Cody Strange

English 1010

J. Matthew Clarke

9/21/2020

Ask her to dance

*One two, one two, one two,* I mentally keep the rhythm in the back of my head as I lead my dance partner across the rough carpet floor of our chapel. It is rather small for a place of worship, enough space to fit a couple hundred people. The room was further confined by the elevated landing in the front that held the podium and sacrament table. The room would continue to feel even tighter, as there were four white columns acting as barriers to guide us around an “inner box” that it created. The room was brightly lit by the Led lights in the ceiling, letting you clearly see the room for how it was. The pure white walls and ceiling causing the room to appear even brighter than it already was and in turn even smaller than it was.

*One two, one two, one two,* I shook off the slight feeling of claustrophobia that was slowly starting to rise, as I had to guide my partner in order to dodge other couples. She would say something. Being too occupied I would simply smile and nod and continue to stare right on through her, not noticing the color of eyes, nor the length of her hair. Instead I would focus on the calm soothing music we were dancing in rhythm to. It wasn’t any kind of American music I’ve heard before, Celtic maybe? As I wondered to myself, I would switch my attention on the movement of my feet, making sure they lined up perfectly in sync with my partner’s. It was a simple two step waltz, two steps to the left and two steps to the right. I would slightly angle my movements to allow my partner and I to move around the “outer box” of the four pillars. The music would come to an end, and I checked the time as I walked the girl back to her seat and thanked her. 5:30pm, it was hard to imagine that an hour and a half had passed so quickly. Whenever I danced it felt like I was in another realm, one that time flowed differently in. So that when I only danced for only a few minutes, hours passed by in the real world. There was nothing left for me to do I picked up my bag and slung it over my shoulder in one fell swoop. It felt heavier than usual, though figuring it was my imagination, little did I understand, the weight of the silence as I walked out the door was heavier than the backpack would ever be.

While I say “class,” class is a rather loose term. It wasn’t a formally created course given by some public entity. It wasn’t traditional private lessons either, it was a makeshift class thrown together by our “instructor.” It was a community class with bunch of kids from my religious affiliation that lived in a community just outside of Mount Pleasant, Utah, that we called “The Hill.” Our “instructor” was merely a woman who knew slightly more about dancing than the rest of us. Though what she did know would become the foundation to the ballroom and swing dancing that I am know capable of doing, and I will be forever grateful for that.

I had gotten up to ask another girl- who it was didn’t really seem to matter. I simply asked a girl who I didn’t have a memory of asking recently. Once again not noticing anything about her, she was a girl and that was all that mattered. We might have some small talk to avoid awkward silence, but that didn’t matter to me. I was just there to dance, as I asked the girl the music started, and I listened for a second. The guitar, deeper voice and rhythm immediately gave off the feel of country. I couldn’t name this song, as I was not very well versed in the genre at the time. But as I listened, I absorbed the rhythm and beat, slightly swaying my body in motion with the song. I hardly noticed when the girl, whoever she was, accepted my hand and I having accustomed my body to the slower smooth beat of the song. I matched every step to be in time with the strums of the guitar in the background. The girl didn’t seem to have much interest in me but that didn’t matter a whole lot, I hardly even noticed as my eyes gazed through her.

What was important was the movement of two people, together in sync with the music, *one two, one two*, a slow but simple rhythm that everyone seemed to know. No communication needed, simple moving to a simple beat, boy leading girl. Then as the music slowly died out marking the end, slowly spinning the girl to finish out the dance, then taking the girl’s arm and returning her to her chair, with a nod of the head and a “thank you”.

I had given my farewell to such a girl I was back on my step next to the pulpit, contemplating my day and daydreaming as I waited for the instructor to either start the music again or to begin another lesson. When to my great surprise, I noticed someone sat down next to me. I was shocked to say the least, though it only lasted for a moment before I simply disregarded her. I didn’t know who she was I was sure I had danced with her before but I had danced with most the girls here so that wasn’t much to go off. She was just another girl, if she wanted to talk to me great, but I didn’t feel the need to use the energy it would take to look at her, so I just simply looked through her.

“How was your day?” she would ask.

“Good,” I responded still not thinking much of her.

“My name’s \*\*\*\*\*” she said.

