

# Barbeque Rendezvous

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I hurried into Jaycee's preschool one afternoon and headed to the front desk to pick up her get out of jail card. OK, really, it's just a blue index-sized card that lists the names and contact information of people who are allowed to transport my daughter to and from daycare.

A smile crept across the familiar face of the woman who greets me every afternoon. She looked at me from the other end of the desk, handed me Jaycee's card, and said, "Are you aware that Jaycee has a boyfriend named Parker?"

"Why, no, I didn't," I responded.

"They are quite the item."

Trying to conceal my curiosity, I added nonchalantly, "Anything I should be worried about? He's not in a band or anything, right?"

"No. But he has been known on occasion to wear cowboy boots with shorts. And his boots light up."

That's all I needed to hear. I instantly jumped to the conclusion that Jaycee was clearly showing a fascination for rebellious boys. What was I to expect? She WILL be turning 3 in October.

I was disappointed to learn upon entering her classroom that Mr. Rage Against the Machine had already left the building, so I didn't get the chance to properly scope him out.

Later that evening, our middle child had football practice and my husband had a fantasy football draft, so that left me, Jaycee and our oldest son to fend for ourselves for dinner. We landed at a barbecue restaurant in Bellevue and I chose patio seating to ensure the diners inside could eat their meals in peace and quiet.

After my children downed their meals in 2.5 minutes flat, I was busy shoveling food into my mouth while attempting to flag down the waitress for a to-go container. All of a sudden, I noticed Jaycee pause from her incessant whining and look longingly across the table. At the same time, I heard a cute little voice yell, "JAYCEE!"

And there he was. In all his glory. Parker. The play maker.

My maternal instinct to shield my little girl melted the moment I saw him and his dimples. His parents and I couldn't help but laugh. His mom had also learned about their torrid love affair that day and admitted that Parker could not stop talking about my daughter throughout dinner inside the restaurant.

We came to the conclusion that our toddlers had clearly planned their secret barbecue rendezvous that night without us knowing. To see those two gaze and smile at one another reminded me how precious first crushes can be.

About a week later, I escorted Jaycee into her preschool classroom and before the door closed behind us, I heard Parker announce, "Cute outfit, Jaycee!"

Jaycee said thanks and sat directly across from him at the breakfast table. I can only imagine the conversation that ensued over Lucky Charms that magical morning.

Parker's a keeper. I guess I shouldn't judge a book by its cover. Or a boy by his light-up cowboy boots. I just hope he knows what he's getting into when it comes to my little girl.

## Forever young (and in love)

*Published: Thursday, August 23, 2012*

Nearly a year ago, I wrote about my daughter, Jaycee, who had a 3-year-old boyfriend, Parker. They met for a barbeque rendezvous.

Remember how Parker stole her heart with his light-up cowboy boots?

Well, guess what? The mutual fascination and adoration continues.

I mistakenly assumed their courtship had fizzled, like so many first loves do. I thought one day I would ask Jaycee about Parker and she would vaguely remember how he made her laugh, but not much else.

They would inevitably replace one another with other memories.

Goes to show you how little I know.

Not only is their relationship going strong, they apparently got married. I guess they eloped because my husband and I never got an invitation to the ceremony.

When Jaycee declared to me that she married Parker as we walked into preschool one morning, I lovingly said, "Just because you carry a baby doll, you're not actually a mommy."

"You are pretending to be a mommy. Just like you are pretending to be married to Parker."

"NO! WE AARRRE MARRIED!" she yelled.

And that's precisely when cuteness turned into craziness. I backed away and tried to stifle my laughter.

Later that evening, my husband calmly explained how her daddy is and will remain her only boyfriend until she turns 19. His reasoning was met with the same reaction, "NO DADDY! PARKER IS MY BOYFRIEND!"

I closed my eyes, fast forwarded 12 years, and envisioned Jaycee with pink hair, a pierced lip, and a pulsating attitude: "I DON'T CARE IF HE SLEEPS IN A CEMETERY AND LOVES SETTING THINGS ON FIRE! I LOOOVE HIM! HE UNDERSTANDS MY ANGST!"

(Of course, it isn't sweet little Parker in this future scenario.)

I ran into my future son-in-law earlier this week while picking Jaycee up from preschool. When his dad and I passed in the hallway, I casually said, "You know... it appears they've taken their adoration of one another to the next level. I heard they stole a kiss on the playground when the teacher wasn't looking. I told Jaycee that wasn't acceptable."

Parker's dad looked down at him and said to me, "I asked Parker if they've ever kissed and he said, 'No, we just hide in the tube (on the playground).'"

Parker grinned and buried his face in his dad's legs.

I swear these kids keep me young. They make me laugh. They remind me of everything young and innocent and joyful in life.

They better not ever elope. Because I want to tell the story of how they met in front of all our family and friends.