

Total Eclipse of a Teen-age Heart

a science allegory and narrative tale

At Galileo High School, there was one boy who thought he was the absolute center of the universe. His name was Tony Burns, Jr., but everyone called him Sonny, the nickname given to him by his family. This boy certainly had a lot more going for him than most; not only was he the Varsity football captain and Galileo's student body president, but he was also the lead guitarist for the rock band—Phoenix Fire—that he and several friends had started in his basement during their Freshman year. No one—including Sonny himself—knew if, after college, he would become a famous sports star, if he would devote his life to heated debates as a public politician, or if he would explode onto the Billboard Charts and be a genuine rock star. With all these possibilities within his reach, it's no wonder his personal motto had become, "Hey, the sky is my limit."

At any given time, it was not unusual for many Galileo High girls to genuinely believe they were in love with the high school's biggest super star. On any given day, eight or nine teen-age girls typically surrounded him in the hallways as he walked from class to class. They just circled Sonny, talking and laughing, just hoping he might send them some warmth in the form of a personal smile aimed directly at them. Most high school boys can only dream of such popularity and would have given anything to have so much attention paid to them. One such boy at Galileo High was named Arty Mesick. Arty had been secretly fascinated with Tara, this very down-to-earth girl whom he'd known since sitting behind her way back in the fourth grade. Eight years later, it pained Arty to suddenly realize that Tara had become one of those girls who circled Sonny in between classes; after all, Arty had been drawn—as though with gravity—to her for so many years now, and here she was attracted to another boy. After so many years of hoping to simply be noticed by Tara, Arty knew he needed to do something much more forward and obvious before it was too late. The prom was just around

the corner. If Arty was going to make his move, he needed to do it soon.

The lovely Tara, her last name was Lively, which pretty much fit her perfectly; most days, she bubbled with so much more life than any of the other girls who were currently caught in Sonny's so-called gravitational pull. In direct contrast to Tara, Arty could very easily turn sad, and a grayness might take over his whole face. Since fourth grade, he'd successfully shown Tara his best side whenever she happened to notice him there nearby, but there was a darker side to him that—thank goodness!—Tara had not ever seen. In truth, we all have different moods we have to deal with in daily life, even the lively Tara Lively. She could be so very warm to all, which people loved about her, but she also had these short episodes when that love of life seemed to go into “hibernation,” for lack of a better word. Still, no matter what mood Tara was in, Arty secretly pledged to himself that he would always be there for her, always showing her his very best side. But first, Tara would have to agree to go to the prom with Arty, not Sonny.

As February ended and spring began its approach, Arty noticed one day that Tara's mood (she had admittedly been a bit colder to everyone recently) was warming. He hatched a plan and began putting it in place. In between French and Trigonometry classes on Tuesday—the time he always saw Tara circling Sonny in the hallway with those other girls—if he could time it perfectly and say the perfect thing to her, Arty just knew he could block every bit of charm and light that popular Sonny gave off. Perhaps in that moment, Tara could be asked to the prom, and Arty might earn a perfect evening with the girl of his dreams.

It was Tuesday. The bell rang, and the hallway was filling with students. Arty saw Sonny coming down the hall towards Trig, and there was Tara, encircling him. It proved to be a tricky maneuver, but Arty had timed it perfectly. “Hey Tara,” he said, “you know what they say about time and tide, right?”

To Tara, for the briefest of moments, it was as though Sonny was gone. She thought hard about the question Arty had asked before answering. It was his next question, however, that changed everything.