

# Climber's Clips, Smelly Socks, and Willie Johnson's Invention

(An excerpt from a story)

By Matt Stewart

Kevin examined the water rushing beneath him. The current was moving rather quickly and one million tiny bubbles highlighted the surface of the enormous, turbulent ocean. The tide was moving out. Or was it coming back in again? Kevin couldn't decide. This is not unusual. Kevin always has trouble making up his mind, which is exactly what Julia hates most about him.

Julia is Kevin's girlfriend. Actually, Julia *was* Kevin's girlfriend. Hopefully the *italics* have made things relatively clear regarding Kevin and Julia's long and chaotic relationship. That is to say, it no longer exists. Julia had finally, after months of frustration, had enough of Kevin's constant indecision. Kevin's inability to make up his mind regarding even the simplest issues had finally driven Julia to leave him. The straw that broke the camel's back was an incident which occurred only days before we find Kevin staring at the rushing water beneath him, contemplating the movement of tides. The two had been involved in a heated phone conversation in which Kevin was having great difficulty deciding at what time he would meet Julia for dinner— 5:15 or 5:30. True, it may not seem like an Earth-shattering decision, but for Kevin a careful examination of all the variables would be required before he could come to a verdict.

"Where do you feel like eating?" asked Kevin.

"I don't care," replied Julia, already losing her temper.

"Well, do you want to meet somewhere, or should I pick you up?"

"It doesn't matter to me."

"Do you think we'll be having dessert?"

"What?"

"At the restaurant. Do you think we'll be having dessert?"

"I don't know."

"What will you be wearing?"

"Kevin, how does that have anything to do with —"

"Will you be sitting next to me, or across the table?"

"..."

"Next to me, or across the table?"

"I can't do this anymore."

"Do you think I should order an appetizer?"

"Stop it."

"Should I order soup or a salad?"

"Stop it!"

"Caesar or garden?"

"Stop it!"

"How much should I leave for a tip?"

"..."

"How much?"

"Stop!!"

"What did you say you'd be wearing?"

"Ciao, Kevin!!"

"Do you think —"

Kevin was cut off by the sound of the phone hanging up on the other end. Actually, it was more like the sound of a phone being violently thrown across the room on the other end. While "ciao" may seem like an odd choice of words for someone so angry, Julia ends all of her phone conversations with the word "ciao", which is exactly what Bradley hates most about her.

Bradley is Kevin's younger brother. He often finds himself taking phone messages from Julia, for Kevin. In fact, it was Bradley who gave the message to Kevin that confirmed that Julia was no longer interested in dating him, only a few days after their original falling out on the phone.

"You tell that no-good, what-will-you-be-wearing, what-should-I-order, Magic-Eightball-decision-making older brother of yours that I NEVER want to see him again!"

"Are you sure you want me to tell him that?" asked Bradley.

"Ciao," was Julia's only response.

Bradley lives in a small room that features one set of bunk-beds, one chair, one dresser, and one small window, in his parent's basement. Kevin also lives in a small room that features one set of bunk-beds, one chair, one dresser, and one small window, in his parent's basement. In fact, it could be said that Bradley and Kevin live in the same small room that features one set of bunk-beds, one chair, one dresser, and one small window, in their parent's basement. The room often smells of sweaty gym socks because Bradley spends a great deal of time working out at the Willie Johnson Memorial Health Spa and then fails to wash his soiled gym clothing, which is exactly what Emily hates most about him.

Emily is one of Kevin's best friends. They met during their high-school days and after graduating three years ago their friendship has grown quite steadily. As a result, Emily has spent endless hours sitting in the smelly-sock filled room that Kevin and Bradley share. It was Emily who first introduced Kevin to Julia. Julia had spent a summer working at the small fruit stand that Emily operates at the local Farmer's Market.

"She's perfect for you Kevin", Emily had said, "I'm sure you'll have no problem making up your mind about this one."

"..."

Emily's fruit stand does a reasonable amount of business and as a result Emily drives one of those expensive new cars that are supposed to appeal to the avid outdoorsman-types. Not because she is an avid outdoorsman-type, but because she just thinks that driving a car that makes her look like an avid outdoorsman-type is nifty. Emily keeps her car in