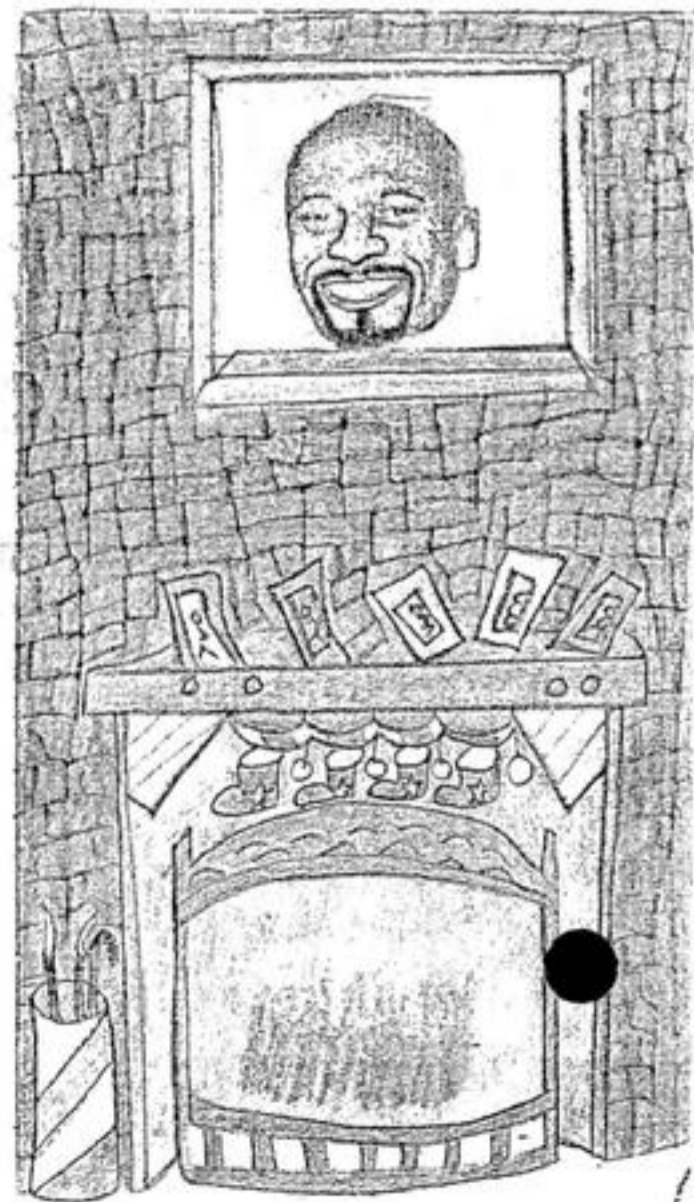


Peer Pressuring Me



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Peer pressuring me

At no time should you be swayed in any one direction by pressure from your peer, especially when you recognize that way is the wrong way and could lead to trouble for you. always be willing to say no and mean it, regardless of what others think of your answer.

Backpack Pals: Peer Pressuring Me

Shuttlesworth never wanted to be at the center of attention and he tried to make sure things stayed that way at all times, if he could help it. Even though he was not nearly the smartest kid in school, or any class, for that matter, he always made sure that whatever class he was in, he found a seat as far away from the front as he possibly could. That meant he usually sat in the back of the classroom.

In this case, Science class, which he hates, he sat in the second seat from the back. By his own calculations, Shuttlesworth figured this would keep him from being chosen by any teacher seeking answers to their many questions, answers Shuttlesworth was sure they knew the answer to.

He figured if he kept his head down, did not smile or make any sudden movements, he would be just fine with not being summoned or asked any questions he was sure he would not know the answer to but, as usual, one of the other kids got him to make a sudden involuntary movement right at the moment the teacher asked the very first question.

To involuntarily force Shuttlesworth into volunteering, another boy slid Shuttlesworth a note; a message from a girl who was sitting in the first seat on the row he was in. He likes the girl so he was more than happy to take the note when he was told it came from her.

The girl has long wavy black hair. She wore blue jeans and a white shirt. Shuttlesworth was always shy around her. He looked away whenever he would walk by her or she passed by him. Some times, she smiled and for some unforeseen reason, that always embarrassed him, especially since she has such a Prettygirl smile.

One of the other kids heard Shuttlesworth talking in the restroom one day and heard him say it right then and there, "she has such a Prettygirl smile," to himself in the mirror. The boy snickered as he left the restroom. Shuttlesworth caught up to him that day and pleaded for him not to tell anyone what he heard. The kid promised but kids are like a holy balloon when it comes to not spreading secrets. They spilled things in all directions.

