

Nice Guy

by Kevin Kelleher

I always wanted to be the nice guy.

When I met Sara nearly a year ago I thought I had finally found my princess. She was completely adorable, smart, funny and sexy. She was also the perfect height for me. That's just one of my things. In her I found everything anyone could ever hope for in a girl.

We hit it off brilliantly right from the beginning. We did all the cute little things that perfect couples typically do: we carved pumpkins, went on romantic dates and fell asleep watching movies together. Everyone else was awestruck by how impossibly flawless we were – a textbook example of young love, really.

We met sophomore year at Donovan U, a school famous for its medical program, and started dating immediately. We spent one whole summer apart, writing sweet letters to one another and talking for hours on the phone. I drove all the way to Evansville to see her a couple times, and she came to my place too. We shared another blissful year at DU and then were parted once again by summer vacation.

“It'll be okay,” she said, “just like last year.”

But Sara, the poor girl, was wrong.

I really did want to be the nice guy.

Devin was my best friend since sixth grade. His dad was a gastroenterologist which meant two pivotal things for Dev: a) he was rich, and b) he had to endure a lifetime of your-dad's-a-butt-doctor jokes. I don't think he minded either one.

His parents had a really nice house on lake Ponca where Devin threw lots of parties. For the Fourth of July, as had become tradition several years ago, Devin was hosting a massive party. His parents were going to be out of the state and forbade him absolutely from having "any parties whatsoever" while they were gone. He told them of course he wouldn't and immediately set about inviting everyone he knew.

Sara's family had a big reunion planned for the same date and, despite my promises of an amazing time, she said she couldn't go. No big deal, we agreed. And it wasn't, really: we had just spent some time together the previous week.

Devin and myself got the place ready the day before. We stocked up on propane, hamburger, chips and all the rest. We fueled up the boats; a speedboat and three jetskis, and even gave the tube a test ride to make sure it was still in working condition. It was.

The following day was completely amazing.

Mackenzie, Al and the Berkeley brothers (Nick and Rob) came over around noon.

"Hey Ben!" Al yelled as he and the others disembarked from his Grand Cherokee. Devin and I were lying on the trampoline staring up into the mammoth oak trees that shaded his yard. "What's good?"

"Hey Al," I called back, lazily sitting up, "hey Macky, Berkeleys."

"You guys get the booze?" asked Devin in his usually straight-to-the-point sort of way.

“You bet your ass,” said Nick, dragging two cases from the back of the Cherokee. Al took two more and Rob grabbed a couple grocery bags of liquor. Mackenzie closed the car door after them before she said, “Looks like we’re pretty well-stocked.”

“Well, one of us certainly is,” said Nick with a devilish smile as he passed Mackenzie, staring ostentatiously at her chest. She scoffed and hit him on the shoulder, but laughed.

“We should start drinking soon,” said Devin, jumping down from the trampoline. I followed as the group headed towards the house down a crumbly sidewalk that bisected the dark-green, overgrown lawn.

“You’re probably right,” said Rob, “we’re already losing time. I’ve just spent too much time today being sober.”

“Enough is enough, isn’t it?” said Devin, holding the front door open for the procession.

We filled a cooler with ice and beer and headed down to the water. Everyone was wearing their swimsuits already so we swam a little and drank and talked and laughed and joked around. We hadn’t a care in the world. We even took the speedboat out for a spin. Before we knew it, it was getting dark and we were getting hungry. So Devin fired up the grill as I set up the sound system on the deck, which was an extension of the screened patio facing the lake. Mackenzie went around lighting tiki-torches.

While we were blaring tunes and grilling hamburger, the first of the night’s many guests arrived. We ate dinner as the sun set. By the time it was dark there were as many as thirty people at Devin’s. Pretty soon we graduated from beer to liquor and Nick, our self-proclaimed amateur bartender, started brewing up concoctions for everyone.

“Hey Ben!” he called to me over the blaring music, “this one’s for you!” He handed me a plastic cup. “I call it Sex Juice.”

I took a sniff of the dark orange liquid and said, “I’m pretty sure that name’s already taken, Nick.” It smelled like candy.

“Alright, for you then, it’s Anal-Sex Juice.” He shrugged at me.

“Sounds good,” I said and took a swig. It tasted like fantastic. He really was pretty good.

