

Chapter 15

The next best thing to do after a good meal is to loaf around, even if the so-called good meal is a hot sausage from a street vendor. Wyatt and Vivien having satisfied their hunger by the way of junk food decide to relax and enjoy the rest of the day before their shift at Bunny's begin. They sit on the grassy field of the park which is not far from the museum. They don't sit close to each other like they are a couple madly in love, and not so distant to prevent a conversation without having to yell. It is a perfectly comfortable distance for any ordinary pals hanging out. They are at a portion of the field that has a slight slope making it ideal for relaxing. If lying down, there is no need of a pillow because your upper body is elevated making it quite comfortable. Wyatt is halfway laid back resting on both elbows, one leg flat to the ground, and the other propped up making a triangle. He chews on a long blade of grass, facing the sun with his head tilted back making him squint to block out the blinding rays. Nonetheless, the eight minutes it took the sunlight traveling through space to hit his face felt good and was also a great way to get some vitamin D and color to the skin. Vivien has her red balloon tied to her wrist as it moves ever so slightly every time a gentle breeze hits it. She is hunched forward in a sitting position and has both her legs propped up with her knees almost touching her chest as her elbows rest on them. She plays with a blade of grass.

"I forgot to thank you for buying me the balloon, Wyatt," smiles Vivien looking up at the balloon floating above her head.

"Ah, no problem," says Wyatt too tired to move his lips to talk.

Vivien looks back at the blade of grass played by her slender fingers. "Remember when we were kids we made sounds with a blade a grass?"

Wyatt, still squinting, turns his head to Vivien and asks, "What? How do you make sounds from a blade of grass?"

"You never made sounds from a blade of grass?" asks Vivien staring at Wyatt in astonishment.

"No. Show me," replies Wyatt who is now highly intrigued by the notion a sound can be made by a simple blade of grass.

"Okay," giggles Vivien by his fascination. She places the blade of grass flat between each of her thumbs as the rest of her hands makes a

clamshell. She blows air between her thumbs and it produces a high pitched squeaky sound that is almost musical.

Wyatt's jaw drops, sits upright, and looks at her in delight as if it was the trickiest trick he had ever seen. "Good golly. How'd you do that? Show me."

Vivien laughs in delight to Wyatt's reaction and his childlike demand. "You seriously never seen this before?"

"Show me how you did it," orders Wyatt with abundant eagerness.

Vivien still laughing grabs a fresh blade of grass who was minding his own business until he was plucked. Wyatt grabs a blade of grass from the same spot that could've been the brother, sister, or cousin to the blade of grass Vivien is holding. Vivien finally composes herself of delirious laughter but still smiles showing her perfectly white teeth.

"Okay, put the grass between your thumbs like this."

"Alright," says Wyatt with eyes attentively stuck on Vivien's hand.

"And then blow," says Vivien placing the two thumbs against her lips to make a high pitched tweet.

Wyatt replicates exactly but blows too hard as the blade of grass rips in half flying out of his thumbs and sounding like a big bad fart. Vivien is left in stitches and laughs frantically, rolling and clutching her gut. Wyatt is left with the biggest frown.

"Drat. What did I do wrong?" questions Wyatt.

Still laughing Vivien sits up and tries her best to compose herself. "Okay, let's try again," says Vivien as she grabs another blade of grass from the same spot.

Wyatt does the same and plucks out a few, examining each one before grabbing the best of the bunch and tossing the rest in the air like a golfer might do to check the wind direction and speed.

"This time don't blow so hard. Hold the grass firmly at the top and bottom between your thumbs. And make sure there is space in the middle for the air to flow," says Vivien showing her thumbs and the blade of grass in the middle.

"Okay," responds Wyatt following the instructions intently.

"Then you lightly blow air in between your thumbs," directs Vivien blowing air and producing a high pitched sound.

Wyatt blows air between his thumbs and is rewarded to the delightfully annoying high pitched sound. Vivien laughs out in excitement and claps her hands enthusiastically.

“Yeah! You did it!” says Vivien getting overjoyed and hugs Wyatt tightly in a friendly way that isn’t flirtatious.

Wyatt laughs and continues to make the uniquely odd sound. They both laugh having the time of their lives.

