

Everybody Plays the Fool

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Everyone has played the fool at least once in their life. Two friends reminice in their past and come to a decision that will effect more than one person.

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1 - Whatever it takes....

The rain poured loudly over the roof of the car as she stared outside into the light of the setting sun. Something was on her mind and whatever it was seemed to trouble her greatly. She glanced in the direction of the driver. His familiar strawberry blonde hair and soothing green eyes brought a smile to her face. However, that smile was cut short when she was reminded about her problem. She quickly turned her focus to the water droplets sliding down the passenger window. The only sound that could be heard was the splashing of the windshield wipers cutting through the rain and the quiet humming of the tires rolling over the pavement. She put her fingers to her forehead as she closed her eyes tightly. She looked towards the driver once more. He had friendly features, charming features, features that sent chills of happiness down her spine. She continued to look. This time he noticed out of the corner of his eye. He quickly glanced towards her. She noticed and immediately turned her focus to the red taillights of the car in front of them. The driver's face formed a smile at the rapidity of her actions. He again glanced at her through his peripheral vision. She too glanced at him, but still appeared to be gazing at the vehicle to their front. The smile remained on his face as a worried appearance remained on hers. His lips began to move.

"What is it?" He said to her as she held her hands closed tightly across her lap. His British accent smoothly rolled off his tongue.

She looked at him as he said this and gave an innocent smile. "Oh...it's nothing really." She replied.

He nodded in disbelief. "How long have we known each other?" he asked rhetorically, "You know you can't hide anything from me, just as I can't hide anything from you."

She gave a quiet chuckle, trying to conceal her true feelings. "It's really nothing of interest, honestly."

He again had trouble believing her. "I know you better than that. You can't honestly sit there and pretend that nothing is eating you up inside."

An awkward silence passed as they both continued to look forward. Moments flew by until he broke the silence.

"Seriously, tell me what's up."

She took a deep breath and exhaled. She didn't know how to tell him. She scrambled through her mind to try to find the right words. Finally she realized there was no sugarcoated way to say what she was about to tell him. She pulled back her long hair that was tied into a ponytail, adjusted herself in her seat, and took another deep breath. She closed her eyes, thought about what she was going to do, and reopened them. She looked at him. Words were surfacing to her lips.

"I-" She knew she couldn't do it, but she had to. She realized it could ruin both their lives if she said it, but she'd regret it forever if she didn't.

She finally worked up the courage and the words resurfaced.

Her mouth opened. "I...love you..." She said it. Butterflies were swarming inside her as she waited with anticipation to hear his response. Instead, he calmly maneuvered the car to the side shoulder. He placed

his foot on the brake as the car came strolling to a gentle stop. He placed the gearshift in park and turned the key to the off position. The humming of the engine ceased. He looked down at the steering column and took a deep breath. Upon exhaling, he sensed her eyes still on him.

He looked at her. A ray of hope beamed through her eyes. "I'm sorry, what did you say?" When she heard this all hope was lost. She knew she had made a mistake, but she repeated what she said before. "I love you."

Again, a long, awkward silence. The anxiety continued to build within her.

"I don't know what to say." He said confused, but calmly. "Say you love me too!" She thought to herself, but she ended up saying, "You don't have to say anything. I understand."

Suddenly visions of her childhood flooded her mind. She could remember every last detail. One specific memory came to mind. One she remembered very vividly.

It was when she was thirteen years old. Her father, being in the military, was forced to move around a lot. Since she moved a numerous amount of times, she has seen so many different places, people, and worlds, but none as beautiful as her next and last destination, London, England. The authenticity and ancient architecture of the entire place sent pulses of thrills and intrigue all over her body. She was never this fascinated with any other place she had been to.

Fortunately, it was her father's last call of duty so after he had finished what he had been assigned, he could go back to his home. After so many years of travel, he had no home to go back to. He went to ask her and her mother where they wanted to live.

"Princess, since we no longer have to go anywhere, where do you want to call home?" "Here daddy, here in this city!" She said as she jumped with joy.

Her mother and father chuckled with her reaction.

"Very well, we shall stay in London. It will be our home for many years to come." He said smiling at her mother.

