

A Lock of Red Hair

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A great battler against environmental pollution has passed away. Now, after discovering his diary, his sons must find out the truth about a mystery girl as they reconstruct the whole image they had of their father because of these new findings.



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It was a dim, murky day for everyone involved, the 13th May of the year 2067. The passing of a great man had happened, a man who would be greatly mourned by his family, his friends, his acquaintances and all of the people that had ever known him. This was a man of principle, who fought for the best interests of every citizen on this good planet of ours, who was an advocate against all matters of environmental pollution and ecological harm, the man who stopped the world from rotting to death. In the years he spent alive amongst his fellow Earth folk, he reclaimed nature for itself, for it to bloom and prosper once again in an almost vain attempt at recovery to its former, beautiful, glorious state.

His wife sat in a red chair back at their old home, along with the two of his sons, nested comfortably yet uneasily in a luxurious sofa. A home that was once homely and warm, it had now become a painful reminder of the man that had just departed from them. An awkward, heavy silence filled the room, the old man's will sitting on the table in an open envelope.

“You think it was okay to give away everything he had to charity? I mean, he didn't write anything about it in the will...” the older son broke the silence reluctantly.

“Honey, your father's dead, he's not going to care.” his mother cut him off coldly, in her usual style, and though he had been used to it by now, it was quite a shock that she still had her *punch* left after her husband's recent passing.

“He said that you'll know what to do with his... well, everything” the younger son mentioned.

“He put but *one thing* in his will, along with a key...” she stated to herself. Sure enough, the will read only a single sentence:

To my sons, and only to my sons, I leave the chest which contains my life.

Unbeknownst to their mother, the two brothers were aware of the chest their father had kept inside of his home office. They had found it years ago, but had no way of unlocking it and peering into the secrets within, until now that is. *This was that key!* And the thought excited them, they would finally get to find out what was in that blasted box of wood which their father held so close to his heart!

Later that afternoon, they went into his office with a feeling of unease, after all, this was the room in which their deceased father had spent most of his time. It still had that whisp of his perfume lingering in the air, which felt all too real to them. Even so, the two young men took after their parents, and they weren't particularly mournful, they took out the chest from his drawer and opened it. It was a somewhat anti-climactic moment when all they found was a thick, old book.

“What?! Are you telling me that we speculated our whole childhood over *this?!!*” the younger son carelessly handled the book and accidentally dropped it to the floor, and out of it papers poured. The older son picked it up along with the newly spilled contents. He briefly studied it.

“Watch it, moron! Can't you see this is a *diary*? Haven't you heard the age old saying of not judging a book by its cover? Well, it *literally* applies in this case...” the older brother continued ranting, in a usual older sibling way.

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“ Well, what does it say?” the junior asked excitedly.

“ Don't know... hmm,” his brother murmured, 18th February, 2022 :

I keep wandering to myself, if us Homo sapiens are the smartest beings on this planet of ours, and by that, most fit for survival, why are we so hellbent on destroying ourselves? Drat, you see it everywhere, factories polluting the air with carbon emissions, guaranteeing lung cancer for a percentage of the population, nuclear waste being dumped, causing numberless birth defects and malignant illnesses, water being befouled, killing and torturing the wildlife living inside and beside it...

Nowhere is this more apparent than in my home town. All of the attempts at reducing air pollution here have been in vain, it has gotten to the point where my fellow citizens, my fellow people, are being poisoned by simply breathing, by inhaling the very air that they need for bodily functions, by quite plainly staying alive, they are killing themselves, and that's just sad... It's just sad that humanity lets stuff like this happen!

“ Wow... sounds like he hated polluters with a passion” the younger son gave his opinion.

“ Indeed” the older brother agreed.

“ Our father was a very technologically-adept man, why do you think he didn't just write a blog or something on his laptop?” the younger brother asked.

“ Clearly he wanted to keep this a secret from everyone,” the older son went on, “ but he didn't want to take it to his grave, that's why he gave us the key...”

“ Why do you figure he would do that?” the junior wondered more to himself than his brother.

“ No idea...” the senior vaguely answered, also more to himself than his brother.

The diary also contained other papers, some of them were receipts, some were sheet music, and a couple were some very *verbally rich* love letters. They continued exploring the secrets that their father kept from them all this time, they felt like they were rediscovering their old man. The children almost felt cheated, like they were living with a fake version of their dad this whole time.

