

Chasing Dandelion's

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I try to hide my swollen face and a pinched expression as Krissy walks through the door of the Starbucks I manage. The door chimes.

“Hey beautiful, what’s cracking?” she asks. I swipe at my tears, turning away quickly. “Ok, who do I have to kill?” Krissy asks.

I turn back towards her and try to muster a grin. She frowns at me while putting her hands on her hips.

“Oh, now honey, that was pitiful. You looked like someone shoved rotten asparagus in your nose. What happened?” She asks. She moves towards me swiftly and leans down before swiping a thumb across my cheeks to wipe away the tears.

“Richard, he cheated on me. That makes three boyfriends in a two-year span,” I say flatly.

“Oh Remmy... I am so sorry. How’d you find out?”

The door chimes again and we both look up. Allan, a man who frequents the coffee shop, walks in. His tall figure causes the door to seem like it’s meant for a dwarf. He cocks his head to the side and looks at us. His lips form a thin line as I plaster on a fake smile.

“Good morning Remmy and Krissy, I’ll have my usual, please,” he says as he makes it to us. He pulls out a credit card and a small stack of bills. He pays for his coffee and stuffs the bills into the tip jar before winking at me.

I step back and duck my head. I take another deep breath and turn on my heel to start the blender. Carmel Frappe, as always. My body trembles, my heart contracting uncomfortably. I begin to feel nauseous. I still remember the way I walked in and saw Richard curled up against the warm body of another woman that previous night. I shiver at the image and chant to myself not to throw up. When I’m done with Allan’s drink, I add extra caramel sauce and place it on the counter.

“Here you go Allan,” I say.

He walks up quickly and grabs it while smiling. I try to smile back, but with Allan’s grimace, I know it doesn’t reach my eyes. I can’t seem to make myself care, though. Krissy looks at me with her nose in the air as I turn back. Her lips are pinched and her mousy brown hair wilts to the side despite being in a full, messy bun. Her green eyes burn with curiosity.

I roll my eyes and walk up to her while speaking under my breath. “I walked into the apartment, and he was in our bed with another girl. From what I could see, she was a lot prettier than me, too.” I shrug my shoulder’s.

“No way! You have got to be kidding me?” she exclaims as she slams a coffee pot down and it rattles. She glances over at Allan, who is staring at us from a table with raised eyebrows. “You are the most stunning woman I have ever met. I bet she was uglier than a horn toad.”

Allan's chuckle causes us to lower our voices further, and I try to pull myself together.

Every little shattered piece of my soul is on display while patrons come and go with their ordered drinks. At one point, I bawl my eyes out because of a couple acting cuddly and the boyfriend ordering for his girlfriend. Thankfully, Krissy jumps in, taking charge as she tells me to go take a break while rubbing my back. I step to the side and the couple both look at me in pity.

“Having a rough day, huh?” A masculine voice says. My body shivers in rage as I look at Richard. He has a stunning blonde tucked under his arm as he grins at me. As if to say; see, I stepped up.

“What do you want, Richard?” I ask as I wring my hands. My gaze sweeps over to Allan, who is still sitting in the same spot.

“Oh, you know, just coming to see the person I wasted my time on,” Richard says.

My gaze still lingers on Allan as he snaps a book he had been reading shut and his eyes dart between Richard, myself, and his new plaything like a ping-pong match. I can't bring my voice to say anything, but a pair of hands grasping on my waist makes me jump before relaxing at the soft sound of Krissy's voice. “The only person wasting time on anything is this beauty right here. How about that Remmy? I told you she was a toad. You gave him way too much credit. Here, with a face and a heart like yours honey, have a free coffee.” She winks and shoves two coffees someone had left behind in their hands.

Richard's mouth gapes open. “Is that how you treat customers? Do you even know what kind of person Remmy really is? She is clingy, insecure, obsessed about having a fairytale life, and a colossal pain in my...”

“I'm going to stop you there,” a masculine voice says, deceptively calm.

I look up and see the blurry figure of Allan as my eyes brim over with fresh tears. “Remmy is a gorgeous woman who put up with your shit for far longer than she should have. It's a blessing you messed up, and she found you with- What did you call her? A toad Krissy?” Allan asks, while beaming at Krissy.

My heart shudders as the words Richard said shove against me like a battering ram. I look back to see Krissy's eyebrows furrowed down.

“Who are you?” Richard asks, and subconsciously steps away from his new toy to place his hands on his hips. She looks at him as if she just ate a lemon, and when he tries to step closer to me, she pouts like a three-year-old.

“Oh, I'm the man who's going to show her how to chase dandelions,” Allan says.

My eyes widen, and I look at him in confusion. He doesn't look at me. His focus is fully on Richard.

“Do you know what love is?” Allan asks.

