GIVANZE / COPPER BEND, WISCONSIN

#01

GRUMPSIDERS

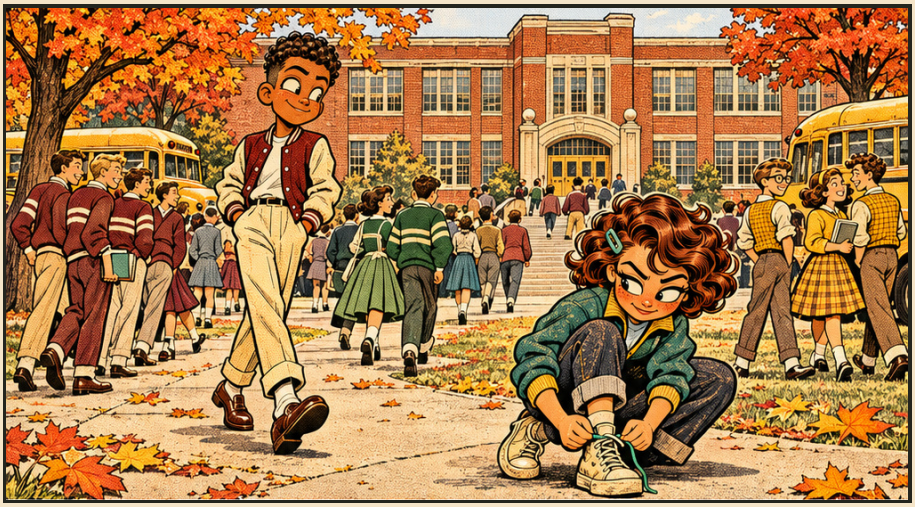
THE FIRST EIGHT



FOUR SCHOOLS. ONE FLOOR.

The freshman-year story

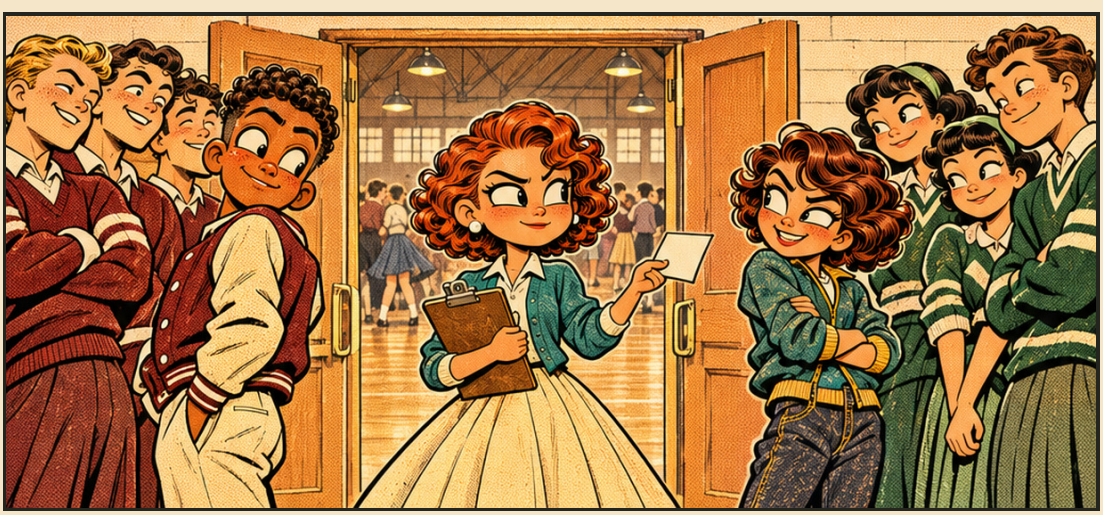
Four Schools, One Floor



Copper Bend, Wisconsin. First Friday of freshman year.
LARK: New school. Same shoes. Nobody look down.

