LIZZY: But what do we do with the other one?

DELIA: Throw him back into the sea! That's what you do when you get a small little nothing on your line. Toss it back in the water!

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KITTY: Heave ho!

CHARLOTTE: Good riddance!

LIZZY: Something tells me that Dylan Atkins is not such an easy catch.

DELIA: What are you saying, Lizzy?

LIZZY: I find it interesting that Brent and he are such good friends.

MARY: Sometimes opposites attract.

CHARLOTTE: Maybe.

DELIA: Who cares. We've got bigger fish to fry. Now Charlotte, that Ronnie Adams is standing over there all by himself. We'd better get working...

GARY: **(joining the group)** There you are, Delia. I lost you.

DELIA: You didn't lose me, Gary. I had things to do.

GARY: Oh.

DELIA: Now stay put. Come on, girls! **(leads MARY, CHARLOTTE and KITTY to the other side of the gym; LIZZY remains with GARY)**

LIZZY: Stay, Gary. Sit, Gary. Good boy, Gary.

GARY: I know...

LIZZY: You are a good boy. I don't understand it.

GARY: There's nothing to understand. I like Delia.

LIZZY: I guessed that.

GARY: And I think she's... funny.

LIZZY: She sure can be. The things she says sometimes! I think I stick around her just to hear what she comes up with next. **(They laugh.)**

GARY: I know what people say... and what you're thinking.

LIZZY: What am I thinking?

GARY: He has no guts, no pride, lots of brains but no pride. Right?

LIZZY: Well...

GARY: But I do have pride, and I've got plans and goals and all that. Delia's just... funny. I like that.

LIZZY: Gary, you are one deep national merit scholarship finalist.

GARY: Laugh at me if you want.

LIZZY: I'm not laughing. I always knew you were too good for Delia. Now I think... you're too good for the whole silly pack of us.

GARY: Silly? Not you, Lizzie. Smart aleck, yes. But silly... no.

LIZZY: Thanks. I guess.

(The music has turned to rock and roll and the dancing has gotten livelier. LYDIA is dancing with all JOCKS at once and showing off.)

GARY: Isn't that your little sister?

LIZZY: Where? **(looks)** Oh, my God!

(LIZZY rushes off to the dance floor and pulls LYDIA to the side. Some of the students laugh, other jeer. LIZZY tells LYDIA off in

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pantomime as the music blares. JANE and BRENT move to the side of the stage where they can speak to each other alone. The dance music gets quieter.)

JANE: That's Lizzy's little sister, Lydia! She's always been a bit wild.

Who knows what she'll do now that she's in high school? ***(laughs)***

BRENT: I can't imagine my sister being so... outgoing!

JANE: Your sister? I don't think so! ***(Both laugh.)***

BRENT: I'm afraid Caroline didn't make a very good first impression.

She's not always that nasty.

JANE: I never judge by first impressions. At least I don't think I do.

BRENT: What about me? What kind of first impression did I make the other day?

JANE: Very polite. You managed not to show panic when Delia and all of us descended on you and Dylan in the library like a bunch of... girls!

BRENT: And what do you think now?

JANE: Well... still polite. A little more relaxed. A good dancer. And... very easy to talk to. I usually don't go jabbering on like this!

BRENT: You were so quiet that first day... how come I liked you so much?

JANE: You did?

BRENT: Still do.

JANE: Oh. Well... I guess I should stay quiet then.

BRENT: Not too quiet. ***(kisses her gently)*** Not all the time.

JANE: Well...

BRENT: I can't believe I did that. I'm sorry.

JANE: Don't be.

BRENT: You must think I'm some kinda...

JANE: I think you're just fine, and sure I'm quiet. I guess compared to Delia anyone else would seem quiet.

BRENT: I don't have to compare you to anyone. I like you just the way you are.

(They kiss again. DYLAN, now alone, is watching from across the dance floor. LIZZY, also alone, is near enough to hear him.)

DYLAN: ***(bitterly)*** Terrific.

LIZZY: Did you say something, Mr. Dylan Atkins?

