

Rules of Love and Grammar

Author's Note

When I was fourteen, I had a mad crush on a boy in my ninth grade class. He was good looking and popular, and, unfortunately for me, he was dating another girl in our class (who was also good looking and popular and definitely more in his league than I was). I sat next to this boy in one of my classes and he was always friendly to me, as he was to everyone.

A big dance was being given that year for the ninth graders. It was a tradition that only the ninth graders got to attend this dance – probably because they were the “graduating class” of the junior high school. Called the Cinderella Ball, the event was held at a private club in town. I arrived there (black velvet dress, hair all done up) and met my girlfriends. We hung out in a little group, longing in our eyes as we watched other kids dance to song after song. And then, something amazing happened. The boy I liked walked up to me and asked me to dance.

I knew he was extending the invitation only as a friend – there would be no romantic interest on his part – but that didn’t matter. The few minutes I spent with him on the dance floor were magical. I’m sure it wasn’t a big deal to him, but it certainly was to me.

That memory has been rattling around in my brain for years, and I guess it had to emerge in a story sooner or later. So I finally decided I would write about it. But what form would that story take? How would one dance become the foundation for some other, more intricate tale? Another piece of the puzzle came to me through a conversation I had one day with a friend. We were talking about how people often feel guilt over the death of a loved one – they didn’t do this or they should have done that – and how it can haunt a person forever. It was an idea I wanted to explore. With these two fragments, I began to build a tale.

I created Grace, the main character, a woman in her thirties whose high-school friendship with a boy named Peter had turned to romance in their sophomore year. That transition took place at an event where they danced to one song, and, afterwards, kissed. I made Grace’s happiness short-lived, however, because I added a tragedy soon after the dance – her older sister’s death. Years later, never really having gotten over that death, Grace finds herself back in her hometown, needing to make peace with the past. And that’s what begins the story.

Despite the tragedy involving Grace’s sister, the book is far from somber. There’s humor throughout, much of it coming from the interaction between Grace and her childhood friend, Cluny, and from

events that unfold when Peter, now a successful Hollywood director, returns to town to film scenes from his latest movie.

Just as I did with my first novel, *The Irresistible Blueberry Bakeshop & Café*, I created a fictional town as the backdrop for this story. I like to design my own locations, by combining characteristics of real towns I'm familiar with and adding whatever additional touches I need to support the story. The little seaside town in this story is called Dorset, and I've included plenty of descriptions of the shops and restaurants, the harbor, the lighthouse, the village green, the nearby apple orchard, and other locations. I hope my readers enjoy the visit.