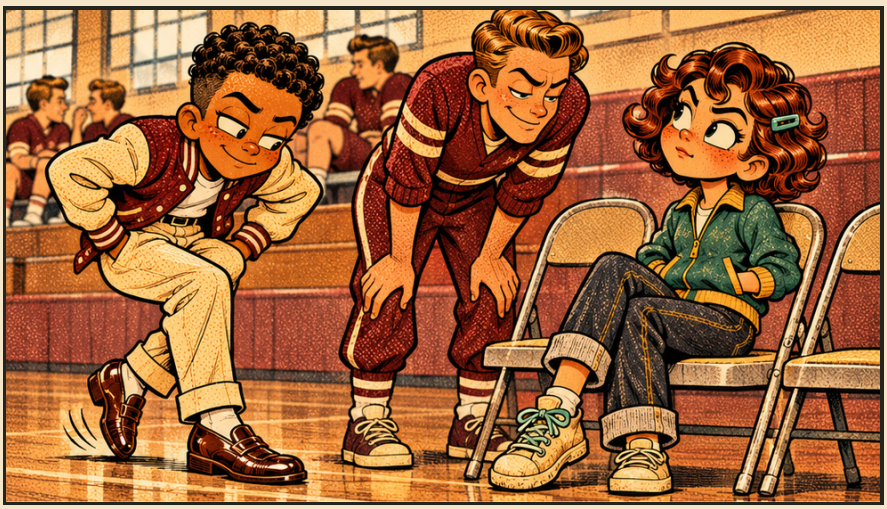


At Maple Hill you shuffled. Mill Creek taught heel taps. North Ward had hand-jive; Bay Road could turn a whole room.
At Copper Bend High, you were supposed to pick a corner.

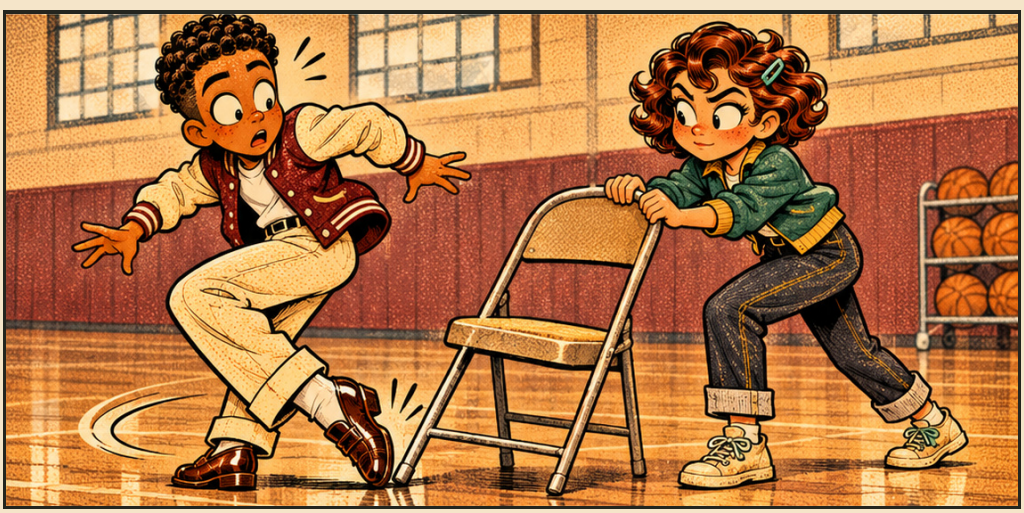


MARGO: One freshman act gets the opener at Founders' Hop. Signups close at four.
MAPLE HILL KID: We brought you here to win it, Dean.