Her mother and father gently kissed as she jumped with extreme happiness.

Upon moving into their new home, a little boy peered through his bedroom window at the new neighbors. He too was thirteen years old. He was a curious little fellow with innocent green eyes. He wanted to venture over to his neighbor's home and see what they were like. Then through his window, he saw a little girl walking into the house with a teddy bear in one hand and a hello kitty backpack in the other. He was excited that another kid would be living in the neighborhood because the other residents were far too old for playing games. He had two older siblings, but they had already gone away for college.

So, he grabbed his thin windbreaker jacket and ran out the door. He walked casually towards the owners of the house. A man was standing there with his wife as their daughter walked up to her new room. The man looked down towards the little gentleman.

“Why, hello little fellow.” He said with a smile.

“Hello. My name is Phillip and I live next door. Are you our new neighbors?” He said with his British accent in the most polite manner.

The woman smiled delightfully and said, “Yes, we are. Why, you can’t be more than twelve years old and you’re so polite.”

“Actually mam, I am thirteen and a half years old.”

The man and woman chuckled with satisfaction and glee.

“Why don’t you go upstairs and introduce yourself to our daughter, Vanessa.”

The boy nodded and gratefully walked into the house and up the stairs, occasionally dodging a mover with large heavy furniture. He walked into the little girl’s room and called to her for her attention.

“Eh hem.” The girl turned around.

“Hi my name is Phillip. What’s yours?”

The little girl looked him up and down and said, “Vanessa.”

The little boy realized she showed a little contempt towards him. “I live next door. Maybe we could be friends. That is, if you don’t mind it.” He said as he began to rummage through a jewelry box placed on her dresser. He picked up a lock-it on a golden chain and opened it to reveal a picture of an elderly woman. The girl grabbed the piece of jewelry from his hand, placed it back in its original casing, and slammed the box shut. The boy flinched at the loud sound. He was almost afraid to ask, but his curiosity got the better of him.

“Who is that woman inside your trinket?”

Rage began to build inside of the girl as she raised her finger pointing towards the door and yelled, “Don’t mess with my things and get out of my room!”

The boy realized he had struck a nerve in her and did as she wished. When he exited the room, the girl reopened the box and took out the lock-it. She opened it and a tear began to develop in her hazel eyes. “Grandma...” She whispered to herself.

After that incident, an aura of animosity was present every time Phillip and Vanessa encountered each other. Until one day...

It was four months later during summer when their relationship changed forever.

Vanessa was riding her two-wheeler bicycle around the cul-de-sac and Phillip was watching a television program that he enjoyed on a daily basis. Vanessa continued to ride when unknown to her, a rock was in her path. The bike tire made contact with the piece of stone, but unable to wheel over it, the tire came to a stop, causing the bike to crash and send Vanessa hitting the ground. She let out a loud cry that caught Phillip’s attention. He sprung from his sofa and ran to the end of his driveway where the incident occurred. When he came upon Vanessa, he noticed blood trickling from a scrap on her knee. He quickly ran into the house and grabbed a first-aid kit. He ran back outside to Vanessa, opened the kit, and removed an alcohol wipe. He proceeded to open it when Vanessa’s hand grabbed his arm.

Tears rolled down her cheeks as she quietly said, “No, don’t use that.”

Phillip, in a reassuring tone, responded, “It’s o.k. it’ll only hurt for a second, I promise.”

Vanessa closed her eyes and felt the sting of the rubbing alcohol touch her flesh. She cried out, but by the time she reopened her eyes, a fresh band-aid had been applied to her wound. She looked up at Phillip's face and saw that he had a smile. She placed her arms around him and gave him an appreciative hug.

"Come on," said Phillip standing up and aiding Vanessa up also, "let's get you inside."

He placed her arm around his neck as she hobbled up her driveway to her front door. Phillip placed her on the sofa in the family room. He spotted the television remote and handed it to Vanessa. He then walked into the kitchen and grabbed the carton of juice from the refrigerator. He was a little lost because he didn't know the location of the cups, but by process of elimination, he eventually found them. He filled two cups with juice and walked back out to the family room where Vanessa was enjoying a program on the BBC. Phillip handed her a cup and sat down beside her. She accepted it and took a sip.

