Moments II: The Dance

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Moments from the relationship of high schoolers Lily Andrews and Jake Harrison.

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Lily arrived late at the dance that evening, due to a bout of fresh tears which were quelled by Emilyâ s strong arms and soft shoulder, as well as some extra time spent making her up and assuring that everything looked perfect. For Lily, she wanted to look perfect so that no one suspected anything was wrong, least of all Alex, and Emily wanted her to look perfect because she wanted John to regret the day he had ever chosen someone over her sister.

â All dolled up and no one here with me,â thought Lily as she handed the guard her ticket and entered the gymnasium of her school by herself. It had been done in all the accoutrements of winter glory that their school could accommodate, from snow to tinsel to ornaments (but nothing religious, of course. Think of the lawsuits!) hanging from the walls. Aside from the glimmer, it was extremely dark, but immediately she saw Alex and John, dancing to the first slow song of the evening, gazing at each other so intently that one would think they had been together forever. Her arms were around his neck and his hands were on her waist, hooking at the back, and Lily realized this was the very vision she had seen, but with the wrong girl. She felt constricted, hot, and unable to breathe. She hurried out of the gym into the lit lobby of the school. She stood there, leaning against a railing and regretting her decision to come when she heard footsteps behind her.

â Hey, you showed!â It was Jake, standing before her with laughing eyes and true pleasure at her presence.

â What do you mean?â She averted her eyes and pulled out a mirror to check that her makeup was still covering the bags she had developed from crying.

â Well, you love these things. But you werenâ t here earlier, right? I was worried Iâ d have to actually go inside.â

â Traditionally, you would. You did buy a ticket. And dress up.â She appraised his appearance, deciding that it was certainly not something to scoff at. He was wearing black slacks with a white oxford shirt, which was cleanly pressed but rolled up at the sleeves, typical of his casual and comfortable manner. They had been friends for so long, seeing each other every day and always in close proximity, that she hadnâ t realized how much he had grown over the years. Now, to look into his ever-changing blue eyes, she had to tilt her head all the way back, even in her three-inch heels. Her eye level went from being at his chin to in the center of his lean torso, so that now they automatically stood an awkwardly large distance away from each other for conversation to not cause neck strain; not too far away, just enough to notice the difference.

â Soâ ¦â Jake began. Lily waited for him to continue, but he stood there slowly rocking back and forth and shoving his hands deeper into his pockets. The silence stretched on as they stared into each otherâ s eyes and they had the first of many moments that would make Lilyâ s entire body flutter with the power of a thousand butterflies. She felt her cheeks burn until both of them realized what was happening.

â Wha-â

â I w-â

Both broke into embarassed laughter, realizing this was the first time they had ever felt shy around the other. They both motioned for the other to continue their sentence. After another minute of that and more

laughter, this time both embarassed and curious, Lily took charge.

â What were you going to say?â

â Um, thereâ s something I wanted to show you. If youâ re not planning on going in, that is.â He looked at his feet and his shoulders hunched ever so slightly.

Lily had not planned on witnessing the scene in the gym again, and Jake was certainly taking her mind off of what was bothering her, so her reply was completely honest.

â Not at all. What is it?â She nudged his elbow with hers, a gesture he had done to her on the third day of their acquaintance that they only continued to do with each other as they grew older as an unspoken private joke.

â Nope. You have to come with me.â

He led her first through the darkened hallways of the school, their footsteps echoing in the halls that neither thought they would see at 10:45 pm. The gates were all left open for students to access the restrooms, which was useful for Jakeâ s plan which required him access to his locker first. Wordlessly he opened it and pulled out a black case Lily knew held his guitar, which he had alluded to playing thousands of times to her, but which she had never actually seen until then. It was still in its black case, slim enough for her to realize that it was electric. He slung the strap over one shoulder and swung the locker shut.

â Where to now?â Lilyâ s wonder at his secrecy was eating at her mind, and she was bursting to know what it was that he wanted to show her. He simply shook his head and started walking back towards the gym, veering off at the hallway that led to the schoolâ s auditorium.

â Itâ s going to be locked, you know that, right?â Lily asked, her smile evident in her words. Again without speaking he simply kept walking. While she thought his ability to ignore her now was amusing, little did she know it would later be the cause of pain capable of breaking the worldâ s most resilient spirits.

When they reached the auditorium, Jake pulled out a ring of keys and located a long, silver one that he inserted into the lock of the handle. Turning it, he pushed open the door to reveal the cavernous auditorium, pitch black and full of reverberations of every step the pair took. Lily was gripped with the fear of being caught, but Jake could not be more cavalier, walking around as if he owned the auditorium.

He climbed up the stairs to the balcony from which the stage crew controlled the house sound, lights, and curtains. Having never been there before, and seeing all of the equipment, Lily timidly stood at the mouth of the stairs, afraid to break the computers or switchboards. But Jakeâ s warm smile made her comfortable again, as he pulled a wheeled chair to face the banister and said, â Here, sit down.â

Sitting in the red foam chair, Lily looked up at Jake, who had perched on the railing of the stairs and was fiddling with his electric guitar, plugging a wire that orignated from the amplifier into the peg on the end of the instrument. Then he walked over to a soundboard and turned a dial three times.

Surprised, Lily burst out, â Jake- weâ re not supposed to touch anything!â

He slowly turned to look at her and said, â Trust me, itâ ll be worth it,â and walked back to the banister.

Taking a seat upon the shiny metal of it, he looked straight into her eyes and repeated the name of his new song, â Not Too Far.â With an awkward clearing of his throat, he begant to strum quiet chords on the guitar.

But it was anything but quiet. The amplifier he had set up was connected to the sound system of the entire auditorium; the room filled with the echoes of his sweetly serene song, surrounding Lily in the music. It was a private concert just for her. He watched as her face light up and she subconsciously leaned forward in her chair, and his face went from frantic with nerves to relaxed and smiling.

The music itself was beautiful: quiet and comforting, yet full of emotion. Lily looked from his fingers on the neck of the guitar along his arm up to his face, and when their eyes met, she realized that she had not thought about John once when she was with this boy, whose clear blue eyes were staring straight into her own. This boy, who took extra time to notice that she was upset, and to actively trying to alleviate her pain without even knowing what had caused it. This boy, who it was so easy to be around, who she could laugh around, make jokes with, and spend time with, was not John at all. It was the boy sitting two feet from her, who had always been two feet from her, it seemed, and was now opening his mouth to sing---

Lily heard the door open first, but Jake was the first to react; he leapt across the balcony to the speaker and shut it off before hurriedly stuffing the guitar back into the case, all before the voice from below called out â Hello? Anybody in here?â

Lily and Jake were both all too aware of their proximity, and the privacy of the moment they had been caught in. Neither wanted anyone to know what had just transpired.

Jake whispered, â Donâ t say anything, and theyâ ll leave. The dance is over in ten minutes.â

Clearly he did not want to be seen there with her. That was fine. She nodded without making eye contact and stared at her toes as she added, â Okay, then we can get out of here.â

Crestfallen that her aim was to extricate herself with such urgency, Jake simply said â Mhm,â and they waited in silence for the voices below to recede and for the door to swing shut.

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