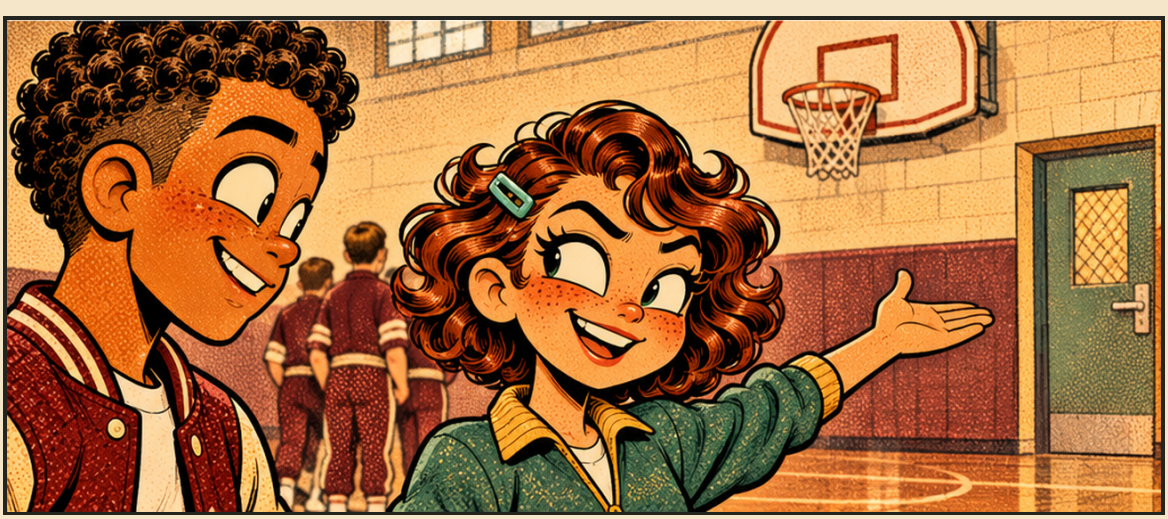
Out of Step



MAPLE HILL KID: Did your school teach dance, or just how to fix the shoes?
LARK: Both. Looks like yours skipped one.



LARK: Put your weight on seven. You’re trying to land on eight before it gets here.
DEAN: You didn’t see that.
LARK: Nope. Saw the chair, though.

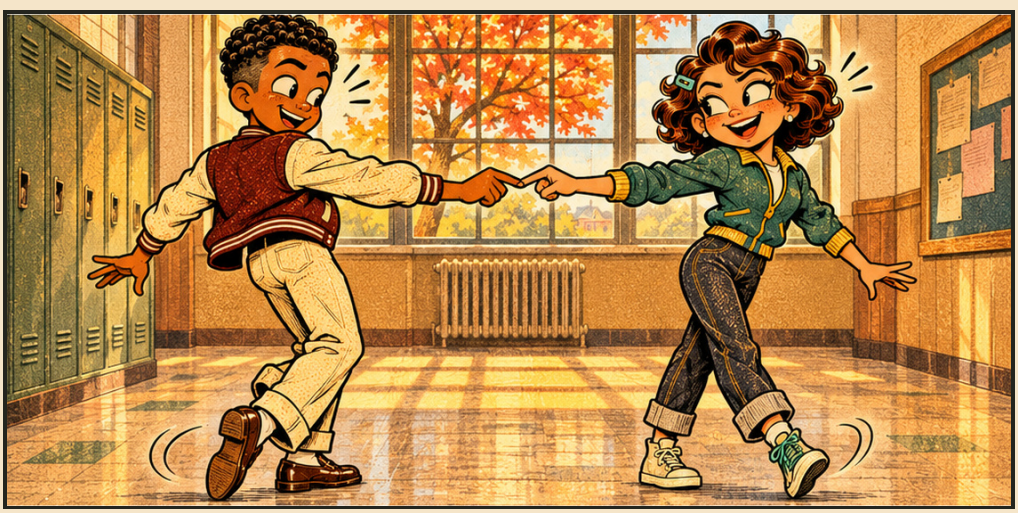


DEAN: Show me seven.
LARK: Out there. Somewhere the chairs can keep a secret.