"So, what are we watching?" asked Phillip as he took a sip from his cup.

Vanessa glanced at Phillip. He turned his head in her direction and smiled.

"Thanks." said Vanessa.

"Eh, don't mention it. That's what friends are for right?"

'Friend' was a word that was never really a concept to Vanessa. Her entire life consisted of leaving people. She never really had a true friend, but she saw one in Phillip. She nodded in response to his question saying, "Yeah. I guess so."

"Nessa..." a familiar voice called. That's when reality hit. The rain was thundering hard now on top of the car. She blinked rapidly after she realized she had drifted into a daydream.

"Vanessa, are you all right?" He asked as he saw that she had finally snapped out of her trance.

"Uh, yeah I'm fine." she replied.

She knew that something had triggered that memory. The driver seemed to still be in a little bit of a shocked state, but it also seemed that he was trying to make sense of it all.

"Nessa, why now? Why tell me after all that we've been through?"

Suddenly, a vision of his own past flashed throughout his mind.

It was during his teenage years around the time of a big dance that took place at his school. His best friend had a date, but he didn't so he decided not to attend.

One day when he was quietly reading a book in his room, the phone rang. A girl was hysterical on the other line. He could recognize the voice of his best friend. She was crying and her words were difficult to make out.

"Calm down, calm down." He said to her. "Don't move. I'll be right over."

He placed the phone back on the hook and grabbed his jacket. He went out the door and headed to his best friend's house. He knocked on the door and heard a rustling on the other side. When his friend came to the door, her face was rosy red and tears were flowing. She had tissues in her hand. When she recognized her best friend standing at the door she wrapped her arms around him in a broad embrace. He assisted her over to the family room sofa and sat her down. He sat next to her and handed her a fresh tissue because apparently the one in her hand was used up.

"Nessa, what happened? Why are you so upset?"

She blew her nose into the tissue and calmed down just enough so he could understand her. "It's Luke. He...he broke up with me!" She began bawling once more.

He took her in his arms and held her comfortingly against his chest.

"Did he say why?" he asked her.

"No. He said something about us not working out and crap like that."

"Well, I think he's an absolute moron for dumping you."

"Really?" she asked wiping tears from her eyes.

"Yeah.", he nodded, "Any guy would be lucky to have you." He gave a sweet smile. "Thanks Phillip. You can always cheer me up."

She smiled and hugged him. While she was in his arms a sense of warmth and happiness filled him.

Then, the memory shifted to a different view.

It was a few years later when the two friends were in their early twenties. It was Valentine's Day. Love was in the air and couples were enjoying romantic picnics in St. James Park. The friends had no other plans because the girl's current boyfriend was away on a business trip, so they decided to spend the day in the park together.

They set up a little spot and sat down to enjoy the view of the fountain. As the girl was looking at the fountain and the children feeding the birds, she had a smile on her face. It also brought a smile to his face as well. He had something to tell her and he figured now was as good as any time.

"Nessa, can I tell you something and you promise you won't laugh or get upset?" he said as she turned to face him.

She saw he had a serious expression so she answered, "Sure Phillip, you can tell me anything."

"Ness...I love you, and I know you probably don't feel the same, but--"

"Phillip, wow. I'm sorry, but I just don't see you in that way. I love you, but as a friend, as my best friend. Besides, I like our relationship as it is. I wouldn't want anything like that to ruin it. I mean, what if it didn't work out?"

"Yes, I understand your meaning. It was silly of me to say anything. I'm sorry." He said with a saddened response. He was kicking himself on the inside for ever having said anything.

"No, don't apologize. It's o.k. really. I enjoy having you in my life." She said to him. She stood up and held out her hand motioning him to join her.

"Where are we going?" He asked, slightly confused.

“Just come.” She smiled as he took her hand.

From that, the memory ended. He came to and saw the face of his best friend next to him in the passenger’s seat. The same best friend he had confessed his love to.

“Phillip, I know I might be too late to profess my love, but I know if I didn’t tell you I’d regret it for the rest of my life.”

