

For Us Two

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Kevin and Gwen are finally getting married. However, Gwen's relatives are almost making them crazy. Could someone understand and help them?

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The greatest proof of love ever, Kevin concluded in a sunny afternoon, wasn't to be able to give your life for the ones you love. It wasn't also their passion and desire keep bursting with the same intensity after years, despite all the obstacles, the fights and periods of separation caused by college or plumber missions. Not even - although that had a great value, too - was the guarantee that he would be still loved if someday he ever became a monster again.

No, the greatest proof of love ever was to remain up there, at the top of Gwen's house, when every fiber of his being craved for him to run back to his house, get his teleporting device and go to the extreme opposite of the universe until the madness finished. *"We should have eloped to Las Vegas as Ben suggested"*, he thought *"If we had done that, we'd be finishing our honeymoon now. Instead, we'll have to wait for one month yet. And for what? Maybe for us to get completely crazy. I wonder if you can find somewhere straight jackets that look like tuxedos."*

Even his mother didn't give him any support. Just a few minutes inside the house had been enough to contaminate sweet Mrs. Levin with the virus that turns every woman involved in a wedding party into a paranoid, hysterical monster. The only female that seemed to keep her sanity intact was precisely the cause of the turmoil. Still, Kevin suspected that it was a matter of time until she went insane, too. "Probably very soon" he concluded as he noticed a movement coming up and towards his hiding place.

Now a young woman with 20 years old, Gwen could fly freely without any need of making mana stairs. Kevin noticed that she didn't look mad at him, but didn't look surprised of seeing him up there either.

"It's bad luck to see your groom before the wedding," he joked with a fake grin.

"Cut it out, Kevin. You know that's only at the day before it. Could you sit aside, please" she asked.

Surprised and relieved, he complied, allowing for Gwen to sit beside him. Sitting with a huff, she folded her legs and crossed her arms over them, so she could have a support for her tired head. They remained in silence for a few instants, until Kevin risking taking a look. She still hadn't moved a muscle or hair.

"Are you all right?" he asked, nudging her with a finger.

"Uh' Gwen looked up with a start. She had forgotten his presence completely.

"Just a little tired and with a headache" the young woman said as she gave her fiancée a reassuring smile "I really need a break."

"It's quite a mess down there." he agreed with a nod, causing Gwen to give him a suspicious look.

"You're not going to say 'I told you' " she inquired in disbelief.

"Nah. I'm leaving that for Ben. Besides, you look like to have received enough punishment."

"Some punishment! Do you know how hard is to choose a flower girl from four little girls"

He shook his head, and by his horrified expression it was crystal clear that he expected to never have that 'pleasure'.

"It's not the way you're thinking. The little girls are nothing, their mothers whine much louder than them. Not mentioning the remarks I had to hear because I didn't choose any of the girls in my family for my best woman. I wonder how they did when they got married." she huffed "And I had to endure all that having eaten only an apple during the entire afternoon."

"Only one apple' What happened to all those snacks your mother did" Your family devoured it all"

"I don't know. They didn't even let me have a glimpse of them. Aunty Sandra suggested that I should be put on a diet so I could be thin and elegant at the day of our wedding, and the rest of the females in my family loved the idea. But don't worry." Gwen added, giving her groom a reassuring look "Emily promised she would hide something for me to eat later."

Kevin's eyes bulged in horror. True that Gwen no longer was a slightly built teenager, but she was not fat at all. Both the practice of sports at her college days and the plumber training had sculpted her body into glorious, hallucinating curves that he adored. Why did women still believe that looking like a skeleton is a synonymous of beauty'

"No need to wait for Emily" he stated as he pushed a greasy bag of paper brown from his jacket and pushed into Gwen's hands " Here. I stole this from the kitchen."

Inside the bag, she found sandwiches and other salty snacks. They were all mixed and misshapen due the hour passed into Kevin's pocket, but Gwen would have devoured even Max' marinated worms.

"I should have brought a picnic basket" Kevin laughed as he watched her digging in.