Borrowed Steps



LARK: Tap here. That gives you somewhere to go.
DEAN: What if I slide into the space you leave?

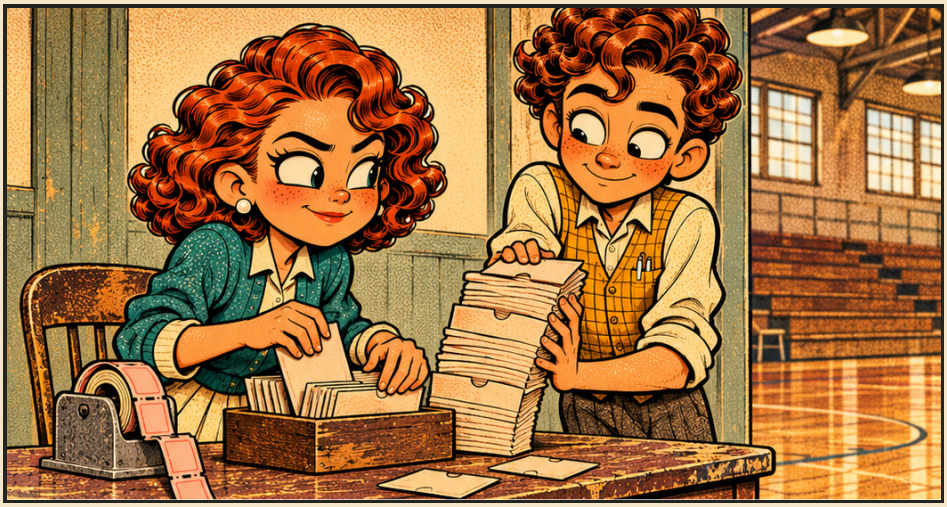


BOTH: Five, six, seven…
LARK: There it is.
DEAN: I’ve never done that before.



DEAN: Put both names down. You get seven. I’ll be there for eight.
LARK: Deal. And tell your chair it can come.

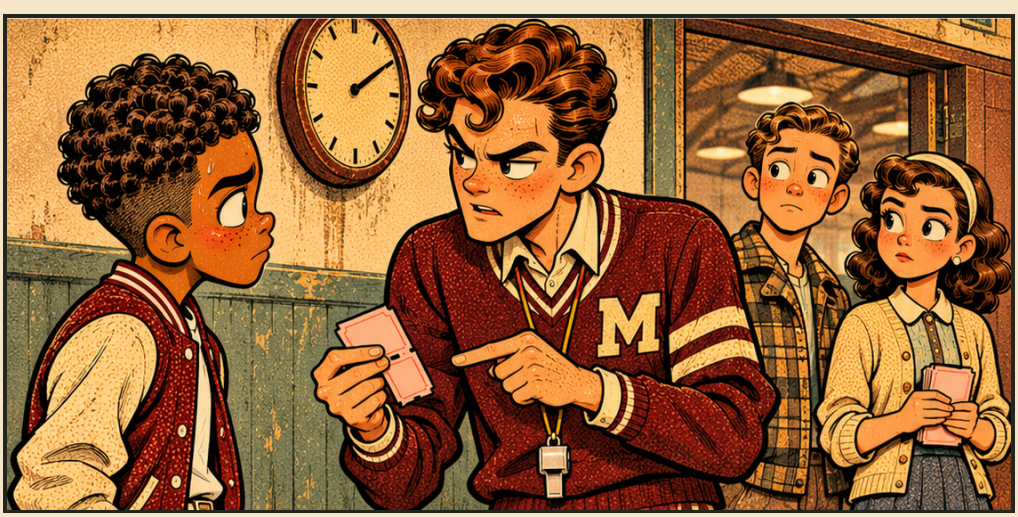
Almost Friends



MILES: You’ve got a system.
MARGO: I had a system. Now I have a witness.

