

THE DANCE

- MARY:** At sixteen, is anticipating her first formal dance, and is quite excited about it at first.
- RENE:** At seventeen, is Mary's best friend and is trying to set her straight on the ways of men.
- RENE:** So, Mary. Tell me all. I heard what happened today in class.
- MARY:** Oh, Rene, it was so neat. I was just sitting there and in comes Carrie, carrying this big balloon with carnations and a card. I couldn't believe it.
- RENE:** So, what did the card say?
- MARY:** Wait, I've got it right here. I swear, John is just a really neat person.
- RENE:** He's sweet. What did you do when you got it?
- MARY:** I was dying for class to end, so I could find him and tell him yes.
- RENE:** So, you're going with him?
- MARY:** Oh, definitely. We will have such a great time.
- RENE:** Totally.
- MARY:** Here's the card. OK, read it.
- RENE:** Let me see. *(Reading to herself)* Hmm hmm hmm. Oh, that is sweet. He is funny. Like Homecoming is no big deal for you. I love it. *(Reading on)* Uh oh.
- MARY:** What, uh oh?
- RENE:** Did you see this last part?
- MARY:** What?
- RENE:** Love, John.
- MARY:** So?
- RENE:** He does know that you guys will be going as just friends, doesn't he?
- MARY:** Of course . . . at least I think so.
- RENE:** Are you sure?

- MARY:** Oh, come on, he's got to know that. I mean, we've known each other for so long and have partied and stuff, but he knows that it's just as friends.
- RENE:** "Love, John."
- MARY:** Rene, you're making more of this than it is.
- RENE:** You think so?
- MARY:** Of course.
- RENE:** Don't you guys talk on the phone a lot?
- MARY:** Yes. Almost every night.
- RENE:** Every night?
- MARY:** He's just a friend. We have a lot in common. He knows that I could never be interested in him that way.
- RENE:** Don't you think you should make that clear to him?
- MARY:** What am I going to say? Hey John, don't forget, we're "just friends" OK?
- RENE:** Yes.
- MARY:** Oh, please. That would be stupid. Besides, it's implying things that may not even be there.
- RENE:** Fine, Mary, you do what you want . . . but if it were me, I'd get it straight before you tell him you'll go.
- MARY:** Uh oh.
- RENE:** You already told him?
- MARY:** Right after class was over, I ran to his class and caught him and told him yes. I was so excited that he would take such time to ask me so sweetly.
- RENE:** You ran?
- MARY:** Well, I was excited.
- RENE:** You're an idiot. Look at that . . . "love, John."
- MARY:** Oh dear . . .
- RENE:** Well, that's one way of putting it.
- MARY:** What do you think I should do?
- RENE:** I think you better tell him as soon as possible.

MARY: Yeah. What should I say?
RENE: Just be honest. Tell him you like him as a friend and that's it.
MARY: That sounds so cold.
RENE: Not as cold as getting his hopes up.
MARY: But what if he didn't mean it like you think?
RENE: Here's what you do. Are you going to talk to him tonight?
MARY: I usually talk to him about 9:30.
RENE: Every night?
MARY: Yes.
RENE: Oh, brother. OK, here's what you say. You say how nice it is that we are going as friends and that you feel so good that it is him you're going with, 'cause you know you'll have a good time with such a good friend. You got that so far?
MARY: I'm not an idiot, Rene.
RENE: Right. Anyway, then you have to give him an out. If you sense that he is feeling funny about it, tell him you will understand if he doesn't want to take just a friend. That way if he feels like he is getting dumped on, then you, as a friend, will be giving him the option to ask someone else.
MARY: OK, so what if he says it is fine?
RENE: Then go. As long as it is clear, up front, that he knows that it is just as friends.
MARY: That sounds good. I just don't want to come off like a bitch, you know?
RENE: If he is as good a friend as you say he is, then you will come out looking like a great person. If he is a jerk, then you are in for trouble.
MARY: What do you mean?
RENE: Well, if his male ego is pierced, then you are out of luck with him.
MARY: He won't be like that . . . I think.

RENE: Call me tonight right after you talk to him and we'll talk, OK?
MARY: OK. God, all of a sudden I'm not excited anymore. I feel like this is going to be more work than fun.
RENE: Hey, the ball is in his court after this. It will be fine if he acts like a mature adult.
MARY: We're talking a 17-year-old male.
RENE: You might be in trouble.
MARY: Oh, not with John. He's too nice. He'll be fine about this. Trust me.
RENE: I hope so. Because if he likes you more than you like him and you shut him down, he is going to be a jerk about it.
MARY: Not John.
RENE: He's a man, isn't he?
MARY: Uh oh.
RENE: Uh oh is right. *(They share a look.)* You better call me the minute you get off the phone with him, do you understand?
MARY: Don't worry, I will.
RENE: I'll see ya later, OK?
MARY: Yeah. Oh, and Rene?
RENE: Yes?
MARY: Thanks.
RENE: No problem. Call me.
MARY: I will. *(By herself)* Damn.