

# The Last Dance

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## **Characters:**

**Mallory:** A high school senior who is about to graduate but still has not made any decisions. She is stressed and very confused. She has also had a crush on her neighbor, Matt for years, but she thinks that he doesn't even know that she exists.

**Matt:** Mallory's next-door neighbor who is a year older and has had a crush on Mallory

**Liz:** Mallory's best friend who is very optimistic and doesn't worry about things. She thinks Mallory should stop getting so stressed and instead embrace life as an experience.

**Mom:** Mallory's mom who always wants her daughter to think positive and only wants the best for Mallory.

## **Scene 1:**

*(MALLORY storms across the stage, which is set up like a living room. HER mother, who is sweeping, stops and looks up as SHE walks in. SHE smiles perkily, but all SHE receives in return is a stormy glare.)*

MOM:

*(trying hard to keep on HER smile)* Hey honey! How was school?

MALLORY:

*(Sarcastically)* Oh, just peachy! We're supposed to be making all of our decisions about college and life and I have no idea what to do!!! How in the world am I supposed to know what I want to do with my life right now? I can't even decide what dress to wear to the dance!!! *(SHE is almost in tears now and just curls up on the couch)*

MOM:

Well, I know it seems hard right now, but you just have to have faith that everything will work out like it should. It really isn't as bad as it seems. Just think about all the things you have to be thankful for.

MALLORY:

*(Looking up and glaring at HER mom)* Like what!?! Let's just examine my life for a moment, shall we: I have no idea what I want to be or where I want to go to college, I don't have good enough grades to actually get a scholarship, which I really need because college costs about as much as a nice house, we have a dance tonight that I don't have a date for and, even if I did, I have nothing to wear to, I have Azalea Trail Maid try-outs next week and I know next to nothing about Mobile history, and I have to go visit Dad next week for my whole Spring Break! Overall, I'd say my life really sucks right now! *(SHE'S now sitting straight up and looks angry)*

MOM:

*(Struggling to try and make HER daughter feel better)* Of course it does if you look at it like that. But you have lots of stuff to be thankful for. You're healthy, you have friends and a family who care about you, and so many options open for your future. And not

having a date to a dance isn't the end of the world, trust me. Plenty of girls go stag, and you're no better than them.

MALLORY:

*(Dismissively)* Whatever. You just don't understand at all! Why do I even try to explain?!?

MOM:

*(Starting to get angry HERSELF at HER daughter's rude attitude)* You can be so ungrateful sometimes!!! Liz's here, maybe you'll listen to her more than me. Of course, you don't listen to me at all, so that wouldn't be hard to do!

MALLORY:

Fine! I'll talk to you later. Maybe you'll understand a little better then!

MOM:

*(Turning to LIZ, who has just walked in)* Good-luck with her! Maybe you can talk some sense into her!

LIZ:

*(Shrugging HER shoulders and grinning at MALLORY'S MOM)* I'll try, but I don't think she'll listen to me anymore then she has you!

MOM:

*(Looking relieved)* Thanks. There's some Coke in the fridge if ya'll get thirsty.

LIZ:

*(Turning to MALLORY with a concerned expression)* Hey! What's the problem? You've never yelled at your mom before.

MALLORY:

*(Again looking both angry and upset)* I don't know! I just feel so weird with this whole college thing and now everyone's talking about that stupid dance and I don't even have a date! I know it shouldn't bother me and I know I sound like such a wimp for whining about all of this, but I just don't know what to do and I don't know why it's all bothering me so much.

LIZ:

Hey, Hey, take a deep breath and calm down! It's definitely not as bad as you seem to think it is! Come on, do you really want a date to the dance anyway? It would be just like babysitting your little brother, anyway. You know how guys are, they burp and fart and have no manners and most of them can't even dress themselves. Remember my last boyfriend, Ben? His idea of a romantic night out was sitting in front of the TV, watching football or whatever stupid game was on and drinking warm beer. I don't think you're missing out there.

