



Valentine's Day Surprise Leads to Emergency Room Visit

by Mathilda Gregory, Editor-in-Chief

Travis Bickle and Mindy Monroe have been dating since they were juniors in high school.

"I walked into third period English and saw her sitting there. I knew she was it for me," said Mr. Bickle, age 19.

"He asked me out after class, and I haven't looked back since," Ms. Monroe, also age 19, confirmed. "Although I'm not sure either one of us knew where we were heading then. We've grown up a lot in the last three years."

After they both graduated from Hardy Falls High School last year, Mr. Bickle knew he wanted to "pop the question" and ask Ms. Monroe to marry him. This Valentine's Day, he took the step.

"I've been working full time at Stein Electrical Fittings since I graduated," said Mr. Bickle, "and I had some money saved up, so I was able to get her a ring and all. Mindy said she wanted to go to Harrisburg to college, and I knew I had to get my ring on her finger before she left."

"I'm going to get my dental hygienist degree," said Ms. Monroe. "Then I'll be back to work with someone around here. I told Trav he didn't need to worry." She smiled. "But he doesn't want to risk losing me."

Mr. Bickle didn't question the fact that he wanted to propose, but he did wonder how he was going to do it.

"I thought about just asking her out to the Fallside for a nice dinner or something, but that didn't seem special enough," Mr. Bickle said. "Then I remembered how much she likes the milkshakes at the Sunnyside Diner. I figured I'd hide the ring in the milkshake, and when she drank it all, it would be at the bottom, you know?" He shook his head sadly. "It seemed like a good idea."

Mr. Bickle admitted he forgot the milkshakes at the Sunnyside are so thick you can't drink them with a straw. He also made the mistake of inviting Ms. Monroe's sister and mother to join them so that they could witness the proposal.

"My mom and sister and I always have a contest to see who can drink our milkshakes the fastest when we go to the Sunnyside," said Ms. Monroe. "It's just something we always do. I guess Trav didn't know that."

Mr. Bickle put the engagement ring in the milkshake without anyone else seeing him do it. The next thing he knew, Ms. Monroe, her mother, and her sister were chugging back the treats as if their lives depended on it.

“I tried to stop her from going too fast,” Mr. Bickle said. “I kept pulling at her arm and telling her to stop, but she wasn’t listening. It scared the crap out of me when she was done, and I looked at the bottom of the glass because the ring wasn’t there.”

Apparently, Ms. Monroe had been so focused on the competition with her mother and sister, that she had swallowed her engagement ring without noticing.

“Honestly, I didn’t even feel it go down,” Ms. Monroe shrugged.

“It wasn’t that small a ring,” Mr. Bickle insisted. “I mean it wasn’t huge, but the stone was big enough. It was a decent size. She should have felt something.”

“I just wanted to win,” Ms. Monroe said. “I’ve won the last three times.”

What Ms. Monroe won this time was a trip to the emergency room at Friendsville Hospital, where the doctor took x-rays, confirmed the situation, and told her she was going to have to wait a day or two before she’d be able to see her ring in person.

“I told them I wanted them to give me something to hurry things along because I didn’t want to wait, but they said that some things need time and I should let them know if it didn’t happen. We stopped on the way home to buy prunes.” Ms. Monroe shook her head. “I mean, Mom said she’d read about this kind of thing happening to other people, but who would have guessed it would happen to me? Guess I’m just too focused and goal-oriented.”

This reporter feels that it’s all well and good to be focused on a goal, but perhaps some attention to detail would have been in order in this case.

As the doctor predicted, the inevitable passage of time brought about the inevitable passage of the ring. Fortunately, it had not been damaged in the course of its detour, and once it had been thoroughly cleaned, Mr. Bickle presented it to Ms. Monroe with the appropriate pomp and circumstance. Fortunately for all concerned, she said, “yes.”

“The doctor checked me out and said I’m fine,” Ms. Bickle reported. “I have a cast-iron stomach. I guess I’ll never forget my engagement, but maybe Travis learned it’s not always a good idea to surprise someone.”

Well, at least not when there’s a Sunnyside milkshake involved.