DYLAN: No, Miss...

LIZZY: Elizabeth Bennet. My friends call me Lizzy. I'm not sure what you should call me.

DYLAN: I may not have to call you at all so there will be no problem.

LIZZY: How convenient. It looks like your friend has found a new friend.

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DYLAN: I suspected that would happen. He's been babbling all about that Jane ever since he met her the other day.

LIZZY: How dreadful. Sinking down to our level so quickly.

DYLAN: You said that. I didn't.

LIZZY: But it's true, or you think it's true.

DYLAN: No comment.

LIZZY: Mr. Dylan Atkins, you are one tough cookie.

DYLAN: Don't keep calling me that.

LIZZY: A cookie?

DYLAN: My full name. You say it like it's a disease or something.

LIZZY: Is it? Is being Mr. Dylan Atkins such a terrible thing?

DYLAN: If it was, I wouldn't tell you.

LIZZY: Certainly not, but I will tell you something. Jane Gideon is my oldest and dearest friend in all the world and if she's not good enough for your buddy over there, no one is!

DYLAN: Such passion in one so... from such a tough cookie like yourself.

LIZZY: You better believe it, Mr. A. **(CAROLINE approaches.)** Here comes someone in your social class. I'll leave you be. You'll be safe with her. **(LIZZY moves off as CAROLINE joins DYLAN. HE keeps watching LIZZY as SHE joins the others.)**

CAROLINE: Sorry I was so long, Dylan. Did you get stuck talking with one of those "Sorority Seniors?"

DYLAN: Just for a moment.

CAROLINE: I remember her. She was the smart aleck one. Her name is... what was it?

DYLAN: Lizzy.

CAROLINE: That's it. Lizzy. Such a backwoods kind of name.

DYLAN: Yes. The smart aleck one.

CAROLINE: What's her problem?

DYLAN: I don't know. I honestly don't know...

(All lights fade as the music fades. A light rises on LIZZY and JANE later that night in a neutral area. Both are laughing.)

JANE: Stop, Lizzy! I can't stand it!

LIZZY: Then I almost said, "What do your friends call you, Mr. A., if you have any?" **(Both roar with laughter.)**

JANE: You are too cruel, Lizzy!

LIZZY: But I didn't. I behaved myself, sort of. **(Pause, then they both laugh.)**

JANE: Poor Dylan! I'm afraid military school was not enough preparation for Lizzy Bennet!

LIZZY: Poor Dylan? How can you feel sorry for the creep?

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JANE: I can't help it. I do, and so do you if you'll only admit it.

LIZZY: Maybe I do a little, but he's such a stuckup...

JANE: Don't say any more. After all, he is Brent's best friend.

LIZZY: Well, I like Brent anyway, and so do you.

JANE: And so do I. Very much.

LIZZY: Is he as nice in private as he is in a group?

JANE: Nicer even.

LIZZY: Oh boy. Then you have got it bad, Jane.

JANE: I sure do.

LIZZY: When he kissed you, the haughty Mr. A did not approve.

JANE: I'm sure he had his reasons.

LIZZY: There you go again, always thinking the best of people! You never have anything rotten to say about anyone!

JANE: I don't need to. You say it for me.

LIZZY: Everybody is not as good as you believe, Jane!

JANE: Nor are they as bad as you believe, Lizzy.

LIZZY: I don't think everyone's bad.

JANE: But you suspect it and make jokes as if they were.

LIZZY: I just have a cynical turn of mind. It's my sophisticated upbringing! **(Both laugh.)** I am happy for you, Jane. Brent seems so... so...

JANE: Yes.

LIZZY: I have no cynicism for him, but as for his comrade in arms...
pow!

JANE: Don't shoot just yet. I think there is more to Dylan Atkins than meets the eye.

LIZZY: I have my doubts about that.

JANE: You always do.

(Lights out on them and up on the gym where PATSY, BIRDIE and CANDY are making posters on the floor.)

PATSY: I hate this time of year.

BIRDIE: Christmas?

