Happy Worst Day Ever

Arlene Hutton

Seriocomic

GLORIE:
JACOB:

JACOB *and* GLORIE *are classmates,* , *but they couldn't be more different.* JACOB, *an army brat, is bright, kind and generous, but a little awkward and nerdy.* GLORIE *is the most popular girl at school, very full of herself. She would rather watch TV than do her homework and is fascinated by a show called America's Singing Sensation. When* GLORIE *gets behind with her schoolwork, their teacher forces them to study together so* JACOB *can help her. Things are further complicated by the fact that their teacher has challenged* GLORIE *to stop using the word "like" in like every other sentence.* GLORIE *is sitting at a table in the school library, with a notebook open.* JACOB *enters and sits next to her. There is a long silence.*

GLORIE: You're late.

JACOB: Yeah.

[JACOB *takes out his books.*]

GLORIE: We have to study until—[*She starts to say "like" but catches herself.*] until one-thirty.

JACOB: Yeah.

GLORIE: Okay. I don't get this assignment. Why is this . . . a noun?

JACOB: You have to figure it out on your own.

GLORIE: You have to like help me. [*Correcting herself.*] You have to help me.

JACOB: No, I don't.

GLORIE: Ms. Adkins said you did.

JACOB: Ms. Adkins said I have to sit with you at this table in the library. She didn't say I had to help you today.

GLORIE: She said it was—It was time for us to study together.

JACOB: And we are studying together. We're sitting here at the same table. We're both studying. Or at least one of us is. Except when someone interrupts him.

GLORIE: I can't concentrate. I'm too sad.

JACOB: I don't care.

GLORIE: David Ying lost *American's Singing Sensation.*

JACOB: I really don't care.

GLORIE: How could he lose?

JACOB: You can't get everything you want.

GLORIE: Why not?

JACOB: Life doesn't work that way.

GLORIE: He was—he was the best.

JACOB: He didn't die. He just didn't win.

GLORIE: I wonder how he feels.

JACOB: He'll make a CD and you can listen to it all the time.

GLORIE: He looked so sad.

JACOB: I don't want to hear about David Sing anymore.

GLORIE: It's David Ying.

JACOB: I don't care.

GLORIE: You're in like—you're in a really bad mood today.

JACOB: So are you.

GLORIE: I have a good reason.

JACOB: So do I.

GLORIE: What's your reason?

JACOB: What's yours?

GLORIE: You first.

JACOB: You brought it up.

[*Silence.* JACOB *goes back to his studying.*]

GLORIE: [*Waiting as long as she can.*] I told you. David Ying lost.

JACOB: That's not a good enough reason. You don't even know him.

GLORIE: So . . . what's your big reason?

JACOB: Nothing.

GLORIE: I told you mine. You have to like—you have to tell me your reason.

[JACOB *is stoic.*]

JACOB: My dad didn't get to come home for my birthday.

GLORIE: Oh.

JACOB: I thought he was going to come and then he didn't.

GLORIE: See, you can't get everything you want.

JACOB: I study. I make my bed. I help with the dishes. I keep my promises. Why can't my dad come home?

GLORIE: Parents are weird.

JACOB: He didn't come. Again. My dad's never been there for my birthday. Not my whole life. And now the army's not even letting him come for Christmas. Again.

GLORIE: I don't get to spend birthdays with my dad, either. Not anymore. He gets Thanksgiving and Father's Day and, and, um, maybe something else, I forget. And every other weekend and a month in the summertime. My mom gets birthdays and Christmas.

JACOB: At least you get him every other weekend.

GLORIE: Someday your dad'll be home for good.

JACOB: Yeah.

GLORIE: Mine never will.

JACOB: I'm sorry.

[*Silence.*]

GLORIE: I'm sorry.

JACOB: Thanks. [*Silence.*] I miss my dad.

GLORIE: I miss my dad, too.

[*Silence.*]

JACOB: I got mad. I made my mom cry.

GLORIE: My mom cries a lot.

JACOB: What do you do when your mom cries?

GLORIE: I tell her I love her.

JACOB: Yeah. I should have done that. I'll do it when I get home. My mom said I could ride the bus home today.

GLORIE: That's cool.

JACOB: Yeah. When I get home I'm gonna tell her I love her.

GLORIE: It sometimes makes them cry when you tell them that, but it's okay. It like—it helps them.

JACOB: Yeah. I know what you mean. Sometimes crying is good.

GLORIE: I cried last night.

JACOB: Why?

GLORIE: Because David Ying lost.

JACOB: Didn't he come in second?

GLORIE: Yeah.

JACOB: So he didn't lose. He won. He won second place.

GLORIE: I wanted him to be the Singing Sensation.

JACOB: You know, it's the second-place winner who has the best career.

GLORIE: Really?

JACOB: Yeah. Because he has to work harder. He does better the next time.

[*A pause, as they ponder this.*]

GLORIE: Ms. Adkins says I'm doing better.

JACOB: She said that?

GLORIE: Yeah. She says she thinks I'll pass.

JACOB: That's great!

GLORIE: She said she could see me trying not to use that word.

JACOB: "Like"?

GLORIE: Don't say it!

JACOB: Like. Like. Like.

[*Each time he says the word, she reacts as if she were being tickled.*]

GLORIE: Don't!

JACOB: Like!

GLORIE: [*Having a fit of giggles.*] Stop it! [*He stops.*]

JACOB: So how much time do we have?

GLORIE: Until one-thirty.

JACOB: It's quarter past one.

GLORIE: We only have like five minutes?

JACOB: No. We have fifteen minutes.

GLORIE: But it's quarter past.

JACOB: Yeah.

GLORIE: So that's—that's twenty-five minutes after.

JACOB: No.

GLORIE: A quarter is twenty-five.

JACOB: No, a quarter is fifteen.

GLORIE: Duh. I know a quarter is like twenty-five cents.

JACOB: Yeah, but a quarter hour is fifteen minutes. A quarter means one-fourth. You divide by four. A dollar has one hundred cents, so a quarter of a dollar is twenty-five cents. That's why they call it a quarter. An hour is sixty minutes . . . [*He's drawing a clock on a piece of paper.*]

GLORIE: And if you divide sixty by four, it's fifteen. A fourth of an hour is fifteen minutes.

JACOB: Yes!

GLORIE: A fourth is a quarter is fifteen. So if it's one-fifteen, we have fifteen minutes until it's one-thirty.

JACOB: That's right.

GLORIE: Did I just do fractions?

JACOB: Yeah.

GLORIE: Oh. Fractions. So that's fractions.

[*They go back to work.*]