"Yeah, you should" Gwen agreed at the same tone, wiping her mouth with the back of her hand" since it's obvious you've been prepared to stay a long time here. Ben was that hard to stand"

"What, you don't know what happened" he asked, dropping his jaw in disbelief.

"No. I hadn't seen any of you guys since you two left last night to get a null void producer and hid it under the altar. I knew you were here because of your mana signatures and because I saw Ben's car out there, but I didn't hear anything from any of you. Though I was not surprised when I felt you climbing up the roof." she concluded with a half - smile, receiving a smirk in response.

"Yeah, you were happy because I gave you an excuse to leave, uh" he teased, nudging her again "Admit it"

"Don't change the subject" Gwen snapped impatiently "What happened between you two"

"Nothing. You know that I don't pay attention to Tennyson's delusions... okay, I don't pay much. But many people do. Some of your aunties - or cousins, I don't know - felt that, since Ben will be my best man, I didn't have actually to worry about the security and was just using that as an excuse to hang around."

"So they dragged you here" Gwen concluded with a sigh "And you came up here because you found too humiliating to help choosing the decoration or the cake"

"I'd have been more than happy of helping to choose the cake. But they locked me up for almost two hours into your father's office to write my wedding vows!"

"Sorry" Gwen covered her mouth to suppress a laugh. Kevin was able to write great thesis about any engines or energy source, but it was a mental torture for him to write anything mushy "Got something"

"Just a few bubbles " Kevin said, showing the palm of his hand "and two baskets of recycling trash. After that, those crazy women decided to cut my hair, so I would match the groom doll that they're choosing for the cake. If Julie hadn't pretended to trip and got in the way, I wouldn't have even been able to climb up here!"

"You're kidding!" this time she laughed.

"I swear I'm not! Well, I overdid a little about Julie's part. But the cake catalogue has 40 pages with groom dolls - all of them with short hair!"

"Gee, what a lack of imagination. But you could make good use of a trim, honey" the young woman observed as she run a hand through the black hair that reached the middle of his back.

He glared at her in a "Est tu Brute" way.

"I'm not suggesting for you to crop it short! "Gwen explained irritated "You could cut it in a mullet till the basis of your neck, like you used to do when you had 17. I found your hair pretty like that..." Gwen trailed off since he looked away, still sour. Her patience finally wore off "At least you have not to anguish about what you're going to wear !Just one smoking and presto - you're dressed! " she outburst, letting all her frustration take over.

Kevin looked back at her, shocked with Gwen's bitter tone.

"I thought that choosing the wedding dress was the brides' favorite part" he said.

"Maybe, for the brides who can choose their gowns by themselves," Gwen explained her voice still bitter "But whenever I find a dress I like, everyone says it makes me look old or fat. Worse, none of the models I like matches to the laced veil that belonged to my grand-grandmother."

"To your grand-grandmother! Gee, it must be all moldy and eaten by the moths!"

"Not at all, but it's yellowed, and well... Grandma Grace insists that's nothing that a good wash and 'a few' stitches won't solve," Gwen said, making the double signal with her fingers "and mom asked me to

keep my mouth shut. Since my grand-grandmother, all the women of my mother's family married wearing that veil, so it's a great honor my grandma is " she finished, in a forced jovial tone that couldn't disguise her sarcasm.

Kevin felt sorry for her. He wasn't a pool of sensitivity, but his mother had told him several times that clothes might be as important for women (even for women that are not overly futile or vain, like Gwen) as his car was for him. In such an important event as a woman's marriage, then, the dress could represent an unforgettable moment as a shining star or a humiliating torture.

"And you're going to wear that old rag so mommy and grammy will be happy," he stated, wrapping a comforting arm around her shoulders. Despite Kevin's tender tone, Gwen noticed he was bristling at that familiar imposition.

"It's okay, Kevin." she soothed, forcing a reassuring smile "We have to give in a little, too. It's already being hard to mom to accept that our alien friends are going to be in that part with the members of our families."

Kevin realized that his fiancée was referring to other things more serious than separated parties. However, she preferred not talking about the other issue because she knew how much it upset him. He thought of something that could take them both from that depressing mood.

