

Featured story:

TWO DATES

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It's interesting when one takes steps towards reaching a goal. Reality steps in and those initial expectations are not immune to the consequences. Sometimes those hopes and desires change in their value or are transformed into new directions and perspectives. This is a story in which a young man goes out on two dates with two different people with two different scenarios. Expectations and reality mix together, showing him a few of the many glimpses of what life has to offer.

As the months turned into years while at university, I matured in my academic struggles and better learned how to approach my studies. Life at university wasn't only about studying, however, even if it seemed to be the main reason and focal point. I gradually grew up in other ways, too, including in my abilities at socializing, interacting with other people, and going out with girls.

Once I really liked this girl, or should I say, I was really attracted to her. Well, it wasn't like these attractions were completely rare for me, but every so often I seemed to feel overwhelmed by a person's amazing qualities, whatever they may be. In this case I let the feelings be confirmed that they weren't some fleeting impulse and quietly allowed them to grow a bit. I often saw her as we lived in the same residence and I felt my heartrate quicken when she was somewhere near. With time I somehow found the courage to ask her out but she politely thanked me and said she had other plans. I knew she was nicely telling me she wasn't interested, but part of me wanted to believe there still might be a chance. I felt inspired and wrote her something. It wasn't exactly a poem but I suppose you could have called it a type of prose. It was to serve as an invitation to go out with me and I slipped it under her door one night, accompanied by my hopes for an answer.

She did have one for me, and to my surprise it was affirmative. What I had written appealed to her, at least enough to take a chance to spend one evening with me. I don't remember what it was we did or where we went, just that neither of us felt it was a particularly good evening. I think I had built up her expectations of me and I didn't live up to them. And I was hoping that she would become interested in me beyond the charm of my story. But it wasn't to be.

I don't think either of us felt bad about it, not that much at any rate. After a few chance meetings as we passed each other in the hallways or in the cafeteria, the awkwardness passed and we went back to being our normal selves.

There is another date I'd like to mention here.

I think this was in my third year but it may have been a year either way. Karen lived in the same residence on campus and while we didn't spend much time together, we seemed to get along quite well. I liked her in a lot of different ways but not so much in the romantic arena. Maybe she felt in a similar way towards me. We enjoyed each other's company but never seemed to have crossed the line to becoming good friends. Two of the things that I liked about her were her smile and her eyes and when I asked her out one day, they really lit up on the spot. That made me feel really good. I'm pretty sure she wasn't expecting or hoping for anything romantic from me and that made us both relaxed about it all. And allowed us to play with some images all the same, without worrying about the consequences and the like.

I told her I wanted to take her to a very romantic (and expensive) restaurant and she was tickled with the idea. As the day approached, she came to me and asked me if I would help her pick out something to wear. Again, neither of us intended for this to go further than a single date, nor was there anything to happen other than simply enjoying our time together. Maybe that made us feel freer to indulge in these gestures.

I would have been happy with anything she had chosen to wear but she gently made it clear that she wanted my participation in this way, so we looked at the possibilities she offered. A short time later we found a suitable combination, and I thought to myself that I had better give some thought to my wardrobe. I may have even asked her opinion, reciprocating the deed.

We went to “Chez Hélène’s”, one of the more reputable restaurants in the city of Winnipeg at the time. We settled ourselves into the table and surrounding atmosphere, and she let me know that she wanted me to order for her. I got into the role, tasted the wine, and attempted to make fine conversation. It wasn’t so bad, mostly because she was easy to talk with. I didn’t feel the pressure to perform or impress but slipped into the role once in a while of a suitor to his date. The rest of the time we just talked, enjoyed each other’s company and the presentation of the food.

The rabbit we had was \$100 and although I couldn’t see why it was so expensive, the night was special. We easily sat next to each other on the bus ride home to our residence, I walked her to her room, and gave her a sweet peck on one cheek and a thank you before she closed the door and I made my way to my room one floor down.

It was a very special evening and I slept contently and happily that night. When we met each other in the cafeteria, in the TV lounge or passing by in the hall, it was as always, although we did have that one special date to share in memory.

There are some special things or situations that mean a lot to us, especially in our hopes of perhaps obtaining them. And there are other, more attainable ones which may seem less exciting at first, but if they can be appreciated, they are all the more fulfilling. This is a lesson I have learned and relearned countless times.