MALLORY:

*(MALLORY gets up and starts pacing around the room)* It's not just that, it's everything. I feel like my life is spinning out of control, and nothing's falling into place like it needs to!

LIZ:

*(Getting up and standing next to MALLORY)* Maybe it is falling into place, and you just don't like the arrangement.

MALLORY:

*(Turning angrily to LIZ)* Would you stop with all the psychology mumbo-jumbo and help me figure out what to do? I'm really lost here!

LIZ:

*(Looking up excitedly)* I have an idea! You should just come to the dance with Chris and me. We're going out to eat beforehand with a big group of people, and then we're all going to the dance together. You won't feel out of place because there will be so many people that no one will know whether or not you even have a date, nor will they care.

MALLORY:

*(Hesitantly)* I don't know. Will I even know any of these people?

LIZ:

*(Still excited and unconcerned with MALLORY'S worries)* What does it matter? If you don't know them when you arrive, you'll get to know them all through dinner. Who knows, maybe your Mr. Right that has all the answers to your questions will be there, just waiting for you!

MALLORY:

*(Flippantly)* You are such a romantic! All that will probably be waiting for me is a bunch of looks from people I've never even seen before, most of them thinking "who is this girl and why did she just sit down with me?"

LIZ:

Enough! We've gone over that already. Look, I have to go home and get ready. I'll come back by here in 3 hours and you had better be dressed, ready, and looking gorgeous when I arrive. Okay?

MALLORY:

*(Dryly)* Do I have a choice?

LIZ:

*(Cheerfully smiling at MALLORY)* Nope. I'll see you in a little bit.

## Scene 2:

*(MALLORY has gotten dressed and ready and is sitting outside on a bench under a magnolia tree, waiting for LIZ to come pick her up. Her neighbor, MATT, comes striding across the yard and stops next to her.)*

MATT:

*(Looking mildly surprised to see HER)* Hey. *(Does a double take)* Wow! What are you all dressed up for?

MALLORY:

*(Looking shyly at the ground)* There's some dance tonight that my friend's dragging me to.

MATT:

*(Sitting down next to HER)* Aaahhh. I remember high school dances. They were okay, I guess, but they were always so strained, like people were making themselves have fun. Of course, that tension probably had something to do with the fact that we had nuns no more than three feet away from us at all times. Just imagine trying to make a move on some girl with Sister Mary Katherine standing there, glaring at you the whole time.

MALLORY:

*(Turning to HIM, looking amused and sympathetic)* Geeze, that sounds horrible! Why in the world did everyone even bother going?

MATT:

*(Shrugging)* It was a dance and it was high school, what else can you say? Besides, they definitely gave me a lot of stories to entertain people with.

MALLORY:

*(Standing up and looking at HIM shyly and hopefully)* Hey, this is going to sound really random, but what are you doing tonight? Because, you know, if you're free, you could always come with me and a couple of friends. We may not have Nazi nuns, but there is bound to be something interesting that goes on. Like you said, it is high school.

MATT:

*(Happily)* That'd be awesome – wait a minute *(hitting HIS head like HE just remembered something)* Crap! I can't do it! I promised to help my mom out for the weekend. I'm really sorry—

MALLORY:

*(Looking crestfallen and walking a little further away from MATT and the bench)* It's okay, don't worry about it. I was already going to go stag, so it's not a big deal.

MATT:

*(Looking imploringly at MALLORY)* I'm really sorry. If I'd had any idea. . .

MALLORY:

It's fine, I'll just talk to you later. I have to go back in and get some, umm, some . . . books!!

MATT:

*(Incredulously)* Books?

MALLORY:

*(Speaking quickly and nervously)* Yeah, you know, like the things you read that have those letter-thingies on the page? I head they make you smart so, uumm, I'm gonna bring some with me so I don't get stupid!

MATT:

*(Giving HER an odd look)* Yeah, well, on that note, I really have to get back inside, so I'll see you later and good luck with those uumm "books". *(He walks away and off-stage)*

MALLORY:

*(Not bothering to look at HIM)* Yeah, see you later.

