

Things That Can't Be Seen

It was early, Sunday morning. Josh shifted the car into neutral and killed the engine. It moved on momentum until gravity became its fuel.

“What are you doing?”

“Coasting,” Josh explained. “It’s quieter.”

The Pontiac sailed silently toward the bottom of the hill. There was only the low, inconsequential whine of the brake-pads as it steered into the driveway.

Josh put the car into park but neither passenger spoke. They listened to the early morning: moths were courting the streetlights and crickets were chatting in chirps on the lawn; a breeze was rustling through the fallen leaves. Above them the moon was pale and half-lit like a clumsy eye combating sleep.

“I really had fun tonight,” Josh admitted.

“Me too,” said Andy, “I’m glad we’re friends. It just makes things easier.”

“Yeah, it’s not as weird. Not that this was weird, I mean, it’s a little weird but not a bad weird.”

“I know what you mean.”

“Good,” Josh laughed. It was quiet again.

“It’d be much weirder on a blind date.”

“I know. I couldn’t handle that.”

“Me either.”

“I mean, look at us, look at who we are,” Josh was talking with his hands again.

“It’s dangerous. I’d be afraid you were some psycho out to kill me or something.”

“Yeah, and how would you even set it up?”

“Yeah,” Josh nodded.

The moon pulled a dark night sheet of cloud across itself and disappeared. The crickets stopped chirping for an instant.

“Well I guess I should go in.”

“I’ll walk you to the door,” said Josh, already pulling at the driver-side handle and stepping from the car. The interior lights shone on, accompanied by a bonging sound warning that the door was ajar.

“Are you sure that’s a good idea?”

“That’s what you do at the end of a date. We did agree this was a date, right?”

“Yeah.”

“Then let’s do it.”

“I don’t want anyone to see us though. I don’t want anyone to think we’re dating.”

“No one’s going to think that.”

“What if someone’s awake? What if my dad comes out?”

Josh flicked the headlights on and off repeatedly. “It’s two AM. Anyone who’s awake would’ve noticed us by now. Didn’t you tell your dad you’d be out with me tonight anyway?”

“Yeah.”

“Then if he comes out he won’t be surprised to see me.” Josh exited the car without further discussion.

The night air was aggressive, its hands groping their way through Josh’s unzipped jacket. He shuddered and squeezed his shoulders against himself. As he rounded the car he could see the breeze running through the tall grass, bending the blades in waves that resembled the ripples of a pond. He watched them. He enjoyed the idea of being able to see the effects of things that can’t be seen.

“You can really be an ass sometimes, you know?”

“I know,” Josh admitted, “must be the friend in me poking through.”

They walked together toward the front door. Halfway up the driveway a spotlight near the roof flashed on, shinning down on them as if they were escaping prisoners in a film. Josh winced and covered his eyes.

“Is that your dad?”

“Just the motion lights, remember?”

“They’re seriously bright.”

“That’s the idea.”

Josh managed toward the front door, his hand shielding his eyes. He could see through the door’s three squares of glass that a light had been left on, but the house was still, asleep.

“Well, I really did have fun tonight, and it really wasn’t weird at all. I swear.”

“Really?” Josh asked.

“Yeah, it was like hanging out, like normal.”

“So, are we going to take this experiment any further?”

“Sure.”

Josh smiled down at his shoes. “How about tomorrow?”

“I can’t. I’ve got early practices all week.”

Josh dropped his jaw, exaggerating.

“I’m supposed to be at practice in like four hours, Josh. It’s Hell Week tomorrow.

My dad’s going to kill me when he realizes how late I was out.”

“Skip practice.”

“I can’t.”

“Come on.”

“My dad would shit himself.”

“No he wouldn’t.”

“You know he would.”

“Fine,” Josh said. He was looking down at his shoes again, kicking at the leaves that had been blown across the walkway. A smile curled at the corner of his mouth.

“What?”

“Nothing.”

“You’re a liar.”

“I know.”

The silence returned. It hung there until an errant car passed in the street.

“Well I really got to go, Josh.”

“Wait, don’t I get a hug?”

“What? You’re really pushing it now.”

“You can’t hug a friend?”

“Are you out of your mind?”

“Come on, it’s a date. You said so yourself.”

“Josh,” Andy rebuked.

He shrugged unsympathetically.

“Fine.”

They hugged, grudgingly, but neither pulled away from the other’s arms. It was strange, different. A new context. They felt themselves become acutely aware of the curves and firmnesses composing the body pressed against them. Perhaps it was the warmth that sustained it, the subtle sincerity with which their bodies seemed to slide together. Their cheeks touched tenuously, Josh’s eyelashes brushing at the soft flesh of Andy’s earlobe as he gently kissed the skin about his neck.

“What are you doing?”

Josh ran his hand to the small of Andy’s back.

“Can I kiss you?” he asked softly.

He perused along the laugh lines of Andy’s face, patiently placing his lips closer. He could feel Andy’s shallow breaths batting against his skin, but there was no reply. Josh moved closer until their noses touched, cold and hugging in their own way.

“Andy, can I kiss you?”

The moon reappeared in the sky, widened as if taking renewed interest in the lives below. The moths were gone and the crickets had grown silent again. The breeze dragged leaves about their feet, pulled gently at their clothes.

“Andy.” Josh whispered.

Darkness swallowed the lawn.

“My dad.”

“Just the motion lights, *remember?*”

Their eyes met then, staring into one another. There was no resistance in them, only shallow currents of fear that seemed to sway beneath flecks of greens and brown. Josh pressed his lips blindly forward, praying his actions be met with reciprocation.

“I should go,” said Andy.

“Stay,” said Josh.

And the breeze ran its fingers through the tall grass.

THE END