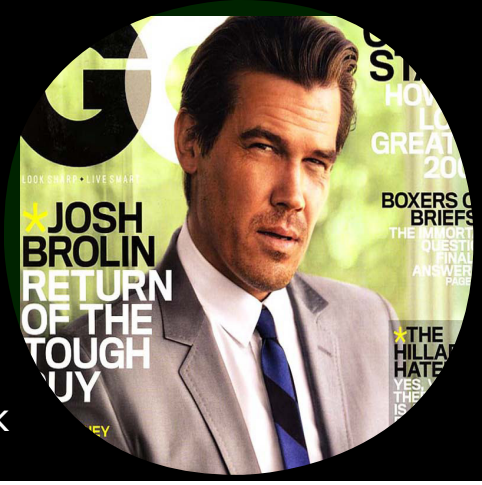


# How Do I Handle a Real Man?

By Mandy Slack



**As a seventeen-year-old high school graduate, I had still never been asked out on a date.**

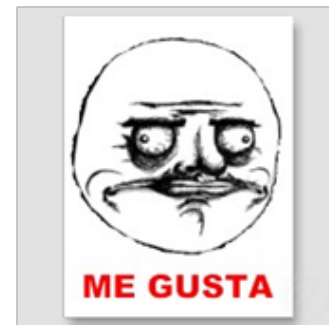
I sat in the lobby at the Singles' Ward waiting for my sister Melissa. I'd never seen so many boys—their presence was almost overwhelming to my seventeen-year-old self. I tried to blend in with the navy blue chair, feeling so unworthy to be immersed in this river of males.

Before I could become one with the chair, one of them approached me. I did my best to keep my cool as this not so tall, dark, and handsome man, Kurt, started making small talk, but talking with any member of the male species had never been my forte. As a seventeen-year-old high school graduate, I had still never been asked out on a date. How was I to handle a real man?



Much to my surprise, Kurt asked me on a date. He asked me right there, right in the middle of the Single's Ward lobby. As I walked out of the church with Melissa, I felt triumphant. I had been asked out. The initial excitement of being asked out

wore off as the days rolled on. By the time Kurt pulled his big white pick-up truck into my driveway, I was actually dreading the night. We drove along the highway, continuing with the small talk we had started on Sunday. My mood lifted when he pulled into Subway. FOOD. I ordered my perfect sandwich, ready to gobble and stop the chit-chat.



"I was thinking we could drive up Brush Creek and eat the sandwiches up there," Kurt told me, smiling so kindly. How could I tell him what I was really thinking? My mouth was watering for that perfect symphony of tomatoes, lettuce, and turkey, but I smiled and nodded in agreement.

I held on tighter to my sandwich as we neared Brush Creek, anxiously awaiting the moment when I could tear the paper open. But when Kurt should have turned left, he turned right instead. I looked at him with wide eyes.

"I need to drop something off at a friend's." He explained. I nodded.

"Okay, sounds good."

The drive way seemed to extend at least five miles. When we finally made it up to the top, I could see an older man working outside. He smiled as we approached, eyeing me significantly. I shrunk in my seat.

Kurt stopped the truck. "Why don't you come out and meet him?"

Every organ of my body groaned at this suggestion, but I jumped out of the truck anyway. The man smiled at me like I was Kurt's blushing bride. "Who's this?" The man asked suggestively.

"This is Mandy,"

I shook the man's hand, smiled and tilted my head like a good little girl, then stood aside with my arms folded. After a few minutes of chatting about my parents, my interests, my hobbies, my dog (what?), we got back into the truck and headed out for the creek. Instead of getting back into the small talk, we started a guessing game.

"How old do you think I am?" Kurt asked me. I squirmed in my seat. I had no idea.

"Twenty-one?" I asked. In my mind, every guy older than me seemed like he was twenty-one. Why not? Kurt looked at me, his eyebrows raised.

He pointed his finger up.

"Twenty-two?"

He kept pointing his finger up, passing the massive number of twenty-four and even twenty-five.

"Twenty-seven?" I finally guessed.

He nodded. I held on tight to my seat belt and gulped. Now it was his turn to guess how old I was. Maybe it was because of the revelation that he was ten years old than me (yes, that means that when he was graduating high school, I was getting baptized), but Kurt seemed to also think this was a good time for confession. He may have been embarrassed about his age (I think

I was more embarrassed about mine) when he began explaining that he had been married.

He talked about his ex-wife as we edged closer and closer to the top of Brush Creek, describing how it had been good, then bad, and finally ugly.

I did my best to listen as he explained how it had finally ended because she had cheated on him, but I couldn't help but watch the trees dancing around freely in the wind. Oh, how I wanted to be with them, chowing down my glorious Subway sandwich. I felt for him, I really did, but how could I, still a teenybopper who had just gotten braces off, relate to a crumbling marriage or anything else that had to do with a twenty-seven year old man?



After what felt like days, months, centuries, we got to the top of the mountain and found a flat spot to eat the sandwiches. Kurt kept telling me about his wife, but despite his desire to share his feelings, he seemed to feel the way that I did about ending the date. As soon as we had scarfed down our grub, we made the downhill trip back to my beloved home.

Needless to say, we didn't make any future plans at the end of the night. I didn't think I'd see him much, if at all, but the next weekend he was at my house...to pick up my twenty two year old sister for a date.