

One Time the Fat Girl Danced

By David Marshall Marquis

NOTES

David Marshall Marquis' beautiful, narrative poem captures the heart and determination of a young lady, a senior now, who has never danced, not even once. This selection may be performed by a female or male and be entered in Poetry Interpretation. The first choice for the performer is deciding the character of the narrator. The true beauty of this at-a-glance simplistic, yet upon closer examination 'complex' poem, transcends the boundaries of gender. If a female chooses to perform the selection, is the narrator a girl simply attending the dance, or is she, herself, the fat girl sitting in the corner? If a male performs this poem, is he the 'one, brave knight' who has come to end her trial and ease his guilt, or is he, too, simply a young man attending the dance, perhaps even one who, at one time, made fun of her? The performer's choice as to the identity of the narrator will dictate the emotions of the narrator, as he or she witnesses the events of the evening. Visualization is another key factor in performing this piece of literature. Create the environment. See the action taking place within the poem. See the girl in the corner. Nodding one's head ever-so-slightly, when mentioning a person or a tangible object in the room, allows a performer to put placement on a designated or desired element in the poem. Don't just recite the poem. Be an active participant *in* the poem. See the couple actually dancing on the dance floor. Follow the action with your eyes; make the audience see what you see. Color those words, such as 'circles and twirls.' Make the chosen words come to life. As "the music stops," look to the opposite corner where the young lady had been sitting, give us the illusion that there is an actual band or DJ set up in that corner. See that band or DJ, and do a tiny head nod on the actual word "music" and create that environment for the audience. Ultimately, this is a poem about witnessing a magical moment in time. When the narrator states, "a snicker breaks out, is quickly hushed," think about how much more effective the performance will be if you, the performer, were to glance over your shoulder, as if *you* are the one hushing those at the dance who are less aware of the sensitivity of the moment. The drama mask icons are simply suggestions to show the performer when to turn the pages of the manuscript. This poem serves as a tour-de-force for the mature, controlled performer, as it pays homage to the adage, "Good things come to those who wait."

In a corner, behind the darkness, sits a fat girl,
alone,
her hands folded like puffy linen napkins.
Her global face smiles demurely, unchangingly,

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a yellow ribbon
on her head, a butterfly on the mountain.
Since seventh grade, a senior now, she has never danced,
not even once,
sits meekly behind the dark and
longs to sit in the open, beside the floor, but
knows that fat girls sit in the corner.
The same yellow satin dress accompanies her,
has since seventh grade,
her size stable since that time.



They whisper each year what they know of her:
a gland problem,
their mothers overheard in the beauty parlor
and tell their girls to be kind to her;
a pretty face,
but so, so enormous.
The girls in their pious beauty pity her, lash the boys
for not dancing with her,
scold them for their jokes:
I'd dance with her,
if I could get my arms around her.
Don't you be ugly about her.
She might hear.

She hears. She has always heard the silence of her corner.



Chastised by female, dared by male, one brave knight,
shamed by years of neglected decency,
prodiced by courtesy and by duty,
seeks to end her trial and their guilt.
He is among the most handsome, over-tall and very
slender, polished, poised enough for it,
moves directly to her, all eyes are on him.
She accepts graciously and together they move
quite oddly to the floor. A snicker
breaks out, is quickly shushed.
The music is slow. He hesitates, but she does not,
ready, so ready
for the moment
rehearsed a thousand times.