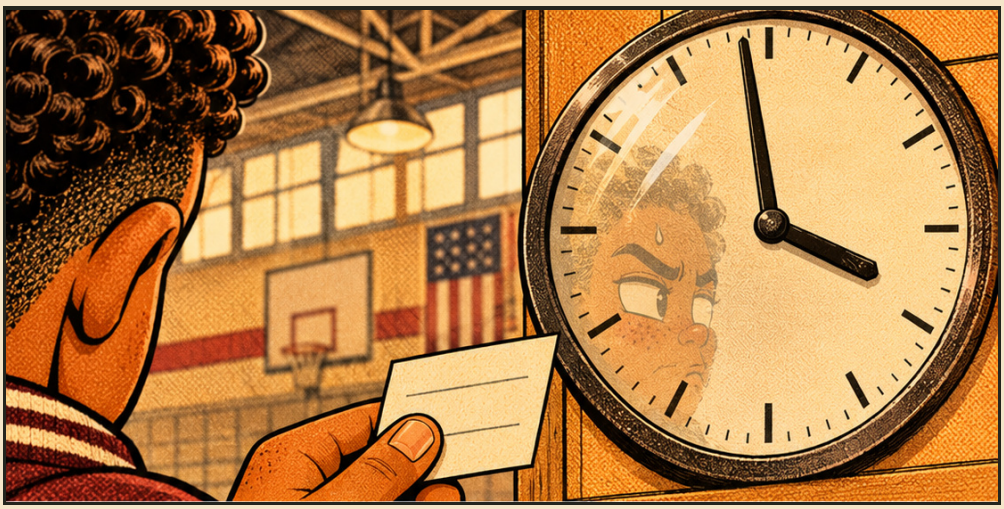


LARK: That’s my brother, Miles. He only talks that much when he’s nervous.
DEAN: That’s my sister, Margo. Nobody makes her laugh on a deadline.



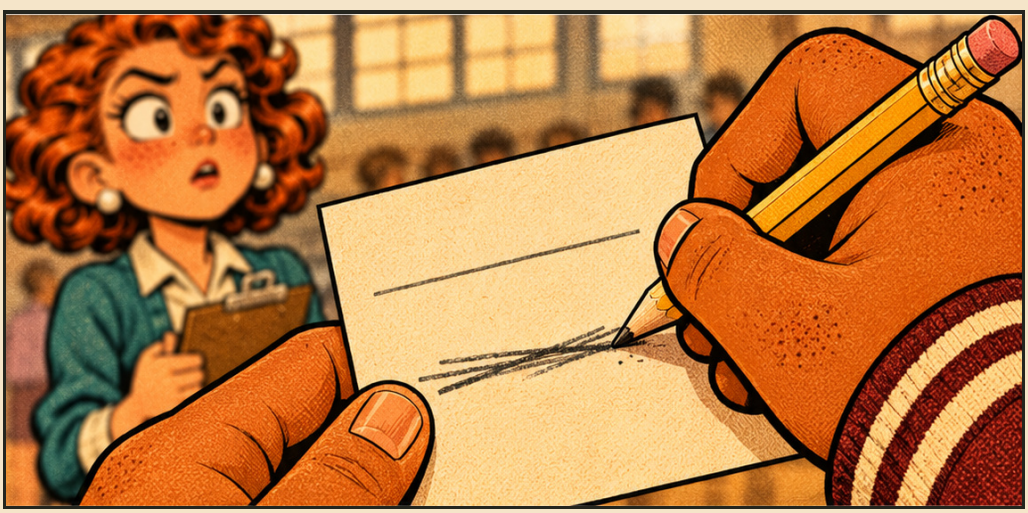
CREW CAPTAIN: They get the opener, Maple Hill loses it. Enter that step with us and you can lead.
DEAN: It’s not just my step.
CREW CAPTAIN: That’s not what I asked.

