

It's Not You I Sought, But It's You I Seek

By Caitlin Schulz,

1st place winner of the 2021 PSII Fiction Contest

Jordan

Her eyes shone as bright as the sun. *No. No.* They dove as deep as the ocean. Most people thought it was weird that I noticed these features, but when I liked someone, I couldn't help it. Her name was Brielle Greene. She never failed to impress. She didn't like me in the same way, but Nial said she'd come around.

Nial was way too confident with himself. But I guess this time he deserved to be. He was coming over later with his "master plan." Nial was my best friend, I didn't know if I could really trust him though. He got me into holes I couldn't easily dig myself out of.

Honestly, it shouldn't have been this hard. I just didn't get it. Why didn't Brielle like me? I've had girlfriends before, so why was this one so hard to get?

I decided to go down to Délicats, the corner store. It's one of my favourite places to get a sandwich or to hang out.

I walked into the store and guess who were the first people I saw? Halley and Brielle.

"Oh, look who's here! Nice to see you, Jordan." From anyone else that would've seemed kind. But Halley's not anyone else.

"Hi," I said dryly. I tried not to look at Brielle. Ever since I failed to ask her out I've been afraid to talk to her.

"Looks like someone's a bit tongue tied. What do you think, Brielle?" Halley teased me a lot since Brielle's rejection.

"I think we should leave before he confesses his love again." Brielle laughed.

"I wasn't gonna," I blurted out. I'm terrible at comebacks.

"Okay, lover boy," Halley taunted as the two girls made their way out. Remind me again why I liked Brielle?

I practically ran home. I was too embarrassed to face anyone. My life was so much easier before I liked Brielle. I was even friends with Halley and her group. I guess this is what you get when you do something dumb in front of a queen bee.

Nial showed up a few minutes later. "Man, Halley's really something else," he said after I told him about Délicats.

"Yeah, well the popular girl always seems to get what she wants, doesn't she?"

"Oh! Speaking of that, let's talk about the thing *you* want." Nial produced a poster from his backpack.

"You've got it all figured out, haven't you?" I asked wearily.

"Pretty much. There are a few holes, but nothing we can't fix. The way I see it, you've got two options. Get over the girl and endure life until things go back to normal, or prove everyone else wrong and get the girl."

“Well, this won’t all magically go away, so whatcha got?” I plopped onto my couch.

“We both know that Brielle gets insanely jealous sometimes, right? All we gotta do is tap into that.”

Mila

So, Jordan Price just asked me out. I mean, he’s cute I guess, but Jordan Price? He’s like a super jock. And until about two weeks ago, he was Halley Becker’s friend. *Queen-of-the-school* Halley Becker. I talked to my best friend about it, and she was totally on board with the idea. “It’ll be awesome!” she said. “You have a chance to be popular!”

“Laura, it’s not about being popular, this is about Jordan. Besides, some drama happened a few weeks ago and Jordan’s not exactly popular anymore,” I told her.

“You’re right. I guess I just thought we could finally stop the evil queen.”

“Again, this is about Jordan. *Not* Halley.” I think Laura was frustrated with my hesitation.

I said yes, after I thought about it. I’ll give him a chance. But that’s all he’ll get. Let’s see if he can use it wisely.

Jordan

My first date with Mila Davis is today. She’s nice enough, I guess. Let’s just hope this plan works.

I walked into the restaurant, and Mila was waiting for me. Her dress looked beautiful with her chestnut hair. Carefully crafted blue flowers flowed around her.

My head whipped around when I heard a familiar voice. Just as Nial said, Brielle stood at another table. Her face practically glowed. Her pink gown twirled, gently swaying as she moved. *Gorgeous*.

“Hey Jordan!” My attention snapped back to Mila. “Come sit.”

I walked over to our table. Mila and I talked as we waited for our food. We discussed my games, and her writing, what kinds of things we like to do, and I discovered that we both think a lot. We think alike. We laughed and made-up movie theories together. I had a really good time.

It was almost time to leave when I remembered Brielle was still here. I looked around, but she had disappeared. All that was left was glitter from her dress, sprinkled like salt over the floor. I stood up to walk Mila home. On the way we talked about what would happen if the rivers flowed the opposite way.

As I walked back home, it was bittersweet. I had a great time with Mila, but what happened with Brielle? Did she even notice me tonight?

