

## The Annual Fair

Everyone in the small town of Ridgewell always went to the annual fair. No matter how young or old you were, it was just something everyone did. Molly and Joseph had been together for two weeks, and decided it would be the perfect occasion for their first *real* date.

So here they were, braving the cold October weather; walking hand in hand towards the bright lights of the Ferris wheel. A perfect scene in anyone's eyes, anyone but Nolan Woods.

Nolan Woods was sixteen years old. He had lived in Ridgewell his entire life. His and Molly's families had known each other for a very long time, so the two basically grew up together.

This was the first year they weren't going to the fair together. Nolan knew that both of them were getting older and they would eventually end up going with different people, but he had hoped that he would at least get to go with her until senior year.

"Are you sure it's okay I go with Joseph, I just want to make sure before I tell him anything." She had asked him days earlier. Nolan hated lying, he really did. Yet at the same time, it would have been a lot worse telling her how much he wanted to go with her.

"It's fine really." He had replied, plastering a fake smile on his face to reassure her.

The day after he found out he wasn't going with her, he decided to ask George, the man in charge of Ridgewell's famous fair, if there was a job he could take. Since his parents were often away on business George took care of Nolan a lot, so the two were very close. He had told him there was only one job left, loading couples into the carts at the Ferris wheel. He wasn't too fond of the idea considering it would only be a constant reminder of how he didn't have a date. Yet at the same time he didn't want to stay at home while the rest of the town was attending the fair.

So here he was. He had just finished loading in another couple, and was on his way back to the lineup. He took in a sharp breath of air as he saw the next couple headed towards the Ferris wheel. He tried to hide his face as the pair got closer. It's bad enough having to lead couple after couple all night, but loading those two in; he couldn't imagine anything worse. He could only hope they would change their minds.

Yet his hopes were dashed as he heard her voice.

"Hi Nolan!" She chirped. He looked up and nearly melted upon seeing how beautiful she looked. Her red curls framed her face perfectly. Her cherry red lips and gorgeous pearly white smile would make any guy fall in love. And her sparkling eyes looked golden as the light hit them perfectly. They shattered him with their innocence.

“Hi, how are the two of you?” Nolan asked reluctantly. He couldn’t help but notice Joseph’s eyes wander to Sarah Heartland every now and then. It infuriated him, the fact Molly was with someone who cared so little about her. The fact she wasn’t with him.

“Good!” Joseph replied cheerfully, seemingly oblivious to Nolan’s cold stare.

“Load them in!” Porter, his co-worker, shouted from the operating machine on the other side of the Ferris wheel. He guided them towards the empty cart and quickly locked it, not wanting to spend another minute with the happy couple.

He went back to the lineup again and sighed when he saw George walking towards him. He loved George, with all his heart, but he just couldn’t take a lengthy conversation right now. It was too late though, George had already seen him.

He approached Nolan, walking with a boy, a senior at Nolan’s school alongside him. “James here is going to take over,” he told me, patting the boy on the shoulder. “I’d like to talk to you.” Nolan’s stomach dropped.

They made their way to a park bench. George sat down and Nolan mimicked his actions. He turned to face George though his eyes remained locked towards the ground.

“Listen boy, you’re like a son to me. I’ve known you since you toddled around in your diapers.” George said with a stern face. It was true, in all honesty George probably knew Nolan

better than his own parents. He also knew Molly quite well because he often came to dinners and holiday parties.

“It wasn’t a challenge figuring out that you liked Molly. It also wasn’t hard to see how happy she is with you. Now maybe I’m just an old man but I know when two people are destined for each other. You’re young, and that means you should be going out and doing stupid things. You should tell her you love her, because you may never get another chance. Don’t end up my age with what-ifs overwhelming you. You have the rest of the night off. Make it count.” He smiled at Nolan before walking away to go chat with a young family.

Nolan sat on the bench, unable to move. He began to wonder, if he didn’t tell her he would regret it. George was right, he was young and he had his whole life to be wise and to overthink everything. He loved Molly, he always had, and he wasn’t about to let Joseph take the love of his life away from him.

Nolan got up and began to sprint around the park looking for Molly. After a while he started to wonder if they had left. Had he missed his chance? Suddenly he saw Joseph...locking lips with Sarah.

His mind went fuzzy. Rage ran through his blood. He made his way over to Joseph with clenched fists. He was going to make Joseph regret every decision he had made.

He was meters away when Molly popped up in front of him.

“Nolan, I was just about to look for you! Listen, I know what you’re about to do, and thank you, but please don’t.” She said calmly.

“No, he’s not getting away with this.” He growled. He started walking towards Joseph again but she grabbed his arm. He spun around question filling his eyes. He wondered how she could be so calm.

“We were never actually dating.” She said bluntly. Nolan’s jaw dropped. Confusion and happiness overtook him.

“So wait, what?” He wondered aloud. She chuckled at his inability to form a proper sentence and continued on.

“We only pretended to date to make Sarah jealous. She just confronted him about how she thought they had something, so he came clean. They’re together now.” She beamed, motioning towards the new couple now riding the carousel. He began to get dizzy taking in all the new information.

“So you never liked him?” He asked, still trying to process everything.

“No.” She replied, smiling. Nolan couldn’t help the grin that spread across his face. And even though every part of him told him not to; he kissed her.

He could feel her shock in the kiss, but after a second she relaxed. Her lips were so soft, and though they had never kissed before it all felt so natural. It was like they were puzzle pieces, made to be.

After a while they pulled back, breathless. Both of them were smiling ear to ear. Suddenly a loud bang filled the park and caused them both to jump. Looking up at the sky they saw all sorts of colours replacing the sea of black. Fireworks.

“You see those too, right?” He whispered into her ear. She giggled softly and nodded her head.

They lay down on the grass together admiring all the different colours and patterns above them. She snuggled into his arms and slowly drifted off to sleep. He looked down and smiled at how peaceful she looked. At this point he didn't care about anything, He was just happy she was in his arms and no one else's.