“Cody Strange,” I responded. I wasn’t really interested in what her name was an, so I didn’t bother to pay attention to what she said. She would continue talking about all sorts of things, how much she loved dancing, her favorite songs, and her family. I figured I would humor her, its not like I was doing a lot in the first place. So, there on the step next to the pulpit I sat on the rough carpet, I found myself talking about my hobbies, I loved dancing, I would soon be joining the sophomore tennis team at North Sanpete High.

Once the music started, I asked her to dance and I noticed the song was country again, *I don’t dance,* I was surprised I recognized it. I found dancing with the girl (who I was beginning to kick myself for not paying attention to what her name was) was a rather unique experience.

Dancing with her was different from dancing with all the other girls that I had danced with previously. Dancing with her became more than just the simple *one, two, one, two,* rhythm I had become accustomed to, and the more we danced the better we got. I eventually stopped asking other girls at the class, silently declaring her as my dance partner and solely focused on improving with her and her alone.

Winter rolled around and the daylight faded faster and faster with every passing day. Soon enough by the time I finished dancing my fourth or fifth dance, I was practicing adding vertical motion to my movements to add to the flow of the dance. Ever so slightly raising my heels, rocking up and down, like a rowboat in the middle of a pond on a lazy day. As I practiced with the girl, spinning her at a moderate speed as we both moved up and down with the beat of *What If¸* by Kane Brown. I noticed I still didn’t know her name, and the thought of asking her flew out of my mind as quickly as it came in. I had more important things to focus on than simple names and faces of people.

By the time we finished it was already dark outside. The chill winter breeze sapping the heat out of anything that dared stay out for to long. Bracing myself for the short but freezing walk back home I noticed someone was following me out the door.

“That was a lot of fun,” she said.

“Uh, yeah I guess it was, you’re definitely improving,” I replied, slightly shock at how I did notice that she was getting noticeably better along with me. She followed me talking about how Kane Brown was one of her favorite artists. Without realizing it I had stopped and found myself with her. The chill air seemed to slide right off me like water over an oiled surface, and I for the first time ever, stood still enjoying the company of another human that I barely knew.

The ballroom was nearly twice, no three times the size of the small chapel room I was used to. A brilliant glittering chandelier hung from the ceiling reflecting the yellow light given off from the room, a grand piano sat in the center of the floor, and the stage was a meter above the ground offering free refreshments for anyone who entered. Being on the stage allowed you to look upon the hundreds of dancers on the floor, all moving in unison. With the exception of a few dancers who stood out from the rest with their spectacular skill on the floor, gliding across the ground guiding their partner, waltzing and weaving between the average dancer who was just they’re for the social gathering of it all.

Naturally, I found myself quite at home there, although not comparable with the best of them. I did my best to use the knowledge and practice to prove myself as slightly above the average, and there saw her. The same girl that had sat down next to me all those months ago, that I only saw a couple of times here and there.

I would go on to ask her to dance, and while I would still ask many others throughout the night, I would always come back to ask for at least one more. And we would dance, no longer a simple *one two, one two,* beat, rather a more advanced *one two three four, one two three four.* While we did not compare to some others and from a view from the outside we might have looked a little odd doing our little waltz on the edge of the circle not quite joining in with the crowd but not being entirely detached from it either. It felt like we were the best of the best there. Our movements in sync, moving as one with the rhythm of the music, not only moving horizontally but adding a bit of depth through the vertical motion of ever so slightly raising our heels as we moved in our own little box steps. I found a little voice pounding in the back of my mind, like a hammer and chisel slowly chipping away a great ice wall, I found myself starting to look at the girl and not through her. I noticed her long shoulder length hair, deep blue eyes and rounded face. She had a sparkling yellow dress on that made her shine brilliantly as I spun her under the light of the chandelier.

*Million Dreams, Thousand years, I Don’t Dance,* we danced the night away song after song coming and going but we were still on the dance floor. With every passing song that ice wall in my mind was being chipped away and I noticed more and more about her. Her contagious laughter, the way her eyes shined as we maneuvered from a twostep into a fourstep and I spun her as our feet glided across the dance floor.

*One two three four, one two three four.* The song, *Rewrite the Stars,* finished its final verse, as I spun her around the floor one more time. This concluded the last dance of the night, and the realization that I wouldn’t know the next time I would see this girl, the ice wall shattered. As she sat down, hand still in mine I looked her right in the eyes and asked one question.

“I’m sorry, but what’s your name?” She smiled broadly as I asked the question, eyes lighting up she responded,

“Laura,”