We all look at Allan as if he's gone insane. My body trembles, ironically no one else is in the coffee house. I don't hear what they're saying as my mind continues to wrap around the evil words Richard had said. *I just want to find love. Was I really that bad? Is it my fault he cheated? Is it my fault everyone cheated? Am I ugly?* I can't help the thoughts as they spiral through my head. Allan suddenly looks at me and frowns.

"She is beautiful, and I have heard enough. Love is actually giving a rats harry butt about how your words can directly affect someone. How your actions affect a person. I have been coming to the coffee shop for a year now, and from the first moment I hoped Remmy was single. She's had unfortunate and terrible experiences with men, including one with you."

"I am not a bad experience, she's just too much to handle. She expects too much," Richard responds as his girlfriend snorts. She sticks her tongue out at me, and I step in front of Krissy who growls at the girl.

"I may not believe in love, but you are a real piece of work. Why don't you leave," Krissy says, and I thank the heavens she has more sass than me. I still can't help feeling inadequate as Richard laughs.

"I'm a real piece of work? Looks like Remmy already has a guy waiting for her. Even if she's a good lay, she ain't worth the trouble man," Richard says, and I gasp.

Allan's calm features and fake smile fall quickly from his face as a fresh wave of tears and sobs wrack my body. "You know Remmy, I have been wanting to ask you to go on a walk with me for a while. You mind taking a break? I want to show you something," he says as he wraps an arm around me. I continue sobbing. I've never touched him before, besides our hands grazing when I hand him his coffee, but his muscular frame feels warm and comforting. I can see Richard is furious as he looks at Allan's arm debating if he wants to rip it off.

"Take a break? There's only two of us, and what are you going to show her? What's so important you need to leave?" Krissy says.

Richard nods his head as if he agrees.

Krissy looks at him and glares. "Why are you still here?"

"It's a free country, and I'm making sure a stranger doesn't kid nap Remmy," he responds.

"Oh wow, nice of you to care now," I force my voice to push out, even as it breaks and a fresh wave of sobs crashes down.

"I really don't think it's a good idea for you to leave Remmy," Krissy says as she tries to move between Allan and I.

He makes it a point to step back while smiling in an encouraging way.

“Honestly, it’s my break and I need some fresh air anyways,” I say despite Krissy’s disgusted look.

“You’re not going anywhere,” Richard says as his girlfriend tries to protest, “Oh shut up and go sit down,” he says to her. She shakes her head and glares at him before storming from the coffee shop.

Krissy’s eyebrows shoot up. I shake my head and look back at Allan. “Well then, lead the way,” I say as I finally calm my crying. He smiles encouragingly at me.

“We’re just going across the street. I want to show you how valuable wishes can be,” he says.

“Wishes?” Krissy snorts out, but my curiosity pushes me forward.

Krissy practically stomps her foot and Richard has his mouth gaping open as I walk out the door. Allan and I watch the road and the cars whizzing by before he grabs my hand and pulls me to speed across. The opposite side has an acre property that I usually like to stare at because of the abundance of wildflowers. It’s spring, and despite the recent storms, it’s not raining when we get into that empty field. I look around in excitement.

“I take it you like wildflowers?” Allan says, and I step back. I had forgotten he was even there.

“Yeah, even when they’re weeds, they’re still beautiful,” I say as he smiles.

“Can I tell you a story?” Allan says, as he suddenly finds a large, fat dandelion.

I look back over my shoulder and chew on my lip while seeing Krissy standing in the window with her arms on her hips. Richard stands outside with his arms crossed. He’s watching the cars whizz by as if he’s going to run across to us. My skin vibrates in anger and frustration, even despite my heart still aching.

“Remmy? Do you know what love is?” Allan asks and I whip my head back to him. I open my mouth and close it several times. He chuckles, and I imagine my face looks like a fish.

“That’s ok, I have just heard you and Krissy talk about it so much over the last year. Not that I was listening,” he says as he shrugs at my furrowed brows. “I just noticed how you would describe what you wanted, and how you just wanted to be loved. It made me think of myself five years ago.” He looks down at that fat dandelion and twirls it between his fingertips. “Make a wish,” he says as he thrusts it into my face.

“What?” I ask, jerking back and going slightly cross-eyed to look at the full flower little wisps of it already beginning to break off.

“What are you doing to my girlfriend,” Richard shouts as he stomps up to us, followed by Krissy.

“I’m not your girlfriend,” I shout back.

Allan chuckles under his breath, the dandelion still grasped in his fingertips and reaching towards my face.

“Ok, this is just weird. Why are you so obsessed with dandelions, dude?” Krissy asks as she throws her hands in the air. She looks at Richard and her expression goes sour. I look between them and raise my eyebrows, completely confused. “Where’s your toad Richard? Finally wishing you hadn’t cheated on such an amazing woman?” Krissy asks.

