

The Fickle Madness of a Man

This is the story of a man named George. George is an ordinary man of about forty years old, he has short brown hair and a constant frown on his face and his clothing are a simple pair of pants with a beige shirt with grey lines at the bottom. The man lives in a cozy neighborhood with very nice people, in other words he lives in the worst place in the world. The man did not appreciate when his neighbors kindly welcomed him and gave him some homemade muffins and cake when he moved into the neighborhood. Did they really think he was stupid ? They obviously wanted something in return, nobody would do this without any kind of reason behind it after all, just like those people from his childhood neighborhood who would do this to his brother. He would stay most of the time inside his house, safely away from the greedy neighbors who came to his locked door. Knocking instead of ringing could be heard as the doorbell had been removed because its constant noise annoyed the man. After a while, the neighbors left him alone, understood he could not be fooled by their smiles and the man was grateful for the silence that lasted for a long time, left alone behind the locked door...

... Until today.

Today, George was in the store to buy food and anything that he may need in the near future. He had planned to get what he needed to quickly leave and go back behind the locked door but, when he left the store, a thief took his bag full of what he had just bought and ran away with it. George was unable to catch the thief because he had sprained his ankle earlier in the day. Suddenly, the thief tripped because of a small leg, one of a child. Children would always play together near the store for some reason but today, there was only one child. The child tried to bring the bag to the man but it was too heavy so they made sure the thief would not try to escape instead. George then approached to recover his bag and quickly left, immediately going back behind his locked door. He even added a new latch to his door because the first one was starting to break slowly but kept it with the new one because despite its slightly broken state, the latch still worked even if it was weak enough to break to allow people to enter.

After that day, every single time the man would go buy supplies at the store, the child would be here to annoy him, by constantly trying to get to know the man out of pure curiosity. After a while, the man caved in and presented himself as George and the child presented themselves as Violet. Violet was wearing what seemed to be her favorite dress, a purple one with a few

pink lines on it and her brown hair had not been tied into a ponytail like usual. She started to annoy the man further to know more about him out of curiosity but he refused and quickly went back to his house like usual. When going back home he noticed that his new latch was broken and decided to put not one, not two but three new latches on his door, but, for some reason one of his new latches was already slightly broken but he absolutely did not care as long as no one could enter his house.

The child continued to annoy him and George would sometimes end up telling her a bit about himself to stop the child from annoying him but the clever child tried to tell a bit about herself like, for example, what she did in class to make him talk about himself and it worked after only a few weeks. They would exchange things about themselves, befriending each other until the child talked about her trip to the museum, what she had seen in the museum, like paintings and ancient artefacts, and, when hearing this, the man had an unusual idea. The man wanted to leave his house to explore the surroundings. After coming back home, he noticed the latches were broken again and placed new ones, even more than before with, this time, two of them being already slightly broken even though they were new. He thought his unusual idea from the day before would be gone during the night but it was still there. The idea had surprised him and it surprised him further when he discovered it was still in his mind the next morning. He tried to forget that idea but it was still there after multiple days making him decide to finally leave his house to quickly explore then go back to his house just as quickly.

After finally making the decision to explore he first researched what could be interesting to see near his neighborhood on his computer and he found a bookstore. This bookstore was perfect for George because it was quite rare to see multiple people at once in the bookstore due to the lack of clients and the small size of the store. The man then found himself in the small bookstore after walking for a certain amount of minutes, searching for a book that might interest him and, when he found one, he immediately went to pay to leave as fast as possible. On the way back to his house, the man noticed a bench under a tree surrounded by flowers in the distance. Reminded of the child's trip with her school, he remembers that the child told him about something unexpected that caused her to end up waiting in a calm place like the one he had been looking at. The child had mentioned having liked it because it allowed her and her classmates to have the creativity to create a brand new game together. This prompted the man to wonder whether he would like the calm and tranquility of such place, making him decide to read a book under the tree. Not now though, he decided to first read the one he bought at home before buying another one to read under the tree. After a few days, the man

