

The New Boy

Ryker Middle School was so small everybody knew everybody there. So when a new boy showed up one Tuesday morning just before the first bell rang, he stood out like a sore thumb. Well, maybe not like a sore thumb. He was too good looking for that. He was more like a bright shiny object that attracted everyone's attention.

The girls couldn't stop looking at him. They huddled together in small groups in the hallway, whispering, when he entered the building. The boys shook their heads and rolled their eyes at the girls, then they slammed their lockers on the way to class. They knew what the girls were talking about – the new boy. Where did he come from? What was his name? And, most importantly, did he have a girlfriend?

By lunchtime, everyone knew the new boy was Riley Logan and he came from Lone Tree, Texas. He used to live on a cattle ranch there. But now he lived with his Aunt Jane in a small house on Bartlett Street in Ryker. Everyone had yet to discover whether or not Riley had a girlfriend. That wasn't a proper question to ask just yet.

Madison Parker sat in the cafeteria, unwrapping a straw, waiting for her boyfriend, Dixon, who hadn't made it to the lunchroom yet. Her best friend, Hailey, sat down next to her. "That Riley guy is really cute!" said Hailey.

Madison took a sip of her juice. "You think so? I hadn't really thought about it," she said, trying to sound nonchalant. But the truth was, Riley Logan was all Madison had thought about since he'd shown up in the hallway this morning. She wanted to tell Hailey, "Yes, I think he's cute. He looks like some famous singer with that blonde hair and those amazing eyes. I wonder if he has a girlfriend." But, no, she couldn't say any of that because Dixon would find out.

A few minutes later, Dixon plopped his lunch tray on the table, then he slid into a chair next to Madison. She looked up from the hamburger she was eating to see Riley Logan with a sack lunch in his hands. He sat down on the other side of Dixon.

"Madison, this is Riley Logan," said Dixon. "He's in my history class. He just moved here from Lone Tree, Texas, and I invited him to sit with us today since he doesn't know anyone yet."

It was just like Dixon to take someone new under his wing, so Madison shouldn't have been surprised, yet she was a bit flustered. She wanted to say, "I know all that, Dixon." She wanted to look coyly at Riley and say, "Hello, Riley. Welcome to Ryker." But she didn't, of course. She just nodded politely at Riley.

He smiled at her and said, "Hey, Madison. Nice to meet ya."

Riley's sweet Texas drawl made it difficult for Madison not to swoon. Why couldn't Dixon talk like that, she wondered. But, of course she knew why not. Dixon wasn't from Lone Tree, Texas. He was

from Ryker, Arizona. She had known Dixon all her life. There was nothing mysterious about Dixon Bradbury.

Madison spent all afternoon thinking about Riley Logan – wondering about him, really. By the next morning, she had figured out how to resist her attraction to him.

She sat at the bus stop now, waiting for Dixon. It wasn't long before he came ambling down the sidewalk. Madison studied him, trying to see him for the very first time. Trying to see him as the new boy that she knew nothing about.

When he sat down next to her a few minutes later, she smiled at him and said, coyly, “Hey, nice to meet ya.”

Dixon laughed and said, “You’re so silly sometimes. I can’t figure you out.”

Madison snuggled next to him. It was nice to know she was still mysterious to Dixon after all this time. There was still that attraction.

Questions

1. How is the new boy like a bright shiny object? Is that a simile or a metaphor?
2. Why can't Madison tell Hailey what she really thinks about Riley?
3. What does *nonchalant* mean here: "'You think so? I hadn't really thought about it," she said, trying to sound nonchalant."
4. What does Madison decide to do to strengthen her attraction to Dixon?