

Two Weeks

Word Count: 682

Note: This was written by an actual eighth-grade student.

When I was in sixth grade I was assigned to do a project for science with one partner. My partner was Marissa Moose. Marissa *was* what some people called her. They called her that because she was taller than all the boys and had broad shoulders that made her seem like a giant next to my “five-foot-nothing.” She was silent mostly, but when she talked it was in a loud, booming voice that always startled me. All in all I was scared of her, and scared of the people who would tease me if I worked with her. But even though I was scared, there was no way I could get out of working with Marissa.

“I’ll come over to your house today,” Marissa said in a voice that I was sure everyone in the class could hear. She didn’t seem to notice. Marissa never noticed what other people heard or said. She was always concerned about getting to where she was going. Back then I could only nod meekly and hope that the jibes I would get from people wouldn’t be too harsh. I could already hear some people’s snickers as I watched Marissa’s broad shoulders walk away. With long strides she covered more ground than I could have done while jogging. Marissa’s walk was straight forward and confident, not like the saunter with your hips moving that some girls had mastered.

When Marissa arrived at my house, we quickly plunged ourselves into the project. I was wanting not to think of all the rumors I had heard about Marissa. Shortly into the project I realized that despite the rumor, Marissa had a head like a brick and a truckload of brains. She was actually very smart. She was smart and clever and knew more than I did. This should have tipped me off that since that rumor had not been true that the others might also not be true — but it didn’t. The fact she was smart only intimidated me further.

It wasn’t until we took a break to eat a snack that I got to know Marissa. She seemed so lonely, her usual confidence wavering a bit. I felt sorry for her. I also felt like a creep for treating her like someone who needed to be kept at a distance. So I cracked a joke and she smiled; I had never seen Marissa smile before. Her smile was fresh, like opening a window after being inside a stuffy room, not like the sugar-coated smile the girls at school pasted on their faces. That smile was the icebreaker for Marissa and me.

I quickly launched into conversation with her, opening up to her more and more. Marissa was nice and truthful. You could be yourself and not have her

hold that against you. I admired her. When she had to go home I was sorry she had to leave, so we arranged to meet at her house the next day to work on the project. We worked on it nearly every day, every day getting to know each other more and working less on the project. I learned a lot about Marissa, that she liked com dogs, was crazy about volleyball, but most of all she liked to laugh. Those two weeks of friendship weren't worth giving up. But when the project was turned in I took the coward's route and went back to my old friends and ignored Marissa.

Marissa understood immediately and went back to her old quiet self. I eventually did go back to Marissa and begged her to forgive me and be my friend again. I wanted those two weeks back. She smiled and said she forgave me, but her smile wasn't her usual fresh smile. It was a smile of pity. She pitied me and I had truly lost her.

Shortly thereafter, Marissa moved to a different school. I heard from her mom that she's made lots of friends: I hope so. They deserve someone like Marissa. Not Moose Marissa. But beautiful Marissa. Wonderful Marissa. Friendly Marissa. My two-week best friend ... that Marissa.