"I think that your mom has changed a lot, since she doesn't care about mixing her family with the Tennysons. But," he continued, lifting a finger "if someone else'll ask me if I'm not going to marry in my plumber suit, I swear I'll..."

"You'll do what" " Gwen asked, rising her eyebrow.

"I'll say I'm going to marry in my trunks!"

The statement caught Gwen completely off-guard, as Kevin expected. She burst out laughing, followed by her fiancée.

"If you'll do that, I'll join you. A bikini would be much prettier than the dresses Aunty Vera wants for me..." she was interrupted by a finger on her lips.

"Sh, sh, shhh..." Kevin soothed, his face coming closer to hers "Can you forget all about your aunties for at least a few seconds"

"How about for one our" she asked back, rising her face to meet his. They hadn't a moment of privacy in such a long, long time...

"Eww, that's obscene," said a voice in a fake disgusted tone "Can't you wait until the wedding night"

Years passed, but many things never changed. Pretending not to hear, the couple deliberately lingered on the kiss before paying attention to the greatest hero of the Earth.

"First, it's not night yet, Charlie Harper." Kevin scoffed as soon as their lips parted "Two, you're not

anyone to talk after you were caught with Kate inside of your mom's closet..."

"Her name's Kimberly." Ben corrected.

"Three," the groom continued as if he hadn't been interrupted "I miss the days when you turned into an alien. You didn't look so ugly then."

"Enough, Kevin" Gwen admonished as she pushed him to look at her cousin "Mom asked for us to come down"

Still with the Spider Monkey powers, Ben crouched in front of the couple. He had become a handsome young man, slightly taller than Kevin and almost as brawny as him.

"She's sent her apologizing, since you really need a rest, but she can't handle things by herself anymore. That little cousin of yours that was going to get the rings got a chicken pox, cousin Rachel and Emily are yanking each other's hair and your aspirants to flower girl joined them to mess up the living room. And Aunty Joyce is demanding for Julie to change her dress because it doesn't match to the hat she's going to wear..."

"What' Rachel and Emily are fighting because Sid caught a chicken pox" Gwen wrinkled her forehead, trying to decipher Ben's confusing message.

"Joyce's giving Julie a new hat" Kevin added in.

"Noooo. Rachel said in front of Emily that classical music is "so last century". She wants that the band of her boyfriend will play at the wedding, instead of..."

"Over my dead body!" Gwen snapped out, as she pulled up on her feet to run and jump out of the roof. Anybody who didn't know her better would have taken a scare, but the two men just watched in silence as the red-haired enchantress floated like a feather until her feet touched the grass below.

"And Aunty Joyce said that HER hat doesn't..." Ben bellowed at her while Gwen ran inside the house. Kevin cut him off with a wave of hand.

"Forget it, Ben. She's gone. Let's get out of here before someone'll come and drag us back to that hell. Can you call Big Chill"

"What happened to your teleport device"

"At home. You know Max has forbidden me from using it off-work."

"As if that kept you." Ben sighed as he slapped the Ultramatrix dial "Big Chill!"

But, even with Big Chill's invisibility their escape took a little more than they expected. A group of kids of Ben and Gwen's family was surrounding and awing at the big hero's wonderful car. Luckily, the security system developed by Kevin kept them from entering the vehicles, but one of the kids sat on its front and started making poses, so his friends could take pictures with their cell phones.

"Look at me! I'm uncle Ben! Get another picture, Dean, so I'll can photoshop it!" he bragged, but a slightly smaller kid stepped forward and tugged at the posing boy's arm.

"You've been there for ages, Terry! It's my turn!" he complained.

"Oh yeah' Why!" Terry threatened as he pushed the small boy down. As an answer, the pushed kid and a friend jumped over him, trying to take Terry from the car. The rest of the gang yelled in encouragement. Ben was about to give up Big Chill's invisibility and shoo them off his car when a hoarse, threatening voice called from the house.

"What are you brat doings out there!" it roared.

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A few minutes later, Kevin was still laughing.

