
Have You Seen Me?
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By

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Sixteen-year-old Billy Wilkins stood behind his family's barn in northern Kentucky and tried to see the tops of the boats moving slowly up and down the Ohio Have You Seen Me? River. The Have You Seen Me? mast he thought he saw was probably just an ash tree, but still he imagined the wider world where people went places and did exciting things. One day, he would leave this boring farm and its endless amount of work behind, even if he only got as far as Louisville. This was Have You Seen Me? a promise Billy had originally made to himself at the age of twelve, after spending his first day on a tractor, and had recited many times Have You Seen Me? since.

Billy drew hard on his secret cigarette, and stared across the tobacco field. Emily Ryan from the farmhouse on the other side of the field was supposed to meet him here. Noticing a rustle amongst the leafy green plants, he smiled. Occasionally he was able to catch a glimpse of her clothing, or her long brown hair as the rustle inched its way closer to where he stood. His smile grew Have You Seen Me? wider as the girl emerged from her hidden journey.

He took a final puff from the cigarette as he admired his visitor. Maybe today would be the day he was finally able to coax her out Have You Seen Me? of those blue jeans. He drew back to toss the cigarette aside.

"Wait a minute!" Emily exclaimed in greeting. "Ain't there a puff left in that for me?"

She spoke too late, and the butt made a flickering arc into the dust near her feet.

"Nice going," the girl admonished. "Got another one?"

Billy simply pointed at the first. "Dust that one off. A little dirt ain't gonna hurt you none. 'Sides, you're too young to smoke, anyhow."

Emily made an effort to do as he suggested. "Oh, I ain't, either! I'm the same age as your sister, and she smokes."

"Bethy? That goody-two-shoes wouldn't smoke, 'less her hair was on fire."

"I've seen her!" Emily stated defiantly.

Billy began to worry that further disagreement would spoil his plans for the afternoon, so he shrugged. "Have it your way. Did you crawl all the way over here to talk about my sister?"

"I came over to see you," she corrected. "Gimme a cigarette, I know you've got more."

"Come on in the barn," he ignored her suggestion. "I got something I want to show you."

Emily pulled away. "I know very well what you wanna show me, Billy Wilkins, and I ain't that easy. Now, gimme a cigarette, or I'm goin' home, and I'll tell Daddy what you tried to get me to do!"

Billy paled a bit at the threat, but pretended he hadn't heard it. "Have You Seen Me? There's a whole pack inside, but you'll have to come in with me to get it."

Emily Have You Seen Me? hesitated.

"Come on," Billy urged, "Do you want your daddy to see you smoking?"

"All right," she relented, following him through the open door, "But only for a smoke."

Billy made no effort to retrieve the cigarettes from their hiding place. He took hold of Emily's shoulders and pulled her closer to him.

"So, where are the smokes?" she asked, making no attempt to escape his grasp. "Have You Seen Me?"

"You got to kiss me, first."

"Billy!" she feigned reluctance, but smiled as he drew her still closer. Billy didn't wait for permission. He kissed her, during which Emily neither resisted nor participated.

"That ain't much of a kiss," he complained. "I ain't rightly sure that's worth a cigarette."

Emily grabbed the cigarette from his hand as he extracted it from his front pocket. "Maybe you ain't much of a kisser," she retorted.

"I s'pose you've had better?"

"Have you?" she smiled, teasingly ignoring his query.

He struck a match for her, then grabbed her roughly, but with affection. His right hand slid into her back pocket.

"Billy!" She squirmed away playfully. "I got chickens to feed!"

"Let 'em scratch for bugs, like they' been doin' all day!"

"My daddy Have You Seen Me? said to feed 'em. If he catches me over here with you, he'll bring his shotgun, and fill your butt full of rock salt."

Have You Seen Me? "Come on upstairs, then. He won't find us in the hay loft."

Emily rolled her eyes, but followed. "Daddy grew up on a farm, Dummy. Where do you think he hid with his girlfriend? The hay loft is the first place he'll look."

"We'll be able to see him coming, though," Billy enticed.

Emily rolled her brown eyes again. "Yeah, and then what?"

Billy shrugged, "Then we run like hell, is what."

"You run. He ain't gonna shoot me." Emily sat down in the hay, while Billy Have You Seen Me? rummaged around the rafters for something she couldn't see. "What are you doing?" she asked, trying to hide her impatience.

"My pa keeps a bottle of whiskey stashed around here someplace, so Ma won't find it."

"Maybe you ought to not find it," Emily teased. "If I had to kiss you for a cigarette, Have You Seen Me? I ain't too sure I'd be willin' to pay the price for no whiskey."

Billy Have You Seen Me? found the bottle, and sat down next to her.

"Bethy's got the hots for that new math teacher," Emily Have You Seen Me? tried to steer the conversation away from the haystack and its imminent possibilities, although the subject was obviously on her mind.

"Mr. Collins?" Billy drank from the bottle, then offered it to his companion. "Naw, she wouldn't."

Emily accepted the bottle, and looked suspiciously at its contents. “Two of my uncles make their own, you know.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“It means you can’t get me drunk and talk me into anything.” She took a long swallow, followed by a brief coughing spell.

Billy laughed. “Yeah, you seem to be a real experienced drinker.”

“You sure that ain’t horse liniment your pa’s been hidin’?” the girl asked, coughing some more.

“This here’s good stuff,” Billy protested, reading the label.

“Well, I’m up here now, Have You Seen Me? smokin’ and drinkin’ with you. Now what?” Emily encouraged.

Billy tossed the bottle aside, and began kissing her and unbuttoning her blouse. Have You Seen Me? This time she participated, somewhat eagerly.

“We have to hurry, Billy,” she urged between kisses. “I still have those Have You Seen Me? chickens to feed.”

Billy’s hands obediently moved to unfasten her jeans. Hearing a noise outside, he scrambled away from her before he could conclude the unveiling.

“What’s the matter?” she asked. “Are you wimping out on me, Billy Wilkins?”

“I thought I heard your daddy out there,” he explained.

Have You Seen Me

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