

## Ice Cream Girl

Remember the song that played on summer afternoons, as the truck pulled into the neighborhood? It was the clear sign that the ice cream man was here. All the kids would run over and get in line, holding a dollar from their mom or dad, ready to get a push pop, ice cream sandwich or another of the dozens of treats pictured on the van.

That large ice cream truck has been replaced by a motorized tricycle with a small freezer, no bigger than a golf cart and no longer driven by a man looking like Captain Kangaroo. No, now the treats were delivered by a young girl, in her teens with a long pony tail, cut off shorts and tie dye t-shirt, the ice cream girl.

Marley (vegan dog) and Jeri (stoned cat) were the first to notice her, hiding in the bushes hoping to get a treat dropped by a young child.

“Marley, what’s happening?”

“See that girl, handing out ice creams. Her name is Nikki. And that boy holding the child’s hand is Tommy. He likes Nikki, but he’s afraid to ask her out.”

“They would make a cute couple. Can we help them get together?”

Jeri tilted her head. “I’ve got an idea.” She bumped into a little girl, who dropped her ice cream cone. The girl started to cry. Jeri was quick to lap up the vanilla treat. Tommy stepped up.

“Don’t cry little girl.” He handed Nikki a dollar. “Please give her another cone.” The little girl smiled with gratitude. Nikki was smiling too.

“That’s very kind of you. I’m Nikki.”

“I’m Tommy. No little one should lose their ice cream.”

Marley smiled. “Well done, Jeri.”

“I think we need to do more. Tommy isn’t asking her out.” So, Marley and Jeri recruited Larry Bird (the cockatoo) to follow Nikki and Duck to follow Tommy and find out more about them.

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The next week, the birds came back with their report.

“Well, if we’re going to get these two together, Tommy is going to have to know something about Nikki.”

“What?”

“Well, she just broke up with a boy who was cheating on her. She won’t stand for that.”

“Of course, most girls wouldn’t.”

“But that’s not all. He was cheating on her with her mom. She caught them making out in the house when she got back from her ice cream job.”

“Oh my! That’s got to hurt.”

“Yes, so Tommy shouldn’t push her into a relationship right now. She needs time to recover emotionally.”

“Duck, you’ve been following Tommy. What’s his state of mind?”

“Not good. Tommy’s been getting ready to ask her out, even going over to her house to do it in person.”

“That could blow up big time. If he happened to be there alone with her mom, waiting for Nikki to come in.”

“We have to follow Tommy and intercept him. He can’t go over there yet.”

So, Marley, Jeri and the birds tailed Tommy.

Soon, they found him buying flowers and walking towards Nikki’s house. Nikki was finishing her ice cream route, so he would get there before she came home. Disaster.

Marley rolled around in some mud, then ran up against Tommy’s pants.

“Argh. Damn dog. Now I have to go home and change.”

Crises averted for the moment. Tommy would have to wait another day.

The next day, Tommy tried again, but Larry landed on Tommy’s shoulder.

“Hey. Get off me.” But Larry just smiled and stood there. Tommy tried to shake him off, but to no avail. And duck walked in front of Tommy, interrupting his gait.

“What is this, a Hitchcock movie?”

Larry started pecking his neck while duck nipped at his ankles.

Tommy screamed and ran home. One more day of relief for Nikki, but the animals knew they couldn't keep Tommy away forever.

He decided that a lesser gesture might be more effective. No flowers, no showing up at Nikki's house. He would just approach her at the ice cream truck.

The next day, he waited behind the little kids getting their treats. Marley, Jeri and the others watched quietly from a safe distance. When he was the last one there, he handed Nikki a dollar.

"May I please have a creamsicle?"

Nikki smiled and handed him the frozen treat. "Of course, Tommy. I haven't seen you here in a while."

"I've been thinking about the future. How have you been?"

"Well, I had a problem with my old boyfriend, but I'm over that now."

"I'm glad to hear that. Would you like to talk about it?"

"Maybe we could. What are you doing later on?"

"Not much. Can we meet down by the beach for a burger?"

"I'd like that Tommy. Six o'clock good? I'll bring the dessert."

Tommy and Nikki smiled.