PATSY: No. When Homecoming and football season are over and before basketball really gets going. I find no purpose to life.

CANDY: There's always the Christmas dance.

PATSY: It's not the same. What's to cheer about a bunch of poinsettias and tinsel?

BIRDIE: Hey, Candy, are you going to the Christmas dance with Fred?

CANDY: The big lummoX hasn't asked me yet. I think he keeps forgetting.

BIRDIE: Put some mistletoe on his locker. Even he'll get the hint.

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CANDY: Fred wouldn't know mistletoe from parsley. I better come right out and ask him.

PATSY: I am so tired of making these stupid posters!

BIRDIE: You just do the snowflakes, Patsy. I'll do the lettering. I like your snowflakes.

CANDY: Why don't you just write "X mas" or is that against some kind of religion?

PATSY: Just wait till the prom posters when we gotta write "Love Letters in the Sand" about a million times!

BIRDIE: Who you going to the dance with, Patsy?

PATSY: Won't say.

CANDY: The same guy who never showed up at the victory dance?

PATSY: My lips are sealed. To tell you would jinx it.

BIRDIE: Well, I like that! (**FRED 1, FRED 2 and NED cross the gym.**)

There's Fred now! Call him over, Candy, and ask him about the dance. He won't dare say no with the two of us here.

CANDY: Okay. (**calls**) Hey, Fred!

PATSY: Fred, Fred and Ned. What have you been doing since our winning football season ended?

NED: Ha, ha, ha. Very funny, Patsy.

FRED 1: I think we needed Moose.

BIRDIE: No kidding.

FRED 2: Just you wait for basketball season to get cooking.

PATSY: That's what I'm doing. Waiting.

FRED 1: Whatcha making?

BIRDIE: Posters for the Christmas dance.

PATSY: If you knew how to read, Fred, you would have figured it out eventually.

NED: What's with her today?

CANDY: Speaking of the Christmas dance, Fred, I was wondering if you had any plans.

FRED 1: Plans? For the Christmas dance?

PATSY: Don't think too hard or your head will start hurting again.

CANDY: Well?

FRED 1: Well... (**obviously evasive**) Uh... gee, I don't know...

BIRDIE: Candy was just wondering. It's only two weeks away and she's gotta order a boutonniere soon.

FRED 1: Well... you see...

PATSY: What are you waiting for, Fred?

NED: Or who are you waiting for, Fred?

CANDY: What's that?

FRED 1: Well, gosh...

LYDIA: (**appearing at the far end of the gym**) Fred! Fred! Ned! What's taking you three?

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FRED 1: Gotta go, Candy. See ya.

FRED 2: We're helping Lydia with her... algebra.

NED: Yeah. That freshman algebra is pretty tough. Bye.

FRED and FRED: Bye! (***JOCKS rush to LYDIA and then exit with her.***)

CANDY: I can't believe it!

BIRDIE: That half-pint tart is after every boy in the school!

CANDY: Or every boy is after her.

PATSY: It comes down to the same thing.

BIRDIE: And she's only a freshman! Who does she think she is?

PATSY: Lizzy Bennet won't be civil to any boy and her little sister can't keep her hands off them! Some family!

CANDY: I am not making one more stupid poster for this stupid dance! (***marches off furiously***)

BIRDIE: Poor Candy.

PATSY: Poor Fred. He wouldn't know what to do if he ever got hold of Lydia Bennet.

BIRDIE: Something tells me she would.

(***Lights out on the gym and up on the cafeteria where LIZZY, JANE, MARY, KITTY, and CHARLOTTE are gathered.***)

LIZZY: I don't want to hear one more word about this insipid Christmas dance!

CHARLOTTE: I only said...

LIZZY: Honestly! You'd think we were a bunch of... girls!

KITTY: But we are girls.

JANE: Perhaps Lizzy is right. There is more to life than one silly dance.

CHARLOTTE: That's easy for you to say. I'm sure Brent Thurman is taking you, so you're all set! (***an awkward pause***)

JANE: I've got to return this book to the library before French class. (***starts to go***)

MARY: I can take it for you, Jane. I'm going there for study hall today.

