

## First Date

The mall was abustle with families running, shopping and eating. Little children were crying. They understood not why their parents had brought them to this venue of total mayhem. All they wanted was a rest and a box of juice. They enjoyed their comforts. No, the mall was not for them.

Seats were hard to find. They did that so you did more shopping than sitting. Across the center of the mall he spotted and empty bench. He started for it. He needed to reserve it. He just about made it, too, when an old couple plopped down on it right in front of him.

The day before, Jason had passed a note to Kiki Ledbetter in class asking her if she wanted to meet at the mall today.

'Do you want to meet me at the mall on Saturday?

\_\_ Yes

\_\_ No

If Yes:

\_\_ at 1:00

— at 2:00 ‘

To his delight, Kiki had checked he ‘Yes’ box on the note and handed it back to him. She also had opted for the earlier time, 1:00. Jason was aquiver. Kiki was one of the popular girls in school. He loved the way she always had her hair done up with a ribbon. She was pretty and smart and everything for which a twelve-year-old boy was looking.

Jason walked the circumference of the atrium. The escalators droned their stairways up and down. People were laughing. A mother was scolding an ornery child. And then he spotted it. A completely empty bench recently vacated by a family of four. He dove for the bench before some other old people grabbed it.

Jason waited. He placed his jacket on the bench beside him to warn any usurpers that this was his territory. None need apply for seating there. That space was reserved for the lovely Kiki.

Jason kept going over in his mind how he was to play the date. He would have to be witty and charming if he was to have any chance with Kiki. Kiki was the kind of girl who could choose who she wanted as her beau and Jason wanted that to be him.

Jason’s palms were sweaty. His hands shook with the rapidity of advanced Parkinson’s. He detected a sudden dryness in his mouth, but he would not, nay, could not leave his post on the bench lest someone snatch it up. Everything had to be perfect. He would have to power through the dryness.

His shirt was beginning to exhibit a bit of moisture around the underarm area. He dropped his nose down for an investigative sniff. The area seemed somewhat perfumed if a bit wet. Jason decided it would pass. He cursed himself for not having applied a second layer of deodorant.

A group of young girls entered the mall's atrium. Kiki was right in the middle of the group. Jason dared not approach the girls as, again, he might give up the bench. He decided to wave to see if Kiki could be brought closer by his signaling.

Kiki's eyes met his and she smiled at his wave. She said something to her friends and then walked his way. Jason started to freak at this. It had all been theoretical until now. Her approach made it real.

"Hi." Jason moved his jacket for her to sit.

"Hi." Kiki brushed her long blond brown hair over her shoulder.

Jason froze. He had rehearsed so many lines of dialogue for this meeting that he was having trouble selecting the one that was appropriate for a just sitting down phase. He racked his brain, and nothing came to the fore. Finally, he just blurted what was available between brain and tongue.

"I ... I ... I won third prize." Jason cursed himself for such egoistic nonsense.

Kiki looked at Jason, first, not sure what exactly he meant, and second, not sure exactly what he had won. "Oh."

Jason felt completely defeated. He would have to make the next one count. He needed to get back in her good graces, if only to reassure her of his sanity.

“Did you know ...” Jason said this at the exact same time that Kiki said, “How did you ...”

The pair smiled a nervous smile and looked the other way. Jason was first to recover.

“Please, you first.” Jason regained a bit of self-respect in this. He had used the word, ‘please’, and he now put the onus of conversation on her.

“It’s just that I was wondering what you won for?”

Jason had not anticipated this. He had won third place for his diorama of the Battle of Yorktown for his mother’s DAR group. It was not the coolest contest or prize. Actually, there just four entries and little David Walkins was never in the running as his diorama had been built out of toilet paper and chewing gum.

“Oh, nothing.” Jason thought this the best answer. Too much information at this point would only make him look bad.

Kiki sat quietly. She was losing interest, he could tell. It was time to bring out the big guns. Jason reached in his pocket and produced a hand full of lemon drop candies. Some had some lint on them. He tried to brush the lint off with his thumb as he offered them to Kiki.

“Oh, thank you.” Kiki selected one of the most lint free ones.

Jason took one himself and together they sat on the bench enjoying their candies. In silence.

After a while, Kiki broke the silence. "Well, I gotta go."

Jason jumped to his feet. "Ok."

Kiki flipped her long blond brown hair to the other shoulder. "See you in school?"

"Yeah."

Kiki leaned over and kissed Jason on the cheek. She then turned and left, searching out her girlfriends.

Jason felt his face turning a deep shade of red. His heart rate was through the roof. He felt as if his body would shake apart. As he watched Kiki leave, he started to gain some control on his musculature.

Jason walked back out of the mall. His Mom would be waiting for him by the Macy's entrance.

Jason perused the parking lot looking for his mother. He noticed an old gray Toyota swimming the parking lot. He flagged his Mom as she was about to drive past.

"Hi, honey!" His Mom was always so cheerful. "Did you have a good time?" Mom was oblivious about his little rendezvous.

"It was OK, I guess."

His Mom looked at him through the rearview mirror of the car. "Why are you smiling so much?"

To comment on or review this story follow the link below.

[https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid0veWvwabCzDbA8DgPcxe5GCvcM7EzP6XYazh7MoHInsssZw5haYhg9y7HuNuPV1fzdl&id=100016888565856&\\_cft\\_\\_\[0\]=AZXqrPL\\_fnFofET1TnLu\\_NyftVGaIP2Eo2aS1cG5mKo2g0KWPFexCyK0dJrD0bSUZZ8hQ1GaDrSM45zoX7jk1bYBCHKbtMDy8g\\_EsEo5JEYg&tn=%2CO%2CP-R](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid0veWvwabCzDbA8DgPcxe5GCvcM7EzP6XYazh7MoHInsssZw5haYhg9y7HuNuPV1fzdl&id=100016888565856&_cft__[0]=AZXqrPL_fnFofET1TnLu_NyftVGaIP2Eo2aS1cG5mKo2g0KWPFexCyK0dJrD0bSUZZ8hQ1GaDrSM45zoX7jk1bYBCHKbtMDy8g_EsEo5JEYg&tn=%2CO%2CP-R)