Abbie and Maria were in the same car approaching the final hill before the meeting spot. However, the driver, Maria, and the passenger Abbie were having two completely different experiences.

Abbie’s excitement was palpable, as was her optimism. Unfortunately, Maria’s emotions were the polar opposite. Maria was certain Mystery Man was not going to show, and her friend was going to suffer. They were one minute away from finding out which perspective was correct.

When they reached the top of the hill, only a seatbelt prevented Abbie from popping up and hitting her head on the ceiling of the car. She couldn’t be more excited. Mystery Man was already there waiting. His car was facing the same direction they were driving. He was leaning on the hood of his vehicle facing in the opposite direction. It didn’t appear that he saw them yet.

Abbie shouted, “He’s here! He’s here!”

Maria pulled over to the side of the road and put the car in park.

“Why did you pull over?” asked Abbie.

“I didn’t want to say anything until I knew if he showed or not. I happen to know that Steven is not with anyone, and he still asks about you. I can’t make any promises, but that door is probably still open if you want.”

Abbie paused her excitement for a moment so that Maria could see that she was serious. “Even if things don’t develop with Mystery Man, Steven is my past. He is not my present, and he is not my future. Getting over Steven was harder than I thought. I cried every day for two weeks straight.”

Maria interjected, “I know. I was there.”

“Then you remember that I finally decided to let it go. And since then, haven’t I been happy?”

“You been happier than I’ve ever seen you. And honestly, it’s kind of annoying sometimes,” Maria said, laughing at her own joke.

“That’s because I finally moved on and started looking forward to my future, a future that happens to be waiting for me at the bottom of this hill. So let’s get going!”

“Okay, but if I sense any danger, I’m going to keep driving. And I want you to stay in the car until I feel comfortable letting you out. Agreed?”

“Agreed!” said Abbie.

Maria put the car in drive and proceeded slowly past Mystery Man’s car. She didn’t sense any danger, so she pulled over about 20 feet ahead of him. Abbie grabbed the leather jacket and looked over to her friend, and asked, “Can I get out now?”

Maria looked in her rearview mirror and saw Mystery Man smiling, waiting for Abbie. Maria said, “I can see how excited you are. And I know you want to go out there, run and jump on him.”

“You got that right!” Abbie said with a big smile.

“For now, just play it cool. We don’t know how he is feeling. You don’t want to be humiliated if he doesn’t share your enthusiasm. I’ll give you two a few minutes to get reacquainted, and then I will come out to meet him. You can go.”

Abbie decided to follow Maria’s advice and play it cool for now. However, there was little she could do to hide her excitement. Her ear-to-ear grin could only be matched by the smile of the man smiling back at her.

She walked up to him and said, “You’re here!”

Mystery Man smiled and said, “There is nowhere else I’d rather be.”

“Are you here for the jacket or the girl?”

“What jacket?” said Mystery Man, making it clear that he was here for her.

Somehow Abbie’s smile grew even wider as she said, “Good! I was planning to keep it. It’s mine now. But I’ll be happy to let you borrow it anytime you want.”

Neither were sure what they should do. Should they hug? Should they kiss? Maria’s presence, peering at them through the rearview mirror, made the situation feel awkward. Abbie twisted her body and waved for Maria to come and meet her Mystery Man.

Maria took her time getting out of the car. The first thing she noticed as she approached was that these two couldn’t take their eyes off each other. Eventually, Maria made her way next to Abbie.

Abbie made the introductions. “Mystery man, this is Maria, my best friend of 10 years, my roommate, and apparently my bodyguard for the day. Maria, this is Mystery Man.”

Mystery Man temporarily broke his gaze on Abbie and turned to Maria. He flashed his confident smile and put out his hand. As Maria shook his hand, he said, “I am pleased to meet you, Maria. My name is Noah.”

Hearing Noah’s name for the first time caused Abbie to bounced up and down with child-like excitement. She instantly decided that the name Noah was the most awesome name in the world.

Maria returned the pleasantry. “It’s nice to finally meet you.”

Maria had expected a strong, firm handshake to match his stature, and was surprised at how gentle the handshake was. Her father had always told her that you can tell a lot from a person’s handshake. Noah’s handshake, seemed to say, “I care. ”

Noah’s gaze had already returned to Abbie. Prompting Maria to say, “I’m feeling like a third wheel here. I am going to let you two have your space. But I’m still keeping an eye out. I am going to pull down there on the other side of the road. Wave if you need me, Abbie.”

While keeping his gaze locked in the direction of Abbie, Noah pulled out his wallet and handed it to Maria.

Maria asked, “What’s this for?”

“I figured you want to know all about me. If you can get a signal, my wallet has my name, business card, and everything you need to know to find me on the Internet.”