I took another drink and turned back to the party. I saw Devin pull a few girls up to dance with him. The sight of him and the taste of my drink reminded me that he had paid for all the alcohol that evening. He was glad to do it, too, because money was no object to him. Plus, he lived to seduce drunk girls. As he sandwiched himself between the two girls and gyrated his hips into both of them I chuckled to myself, knowing that I was, in all likelihood, going to hear tomorrow about how much fun Devin had having sex with both of them. If Dev played his cards right, maybe even at the same time. He was a bit of a ladies’ man.

For that reason it had always been a little frustrating to be Devin’s boyhood friend. The guy had been an enchanter since he was a kid, only then it was his boyish cuteness that everyone loved, and now it’s his rugged good looks. He’s the only kid I know who was lucky enough to skip the awkwardness that usually comes in between.

He caught me looking and gave me a thumbs-up, a nod and a cocky grin. I raised my glass to him in admiration. He went on dancing. A few more people joined them.

Mackenzie appeared at my side with a fresh drink from Nick and said, “So, where’s Sara?”

“She had a family thing today. Couldn’t make it.”

“That’s too bad,” said Mackenzie, sipping her beverage. I looked at her strangely.

“What’s so bad about that?” I asked.

“Nothing, I guess. I just mean I bet you miss her.”

“Naw, not really. I spent last week at her place in Evansville.”

Mackenzie laughed. “Oh, I see, so you’ve had all you can stand, is that it?”

I laughed back. “Yeah, pretty much. She’s a great-big bitch, you know.”

“I’ve heard.”

As a matter of fact, I hadn’t been seeing very much of Sara at all. She’s been pretty occupied all summer, working two jobs to pay for school, and last week was only the second time we’ve been together since school got out. Not the best arrangement, but what can you do?

Two Anal-Sex Juices later I found myself in a heated conversation with Devin about women, a topic we frequently liked to argue.

“I’m just saying that all girls are dumb,” he said, “I think Mackenzie will agree with me, won’t you, Macky?” She hit him. “My point exactly.”

Our debate had attracted a few onlookers, amused by our spectacle.

“Devin,” I said, “you just think girls are dumb because you can only get dumb chicks. Any girl who hasn’t got the downs is way out of your league.”

They laughed at that.

“No, I think they’re dumb because all they want is to be treated like shit,” he said simply.

“Excuse me?” scoffed Mackenzie, who, until that last statement was about to leave the conversation.

“No, seriously,” Devin said, “all a girl wants is for a guy to treat them like shit. Look, as long as I pretend not to care about a girl, she goes absolutely crazy for me, but if I like her back and act nice to her, she doesn’t want anything to do with me.”

“Devin,” I said, “I don’t know about that. In my experience, girls like it when you actually *respect* them.”

“It’s true!” he insisted. “Remember Lisa What’s-her-name? That girl in American Government?”

“Yeah,” I said. She was a girl he had a thing with earlier that year.

“Remember how when she called we used to flip a coin to decide whether or not I would answer?”

“Oh my god,” said Mackenzie incredulously, “you didn’t really....”

“Yeah, I remember,” I said.

“Well, when I didn’t answer at first, she would get all flustered and call back a bunch more times right away, worried that I didn’t like her or something.”

“You guys are such assholes,” said Mackenzie to no one.

“When I finally did give her the time of day, she felt like she had won a prize or something.”

“Yeah, okay,” I said, “but she would’ve dumped you eventually, after she figured out what you were doing.”

Devin reclined in his chair. “I don’t know, man, she was all about it.”

“Well, I think you’re retarded,” added Mackenzie, “if a guy treated me like that, I’d never talk to him again.”

“Maybe it doesn’t work for all girls,” Devin conceded, “just the good looking ones.”

The onlookers oohed.

“You are such a dick sometimes,” announced Mackenzie, getting up and leaving.

“She’ll be back,” joked Devin, “they always come back.... Hey, who’s that?”

Devin sat up in his chair, his attention fixed at the door connecting the patio to the house, from which a fresh group of guests was arriving. I turned to look. I saw a few unfamiliar faces and then – my god – I saw what had piqued Devin’s interest.

“Who is she?” I heard him ask behind me.

She was a model. Or a goddess. Maybe both. No, definitely both. She must have been about as tall as me, but maybe a third the weight. She had the longest, sexiest legs I’d ever seen. I don’t even remember being attracted to just legs before, but hers were fantastic. She wore tiny, little shorts that were so tight, they almost exploded off her bodacious ass. A skin-tight wife-beater-type-thing clung for dear life around her thin trunk, barely covering two wondrously massive, gravity-defying breasts.

