

At the time my friend Christy was walking out with her sister Theresa, and I was asked along basically to make up the numbers. There was something about her I found immediately attractive; it wasn't just her lean delicate frame or elf-like looks. No, there was an aura about her of sophistication and intelligence which I instantly felt drawn to. To be honest I felt a little bit in awe, even a bit frightened.

Our first meeting took place in Bewley's for afternoon tea and cakes with Theresa and Christy, and the next time we all went to a matinee, but I felt if this was going to go further I needed to up my game and ask her out on her own. I was unsure how she might respond. She was always polite and friendly and laughed heartily at my jokes, which was always a good sign, but whether she wanted to spend any time on her own with me was hard to gauge.

It was Christy's idea that I take her to the theatre: "A woman like that needs to be treated properly," he said. "A half pint in the snug up in South's isn't going to do it this time. Try taking her to see a play and a bit of supper afterwards. Show a bit of class- that's what she will expect".

This was all easier said than done because at the time I was still working up in the railway for 45 shillings a week, half of which I had to hand up to my mother for housekeeping. But I thought to hell with it- you only live once and what's they worst that could happen!

It was three weeks before I had enough money to ask her out. I waited for her outside Woolworth's where she worked as a typist. I stood across the road and decided to make it look as if I was just passing. She came through the door with a couple of work mates and stood chatting. As soon as she went to move on I ran across the road and nearly got a slap from a van driven by Mickey Sheehan who angrily roared out the window, "what kind of a feckin eejet are you? I'm telling your father you shouldn't be let out on your own!"

This wasn't the look I was going for but as quickly as I could I tried to regain my composure and walked nonchalantly up to Betty who was watching all this, and I have to say was looking a bit bemused!

"Hello Andy", she said. "Haven't seen you for a while."

"No", I said, "it's rugby season. We have to train every night if we're in with a chance."

"Funny, that", she said, "Christy was around our house two nights this week!"

"Oh", I said, and looked at the ground. Damn, this definitely wasn't going the way I had imagined.

"Have you any plans for Saturday night?" I said, a little too eagerly. I didn't want to sound desperate. It wasn't good for my image, but she had that effect on me!

"Well it depends", she said.

"I was thinking the theatre and perhaps supper afterwards!"

Betty raised an eyebrow. "I didn't think you where the theatre-going type."

"Oh yes", I lied, "I often thought I would like to act myself!"

"Right", she said, not quite convinced. "Pick me up at 6!"



She seemed completely at home in the plush surroundings of the Opera House. Quietly she raised her hand and immediately a young boy appeared at her elbow selling programmes. With her gloved hand she flicked through the pages. "Two shillings, Sir", the boy said, looking at me.

"Jesus! I thought to myself- that's the price of a pint? I thought we came to see the play not read it!"

I took her by the elbow and couldn't help but notice the admiring glances she received from the other young men milling about in the foyer. I felt my chest swell with pride.

"Fancy a drink?"

"That would be nice- a Babycham please!"

We took a seat by the window, and for the first time looked at each other properly.

She was very beautiful. My pulse was racing and for once I was struck dumb.

We looked into each other's eyes and I knew she was the one for me and I believed she felt the same way too.

"Did you hear I have been offered a job in the civil service in Dublin?"

"No", I said, my heart sinking.

"I intend coming home at the weekends", she said eagerly!

By the end of the year she was engaged to a guard up in Dublin and I had been laid off from the railway and was digging holes in London. But there was many a day that I closed my eyes and thought to myself.... what if !?