JANE: No, thanks. I'll do it myself... (***rushes off***)

LIZZY: Well, you really put your foot in it this time, Charlotte!

CHARLOTTE: What did I say!

KITTY: Brent hasn't asked her to the dance and it doesn't look like he will.

CHARLOTTE: What? But they've been together since September!

LIZZY: I swear Dylan Atkins is behind this. He's been trying to break them up for months.

KITTY: Rumor has it that both Brent and Dylan are bringing dates from the country club. Boarding school girls!

CHARLOTTE: That's terrible!

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LIZZY: Right in character for Dylan, I'm afraid.

DELIA: (*enters to join them*) Hold on to your poodle skirts, girls! I've got news!

MARY: I hope it's good news. I'm feeling awful about Jane.

DELIA: I've got to talk fast...

LIZZY: That'll be a switch.

DELIA: Because Gary is bringing him over any minute.

KITTY: Him?

DELIA: Myron Collins the second or third or something.

CHARLOTTE: Who's Myron Collins?

DELIA: A new boy *and* a senior! His father is president or vice president or something out at the glass factory and the whole family moved here from Boston! Myron is a national merit scholarship finalist just like Gary and his family is rolling in the dough and...

MARY: Have you seen him yet?

KITTY: What does he look like?

DELIA: I don't know. He's only been in the building for half an hour, but I'll bet he's a dreamboat!

LIZZY: Just because he has money or because he's smart?

DELIA: Both, I'll bet!

CHARLOTTE: Here comes Gary with someone now!

DELIA: Play it cool and classy, girls!

(GARY enters with MYRON COLLINS, a pudgy, odd-looking boy with a nerdy voice and too broad a smile.)

GARY: That is the cafeteria, Myron, which I guess you figured out yourself, and here are a pack of seniors that I'm sure you'll be seeing plenty of. Delia, Mary, Lizzy, Kitty, and Charlotte, this is Myron Collins. He's just...

DELIA: Just arrived! Welcome, Myron! I hope you'll like Emerson.

MYRON: Gosh, I hope so! I told Mummy this morning that I can't imagine Ralph Waldo Emerson High School will compare favorably to the Winslow Academy in Boston, but she said I should make an effort and, golly, I think Mummy was right because it seems like quite a fine place with lots of nice people as far as I can determine in so short a time. **(an awkward pause)**

LIZZY: Mummy?

MYRON: You are Lizzy... and this is Kitty... Mary... Delia... and Charlotte! Is that right?

GARY: Bull's eye!

MYRON: Gosh, I'm glad to meet you all. At the academy I'd been with some of those kids since kindergarten, so it sure is dandy seeing some new faces!

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LIZZY: Dandy?

DELIA: Uh... has Gary been showing you around... Myron?

MYRON: I'll say he has! First, the auditorium, then the library and the gymnasium. Next the pool and the music room. Oh, and the art studio and... we're going to take a gander at the chemistry lab next. Aren't we, Gary?

GARY: That's the idea. Anyone want to come along?

CHARLOTTE: Oh, not right now...

KITTY: Gotta run to class...

MARY: I was just leaving for the library...

DELIA: Gary will take good care of you. Won't you, Gary?

GARY: I'll do my best.

MYRON: Golly, everyone here is so pleasant! Back in Boston sometimes people can be so... oh, I don't know... Bostonian, I guess, if you know what I mean. It's the oddest thing!

LIZZY: Odd. That's the word all right.

MYRON: Lizzy, you have no idea! It's not a myth, all that about New England snobbery. Sometimes I'd say to Mummy...

GARY: We better hit the chem lab before Mr. Hawkins starts class.

MYRON: Oh. Good idea, Gary. Goodbye, ladies! See you around, as they say!

GIRLS: Bye... **(GARY and MYRON exit. A long silence.)**

MARY: Well...he seems pretty smart... I guess... **(All look at each other and burst out laughing.)**

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