The class, nor the room for that matter, were big at all and supposedly, is a normal size class; 23 kids, equally balanced with girls and boys.

The teacher, Mrs. Burnett is old fashion. She made sure her students were courteous but is not strict. She is all for a kid expressing him or herself in whichever fashion they desired, so long as there was no classroom interruption during this display of individual expression.

The note read, "Do you like me and want to go out with me? Circle yes or no. The girl had circled yes. Shuttlesworth got beside himself when he read the note. The kid who handed it to him waited for the right moment to do so. He could usually time it when Mrs. Burnett was about to ask one of her questions or try to get a kid to volunteer. In this case, the teacher asked for a volunteer to read a chapter in front of the class, at the same time Shuttlesworth shouted, Yes!"

The kid fell back in his seat and stumped his foot as he and the other kids laughed. Mrs. Burnett immediately requested Shuttlesworth to report to the front of the class.

"Bring your book with you Mr. Shuttlesworth. You cannot do much, if any, reading without a book and the rest of you, quiet down." The students immediately quieted.

Old Shuttlesworth was flustered and nervous. He couldn't believe he allowed himself to be trapped like this so easily. He glanced at the kid who slipped him the note, shook his head because he'd told the kid to keep their secret between them and he didn't. The girl was not even supposed to know he likes her and here it is, the kid slipped her a note and she circled yes. Now everybody knows.

He stood up, glanced around, reaching for help, as he pulled his book up off the desk. He wished one of the other kids would volunteer to take his place but none did. None ever does. The ones who knew about the note wanted to see him sweat anyway.

They knew he wouldn't hold up well in front of the girl he likes let alone an entire classroom full of kids. Shuttlesworth was wearing a pair of jeans that weren't old but not exactly new, either. He would barely make it through the whole day without that plaid shirt threatening to tell tails about him if he breathes too hard at any given point or time.

Stay cool stay calm. I remember repeating to myself during what seemed like the longest walk in my entire life, even though I was only about twelve feet from the front of the classroom. Having all of the other kids staring at me the way they are now makes me feel like I'm walking the green mile to the chamber, or something like it. I know I'm walking slightly faster than a snail but slower than a turtle but I don't care.

Now I fear even glancing around at any of the faces staring at me because I don't want to further my humiliation and take a fall. Something told me, just this morning and just this once, I should sit toward the front of the class. Not directly in front but close enough to where if I were somehow called, I could hop right up and be there in two steps. Maybe then my misery would be lessened somehow but did I listen to my own inner voice? No, so now I have to go through with this humiliation, which, hopefully, won't last that long.

The hardest part about this journey is, the girl in the front row, the one I really don't know and whom I completely forgot her name, if I knew it at all, purposely waited until I got to just about where she was sitting and turned and looked at me; just turned completely in my direction and scared the rompers out of me. Not only is she staring at me, like the other kids but she's smiling. Boy, I hate this.

Somehow, I know from this point on, there is no way she and I would ever date one another. She'll hate me as soon as I open my mouth to read. I know she will. Then again, I guess a kid could like somebody and not know their name, or remember it.

I have never seen such a pretty girl before, or maybe I never noticed. My heart is pounding so bad right now and I can't even explain why. I hope it doesn't tare my shirt. I know it's about ready to burst from my body, or worse, I pee my pants.

I had absolutely no idea I had stopped at the girl's desk, until Mrs. Burnett snapped me out of it by yelling my name out extremely loud. When I came back to, it seemed as though I heard a thousand voices cackling, all at me. I do know one thing for sure somebody threw a chalkboard eraser and binged me off my head with it. It wasn't Mrs. Burnett because she was wagging her finger in the air at one of the other kids.

Well, I made it through the reading, an entire chapter but not through the embarrassment for having to do so. I hurried and raced back to my seat, my comfort zone in the classroom and I didn't even glance one time at the girl who had agreed to be my

girl by circling yes on that piece of paper. I wonder if she even knows it is me who that note was talking about. She could think it was another boy instead of me.

After class let out and I stopped by the restroom to wash the embarrassment and perspiration from my face, the craziest thing happened next. One of the other kids, who usually sat at the back of the class but in the left corner, shared some advice with me.

"Hey, kid, that's your girl now. You have to go out with her. I know you're thinking you shouldn't but that'll be a bad mistake. You can't pretend to go out with a girl if you have no intentions on actually doing it. She'll hate you forever if you don't. That's how it was with me and my girl, that is, before she became my wife."