The Last Minute



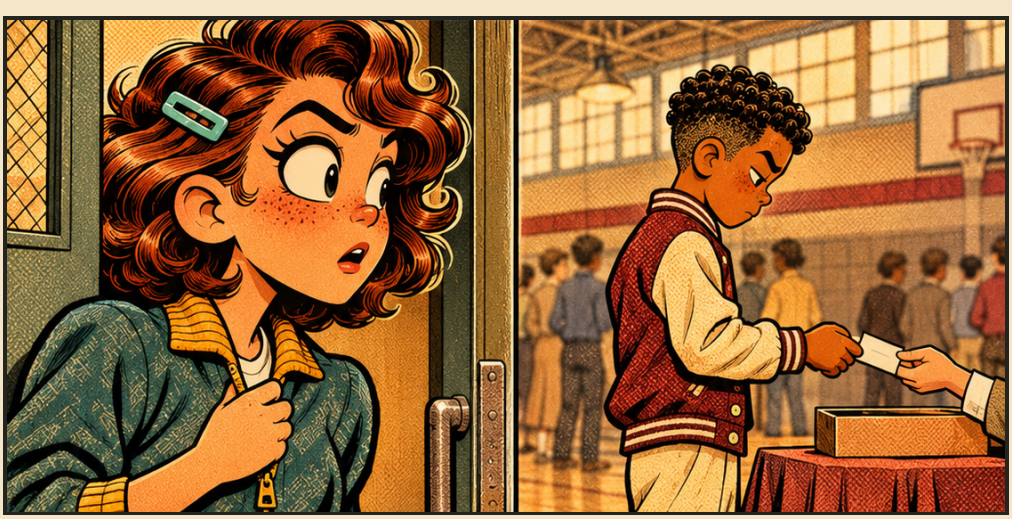
3:59.

DEAN: Tell me where to sign.



MARGO: Dean. Where’s Lark?

DEAN: It’s a Maple Hill solo. I made it.



LARK: You promised you’d be there for eight.

DEAN: I never said you couldn’t do your own.

That was when she stopped waiting for him.

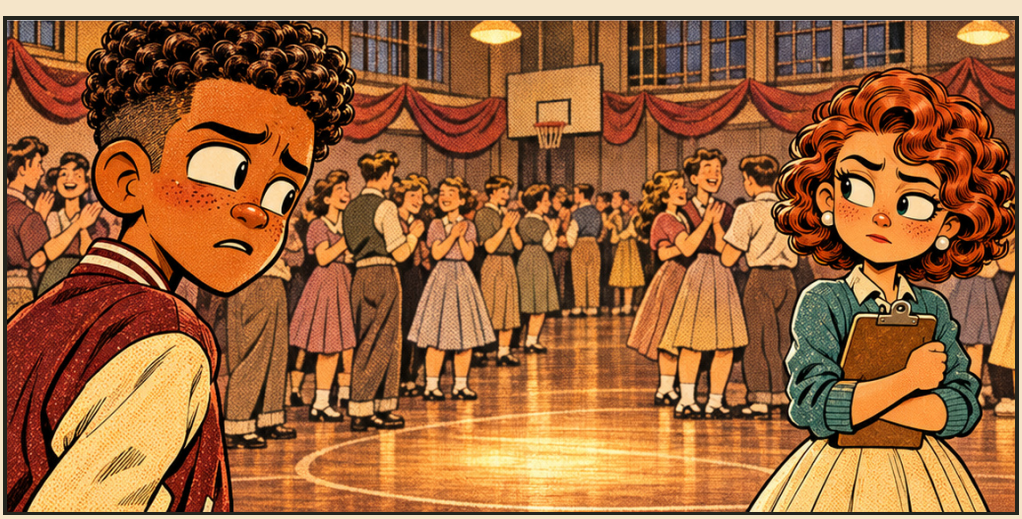
The Opener



At Founders’ Hop, Dean got the floor, the shout, and the space where she had been.
CROWD: Eight!

