

First place, Fiction

## **I Met a Cute Boy Today**

by Dana Carpenter

I met a cute boy today. He reminded me of Ben Affleck, but that's beside the point really. He was a friend of my friend Hope, and I had met up with them at the river while my roommate used my van to help her sister move. Hope introduced me to the gang and then politely excused herself for a moment. At first I just admired from a far as everyone mingled, but before I knew it, I found myself sitting next to him.

"Hi, I'm Dana." I said without much conscious effort.

"Hi, Dana," he says with a grin. "I'm Josh."

"Nice to meet you Josh," I say now with my own smile upon my face. We proceed to make small talk, and I'm amazed at how easy the conversation is flowing. I discover he plays soccer and rides a motorcycle. My interests are definitely peaked now.

"Would ya like a beer?" he asks as he stands up.

"No, thanks," I say politely. "I don't like beer all that much. I'm more of a bourbon kind of gal myself."

"That's too bad," he says. "You sure?" he says walking away.

"Yes, I'm positive," I say with a chuckle.

"Well you can't say I didn't ask, right?" he says throwing his arms up in an exaggerated defeated motion.

I laugh.

It's at these times I get really self conscious. Did he leave to avoid me? Was he just being nice? Usually, these thoughts take over, but not this time. I felt a confidence in me that I wasn't used to. The wind was blowing my long silky hair and I even had put on lipstick. I felt cute. For a brief moment in time, I forgot to be self conscious, and it felt great. I was just a girl flirting with a boy. Nothing more, nothing less.

"You sure I can't get you something?" he asked as he set back in his chair.

"No, thanks." I say again.

"So how long have you known Hope?" He asks.

"About six years now," I say. "She used to be my helper in college."

"Niiiiiiice!" he says in a surfer-like accent. "I bet you girls had some crazy times together!"

“It was definitely interesting!” I say with a wink.

“You know,” he says in a more relaxed voice, “you have the most beautiful blue eyes.”

My heart kind of flutters and I can feel my face flush a little. Did he really just say that? I mean I’ve been told that before, but usually by drunken old guys. Here was a cute average acting guy that just paid me a compliment, and I had no idea what to say. I am 27 years old and for a second I felt like an awkward teenager again. Luckily that confidence kicked back in and I managed a “Thank you.”

“No, I’m serious!” he says touching my shoulder.

“Well, you’re not too shabby yourself,” I say grinning.

We both laugh and start with the small talk again. We talked about school and getting older. He told me a few jokes, and I just rolled my eyes and told him how lame they were. We made comments of how beautiful the river looked with the sun hitting it. It was weird how easy this was going. I didn’t expect it to lead anywhere, but the anticipation made things exciting. Then he threw me for a loop.

“So Dana, you got a boyfriend?” he asked nonchalantly.

“Uh, no…” I stutter.

“I don’t believe that,” he says. “Why not?!”

I had never been asked that before, and I really did have an answer. I must admit I was at a loss for words here because here was this stranger asking me why I was single. He saw me as dateable, when all the other people avoid the subject with me. “Just haven’t found the right kind yet I guess.”

“Well, are you looking for one?” he asks.

“Oh, I’m looking alright,” I laugh. “Guess I’m looking in the wrong places, though!”

He chuckles, “the ladies aren’t knocking at my door either.”

“That’s too bad,” I joke.

“Hey now!” he laughs as he jokingly hits my arm.

About that time Hope comes back over to us. It turns out her boyfriend was being a jerk, so the conversation shifted to consoling her. Josh stepped away for a few minutes to give us some privacy, and I kind of felt

disappointed. I couldn't get over how much fun I was having hanging out with him. After about half an hour later, Hope was feeling better and went to jump in the river, so Josh walked back over.

"You got plans later Miss Dana?" He asks squatting down to my level.

"Well, I'm waiting for my roommate to get back with my van, and I'm not sure if she'll want to hang out or drive back to Austin." I say shrugging my shoulders.

"If she wants to hang, you want to grab a drink?" he asks.

Did he just ask me out? I look around. Yep, it's just us two around. I think he just asked me out. Maybe it was just a friendly invite. Maybe it wasn't. This is definitely a new one for me. What do I say?

"Uh, sure." I say. "Sounds like fun."

A few minutes later, my roommate gets back and looks exhausted. I introduce her to Josh and they shake hands. She sits down under the tree for a few minutes to rest, and Josh asks her if she'd like to go have a drink with us. She looks at me and says if I minded if we just headed back to Austin because she needed a shower. I said of course I didn't mind, but deep down I really wanted to stay.

Josh turns to me and says, "Maybe next time you're in town?"

"Yeah, maybe next time," I repeat.

He helps my roommate off the ground and then walks over closer to me. "It was nice meeting you baby," he says bending over to give me a hug.

"Bye Josh."

We walk back to the van and head back to Austin. The whole way home I had this goofy grin on my face. I have no idea if I'll ever see Josh again, but I'll always remember him. He validated a lot of doubts I've had swimming around in my head over the years. I may not fit the mold of the average gal, and I no longer feel I have to.