They found a passage mentioning their mother, how she and their father met:

Oh, great joy! My best friend introduced me to a girl from his school over Facebook and I've gotten to know her quite well. She's like a female version of myself, likes the things I like, dislikes the things I dislike, has a wicked sense of humor and isn't afraid to discuss taboo subjects. I've already asked her out and we're meeting this Sunday, I really hope things go well!

“ That's where it all began” the older brother remarked and they both snickered.

“ But I'm more interested in this other girl, he seems to mention her more than mum” the younger brother noticed.

And indeed, all of the love poems he had written were about this other girl, who, they discovered, he had met sometime during his first year of high school in an English competition of all places. And these were not just innocent scribbles! They contained an abundance of lustful thoughts and ideas, full-fledged, rich fantasies about this mystery girl he seems to have been so enamoured with.

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But, still, all throughout the document, they found his hatred against the polluters of our natural environment. Every single one of the phrases he used to describe it, more foul and demoting than the last one.

25th March, 2037

In the 40th year of my life, with the fortunes I have obtained, in one way or another, I have decided to found a corporation solely bent on fighting and extinguishing the threat our good home faces! Many fine men and women have answered my call, many humans who still know what the word â humanâ means! The real filth of this world are the ones who call themselves humans, but don't stand for anything that word implies! I doubt there exists a language with the words wickedly horrible enough to describe the hatred I feel now...

I walked through a hospital today... I saw an adolescent child wither away from lung cancer in front of my very eyes, for Heaven's sake! Dead, before even experiencing the comedies and horrors of life, the two contrasting sides which make it beautiful... All because of this foul garbage poisoning our abode! I swear now, on my own life, that in thirty years, Earth will be what it was thirty thousand years ago!

â What caused him to be so obsessed with this?â the younger son wondered.

â No ideaâ his older brother honestly answered. They knew well this battle against environmental polluters was important to their father, but why?

They continued going through the pages and papers in the old diary. Again and again, the mysterious girl kept popping up. It was becoming plainly obvious that he was infatuated with her, even more so, it seemed, than with their mother. Sure, she received mention a few times, and in a very pleasant tone and description, but the passages about the woman he chose to spend his life with weren't nearly as blistering, boiling and *on fire* as the ones about this girl he met in his freshman year. She was apparently older than him, third year and she always called him *boy* because of it.

â God, this is frustrating!â the youngest son snapped.â There isn't even a mention of her name...â

â Wait... this letter, it has the intended receiver's name...â the elder brother noticed on one of the many love letters they had been reading. â But it just says Lady â â

â Hey, look at this,â his younger brother interrupted him before he could utter the full name, â sheet music!â

The eldest brother took the sheet of manuscript from him.

â It's titled *Sonata for My Witch*â he read.

â What do you suppose that means?â the younger brother asked.

â I don't know... grand staff, must be for piano. Father was a pianist, so it makes senseâ the older brother explained. â Says here it was written in three movements,â he continued, â must have been important for him to put so much effort into it, we both know he hated work. It's so... calm, the music, it's unlike him.â

â Great! So now we know he was apparently in love with a *witch*... Come on! This tells us absolutely nothing! All we know from this mess of information is that she was obsessed with her blog.â the younger brother exclaimed.

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“What if we found her blog? Maybe he has the web address written somewhere in there...” the older brother tried to reconcile.

“I doubt it, it's all pointless, he obviously never wanted us to find out who she is” the junior said and started leaving.

“Let's at least read the final entry” the senior suggested, and so they did.

My health has been failing me as of late. My birthday is nearing and yet I cannot feel closer to death, at least that's what I keep telling myself, then I wake up the next day feeling even worse. I feel that time is finally catching up with me, I just hope that my young can lead the pack now...

I have prepared a special invitation to my funeral, addressed to her, that he who read this little scribble of mine knows well. I know not if she will come, if she would like to come, if she still thought me dear, or if she's even... But know this, ye who reads this book of mine: This diary of is only half of my life, the other half rests beneath the place I lay my head every night. You can stop chasing the elegies of a running bag...

“That's it, let's just find that invitation and we'll know who she is!” the youngest son happily realized and went looking for the invitation. The older son had other concerns though, those last sentences his father wrote itched at his mind like wool... He was determined to find the final piece of this puzzle.

That night, the eldest son came up to his parents' bedroom and looked under his father's pillow. He found an envelope, sent from the *General Hospital for Environmental Diseases - Terminal Ward on 12th May 2015*, of which the front read *Here, have this boy, my final and eternal gift to you, for keeping a promise Out of it, he pulled a glass container and in it was:*

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