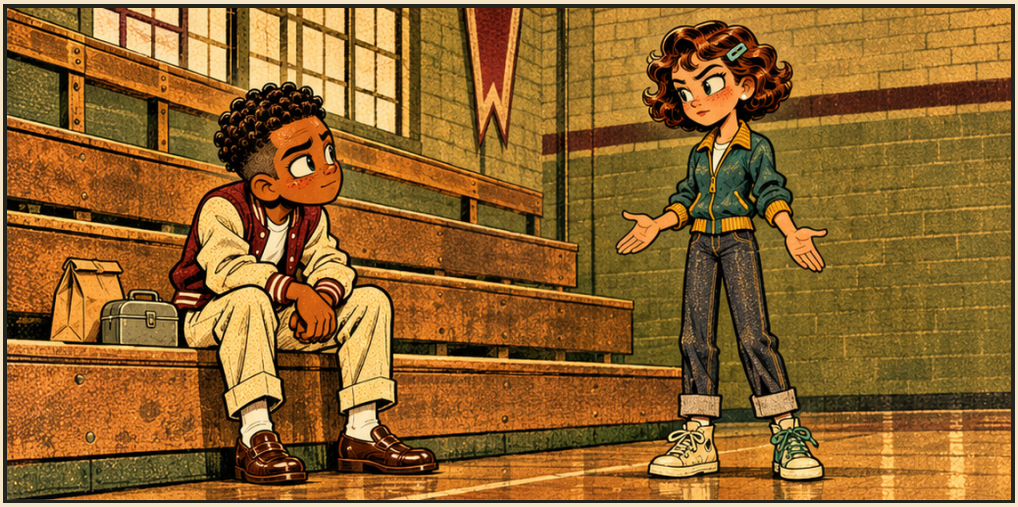


FRESHMAN: What if I forget how to start?
LARK: Start before you’re ready. I’ll make room.

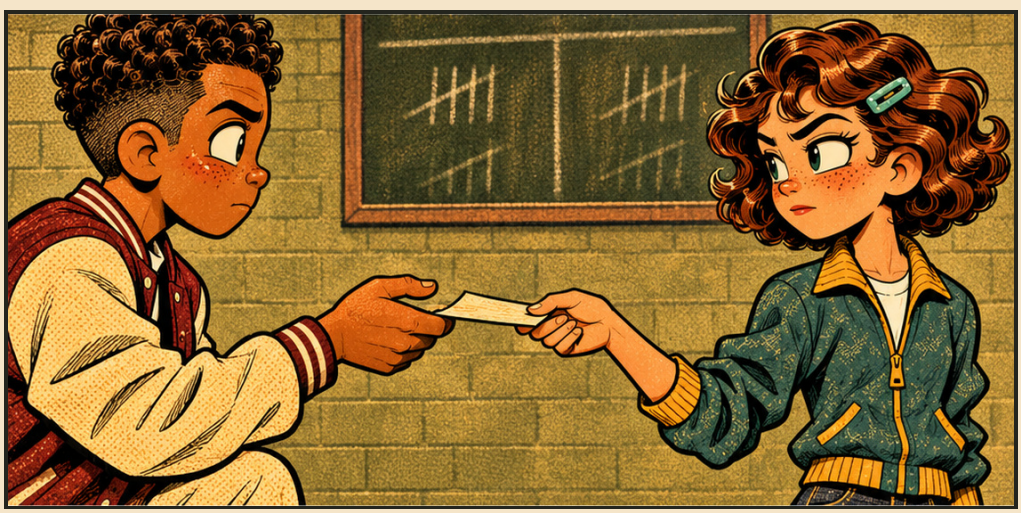


LARK: You won.
DEAN: I know.
Neither of them felt like clapping.