And her hair was long. Blonde, I think.

She had the magical kind of face you see in a magazine while you’re just flipping through, the kind that makes you stop and go, “whoa,” and then turn back to find it again. Something about it was almost inhuman, or just too perfect.

Almost immediately she caught me staring... but she stared back for a moment. It was just for a moment, though, and then some asshole started talking to her. It was Nick,

that idiot, and he thrust a drink into her hand. By now her friends were scattering around the patio, mingling with other partygoers.

“Ever notice how they always come in pairs?” Devin asked from behind.

“What?” I said, breaking from my spell to turn back to him. He was still fixated on the girl.

“Girls,” he said, “they always come in pairs. The hot ones always have some ugly best friend that follows ‘em around everywhere.” He took a drink. I looked back. Sure enough, though I hadn’t noticed before, there was indeed a much less attractive girl right beside the bombshell, actually cock-blocking Nick at the moment, from the looks of it. The poor bastard was telling some kind of joke, it seemed, only as the goddess’ attention wandered, he found himself telling it only to her enthralled ugly friend. The pudgy girl laughed outrageously at whatever it was.

The beauty was looking around the patio, lifting her cup to her mouth, when her eyes found me staring at her again. She froze. I froze. Then she smiled – she actually straight-up *smiled* at me – and took a drink. That kind of thing never happens to me, by the way.

“Come on,” said Devin, rising from his chair, “let’s go introduce ourselves.”

Without argument, I followed.

“Hi, I’m Devin,” he said, “I’m the guy who lives here.”

“And I’m Ben,” I said, “I’m the guy who has sex with the guy who lives here.”

As my introduction evidenced, I was a little intoxicated at this point. Luckily, though, she laughed at it.

“Well, hi,” she said, “I’m Amber and this is Megan.” She had a great smile. And her teeth were immaculate, too. “This is a pretty cool place,” she said.

“Yeah, thanks. So where are you guys from?”

Megan answered that, but our attention remained focused on Amber, “We came with Josh Pferdmann, he lives like ten houses down, but we’re actually from Evansville.”

Devin gave me a look. “*Really?* Evansville?” he said. The name had jarred me a little and Amber noticed it. She had big, gorgeous almond eyes... I just wanted to stare at her forever.

“Yeah,” she continued, “it’s like three hours away from here.”

“Oh, I’ve heard. Don’t you know someone from Evansville, Ben?” Devin asked while I was exchanging glances with Amber. Her eyes told me something naughty.

“No,” I replied without a thought.

Devin was a little struck, and for a moment he wasn’t sure what to do.

“Where are you from?” Amber asked me.

“I’m from Parker, but I go to Donovan U now.”

“Ooh,” she said, “a *med* student?”

I laughed shyly. “Well, pre-med, actually.”

“Isn’t that, like,” she chuckled one of those cute, little girl chuckles, “super hard?”

“Um... yeah.” I laughed. I don’t know how I laughed so easily, but it just came.

She laughed with me.

Devin stared at us both, mildly stupefied. At last, like the true friend he was – an archangel, really – he took his cue.

“Hey, Megan,” he said over-zealously, putting an arm around her thick shoulders, “are you any good at beer-pong?”

“What’s that?” she asked. Devin laughed.

“Oh my,” he said, “come with me, young one, I have many things to teach you.”

As he led her to the table on the other side of patio, he left me with a cautionary glance.

It was then that I realized what was happening. I was being seduced. In a way, I was already being unfaithful to my girlfriend. I was being an asshole. Amber said something, but I missed it because I was too preoccupied with my newfound moral predicament. I shook it away, reasoning, *‘come on, Ben, you’re just talking.’*

“I’m sorry, what did you say?”

We talked for a good long time that night. After a short while I invited her to sit on the couch. Somewhere in there I drank two or three beers. I made sure Nick refreshed her drink when it got low. Since he was progressively getting drunker, his fun-potions were growing correspondingly stiffer. And Amber was really putting it away. She was apparently no stranger to the drink. In fact, if upon inquiry she hadn’t directly told me otherwise, I would’ve believed she had spent some portion of her life as a sailor on a Russian whaling ship.

While our faces grew redder, I learned more and more about her. She lived in Evansville where she attended the La’James International College of Hairstyling, which I mocked her for accordingly. She was studying there to be a masseuse, however, which of course segued into a test massage. She really was good.

