

# she has one of those names that only a southern girl could pull off

*by Peter DeWolf*

“But I don't HAVE an accent,” she said. With an accent. “Tell him I don't have an accent, y'all.”

Looking from one friend to another.

Messy ponytail bouncing.

I just stared.

I may have blinked.

A couple times.

Every syllable dripped with sweetness.

But not too much. You know?

It was barely above a whisper, her telling me that she sneaks a flower home from each park outing with her friends. She saves them all.

She saves them all.

If there was a book about how to get me to become quickly smitten, I'd believe that she'd read, or maybe written, it.

If there was a book about how to get me to become quickly smitten...

That would not sell very well.

At some point, I was sick of the group conversations and really just wanted to hear this girl's story.

That was twelve minutes after I arrived.

But I waited patiently.

Until fifteen minutes after I arrived.

I invited her to feed the ducks with me, explaining simply that, “The ducks may starve if we don't. Would you want that to happen? Would you? Poor little baby duckies...”

She tried an angry freckled nose scrunch.

But got up off of the blanket, reaching out for my hand, that instinctively appeared, to help her to her feet.

I hated myself for letting it go as we started walking.

And we talked.

And I tried to learn every single fact that I could.

From what she said. From what she left out.

I did pretty well.

Moving to the city had pulled the sheets off of a fashion sense that had been for too long merely peeking out from under the covers.

She missed her family.

Sometimes.

The beginning of every new day excited her.

She always felt bad for the first person eliminated from any reality show competition.

She said my name differently than anyone else on earth.

I liked her version the most.

Pretty early on, I asked for her phone number.

I'd like to tell you that I thought of some creative way to ask.

Something that would make a good story for her to tell her friends.

But all I said was, "I think you're great. I'd really love your number."

"If we're meant to meet again, it will happen. Fate brought us together once..." she said, in a voice just quieter than the sound of my heart breaking.

Sure. Fate. And me begging, bribing and a mildly threatening a mutual friend. Who, by the way, said "I thought you liked brunettes!" and then I "bup bup bup"ed her until she agreed to let me join them at the park.

"We met once before. Do you remember?" she asked, looking out over the pond.

Did I remember?

"Vaguely," I laughed — through my pain.

I don't think she got the joke.

Then I told her where. When. And what she was wearing. (I know. I know. Too much.)

She smiled. "Maybe you remember a little."  
I pulled the bread into little pieces.  
I handed them to her.  
She threw them to the ducks.  
She hit one of the ducks, gently, with a little piece.  
She apologized.  
The others yelled to us that it was time to eat.  
I was opposed to this idea.  
But smiled and passed her the last morsel of bread.  
She tossed it to a baby duck.  
And she watched to make sure that he got it.  
And she smiled.  
We walked back.  
We joined the others.  
The rest of the afternoon went by in a blur.  
Everyone chatted, but she and I sat next to each other and playfully bantered.  
She asked questions.  
I answered.  
Which, frankly, is a bit odd for me.  
When she dropped a southern phrase that her grandma used frequently, I laughed.  
Hard.  
But then it was time for her to go.  
A work event.  
I recommended her quitting her job.  
Maybe getting some kind of adorableness grant.  
She told me to process for getting one of those is "like, so political."  
I had to do it.  
I had to.  
I leaned in and asked for her number again.  
"Not today," she whispered.  
My crest was fallen.  
I faked a smile.

She hugged me.  
After a delay, I hugged back.  
She waved to everyone, picked up her flip flops and walked away.  
I tried not to watch her go.  
It was not an overwhelming success.  
I stayed for a while after that.  
Not because I was enjoying the conversations about artists I had  
never heard of, or foods I wouldn't eat at gunpoint.  
But because...  
I just didn't want the day to end.  
When I felt like my mood was darkening too much to put up with  
conversations, I stood up.  
I grabbed my shirt and put it on.  
It seemed heavier.  
I reached into the pocket and felt something. I pulled it out.  
It was a flower.  
A pretty little white flower.  
There was a piece of paper, wrapped around the stem.  
I unrolled it.  
It was a name. Her name.  
And her phone number.