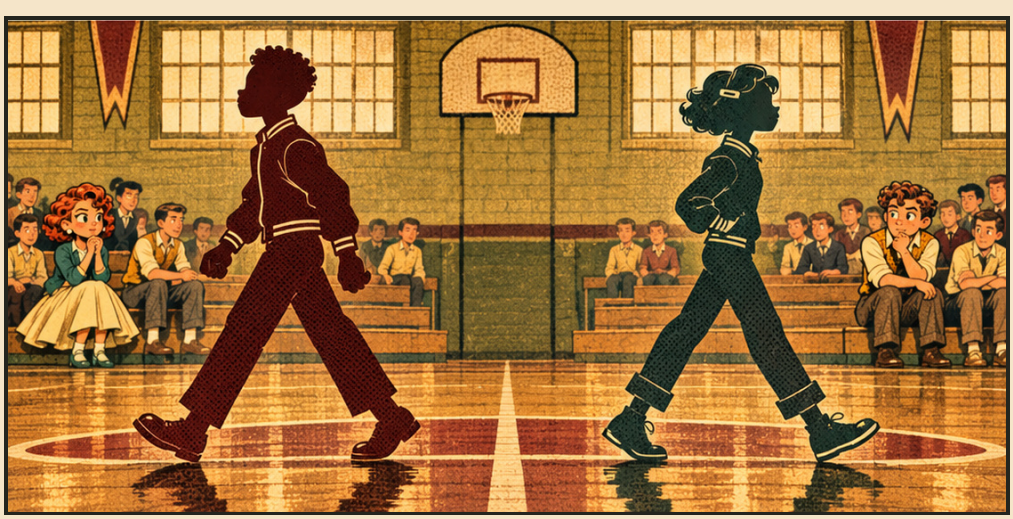
A Different Beat



DEAN: They were going to stick me in the back row.
LARK: Then you could’ve stood next to me.

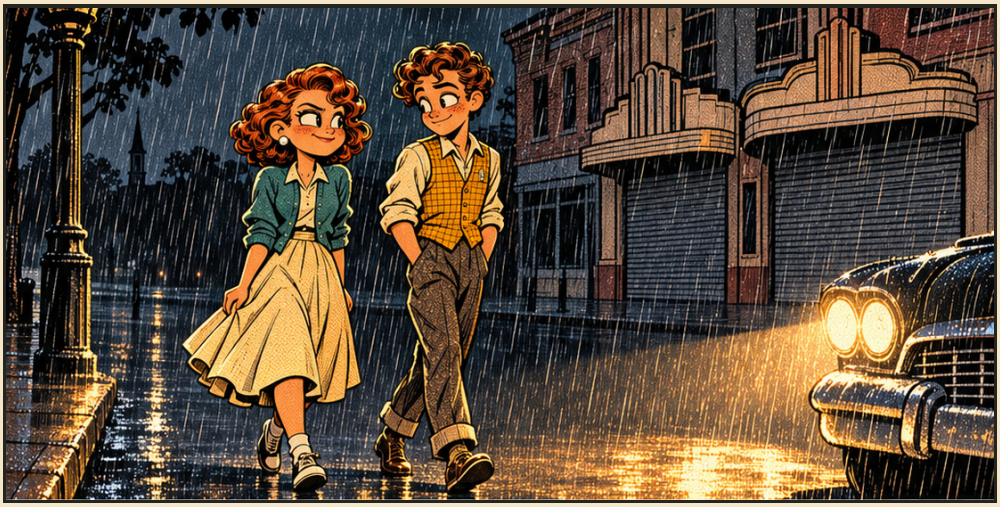


DEAN: Next time, we sign first.
LARK: Next time, I beat you.



By spring, every contest had two sides.
The funny thing was, they still agreed on the count.

Years Later



Years later, the lights went out on both sides of Copper Bend.
MILES: Well. Our backup plan’s out of power, too.
MARGO: Good. No one gets to decide the song.



MILES: Is that how it goes?
MARGO: It is now.



DEAN: I’ve never seen her this happy.
LARK: I know. Look at him.
Neither tried to stop them. Neither was about to let the other win.