Mila

Jordan seemed distracted tonight. He kept looking around the restaurant. We had fun at least.

Jordan

Mila and I have been all around the city since our first date a few weeks ago. Bowling, swimming, skating, and the movies. It was very enjoyable. Of course, Brielle was there sometimes but I've noticed her less and less. Tonight, we went for a walk. When it was time for a break, we sat by the beach and watched the waves. I looked over at Mila. Her eyes were speckled with sunlight that bounced off the water. With the sunlight against her dark navy irises, Mila's eyes shone like the night sky. She looked over at me and chuckled.

"What?" I smiled.

"You know you can look at something a hundred times and not think twice about it," She turned back towards the waves. "But when you stop and *see* it, the value of it changes. It becomes more... *special*. You see the complexity of it. You know what I mean?"

I watched the wind blow wisps of brown hair out of her braid. "Yeah." I grinned. "I think I do."

Jordan

Mila beamed. "I didn't think you would." She suddenly gasped and jumped off the ledge onto the beach. She picked something shiny up out of the water. "Look, a pink scallop shell." She held it in her palm for me to see. "I love it!"

"It just needs one thing." I took it from her and washed it off. Then I stepped around Mila and secured the shell in her braid. "There."

She reached up and touched it. "Good idea!" She searched the beach. "Aha! A West Indian false cerith." Mila held a spiral brown and white shell. "They're everywhere on this beach."

I reached to put this one in her hair too, but she pulled away. I gave her a confused smile. Mila giggled as she reached up, and wove the shell in my head of curls. "Beautiful." She stood back to admire her work.

I laughed. I bent down to scoop up some water, but I was too late. A stream of it soaked me. I wiped the water out of my eyes to see Mila cracking up. I laughed with her.

"You think that's funny, do you?" I sent water flying her way. Mila stood there for about a millisecond in shock, then retaliated. With water flying left and right, I could barely see. When the waves settled, we were both dripping and laughing.

Mila walked slowly through the water towards me. Then she did something she hadn't done before. She hugged me. After I got over the second of surprise, I hugged her back. I adjusted the shell still in her hair. When the shell was wet, it matched the colour of her sundress. *Beautiful.*

Jordan

“Dude, our plan worked!” Nial came over to my house the next day. “Brielle’s totally jealous.”

“Really?”

“Yeah! I believe her exact words were, ‘What does he see in *Mila*?’ This is awesome!”

“Yeah, great.”

“Hesitation? Wha—oh no. No, don’t tell me—” Nial sighed.

I looked over at him. “I can’t go out with Brielle.”

“This wasn’t our plan! The plan was to use Mila to make Brielle jealous! Then you could end it with Mila and go out with Brielle! Where in those steps did you hear *‘fall in love with Mila?’*”

“*Your* plan, Nial! I didn’t tell you to do this! And you know what? You don’t control my heart!”

“Some friend you are.” Nial’s tone was icy. “I did all of this for you, because *you* struck out and *you* were the one complaining. And this is the thanks I get?!”

“I DIDN’T ASK FOR YOU TO DO THIS, NIAL! I NEVER ASK! Yet somehow you know how to run my life!” That shut Nial up.

I groaned as I flopped into a chair. “I gotta tell Mila.”

“It’s okay, don’t bother. I already know.”

Jordan

“Mila?!” She stood in the doorway of my room.

“Your mom let me in.” That answered my first question.

“Uh-” I shoved Nial out of the room before he could finish his sentence.

“How’d you know?”

“Please, Jordan. I saw the way you looked at her. Your eyes lit up when her name was said.” Mila wore a sad expression.

“Why didn’t you stop it? You let me do this terrible thing to you.” I reached for her hand. She placed hers in mine.

“I was going to, but... then you shifted your gaze to me. Brielle was there every single time. Still, you went days without even turning your head.” Mila leaned in. I held her. Her arms clung to me.

“I’m sorry.” I whispered. Her head came to rest on my shoulder.

“I know that too.” She whispered back.

In the moment, I didn’t know if Nial and I would continue to be friends anymore. I didn’t know how Halley and Brielle would react to this. They’d probably hate me. I didn’t know if I could fix this with Mila. I didn’t know a lot of things. The one thing I did know was that I didn’t want to lose her. She was the kindest person I’ve been close to. But, if I had to let her go, that would be on me.

Her eyes shone like the night sky. And her name was Mila Davis.