*(To HERSELF)* Books! How stupid could I sound? Not only is it too dark to read at a dance, but now I sound like I'd be so lonely that I would have nothing to do but sit in the corner and read! God, how much more of a nerd could I possibly sound like?!?! Crap! Liz's back!

*(MALLORY jumps behind the azalea bush beside her and watches as LIZ rings HER doorbell and waits for a few minutes, then tries again. After a couple of tries, LIZ throws up HER hands disgustedly and walks away)*

Thank God! I thought she was going to break into the house or search the yard or something!

*(MATT has walked back over to where MALLORY was but slows down when HE sees HER crouched behind the bush.)*

MATT:

*(Looking slyly at MALLORY)* So, you're hiding behind a bush instead of going to your dance. There has got to be a good reason for that, at least, I hope so.

MALLORY:

*(Startled, jumps up and exclaims)* I didn't see you there! What are you doing sneaking up on me anyway?

MATT:

*(Trying to defend HIMSELF)* I'm not sneaking up on you. I just told my mom that I had some errands to run and I came out to see if you were okay. You seemed different earlier, not quite yourself, you know?

MALLORY:

*(Getting angry because SHE is embarrassed. Starts pacing around)* Oh, great, I'm a pity case now! What next, I mean, my life truly cannot get much worse than it is now!

MATT:

*(Trying to calm HER down and keep up with HER pacing)* Relax; you're not a pity case! I just felt bad that I couldn't go with you and then I saw you hiding from your friend so I figured something was up. I came over to see if maybe you needed someone to talk to.

MALLORY:

*(Turning to MATT with a remorseful expression)* I'm sorry I snapped at you, I just don't know what's wrong with me lately. It's like my feelings are all over the place, and the littlest things are making me lose it. I'm driving everyone, including myself, completely crazy!

MATT:

That sucks. Anything I can do?

MALLORY:

*(Hopefully and sarcastically)* Do you have all the answers or even a crystal ball tucked away in your closet?

MATT:

*(Grinning)* Nope, sorry.

MALLORY:

*(Sitting down)* Oh well.

*(MATT sits down next to HER)*

*(Silence for a few seconds)*

MATT:

*(Turning to MALLORY excitedly)* Hey, let's play a game!

MALLORY:

*(Now looking at HIM incredulously)* And how old do you think I am again?

MATT:

*(Giving HER a chastising look)* Well, it's better than just sitting here in silence listening to the grass grow.

MALLORY:

*(Dryly)* You could always go back home.

MATT:

*(Jokingly)* And leave you out here to sulk and get even more miserable? No way.

MALLORY:

*(Shrugging and looking away)* Oh well, a girl can always hope.

MATT:

You're just mad right now. Anyway, let's play twenty questions! I haven't done anything like this in so long, it actually sounds kind of fun!

MALLORY:

Who's asking first?

MATT:

I'll go, since you look like you're one step away from either crying or screaming at me.

MALLORY:

I'm feeling discriminated against over here. *(Smiling)*

MATT:

Ha! I saw that smile! *(Moves a little bit closer to HER)* Okay, what's the stupidest thing that you've ever done?

MALLORY:

*(Grimacing)* Geeze! Can't we start off with something slow, with something a little less embarrassing, you know, something like "What's your favorite color?"

MATT:

Don't wimp out on me here! I know you can answer that question.

MALLORY:

*(Puts on a resigned look)* Fine, fine. . . Well, there was this time a couple of years ago when I couldn't remember how to spell "sweater". I kept walking around asking people, "is it sweat-or or sweat-er", and everyone thought I was joking so they would just laugh and not answer me. Finally, one of my friends realized that I was serious and decided to let me know.

MATT:

*(Grinning)* Wow, that's actually kind of sad

MALLORY:

*(Looking put out)* Oh, and I'm sure you've never done anything dumb. How about you? What was your stupidest moment?