Maria was impressed by this gesture. She decided to take it a step further. She put out her hand and said, “Your keys?”

Abbie scolded, “Maria! He already gave you his wallet.”

Noah laughed and handed Maria his car keys and said, “I don’t mind. I admire a woman who looks out for her friends.”

Abbie said, “Wait up, Maria.” She turned back to Noah, smiled, and said, “I’ll be right back. I want to put my jacket in the car.” Then she told Noah, “Don’t you go anywhere!”

Noah replied, “Why would I? How could I?”

Abbie laughed and said, “Good point!” And then headed toward Maria’s car.

They got in the car together to have a quick talk.

Seeking Maria’s assessment of Noah, Abbie asked, “Okay, give it to me straight. What do you think of him?”

Maria smiled and said, “What do I think of him? Hubba hubba, that’s what I think.”

Abbie couldn’t be more excited to hear Maria’s words. “Really!?”

Maria was excited to share her observations with Abbie. “Oh my God! Abbie, you described him so perfectly! You were right. As big as he is, he is gentle and considerate. He may not have Steven’s pretty-boy looks, but he is so much more attractive!”

Abbie’s excitement intensified with Maria’s every word. “You really mean this? You’re not just saying this?”

“I am being totally honest. Until today, I couldn’t imagine you with anybody but Steven. But now that I’ve seen you two together, I can’t see you with anybody else but Noah. You know how much I care for Steven. But all of a sudden, he seems like just a boy. Noah is clearly all man!”

Abbie squealed and giggled with excitement and gave her friend a big hug and said, “I’m so glad you like him.”

“I do like him. I’ll tell you what I like most about him. It’s the way he looks at you. You look smokin’ hot in that dress, and I don’t even think he noticed it. It didn’t matter what you were wearing. He was dialed into you!”

Abbie said, “I’m so happy. So does he have your official seal of approval?”

The always protective Maria said, “He’ll still have to prove himself, and my mobile does have signal, so I do plan to check him out. But so far, I like everything I see.”

Abbie put the leather jacket in the back seat, gave Maria another hug, and exited the vehicle. She waited there until Maria pulled away. Then she slowly approached Noah as she had before. No words needed to be said as they embraced and kissed for the first time in three months.

Abbie looked up at Noah and said, “That was just like I remember. Kissing you feels like…like…like home.”

“Be honest, did you have any doubts since the last time I saw you?” asked a curious Noah.

Abbie laughed as she said, “Only about a dozen times!” Abbie continued, “There were times when anxiety would overcome me. It all seemed so crazy. But I would take a deep breath and remember the way you touched me, the way you kissed me, and the way you held me, and in no time at all, I was right as rain. If I were really anxious, I’d wear your jacket. It had a calming effect on me. But it’s been weeks since I’ve had any doubts.”

Abbie said, “How about you? I can’t imagine you had any doubts.”

Noah lowers his head to appear shameful.

“Really? You had doubts!? You always seemed so confident,” said Abbie.

Noah lowered his voice, pretending to be embarrassed, and said, “Yes, Abbie. I had doubts. The minute you drove away, I thought to myself, What was I thinking! I don’t want to wait three months. I should have said two months. That would’ve been plenty of time for her to wrap things up at home!’”

Abbie laughed as she realized Noah was just having fun with her. “Are you being serious, or are you just saying that to be charming?”

“Both! In fact, I was so serious that I came here at noon a month ago in hopes you had the same thought. And then I’ve come every week since, just in case,” said Noah.

“Wow, that’s a long drive, isn’t it?” asked Abbie

“Two and a half hours each way, plus a couple of hours waiting and hoping you’d come.”

“That’s like seven hours! You did that four times just in the hope I’d be here too?”

“Yep!” Noah said with a proud smile.

“Impressive! You are already baking some major boyfriend points.”

“I can’t wait to redeem them,” Noah said with a sexy smile.

“Me either!”

Abbie and Noah spent a few silent moments looking deep into each other’s eyes. Their next kisses were the most connective yet. These kisses established an unspoken bond of their commitment to a future together. A warm, loving embrace followed.

Abbie looked up at Noah and asked, “Noah, may I know what my future last name will be?”

Noah responded, “Jenkins.”

“Abbie Jenkins! I love the sound of that. I’d be moving up in the alphabet!” Abbie then asked, “Does it bother you that I’m already thinking about marriage?”

Noah smiled and said, “Nope! Would it surprise you if I told you that I would be shocked if there is not a ring on your finger by this time next year?”

“It wouldn’t surprise me at all. You seem like a man who is not going to wait very long when he knows what he wants.”

Noah peered deep into Abbie’s eyes and proclaimed, “This is going to work, isn’t it?”

Abbie responded, “You got that right!”