While she worked my trapezii in a hypnotic fashion, I got another look from Devin across the patio. He had succeeded in distracting the friend, Megan, who was now hopelessly drunk, shouting hysterically at the beer-pong players. He gave me a wary eye as Amber massaged me, then returned to his own prospects. He was by no means concerned about my infidelity, however, for Devin was notoriously unscrupulous in his own romantic dealings and proud of it. What did bother him, though, was the fact that Sara was a nice girl, a genuinely good person, and we both knew it. Devin once confided in me that he always wanted a girl like Sara for himself, and was, in fact, a little jealous of me. ...Him? Jealous of *me*? I didn't get it either.

Watching Devin work those two gorgeous ladies simultaneously would've made me a little envious had there not been a divine entity massaging my back. But then I began to wonder about what Sara would think of this whole situation. She wouldn't be too thrilled about it, I surmised. She wouldn't like it at all. In fact, she'd be pissed.

When the guilt of my predicament eventually overwhelmed me, I made it up in my mind to casually excuse myself for a round of beer-pong. Just as I was opening my mouth, Amber said, "Hey, you've got pretty defined shoulders, do you work out?"

I felt my face get really hot.

"No," I said, "fraid not." I really didn't, either. I don't know where that came from.

"Oh," she said, finishing the massage, and sat back on the couch.

"So," I began, about to get up, but then said unexplainably: "how do you know Josh?" I guess I forgot to ask her that earlier. She took a sip from her cocktail.

“I don’t, really,” she said, “I know Kate, his girlfriend. We went to school together.”

“Oh, okay,” I said, and took a drink too.

And then silence. Horrible, intolerable, aching silence. It was probably only a couple seconds, but it felt like forever. I beat my drunken mind against a metaphoric wall for something to say – anything, but I was blanking. So I just looked at her, and she, of course, looked right back. I was feeling pretty cozy from all the booze, so a smile materialized upon my face all on its own. Amber smiled back. God, was she radiant. I took this moment to reflect on the impossibility of my situation. *‘Hot girls never like me,’* I thought, *‘how is this even happening?’*

Then I thought of it: something interesting and clever and pertinent to say, and I was about to say it and woo Amber when, from behind me, someone yelled, “Let’s all go swimming!”

Swimming? It was a marvelous idea... truly marvelous.

“You wanna?” I asked Amber with a mischievous smile. I had already forgotten my genius conversation piece.

“Sure,” she said immediately, and took my hand so I could lead her down to the water. We drained the remainder of our drinks along the way.

It was a gorgeous night that night, too. Warm, almost muggy, with a nice breeze. There was no moon, but a billion stars lit the sky and reflected an eerie sort of twilight off the rippling lake. When Amber and I made it to the sand most of the swimmers were already in the water, having cannonballed from the dock.

“I don’t have a swimsuit,” Amber mumbled while I took off my shirt.

“That’s okay,” I said, “you don’t really need one. It’s so dark.” I kicked off my flip-flops and was ready to go. She was looking at me, biting her lip.

“You think so?” she said. From her forced expression I could tell that she was completely ready to strip down in front of me, but just needed me to nudge her a little so she didn’t come across too easy.

“Yeah, it’ll be fine. Come on, the water’s really nice....” I waded in a little and smiled at her. “Look, I can barely see you already,” I lied.

She smiled. I guess that was enough. “Okay,” she said, and yanked her shirt over her head, pulling from the base all the way up over her head like people do on TV, but never in real life. Taking it off that way provided me with an excellent view of her body, which was surely her intent, I concluded. In the twinkling starlight I could see the little lines that defined her abdominal muscles.

Then she dropped her tiny shorts to the sand and took a protracted moment to wipe the hair from her face, giggling at me. Standing before me in the night was a true goddess, clad only in sexy underwear. In my drunken state I must have gawked at her like a retard, but at the time I didn’t care. She didn’t seem to care either.

As she tiptoed into the warm lake my eyes fell upon her panties. They had a little monkey printed on the front for no apparent reason. Sara had a similar pair of panties, only instead of a monkey it was cherries. I felt an uncomfortable, dull pang in my stomach.

“Oh, yeah, the water *is* really nice!” said Amber. Without letting myself think about it, I took her hand and led her deeper to where the other swimmers were

congregated, standing in waist-high water. True to drunken adolescent fashion, they were already talking about skinny-dipping.

“Okay, I will if you will,” said one girl to another with a devilish grin.

“Let’s all do it together,” instigated a boy. This was roundly agreed upon.

I looked to Amber with glowing eyes and said, “Well? We don’t want to be left out, do we?”