MATT:

*(Closing HIS eyes for a minute as HE remembers)* Ooohhh, that's an easy one. This one time, I was at the mall getting something for my mom for Mother's Day and I heard someone call my name. It sounded like one of my friends, so I turned around to say hey back to him but kept on walking. I managed to face back around front right as I was running into one of those big signs they stick up to let you know about sales. Not only did that really hurt, but everyone, including my friends, saw that one. They still bring that up today!

MALLORY:

Yikes! I would have been so embarrassed! I probably would have turned bright red or something equally bad.

MATT:

Nah, it wasn't that bad and hey, now I have a great story that I can use to pick up chicks!

MALLORY:

Right.

MATT:

*(Looking interested)* So, you're sure you want to skip that dance? Isn't it your last one or something like that?

MALLORY:

*(Shrugging nonchalantly)* It is, but I really have no desire to go. I'm having more fun here with just you than I would be having in a restaurant full of strangers, anyway.

MATT:

*(Putting on an injured face)* Well, at least I'm better than a stranger.

MALLORY:

*(Trying to take back what SHE said)* No, wait, you know I didn't mean it that way. It's just, you know, your . . .

MATT:

*(Chuckling now and smiling)* Hey, relax, I was just teasing. You shouldn't worry so much; it's really not good for you.

MALLORY:

*(Looking at the ground dejectedly)* I know, it's just that I have so much going on right now. I mean, I have to decide on a college, and what I'm going to do with my life and.

MATT:

Don't worry about it so much. Everything's going to fall into place, if it hasn't already. You need to stop stressing so much and just have fun. You know what they say, Carpe Diem!

MALLORY:

*(Not looking at HIM yet)* Easy for you to say.

MATT:

*(Lifting HER head up to get HER to look at HIM)* Easy for you too say. Come on. What do you want to do, right now?

MALLORY:

*(Blushing)* I don't know! What kind of question is that?

MATT:

*(Still looking at HER kindly)* The kind you should be asking yourself, instead of “what do I have to do right now?” For example, I really want to dance with you right now.

MALLORY:

*(Stuttering)* Right now, with me?

MATT:

*(Smiling softly, standing up, and pulling HER up to stand next to HIM)* Yes with you, and yes right now. Come on, what’s stopping you?

MALLORY:

I don’t know . . . *(trailing off)*

MATT:

*(Excitedly)* Exactly! Now, come here and dance with me!

### Scene 3

MALLORY:

*(MALLORY and MATT are sitting back down on the bench, but HE now has HIS arm around HER and THEY are close together. The moon is up and the night is silent.)*

*(Looking up to see MATT'S face)* Thanks for everything you did tonight. I don't know why, but I really feel so much better than I did earlier.

MATT:

*(Smiling down at HER)* I had a great time, and I'm glad you feel a lot better, but there's something missing right now.

MALLORY:

*(Confused)* What?

MATT:

Well, we never actually finished our game of twenty questions, you know.

MALLORY:

*(Groaning and pulling away from HIM)* Not that again! I always end up answering those humiliating questions!

MATT:

*(Talking with laughter in HIS voice)* Don't worry, I won't ask anything super-personal. At least, I think I won't.

MALLORY:

*(Closing HER eyes, opening them, and looking back at HIM with a slight smile)* I swear, sometimes you just need to be hit.

MATT:

*(Grinning and pulling HER back into HIS arms)* But you love me anyways!

MALLORY:

Now I know you're dreaming! Okay, let's get the rest of these questions over with.

MATT:

Let's see, question number 2. . . *(Pretending to think deeply and tapping HIS head)* I've got it! What's one thing you did this week that you don't think you'll ever forget? And please don't give some stupid answer like: "Well, I went to the mall and bought the cutest little purse and then I even found a pair of matching shoes for half price!"

MALLORY:

*(Putting HER hands on HER hips)* For your information, I wasn't going to give some air-headed answer like that anyways! If I remember anything from this week, it would probably be sitting there at lunch with my friends and deciding to name and adopt my apple.

MATT:

*(Doing a double take and looking back at HER)* Wait a second, come again? What in the world possessed you to name an apple?

