

A Near-Date Experience

By Alicia Dayley

My parents had always insisted that if a guy asked me on a date, I should say yes.

When I was a sophomore, I was in an English foundations class. Obviously, the class was filled with freshmen, not to mention the many unreasonable people, and often the class would get chaotic.

This is where my epic social fail began.

There was this guy in class that was out of place. He was skinny and fairly short and, frankly, he wasn't very stylish. His clothes were out of date, he wore glasses, and he had a bad haircut. He slightly irked me. Not because of his appearance, but by his behavior. Many of his comments were immature and out-of-context.

"And that's when the ninjas come in!" He would exclaim as we were discussing another aspect of writing. It was like nails on a black board. Nothing is more irritating than interrupting the writing process.



The puzzling thing was that when he wasn't saying outrageous comments, he seemed shy and socially closed, especially in one-on-one situations.

But then again, his wariness turned out to be more than just his personality. April, my roommate who happened to be in the class with me, and I began to notice him eyeing me. A little unnerved, I tried to be polite to him, but not try to encourage him. He sat to the side of me, and he was always trying to talk to me and April, and we always tried to be as polite as possible. But all my efforts to keep him distant were dashed in a moment.

We came to our second paper—the "other" paper. We had to write about someone else's life in a narrative. And guess who got to write about me? Yes, the nerdy ninja man.

My heart sank. I knew I was in for something dangerously new. I knew I had to share more personal information than I ever wanted to with this boy. Not only did I have to tell him about myself, I had to deal with the consequences. We had to get into groups and interview each other, and the more I told him about myself, the more he seemed to look at me differently. He seemed to indulge in getting to know me. I did not enjoy the interaction. I tried to ignore it, but as we came closer to finishing the papers he was even more interested in me. Perhaps denying that he was interested would make it disappear.

It didn't work.

One day, he came to me after class. I had dawdled a bit (big mistake) after class, and as everyone filed out, he approached me timidly. "Hey, I was wondering if you would... like to go to steak dinner? It's on Friday nights."

I froze. It's ridiculous, but time stopped as I panicked. The universe had once again turned against me. What was I suppose to do? My parents had always insisted that if a guy asked me on a date, I should say yes. The man had the bravery to approach you. You should go, just to reward that bravery. (Of course questionable men were exempt.) But I didn't even like him—quite the opposite. But I felt sorry (extreme guilt) and when I thought of saying no, I was wracked with guilt. My brain came to a halt, and to honor my parents' advice, and against my better judgment, I said, "Where is it at?"



April would not let it go. She constantly teased me, "You're going to have so much fun with him!" Then she would laugh while I sank deeper into dark misery. I completely dreaded going on the date with him. I did not like him—he even annoyed me half the time. Would this just encourage him—the thing I was trying not to do—or make him think that he could take me on another date?

I think he was as terrified of me as I was of him—in a drastically different way. He did not communicate with me again. The only inkling of when it was going to happen was that it was going to be on a Friday. But I had no idea when it was going

to happen. What time? Which Friday? I decided to comfort myself with the possibility of never going on this dreaded date; I decided that if he wasn't going to talk to me about it, then I wouldn't even be bothered about being prepared on any given Friday night.

It was terrible. On a Friday night, there was a knock on the door, and there he was. I wasn't even in decent clothing, but he was in a white shirt and tie. My heart tried to escape my chest instead of hiding in my stomach. It was shame that it was trying to escape.



I was the worst person in the world at that moment. I tried to be kind as I struggled to find the words to tell him that I wasn't going. "I didn't know when you were coming, so I am not ready..." I paused, then continued, "I don't think I'll be able to go tonight."

I couldn't stand seeing his face as he mumbled, "Okay."

I tentatively said, "Well, goodbye..." and shut the door.

I truly was the worst person in the world—for saying yes in the first place.