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Soon as he turned sixteen, put on weight and began to get attention for his looks, things began to turn weird.

Being a swimmer, advanced to the varsity team at the end of his sophomore year at North Falls High, also a promising diver, what Coach called "up-and-coming," he got more attention.

People began to say how good-looking he was. In the street, older girls and even women in their twenties would turn to watch him. Even some teachers, teasing: "Darren Flynn could pass for Brad Pitt's younger brother."

Oh, sure! Darren went red in the face, glowered and turned his lower lip inside out to look as ugly as possible.

To hide his odd silvery-gold hair, he wore a grungy

Red Sox cap reversed on his head. A grungy NFH purple-and-cream sweatshirt frayed at the cuffs. Rotted old salt-stained Nikes on his size-eleven feet.

In a hot mood, his skin erupted at his hairline. And across his upper back, flaring and itching like hives.

Girls liked to say about Darren Flynn that he was sexy, but shy. Or he was shy, but sexy.

Darren was a guy's guy, basically. Unmistakably a jock. Laughing and relaxed with his friends, but with girls this weird kind of light would come into his face as if his mind were struck blank. Like he could see how girls were drawn to him like those sad little moths drawn to the light, beating their wings and crowding one another desperate for the light, and when it's switched off, the little moths are like, *What? What happened? Where is—?*

Darren Flynn would light you up from inside, just the way he looked at you. Make you feel like you were somebody special. Then suddenly he backs off, blushes and mumbles something and walks away and

you're standing there blinking as if the light has gone—where?

Thinking, *Next time I won't fall for it. Let Darren try!*
Next time, same damn thing happens.

The way Darren Flynn had of getting inside a girl's head.