She smiled and crouched to neck-depth in the inky water. I could hear wet clothes being tossed on the dock nearby and people giggling, but my eyes were locked on Amber. After a moment, she raised a hand out of the water, dredging up a dripping-wet bra. She chucked it to the dock. I subconsciously yanked off my shorts and threw them likewise. She tossed away her panties....

The naked crowd of swimmers quickly dispersed, discovering with glee the feel of the water on their bare skin. Before I knew it, Amber and I were the only ones left by the dock and a convincing feeling of aloneness overcame us. We looked at each other for a while, then she stood straight up out of the water.

I felt a surge in my chest, like an extra-heavy heartbeat. I only feel that when I’m doing something especially titillating, like the first time I ever felt a girl’s breast, or the day I discovered internet pornography. It’s a magical sensation, and you only seem to get a few per lifetime. I usually savor it, but this one came in a different flavor: a nasty combination of guilt and self-loathing. It’s not everyday you get to see your own sins face to face.

My drunken eyes did their best to keep her face still as it came close to mine. My toes curled up in the gooey sand when I felt her breasts press against me. My hot ears

were overwhelmed with the gentle crashing of the surf as her lips kissed me, and that was all I could think about.

I grabbed her behind the neck and kissed her full on, tongue and all. She wrapped her arms around me and pulled me against her. She was really skinny, I remember that.

We made out for several minutes and the entire time I could not get Sara out of my head. The more we snogged, the more I could feel my heart disintegrating. It was like a great black darkness was eating away my soul... it was weird. Eventually I could take no more and had to pushed her away.

“No, I can’t,” I said. Amber was confused. I don’t suspect anyone had ever pushed her away in her life. “This isn’t me, Amber. I have a girlfriend.”

She smiled villainously. “That’s okay, I have a boyfriend,” and she came at me again.

As her big, pouting lips approached, something dawned on me. More like it, something shifted within me. Here was this girl: probably the sexiest girl I’d ever see in my life, and yet, to me, there was nothing ...*beautiful* about her. All of her charms that had ensnared me were instantly vanished like a spell. She was still so remarkably sexy – ridiculously sexy, in fact – and yet that seemed so empty and meaningless to me now. She didn’t have any of the wholesome qualities of Sara, and just then, at that exact moment, that was all I cared about. It was as if all that alcohol had worn off suddenly. I felt sobered up.

I dodged her kiss.

“No,” I said, “I can’t.” It was quite apparent that she didn’t know how to handle herself at this point. From here on, I assumed, we’d be breaking new ground for her.

“Can’t what?”

“This isn’t right, Amber.... I’m sorry.”

Looking at her for a moment, I saw something quite rare. There was something in her eyes: the look of genuine bewilderment that a super-hot girl expresses when she’s finally been turned down. It can only happen once in a person’s lifetime, I suspect. So, I relished it. It was a little sadistic of me – yeah, I know – but I did. I looked at her for a long time, milking that incredulous expression. I guess you can do a lot of strange things when you’re drunk. A moment later and I had left her, left her alone and naked in the lake. It was pretty dramatic: more like something Devin would’ve done than me.

I found my shorts on the dock, put them on in the water, and went back to the house.

That night I didn’t sleep, and it wasn’t because I was still partying. In a drunken frenzy I argued with myself about what to tell Sara. Sure, I crossed the line, I figured, but this could really compromise her trust in me forever and I wasn’t sure if the truth was worth that price. Sara was an amazing girl, after all, and I had planned to marry her someday. Could I risk all that for one dumb mistake?

Yes, I could, I resolved. In reality, it was nothing. Less than nothing. A little kiss, some flirtation. We hadn’t done anything unforgivable. At least before I let it get to that point I figured out where my priorities were. Sara is a reasonable girl. She’ll understand that.

I’ll tell her.

I’ll explain it to her and she might get upset, but she’ll understand.

The next day I got a call from Sara. We caught up extensively. She told me all about her family thing: her cousin getting in a fight with his mom again, an uncle getting too drunk and making a scene, her own parents fighting – the usual family stuff. Then she asked me about the party.

“How was it?” was the initial question. My heart fluttered reflexively with the onset of panic.

“Good, good, – really great, actually. We had an awesome time. You should’ve been there, Sara, we missed you.”

I recapped most of the events from the evening.

“That sounds cool,” she said. And then at last she asked it:

“Did anything interesting happen?” she said.

There was a pause.

I took a deep breath.

“No, not really.”