Richard gapes at her before turning to me. “Come on Remmy, let’s talk this out. I didn’t mean anything I said. I was just scared. You know I love you, you’re the only woman I’ve ever loved,” Richard says. He looks nervously at Allan and Krissy as Allan chuckles and Krissy snorts.

“Can I tell you a story?” Allan asks again while he examines the dandelion. A small tuft blows off as he twists it again. I can’t help nodding, looking at him curiously.

“Five years ago, I met the most beautiful woman I had ever seen. I was heartbroken and insecure because my girlfriend had cheated on me. This woman I met, she was so full of light that it was contagious. She made me want to smile despite being heart broken. She convinced me to go into a field like this one and found the fattest dandelion I had ever seen. I swear that thing had more puffy tufts on it than any other dandelion that’s ever existed,” he says as he smiles widely at me. He stuffs a hand in his pocket and takes a deep breath. “Five years ago, she convinced me to blow on that dandelion and make a wish. She swore up and down that any wish you make on a dandelion, if you blow all the tufts off, it will come true. She called them wishing flowers. Not wanting to disappoint her because she seemed so genuine, I went ahead and made a wish. We got married three years later,” he says.

My heart wilts for a second, the dude is married and sitting here flirting with me. Figures.

“So then why are you all up in my best friends cheese whizz dude?” Krissy says as if she can read my thoughts. I look at her thankfully. She just nods and steps closer to me.

“Because, two years ago she passed away from stage four brain cancer,” Allan responds simply. His expression doesn’t change as he continues to stare at the puffy little white flower. My heart wilts further in grief for him. “Oh, don’t look so sad, see my wish did come true. I wished to find true love, and I did, even if it was just for a couple of years. I made a wish after chasing dandelions. She made me promise I would find someone to pass that onto,” Allan says. I hear Richard laugh heartily, as if he has nothing to worry about. “Come on Remmy, let’s go talk things out. This dude is a weirdo,” Richard says as he extends his hand. I look at him blankly.

“Oh man, I’m sorry for your loss, Allan, but this really is pretty weird, and we need to get back to the coffee shop. A flower isn’t going to make men act any better. Wishing on a flower isn’t going to change anything,” Krissy says, and my eyes scan her while she tries to take my hand. I look at her with the same blank expression I gave Richard.

“What does it hurt to try?” Allan says as he pushes the thick dandelion towards my face again.

“Oh, why not,” I huff out. I blow out heavily and all the tufts from the flower skitter away. *I wish I could find someone who loves me for me, who won’t cheat, who supports and sticks up for me.* I think to myself. Meanwhile, Richard and Krissy stand to the side as if waiting for something magical to happen. I think I kind of am too, but nothing prepares me for what Allan says next.

“I can imagine what you wished for, but if you’re anything like me you didn’t realize something,” he says before glaring at Richard.

Richard steps back with a disgusted look. “I don’t need this. Screw you Remmy, your missing out on something good,” he says before stomping away.

I choose to ignore him, and Krissy crosses her arms as her eyebrows furrow. “What could she possibly not know about a wish? Is it gonna start raining, men?”

Allan chuckles and shakes his head. He finally tosses the stem down and we all stare at it for a few seconds. “No, Krissy, do you know what love is?”

“Of course I do, doesn’t mean I believe in it.”

“Do you love Remmy?”

I look between them with raised eyebrows.

“What? No, like I said, I don’t believe in love,” Krissy responds.

Allan ignores her and stuffs his hands in his pockets before looking up at the dark sky. “You know, I told Sandra my wish came true only after we got married. I remember how she chuckled and said my wish had happened long before she and I started dating. When she asked me to clarify why I thought my wish came true to us, I told her. I just wanted to be loved, to be valued, to be cared for. You know what she said?”

Krissy and I both shrug our shoulders and look at each other. I’m confused and I can see warning bells going off in Krissy’s eyes.

“She told me I always had the love I was searching for; I just got a little extra with her. Remmy, I’ve heard you and Krissy talk. I’ve heard you talk about your parents, your family, and your other friends. You already have that love you wished for, but Krissy, you just didn’t realize. You both have been looking for something you already have. Companionship and friendship are just as important as a romantic relationship.”

We look at each other with wide eyes, Krissy pulling me into a hug. I smile for the first time in what feels like years.

“Why would you want to tell us this? Why were you so invested in some random strangers?” I ask. When there’s no answer, Krissy and I look around confused. Allan is nowhere to be seen.

“Ok, wait a second, that did just happen, right?” Krissy asks, and I nod my head.

“I think I’m going to spend the rest of my life chasing dandelion’s,” I say as she puts her hands on her hips.