MALLORY:

*(On a roll now)* Well, there was a lull in the conversation and I noticed that my apple had all these little dots that looked like freckles and I just decided that I would name him Al the Apple. Of course, then my friends decided that Al had to stand for something and

no one could decide if it was Alvin or Aloysius, so he became Alvin Aloysius the Apple. Then I became too attached to eat him, so my friend Katie had to take the first bite and, well, that's pretty much what happened.

MATT:

*(With a bemused expression)* That's kind of weird, but in a cool way. At least we now know that you will never really get bored.

MALLORY:

*(Slightly blushing and looking away)* I'm starting to think that that's one story I probably shouldn't have told.

MATT:

To late now! Your turn, what's your question?

MALLORY:

*(Relishing HER new job)* Give me a minute, now I have to get you to tell something as embarrassing as the Apple Incident . . . think . . . think . . . Oh! I know! What's your worst story that your Mom loves to tell everyone about you? You know, those embarrassing ones that moms seem to get a kick out of telling because they think they're "oh so cute!"

MATT:

*(Looking embarrassed)* Unfortunately I know exactly what you're talking about. My mom's favorite "cute Matt" story is probably the one that happened about eight years ago. It was raining and my mom took me to the store with her. After we had paid, she told me to stand by the door with the bags and she would bring the car around. Well,

time passes really slowly when you're a little kid, so it seemed like I had been standing there for hours when this green car that looked just like mine came driving by. I went tearing off after it, and when it pulled into a parking spot up front, I tried to get in, but the doors were locked. I had just started knocking on the windows, trying to get my mom to unlock the doors, when I heard a car horn honking behind me. I turned around and there was my mom, laughing her head off in the driver's seat.

MALLORY:

*(Laughing heartily and speaking between breaths and laughs)* Oh wow! And I thought I made some ditzzy mistakes! I think that one takes the cake!

MATT:

*(Seeming very embarrassed but glad to make HER laugh)* I was only 9 then, cut me some slack!

MALLORY:

*(Still trying to stop laughing)* Okay, okay, don't get upset. It's just really really funny to imagine you chasing after some random car! I wonder what the driver was thinking.

MATT:

*(Now grinning back at HER)* Probably "Oh, my good gracious! What in the world is that boy trying to do?"

MALLORY:

Probably. Now, what's your next question?

MATT:

I only have two more.

MALLORY:

Okay, let's hear 'em.

MATT:

What are you doing tomorrow?

MALLORY:

*(Slowly)* I don't think I'm doing anything. Why?

MATT:

*(Hesitantly)* Well, I was wondering if you'd like to go on a real date with me. You know, I'd take you somewhere besides your front yard. If you want to, that is.

MALLORY:

*(Happily)* I'd love to! *(Stopping and thinking of another idea and frowning up at HIM)*  
You're not doing this out of pity for the girl who skipped her last high school dance though, are you? *(She gets up and walks a little ways away)*

MATT:

No way! *(Gets up and follows after HER)* I've wanted to ask you out for awhile, you just always seemed so busy that I didn't think you'd have time.

MALLORY:

*(Turning to him and grinning a mega-watt smile)* In that case, yes, I'd love to go out with you!

MATT:

*(Also grinning)* Great! Now let's go ahead and get you back home before your mom notices the two people skulking in her front yard!

MALLORY:

Trust me, if I know my mom, she's been standing there listening on and off for awhile now, and as soon as I walk in, she'll want to know all the details. I will go ahead and go in, though. I'm starting to get really tired!

MATT:

So I'll call you tomorrow and we'll make plans?

MALLORY:

Definitely! Talk to you tomorrow!

*(MALLORY walks up to HER house, opens the door, and steps inside. SHE glances back towards MATT, who is still sitting on the bench, before SHE slowly closes the door. MATT remains sitting on the bench for a few minutes, gazing at the door that MALLORY has just entered, before HE gets up and walks off stage, presumably back to HIS house.)*

**END OF PLAY**