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## Failure to Communicate

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## FAILURE TO COMMUNICATE

*“Speak when you’re angry, and you’ll make the best speech you’ll ever regret.”*

— Lawrence J. Peter

“Grandpa you are being utterly unreasonable. Why are you displaying such stubbornness? Are you blind towards my suffering?”

“Oliver do shut up and let me finish my reading.”

“You old fool!” I exclaimed with rage. “I refuse to be treated with such neglect and aversion. Why do you treat me like a toddler? Have you no respect for me?”

The old man slowly put his book down on the hardwood floor. The bifocals that conformed around his aged face tilted downward onto the tip of his nose. The stare he gave showed a hint of disgust.

“I know what you want to discuss boy, but we have been beating the dead horse’s head on this subject. Not another word about this girl. She is nothing but trouble for you.”

“But you haven’t told me a thing about her. I know how small towns are. Everyone knows everyone. Even if you hardly know anything about her...”

“To hardly know her is to know her well,” grandpa interrupted. “And the only thing I want to mention about her is that it would be best to stay away.”

“Why do you say that?”

“Because even if I felt she could be a perfect companion, you may never see her again. Dear boy you are leaving tomorrow to go away for school. If before you leave, you end up meeting this girl and falling in love, your time away will be miserable. A

thousand miles is truly a long way and there will be plenty of attractive and intelligent girls at Bates for you. Why can’t this perfect image you have of her stay that way? No matter how wonderful she is in person, she will never be as flawless as you are imagining her now. The great thinker Epicurus stated that mental pleasures are superior to physical ones. Are you familiar with his work?”

“Vaguely. I know he lived before the birth of Christ. His influence lags in comparison with Descartes or Kant.”

“Impressive. I see the teachers are doing their job.”

“Oh yes. They have been learning me well,” I stated sarcastically.

“Well anyhow, this pleasure you receive from dreaming about her will outweigh any physical meeting. You can fantasize how wonderful she appeared and store it in the most wonderful gift God gave us: the mind.”

“But He also gave us a heart. And my heart tells me to go see her. It will suffer eternally if she is kept an enigma.”

“It is not your heart speaking, but your tail end,” grandpa scolded. “You will never become a man if you don’t learn to become more rational.”

“How dare you insult me like that. I demand an apology this instance.”

“I refuse to apologize to such ignorance. You have to learn to respect your elders, boy. All you have done is criticize my advice.”

“I only criticize when need be,” I replied quickly.

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After a sigh he asked, "How old are you Oliver?"

"Twenty."

"Well I am almost eighty, so I have lived your years four times over. Don't you think with that much experience that I would know what's right for my grandson in this situation? I've forgotten more than you know."

"Grandpa, I'm tired of you treating me inferiorly. There is a justice higher than that of man and I will be judged by Him, not you. I mean, who are you to talk down to me anyway? You're nearly blind and deaf, you rely on drugs to survive and to top it off, you wear diapers. All in all, you're basically a second-rate human being."

"Do watch you tongue boy. Intellectual revenge can be much harsher than any corporal reprisal you're familiar with."

"Go back to your cave old man," I irritatedly replied while rushing to my room. Any more confrontation would have gotten ugly. He was the one beginning to talk from the tail end, not I.

The hours are a few minutes longer in Fairmount, Indiana. Everything's done gradual and steady here. The locals follow the ancient philosophy of Confucius that "It doesn't matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop." That's probably why my grandfather is so content with this town. I wish he would heed another conviction of Confucius that states, "When we see men of a contrary character, we should turn inwards and examine ourselves." The old man's greatest flaw is that he can everyone else's blunders, yet is

blind to his own. I guess that is innate with the male species.

I'm on vacation from my parents here. The Fall Trimester begins soon, so I wanted some deserved peace before it begins. My grandfather was kind enough to let me stay a few days. The closest neighbors are about 200 feet east of his 15 acres of true Earth. The mornings are delightful with the sun rising over the seemingly endless miles of cornfields and white deer sipping from the pond. But I have grown accustomed to the evenings now.

