

Summer Nights

By [Lou Gallio](#)

Average Rating: 10

Excerpt of a story: A town bully in Southeast Texas, a car accident, teen romance and capers while growing up in the late '50s.

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“Hi Frankie.” Marcy got into the car and slid across the seat next to me. After a quick kiss and a screech of tires, we drove off. I cringed at the thought of telling her.

We had met a year ago at the Beehive Dance Club, a former bowling alley and holdover Quonset hut from World War Two.

I remember it well; Ougoo and I went inside and Honky-Tonk by Bill Doggett was bouncing off the drab plywood walls. That's when I spotted her.

“Ougoo, look!” I said, nodding my head in Marcy's direction. She stood out like a fresh lily. The overhead glitter ball mirrored multi-colored specks across her pink dress.

Ougoo dropped his jaw and gawked at her.

She was like a magnet and I was ready to make a move. “Think she'll dance with me?”

“Worth a try,” Ougoo said nonchalantly. “But face it man, you ain't no better looking than the rest of us.”

“What the hell does that mean?”

“Your sideburns are so long, they look phony like Elvis'; your flat top hair and DA look greasy. That gangly frame, a Greek-looking face and a cigarette pack rolled up in your sleeve don't help much either,” he said laughingly.

“Thanks a lot,” I retorted. “You sure know how to make a guy feel good. Hey, I'm a Rat Packer from Byrne High. Not a sissy rich kid!” At the time, we thought we were cool with our T-shirts, penny loafers, and jeans with creases that could slice cheese.

The DJ put on In the Still of the Night. Perfect! Here's my chance. I bulldozed my way through the crowd, went up to her and said, "Hi, I'm Frankie." I looked into her vibrant, sea-blue eyes. They were arresting, hypnotic, and sexy. I could tell she was a classy, bubbly person. Silky auburn hair framed the smooth contours of her creamy, oval face.

A thin smile crossed her face. "I'm Marcy," she said softly.

Her dress was tight fitting, elegantly outlining her buxom torso and thin waist. A mass of pleats and petticoats flared from her waist to just below her knees. I thought, probably a cheerleader from Griffin Park, the rich side of town. But she doesn't appear to be snobbish. I finally squeaked it out. "Wanna dance?"

She flashed a bigger smile. Then she flicked her hair back. "Sure."

Yes! My heart leaped. I clenched her slender hand and led her to the dance floor. Now, my heart was pounding. As we came together, she smelled like fresh honeysuckle in the springtime. My insides heated up like a soldering iron. As her body pressed against mine, my primal instincts swelled with passion.

We danced again and again, slow and fast, each time becoming more attracted to each other. Eventually, I was standing at her side the bigger part of the evening.

I'll never forget that night--especially when Ougoo did the James Brown shuffle. Everyone circled around him to watch. With a smug grin on his face, he did some fancy footwork, and then attempted to leap over a metal fold-up chair. But he snagged his crotch and toppled over, ending up spread-eagle on the floor! We all cracked up. Marcy laughed heartedly too. Good, she enjoys our kind of humor.

Since then, Marcy and I have been going steady. But tonight, our bond may be in jeopardy.

We drove to the drawbridge at the port canal and joined a line of waiting cars. A tugboat was passing through to the Port Neches refineries, where it would likely escort large tankers through the narrow water channels.

Above, the moonlit sky was clear. Looking straight ahead, the Pleasure Island lights shimmered on the canal. The tugboat pilot sounded his horn and waved as he passed under the bridge.

Marcy's alluring White Shoulders perfume drifted in the moist air. Okay

enough time for at least one passionate kiss. We embraced.

Over the bridge and on the other side of the canal, we cruised down Seawall Boulevard, heading towards the entertainment center. But I had put it off long enough. "Let's skip the arcade tonight," I said.

"Okay," she answered. "We need to talk anyway."

On that, I wondered if she somehow knew. She did seem unusually quiet, and a little nervous. We pulled up to the seawall at Lake Sabine. Stair-stepped granite blocks rimmed the lake, forming a popular romantic alcove. We parked at the far end, near the Pleasure Pier Ballroom, where Fats Domino, The Coasters and many other entertainers had performed.

"Look at the moon," she said, a tranquil look on her face. "It bounces off the waves and spotlights all the cars around us." Under a diamond-studded sky, parked cars with steamy windows had lovers inside. The clammy Gulf breeze swished through the palm trees, creating a natural, pleasant chime to the setting. The tide splashed against the seawall, spraying my windshield with glistening water pellets.

You could hear Sea of Love echoing from car radios. We kissed again, slowly. Marcy's full, ruby lips were soft and sweet, like marshmallows. A flit of my tongue playfully found its counterpart. After a long while, beads of sweat trickled down our faces. We broke for air. I took in a deep breath and said, "Got something to tell you."

She turned, her eyes enquiring. "Oh?"

"Don't know how to say this." I failed to suppress the slight quiver in my voice. "I'm joining the Marines."

We were silent for what seemed like a long time. The corners of her eyes glimmered with tears. "Why?" she said, voice tight with emotion.

I shrugged. "I think it's the thing to do."

She pulled out a tissue from her purse and dabbed her tears. "When?"

"Right after graduation. Marcy, I've been--"

"No, no, it's okay." She paused. "Frankie, I . . . I can't believe what's happening. This is dreadful. I need to tell you something too."

"What?" I wrinkled my face into a frown.

“I’ve decided to go away to college.”

I went numb with ambivalence. We sat quietly, holding hands and staring at the moon dancing on the lake. There Goes my Baby came on the radio. We listened for a while.

“I’ll write,” I said.

“I’ll wait for you.”