At first, I was a little taken off guard because I didn't know if this curly haired, freckled face kid is actually a student here, a high Schooler or an adult pretending to be a kid again. He never talked to me before and I doubt if he is in the sixth grade...still. The kid always wore a black leather jacket and blue jeans. Mrs. Burnett always made him take his hate off in class. She never asked him any questions either. Besides, I never said anything about getting married. I don't even want to get married.

I stepped back a little because he was standing too close to me. I was already pressed against the sink. "Why should I? That girl doesn't want to be with me, or have anything to do with me, especially after the way I fumbled in class."

"Yeah. I saw that. You can use a little greasing but you have what a lot of kids your age don't have..."

"Yeah, what's that?"

"Courage..."

"Courage?"

"Yeah, courage. Look, you got up there in front of an entire class, didn't you?"

"That's because I had to. Mrs. Burnett made me."

The kid pounded me on my chest with his open hand. I can smell his cologne.

"Nah, kid. You didn't have to. You wanted to..."

"I did?"

"Sure you did. You could have sat back down but you didn't. How else were you going to make an impression on your new girl? As goofy as it was but girls like goofy guys, a kid who will make her laugh. Nobody wants to be all uptight all the time."

He made perfect sense. The more he talked the more my courage built to a sizeable maybe. My mouth almost flew into a smile. He was making me sound good and look like super man. Now she's my girl. I agreed. "Ok, I'll do it."

"That a boy. Besides, you have to redeem yourself."

"I thought you said I did good."

"Yeah, about that," he put a hand on my shoulder, "you did good but not in the way a normal kid does good. You were awful bad. It was good but could have been better. Now go out there and show them who the man is."

When I bent down to splash more water on my face, to reboot whatever courage I have in me then looked up, the kid was gone. Even though I agreed to go out with the girl who I can't remember her name, I'm still not fully sure I can actually go through with it but since that cool kid said I have what it takes, I guess it wouldn't hurt any. Besides, she did circle yes.

As soon as I stepped out of the restroom, I was the center of attention. I hate that. Not only were the kids from my reading class lined up in the halls but kids from other

classes were there as well. They all stopped talking when I stepped out. Some of them had smiles on their faces.

I tried to go back in the restroom after they started whistling and clapping but my friend, Booterbug, stopped me. He grabbed me by my arm then pulled me to the center of the crowd.

My skin was flushed as I began to sweat all over again. It felt like a thousand bugs were crawling all over me but I realized the bugs are only chill bumps. I need to chill but I can't. If I thought it was bad before with an entire classroom full of kids staring at me, this is five times worse; seems like the entire school is staring at me now.

I tried to hide amongst my own group of friends but some good that did. They were just as bad as the other kids who were egging me on to kiss the girl from my class. My new girlfriend, who was pulled out to the middle with me but how do you tell someone you don't know their name after you've kissed them, when you're supposed to be dating?

The girl was shoved right into me. Now I'm reeling with all sorts of emotions and I can't even begin to figure any of them out. It doesn't help that the girl is smiling at me, either. She's as cute as a pretty-yellow butterfly but I don't want to kiss her in front of all of these other kids.

"Stop being a lame and kiss the girl. If you don't kiss her you'll be considered the worse kid in the entire school!" someone shouted.

All I could think to say was, "I don't want to." Those words just leaped out of my mouth but they can be interpreted in all kinds of different ways. They could mean anything. I shyly turned away from the girl and looked at my friends but they all looked disappointed, like they no longer want to be associated with me if I don't do it. This sucks.

I looked right at my friend, Crystal, trying to appeal to a girl's point of view because girls can't just want a kid to just go up to them and kiss them, especially when the kid don't know her name but Crystal looked just as disgusted with me as everyone else. She turned her head away like I did something to her personally. Man.

I turned and looked at Booterbug and Teal and they were making kissy faces with their lips. Teal even had his eyes closed for affect. The last thing I ever wanted to do was to let my friends down so I got a grip on some courage; not mine I don't think but somebody else's. I don't even know where it came from but because of the current situation of me facing disassociation from my friends, I used that courage full throttle and would be sure to return it to wherever it belongs afterwards.

I sensed my target behind me, closed my eyes then spun around with my lips pushed out. I grabbed the girl, fully wrapping my arms around her tightly, planted my lips on hers then felt the warmest sensation I could ever imagine in my whole twelve years of living and it feels good, still can't describe it but it feels good.

When I heard all the laughing, cheering and hand clapping from the other kids, I knew I had finally won them over. The kiss wasn't bad, I got a new girlfriend and she didn't say no to my kiss. The other kids won't look down on me. I won't be the worst kid in school and more importantly, I won't lose any of my friends.

In fact, I'll probably be treated better than super man. I certainly displayed the courage of one. I love it and just think, I never wanted to be the center of attention but I love it now.