"I swear, I never saw a bunch of brats run so fast!" he cracked out "Even Vilgax never scared someone so good, I bet"

"Even I got a scare", Ben also laughed as he drove through Bellwood streets "I knew a modulator could change your voice, but I didn't know it could make you play ventriloquist. "

"That's a new ability. Courtesy of Levin Inc." the black haired man bragged, flashing a line of white perfect teeth.

"Mr. Smoothie" Ben offered. Kevin stared at him in disbelief.

"I was just kidding" the green-eyed hero explained "It's obvious that you could use something stronger than smoothies"

"I won't say no, since you're the one driving here."

"I meant a coffee! " Ben protested with a disapproving grimace "Gwen would kill me if I took you out to get plastered. She must be already hitting the ceiling because we've left her to take all the trouble by herself."

"Indeed. But she's mad because she can't come with us this time" Kevin finished bitterly, the good humor of seconds ago melting away like cigarette smoke. He rested his weight at the passenger seat and crossed his arms under his head absently.

Ben peered at him by the corner of his eyes. Even before eaves dropping his best friends at the roof, he had realized they were no longer happy with the marriage preparatives. No wonder, since that spectacle of flowers, arches and crowds scheduled for the next month had anything to do with the couple. Ben had once heard his cousin sigh that they should have a ticket booth at the church entrance. Since the young couple decided to make their union official, Gwen had idealized a private ceremony, only with their very

closest relatives and friends around. Knowing things could not be that simple, Ben and Kevin had suggested that the marriage was celebrated secretly, only with Ben, Max and Julie as their witnesses. But that idea shocked the young woman.

"You're sounding like Kevin and I are Romeo and Juliet! For heaven's sake, five years have passed. We're not teenagers anymore. And my parents like Kevin now." she insisted.

However, Gwen's parents didn't receive the news as happily as she had expected. Not that they (still) disapproved their daughter's choice, but Gwen and Kevin were still too young. He still was at college (Studying hard, Kevin had finished high school and got a vacant for Engineering, thanks to Gwen and Max's help) while Gwen had got her diploma a couple of years ago. Couldn't they wait at least until Kevin's graduation? There was too many discussion and arguing until the older couple relented it. However, Natalie stated that at least they had a traditional wedding ceremony and their entire families were present, too.

"No matter how much they say they like me" Kevin had told Ben in private, a while later "deep down they still hoped that Gwen could get tired of waiting for me and got some little doctor of Harvard. One with a traditional family and a shoe-in for the White House." Ben remembered when his own parents finally dropped their prejudices towards Kevin and started treating him more affectionately, and how happy Kevin had felt with that. It was important for the young Osmosian to be accepted by the rest of the Tennysons, and the apparent rejection of his in-laws-to-be had hurt Kevin more than he admitted. Ben started suspecting that his almost brother wasn't enduring all the torturing preparatives only because of his love for Gwen.

Ben thought about the yellowed veil, the kids messing up his car and all those people nosing and saying should or not be done - people related to him and Gwen, but still complete strangers for them. Auntie Natalie often said that family was more important than anything, even saving the universe. But did the members of the treasured side of her family really care about the bride and groom? Did any of them ever stop to wonder what the couple really wanted or how they felt?

"Earth calling Ben. Weren't we supposed to have a coffee somewhere?" Kevin suddenly broke up the silence "We've already passed three coffee shops, hero."

"Sorry. I guess that I took unconsciously Mr. Smoothie's route." Ben answered with a fake grin "Out of habit, you know."

"Mr. Smoothie's not this way." Kevin hissed, his eyebrow arching in the way that made him famous in interrogatories. "*Make Levin suspect and you're dead,*" it was a famous proverb/joke among the Plumbers.

"I meant the Burger Shack" Ben fixed up quickly "They've built a new one a few quarters from here. We could make use of something more nutritive than a coffee. "

Kevin admitted he was hungry, too. Any remaining suspects were shrugged off, and Ben breathed in relief. Staring at the mirror, his green eyes took the famous resolute expression they always had when their owner entered the battlefield.

"It's hero time!"