“Vanessa, it is too late. You’re too late. I told you how I felt and you turned me away. It’s hard to say, but I’ve moved on.”

Realizing what he said was true, she bit her lip to try to hold back her tears. “Why, why didn’t I tell him how I felt when he told me his true feelings?” she thought to herself.

Then she understood what made her wait so long. She knew why her love for him didn’t fully bloom until now. She had another flashback.

This time it was her inside of a shopping mall. It was two years after Phillip’s confession. She was searching through a rack of blouses when her cell phone rang. It was a call that had changed her view of her best friend completely. She rummaged through her purse and found her purse. It read “Phillip” on the caller I.D. so she answered it.

“Hey Phil, what’s up?” She said into the receiver, still searching through the blouses.

“Ness, guess what!” He said with a voice full of enthusiasm.

“You were knighted by the queen for your handsome looks?” she said in a joking manner, judging by the lack of interesting things that happen in Phillip’s life.

“Ha ha, funny one Ness. No, I’m getting married!”

Just then, when the words finally processed inside her brain, something awakened. She went wide-eyed and found it difficult to breathe all of a sudden. Through the phone she heard Phillip’s voice.

“Ness...Nessa you there?”

She finally regained her sense and said, “Uh, yeah....yeah I’m here. That’s...that’s great Phillip. Great news!”

She still had disbelief in her voice. She couldn’t fully comprehend what had provoked this abrupt emotion, but no matter what the consequence she had to be happy for her best friend, he was getting married after all.

Despite her bitterness towards the entire situation, she helped in every way she could and even told the fiancé many quirks and odd behaviors he has. However, as the time passed, the love she had for him grew stronger and more passionate. Even now, as they drove along the highway towards a new future, she couldn’t shake her affection.

She always saw how in love the fiancé and he were and how they held each other in their arms. She saw how they laughed and enjoyed just being in each other’s company. She only wished that all of that could be hers.

She now sits next to him, her life and his wait in the balance as she anxiously listens for the words she

so desperately needed to hear. She was at the most vulnerable stage of her life. Anything he said could either make or break her. She stared into his affable green eyes. She was wearing a long red gown and a bouquet of artificial flowers rested upon her lap. The driver, now looking prepared with the words he wanted to say, was wearing a black tuxedo and had a white corsage inside his jacket pocket.

“Vanessa, you do realize where we’re going right? To my wedding. Why wait until now? Why not two years ago when I told you I loved you?”

“Because...because I didn’t realize what I truly felt until you were taken away from me. I knew if I waited until after you were legally spoken for then it’d be too late and I’d hate myself and regret it for the rest of my life.”

She now had his hand in hers. She gazed deeply into his eyes, looking for just a slight chance of hope. Nothing was lost until he officially turned her away. He knew what he had to do...the right thing. What that was still boggled his mind. He kept remembering all the moments he had with her that made him love her in the first place. He remembered how strong his love for her was and how much it hurt him when she didn’t return that love. He remembered all those nights he couldn’t sleep because all he did was think of her and how it could be...how it should be. He remembered all the fun times he had with his fiancé, but no matter what he did, he had always wished her to be the only woman he truly loved, his best friend. He knew he had to make a choice. Whatever he decided, someone’s heart was going to be broken.

Now, sitting in the car, the two friends wait. They wait for that life altering decision. The rain was gradually calming as the night sky shimmered with bright stars. He turned and peered into her eyes. He gave a quiet smile and appeared to have come to a final resolution. He placed her other hand in his, cradling it against his heart. He pulled her towards him, speaking softly now.

“Vanessa...I choose you. It’s always been you.”

He moved even closer to her, leaning in for a kiss, when his cell phone rang. He laughed slightly in exasperation and answered the call. It was his best man on the other line.

“Hey man, where are you? Everyone is waiting!”

“I’m not coming.” He said unperturbed.

“What? What do you mean you’re not bloody coming?!” He sounded furious through the receiver of the cellular phone.

“Something’s come up. Tell Elizabeth I’m not coming and that I hope she understands.”

He flipped the phone shut and proceeded to do what he planned to do before the intrusion of the call. Vanessa smiled and wiped the tears from her eyes.

THE END