

MOM AND DAD'S MARTINIS by Jacelyn Cane EXCERPT

Back in Toronto, Dad, cleaned up this time, asked Mom out again. She agreed to go with him to U of T's varsity dance the following Saturday.

Mom wore a calf-length dark-green taffeta dress with a cinched waist. Thanks to the crinoline, the skirt was so full it could stand up on its own. Dad dressed in a navy-blue suit with wide lapels and shoulders and a matching blue bowtie - no mickey in his pocket that night. Together they danced to dreamy music, like Nat King Cole's "Mona Lisa" and the Ames Brothers' "Sentimental Me."

"You're quite the dancer, Dot. Can I call you Dot?" asked my dad.

"Of course." She smiled at him. "I'm not calling you Charles, am I?" Together, they swayed around the dance floor. Mary Coxwell swung past them in the arms of a heavy-set boy in a varsity sweater, followed by Sue Conway and her boyfriend, Ed. Mom looked over Dad's shoulder at her two best friends and smiled.

Later that Saturday night, the three girls, with curlers in their hair, sat cross-legged on my mother's bed. They always curled their hair for church on Sundays, regardless of what had happened on Saturday nights.

"Did you see that fellow with Eve?" Mary stretched out on her side in her checkered jammies. "Wasn't he dreamy?" She raised her eyes to the ceiling.

"And, what about Cassie's new boyfriend?" said Sue. "I wouldn't mind taking a walk with him." The three of them giggled.

"Never mind all that," said Mom. "I've met the man I want to spend the rest of my life with." She threw her arms up in the air. Mary hugged her while Sue bounced on the bed.

Dad was equally taken with Mom. Their university classes ended at the same time at opposite ends of the U of T campus, so he would bolt across the university grounds on his lanky legs, just to meet Mom.

"Can I ... carry your books, Dot?" he asked one day bent over and out of breath. "And ... can I ... take you for coffee?"

“Why thanks, Charlie. I’d love to,” Mom handed her books to my dog-tired dad. From that day forward, they became an item. Dad spent so much time with Mom he became known as “The Shadow”—a nickname that stuck throughout their married life.