It was only yesterday while I was sitting on a branch of a red maple, waiting for the sun to set, that she appeared. It was like she just stepped out of a Renoir painting. She moved with the grace of a swan and was fairer than anyone my eyes have been fortunate enough to see. Her sandy brown hair swayed gently back from the winds of the west and her skin appeared as smooth and impeccable as the white sands of Bermuda. She was truly a Goddess, yet my gutless conscience would not allow me to approach her. That was why I needed my grandfather. He knew of her, but refused to say anything of her. This seemed quite peculiar to me.

An hour passed while I miserably lay in my bed before the old man finally came to the rescue. My senses smelled a hint of whiskey on his clothes, but he seemed sober. Then he stated, "Boy, you don't have long before Miss Melody walks by. She does every night right when the sun leaves the horizon."

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“So Melody is her name. Quite fitting for she is music to my ears!”

“No time to waste now. Let me ask you a question. Have you ever seen fair Melody’s eyes?”

“Well no, I wasn’t quite close enough last night and she was wearing sunglasses anyhow. Why do you ask such a question?”

“I do so because she rarely takes her glasses off in public. I have been one of the few to be able to observe such beauty. But I think there’s a way you will be able to see the virtually unseen.”

“Oh do tell,” I anxiously replied.

“Well I hear she’s a sucker for French literature,” he stated while lifting up a tarnished red book from the ground. The words from the title were faded and all I could make out were: “Le Petit...” He opened the book from a marked page and quoted a line he had highlighted. He taught me how to say it in perfect French and remarked that Melody will be able to translate it. Then maybe if I’m lucky, she will take her glasses off to read other passages from the book.

“Grandpa, I apologize for the nasty things I’ve said to you. I hope you’ll forgive me.”

“I’ve been only a thorn in your side this evening Oliver. At my age, I didn’t think it was possible to be immature — I’ve found out otherwise. I, too, am sorry. Now go out there and get your girl.”

“Thank you for everything,” I exclaimed while running towards the red maple tree.

It was only minutes before she appeared again. My feelings hadn’t changed and she still appeared as divine as ever. My confidence was at a climax, so when she was

steps from the tree, my lips stated, “Wonderful evening for a walk, isn’t it?”

“Who are you, what do you want?” she defensively replied.

“Dear Melody no need to fret, I’m...”

“Oliver Gray,” she replied.

“These small towns. Nothing gets by any of ya.”

“My Auntie warned me that Mr. Gray’s grandson would be in town.”

“Well I don’t bite,” I replied.

“Well I don’t care sir.”

“What is your armor made of my dear? Cobalt or nickel?”

“Save that line for one of your bimbos back home. Good night, I must be off.” She started pacing and then I yelled, “Wait!”

“What is it now?”

“I hear you enjoy French Literature.”

“That is correct.”

“Well I was wondering if you could be so kind to translate a line for me. Would you like to see it?”

“Your grandfather must be enjoying this one. You must have gotten him mad.”

“Why do you say that? Do you not know French?”

“Oh no, I’m quite fluent. But you see,” she paused for a moment and then stated, “I’m blind as a bat.”

I felt my world come falling to the ground. Grandpa spoke of revenge and he got it.

“Would you recite the line for me?” she then asked.

“Yes,” I replied half-heartedly. “On ne voit bien qu’avec le couer; l’essentiel est invisible pour les yeux.”

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“Oh, one of my favorites! It’s from the book, *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupery. Mr. Gray must have picked this one out,” she stated with a grin.

“He did,” I replied.

“It translates: ‘It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.’”

— *Edward Quinn*

CHUBBY GIRL SIZES

Milky Way  
Snickers  
Almond Joy  
Mounds  
Each passing year  
Measured in pounds.  
Five Babes  
Six years  
Less Mom to go around.  
A typhoon of tears  
For every Fatso put-down.

Chubby Girl Sizes  
No hand-me-downs  
Forest green, navy blue  
Mostly dark browns.  
A-line  
A thin line  
To hide her in.  
Cover her up,  
Where did she begin?

Puberty passed,  
She starved at last.

Milky Way  
Snickers  
Almond Joy  
Mounds  
Each passing year  
Measured in pounds.  
First 5,  
Then 10, 15, and 20.  
  
No pie,  
Chocolate ice cream, candy or honey,  
No food for the fat  
No food for the soul.  
Where did the poor little Chubby Girl Go?

St. John Knits  
Gucci  
Calvin Klein  
Dior  
Hiding her still  
Covering her once more.

— *Cindy DeFranco*