had finished the book and was heading to the bookstore. He noticed a woman on the way taking some hungry kitten that had been abandoned in the box, telling the kitten that she would feed them. The man took a corner, unable to see or hear more, he continued to the bookstore to buy a new book. And, after buying a small book, he headed to the tree and sat on the bench. There, he started to read his book, surrounded by the silent wind, the flowers that seemed near him but far away from the bench just enough to be out of reach due to the wind pushing them away and the soundless flow of the river nearby. This became the man's routine, sometimes passing by the store to buy food and quickly saying hi to the child who reminded him that her name was Violet after she noticed that he had forgotten. He would rarely see any activity on his way from the house to the bookstore and the tree but when there was it was usually an injured child with an adult immediately coming to help, making George wonder whether he would help anyone like this in the future before quickly dismissing the thought and continuing with his routine.

While under the tree, the man noticed that children would occasionally go play near the river, not close enough to bother the man but close enough for him to notice them. He thought the river was not deep but it was probably deep enough for children of their size to drown, causing the man to wonder who would leave their child unsupervised. That day, it had rained in the morning, not bothering the man's routine since he would stay inside in the morning, but, the rain did make the surrounding of the tree quite slippery, making sure the man would fall headfirst into the surrounding flowers. The man had been careful and was sitting on the bench, reading his book while the children in the distance played as usual. After about 3 hours of reading, George was planning to finish the line he was reading before going back home when he heard some adults who he assumed were one or two of the children's parents started calling for them to come back home. The children then walked to them to leave but one of them was not careful and slipped right into the river, right in front of the now possibly - it was quite hard to see from this far - shocked adults. The man saw this and jump in the river to grab the child and noticed that the water barely reached his waist, confirming his suspicion that only children could drown here but now was not the time for that, he had a child to save. He intercepted the child going down the river toward him and got out of the river with them. The adults thanked him and quickly left to get him out of the wet clothing to avoid the river child from getting cold or to get him to a hospital, or at least he guessed that is what they would do. To be honest, the man genuinely panicked when he saw the child at death's door. It had reminded him of his late brother who had passed away a long time ago, the man had

remembered his inability to save his brother that day, reaching for his brother with his arm as far as he could but he was one hand too short to be able to grab him and the man quickly shook his head to focus on the present going back to finish reading the line of his book then leaving back to his home. The line read : "I wish you to have the best possible life, my dear Stanley".

Since then, the neighbors had heard about George's heroic act and stopped avoiding the man, thinking that the man may not be a bad person like the rumor that stemmed from the mystery of the man had said. The child from the store had been happy to see the priceless look on her careless mother's face when she heard that her daughter had been telling her the truth about the man. By the time the man stopped installing latches on his door, it had covered the door and the wall surrounding it so much that you could not tell where either began and most of the latches were broken. The river child's birthday was approaching and he had been invited. He had used the bookstore new service to get a book he thought the river child would like after he asked the parents about the child's interests. The bookstore's new service had been created due to the man buying almost every book in the store to read, making the bookstore soon unable to provide him any new books. This new service was then created, allowing the clients to order a book that was not currently on the shelves, one could ask for a specific book or genre and come back a few days later to buy the now delivered book. The man had talked to a few people who had been invited who lived near the bookstore and met one of those people's child. The child did not seem to like social interactions, clinging to their father as he reminded the name of the river child to them before explaining that the child had trouble remembering names to the confused man. The man remembered that his brother also had trouble with names sometimes not remembering his own name and noticed that the recent events had reminded him of his brother a lot lately before ignoring the thought and continuing the conversation for a few minutes then pretending he had to do something important to leave back home. Finally, the day before the birthday of the river child, he decided to stay home until five minutes before the time indicated in the invitation to make sure that the birthday would not be too socially exhausting, figuring that he could easily get there in time as the river child's birthday was celebrated next door, on the other side of the road. The time came and, the man, with wavering confidence, arrived at the birthday party as the latches on the man's front door all broke into little pieces, the little pieces became dust and the dust flew away outside through a crack in the window that the man had neglected until recently, leaving no traces of the latches, as if they had never existed.