

From Badger by Don Zolidis

1943. After a dance. IRENE and GRACE are co-workers at the Badger Ordnance Plant. IRENE is dressed like a man, and got into a fight with another man at the dance who took issue with her dress. She's been punched in the face. Grace has helped her outside.

IRENE, 21, gender non-conforming.

GRACE, 19, a free spirit.

GRACE helps IRENE outside. IRENE holds a cold drink to her face.

GRACE

You all right?

IRENE

Owww... sometimes drunk idiots pack a wallop.

GRACE

Here, sit down. Well that was a first. I've never had a gal take a punch for me before.

IRENE

I shoulda hit him back.

GRACE

Next time. You ever been punched before?

IRENE

My Daddy was a mean drunk, so...

GRACE

I'm sorry.

IRENE

He's dead now. But he was a class A bastard when he was alive. Didn't really take a shine to me or my brothers. We all got plenty of bruises.

GRACE

I'm sorry to hear that.

IRENE

It is what it is. People lash out. When you don't have nothing, you want to lash out at something. You can't punch life, so you punch you the nearest soft thing available. That was me. Or my brothers. Or my mother before she left.

GRACE sits next to her.

GRACE

I had a fun time today.

IRENE

Sorry I ruined it.

GRACE

You didn't ruin it. You were the reason I had fun. I woulda danced with you all day.

IRENE

Ah it was stupid. They want you in a dress, right? Unless they need you to work. Then you can work like a man, but you can't get paid like a man. You can't get respected like a man. And once the job is done... back into the dress, right? And if you don't like it... we got ways. Stupid to think that's it gonna be any other way. You fit in the box or they cut your arms off. You know that Cinderella story? The stepsisters, they don't fit in the shoe, they can't fit in the perfect shoe, and they want so bad to be the princess in the story the first one cuts off her toes. I think about that. You don't fit. You'll do anything to fit in. Even if it means severing pieces of yourself. Just lop 'em right off and hope nobody notices the blood.

GRACE

What parts of yourself are you chopping off?

IRENE

Oh – so many.

GRACE

Yeah?

IRENE

Yeah.

GRACE

Me too.

They sit there a moment.

IRENE

I really liked dancing with you tonight.

GRACE

It was fun.

IRENE

It felt... comfortable.

GRACE

Nobody trying to grope ya.

IRENE

Yeah.

IRENE gathers her courage. GRACE notices.

GRACE

You all right?

IRENE nods.

You sure?

IRENE

I just wanted to let you know that you were beautiful tonight – today.

GRACE laughs.

GRACE

And you were very handsome. In a beautiful way. Best man there.

IRENE sets her hand down between them.

GRACE notices. She puts her hand over IRENE's in a friendly way – at first.

It becomes something more. They notice.

I'll... I'll see you at work.

IRENE

Okay.

GRACE takes a moment, stands up.

GRACE

You okay to get home?

IRENE

Sure.

GRACE

All right.

She stops – kisses IRENE on the top of the head, and leaves.

IRENE waits there. Smiles.

To read the rest of this play, visit www.playscripts.com