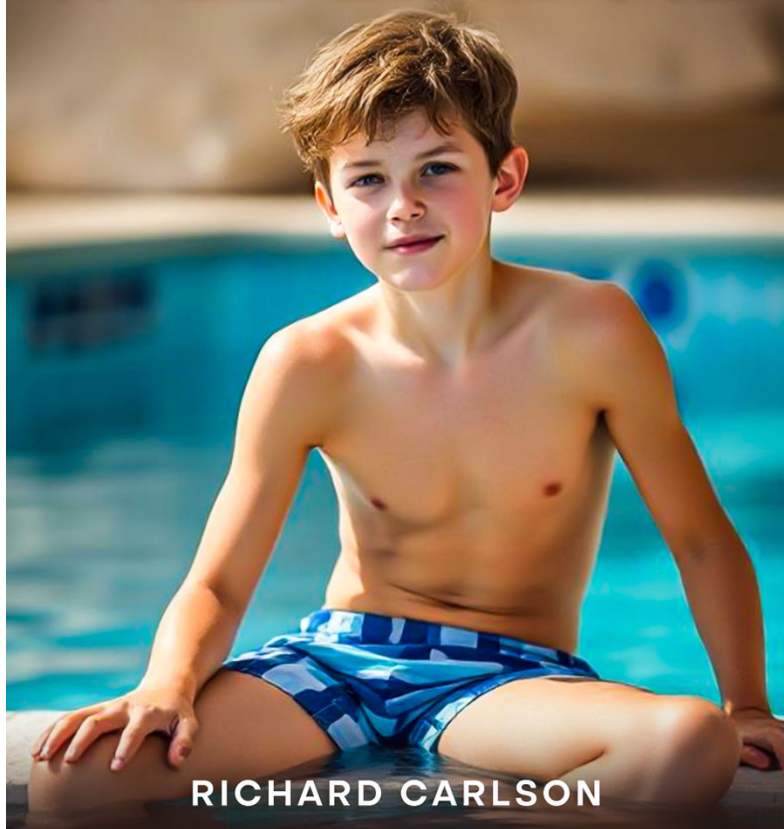


*A Girl*  
**WILL LIKE ME**



**RICHARD CARLSON**

# **A Girl Will Like Me**

Richard Carlson

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My name is Rich. I was a shy, sensitive, and imaginative thirteen-year-old and had just finished seventh grade at Cross Junior High School. It was early summer in the unbearably hot southwestern desert of Arizona, USA. I was at my friend Sean's house, with Sean, Susan, and Anthony. Sean was my age; Susan, his sister, was a year younger than us; and Anthony

was Susan's classmate. We were all playing *Hungry-Hungry Hippos* on the floor of Sean's bedroom.

Madonna's hit song, *Like a Virgin*, was playing on Sean's new dual-tape and LP record player stereo system, which he'd bought with his paper route money. The four of us had just been swimming in the pool and were still in our swimsuits.

“Girls like guys with muscles, not someone with a scrawny

body; not like this,” Anthony said, poking my arm, “and this,” poking my chest with his finger.

Sean just laughed; I could tell he wasn't laughing to insult me, though. Susan kept a straight face and didn't say anything.

I stared at my lap in disbelief. What a character. Insulting me in front of my friends. I was very surprised and angry, but kept my feelings to myself. I was too shy to defend myself, especially in front

of a girl close to my own age. My stomach sank as quick as an elephant diving in quicksand.

I was miserable inside; I was hurt! But I didn't say anything back; we continued to play the game. I won two games, and Susan, one. I was a winner at the game, but not a winner in my mind. Anthony was right: I did have a scrawny, nonmuscular body. I wasn't as muscular as

Anthony, and he was younger than me!

After we finished the game, I sadly rode my bicycle home. All I could think about was my scrawny arms, legs, and wimpy chest. I was not good-looking enough to find a girlfriend, even though I was secretly hoping to have a girlfriend very soon. But no girl was going to like my body; Anthony had said so.



Shrugging, I walked into our house and trudged by Mom and Dad, who were talking about the new furniture they were planning to buy.

“What’s wrong?” Mom asked, interrupting Dad.

I shrugged. “Nothing,” I mumbled, dragged myself into my bedroom.

I lay on my bed, thinking about my body. Then, I got up to change into my clothes.

I took off my swimsuit and looked at my naked body in the mirror behind my bedroom door. I didn't like what I saw.

*No girl will like me; no girl will want to marry me! I won't get married.* I thought and thought and thought about my lonely, disappointing future.

Then, finally, I got dressed.

Someone knocked on my door; it was Mom. I invited her in.

“Is everything all right? It seems like there’s something wrong,” she asked, radiating concern.

“Oh, it’s nothing,” I replied. I was so glad to know that I could trust my mom, but even so, I wasn’t honest with her.

“Did someone say something to you?” Mom guessed correctly.

She was concerned about how I was doing. She was such a good and caring mom.

I plopped onto my bed. “I was told by a boy that I didn’t have good arms or a good chest. They’re scrawny,” I said, staring at my lap. I was trying to hide the fact that I was upset about it, but I really needed someone to help me feel better about myself.

“What’s wrong with your arms and chest?” Mom asked. Before I could reply, she answered her own question: “Nothing!”

I wasn’t certain, though.

Looking back now, I can see how silly I had been. I hadn't listened to the person I could always trust. Instead, I had believed a boy whose only goal was to be mean to me.

“Okay,” I replied, but I was still not satisfied.

After dinner, I tried to forget about what the boy had said. Then, Grandpa phoned. Mom talked to him for a while.

I overheard her tell Grandpa, “A boy told Richard that there was something wrong with his body-- that he’s scrawny,” she explained. She listened to Grandpa’s reply and then handed me the phone.

“It’s Grandpa. He would like to talk to you,” Mom said.

“Hi, Grandpa,” I said into the phone.

“A boy told you there was something wrong with your body and that you were scrawny?”

Grandpa asked with his Slavic accent.

“Yes,” I replied, hoping he’d convince me otherwise.

“Boys told me the same thing when I was thirteen or fourteen, just like you. I married your grandmother. Did you see how beautiful she was when we got married?” Grandpa asked.

“I don’t remember exactly,” I answered, but then I remembered

the picture of my grandparents on their wedding day on the wall.

“Hold on, Grandpa.” Still on the phone, I walked into the dining room, where the picture hung.

“Yes, I see. I’m looking at your wedding picture. She was beautiful and still is,” I exclaimed, very happy and relieved. Grandpa had married a very attractive girl.

“So true,” he said, and I giggled.



“Thank you very much, Grandpa! Now I feel a lot better,” I declared.

“Here’s Mom again,” I added, handing the phone to her.

I eventually figured out that I shouldn’t let someone else decide what I believe about myself. *No way!*

Anthony may have said it just to make himself feel better about himself. In fact, there might be something about himself he

doesn't like, I realized. In fact, I started to feel a little sorry for Anthony—it's really pathetic to feel so bad about yourself that you have to insult other people just to make yourself feel better.

**About the story:** Thirteen-year-old, shy, sensitive, and imaginative Rich has a problem: A younger boy insulted him, causing him to doubt himself. The story is similar to a true story that took place in Tucson, Arizona, in the southwestern desert of the USA, circa 1984.

**About the author:** Richard Carlson is an author of children's and coming-of-age books. He is a

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You can learn more about him at

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