This brought Vivien memories of her childhood when summer vacations seemed to last forever and the days were just as long. She had nearly two and a half months of, no more pencils, no more books, no more teacher’s dirty looks. And if you were a kid of eleven or twelve years of age, the two months or so might as well be a lifetime. On those forever long summer days she would hang out in the park with her neighborhood friends. Growing up together, Vivien was closer and less shy with them as opposed to her fellow schoolmates. The park where they hung out at was not far from where they lived and it took half an hour at most for a twelve year old and half the time for an adult if walking. Most times she would ride her bicycle to the park which took fraction of the time. Once she got to the grassy fields of the park, it was difficult to peddle up the hills and had to walk it until she got to her destination. The park wasn’t huge and had a small creek running through it and at one point had minnows and crayfish but the dumping of pollution from nearby factories wiped them out to complete extinction. The park had tons of trees and a few good acres of open space to play soccer or frisbee. During the winter, there is a hill steep enough for a good toboggan ride – just as long as you stopped before you hit the creek. It was a great place for kids, and adults alike, to spend an entire summer day. And if it got too hot, there were tons of shade under the big trees. Vivien would be gone for the whole part of the day and sometimes skip lunch. When you’re a kid, your energy doesn’t require food, but fun. Many times she would skip breakfast so she can get to the park, so her mother would quickly pack her a lunch of peanut butter and jam sandwich and a thermos full of milk or whichever flavor of juice was in the fridge that day. Her father would get a bit worried if she wasn’t home by the time he got from work and drive to the park to find her. He would watch them play until it was almost dinner time and try to convince her to come home. When she got home she would be so tired she only ate a mouse portion of her dinner. There were times she fell asleep at the dinner table and her mother had to carry her to bed. When she woke up the next day, she would do it all over again, right up until school had officially started again. Vivien cherished those moments because when you’re a kid, all you did was have fun and

never worried about rent or your next meal. Everything was provided for. Those were, irrefutably, the best days of her existence.

And for an instant, making sounds with a blade of grass brought back her childhood and Vivien forgot all about her current problems. It was great, even for a moment, to relive her childhood.

After all the laughter and nostalgic memories, Vivien looks at Wyatt and leans over ever so slightly to get a better look at what got her attention. She looks deeper into his eyes, moving a little bit closer to his face. The brightness of the sun helped Vivien notice the color of Wyatt's eyes. Wyatt is baffled by Vivien's gazing and wonders if something is amiss.

"What?" asks Wyatt. "Do I have something on my face? Is it a bug? Ugh! If it's a bug, please get it off. I hope it's not a spider. I hate spiders. They creep me out. Is it a spider?"

"No, Mr. Arachnophobia." says Vivien giggling. "I just didn't realize you had different colored eyes. Blue and Green. Wow. I rarely see two colored eyes on a person. Actually you're the only one."

"Yeah," replies Wyatt bashfully.

"No, it's nothing weird. I just think it's beautiful," says Vivien still gazing into his eyes and seems to be possessed and in love with the two colored eyes.

"Amazing what you can do with a blade of grass," says Wyatt.

As if an angel just relinquished the control of Vivien's mind, she is back to herself. "More amazing is how you never knew this before. Did you even have a childhood?"

"Maybe my childhood wasn't as interesting as yours," smiles Wyatt.

"Tell me about your childhood and family."

"Seriously, it's the most boring."

"Come on. Can't be all that bad."

Wyatt stops and thinks for a moment and gazes into the horizon with a sadden expression. Vivien sees this and realize she may have hit a nerve on the subject and tries to rectify it.

"I mean, I'm not asking the details of your childhood," says Vivien pausing for a second to choose her next words carefully so she won't further butcher the conversation. "I mean, you know, brothers or sisters? Parents? The general get to know you more stuff."

Wyatt just grimaces as he looks the other way.

This is when she realizes she hit another nerve. "I'm sorry. Those questions were a bit too personal."

Wyatt decides to answer those questions and looks down at the blade of grass still in his hand. “Nah. It’s not too personal,” says Wyatt and thinks back. “Well, my mother left my father and me when I was five. My father died a few years back. I’m the only child with no other known relatives. Kind of a boring story, huh?”

Maybe it was the way he said it, in the most sincere way, but Vivien’s heart just sank. She wanted to hug him so tight and never let go and comfort him forever. Her brain and mouth were too paralyzed to produce any words of ease. She was dumbfounded and before she could utter any words, Wyatt looks at his watch and stands up pretending the last ten seconds never happened.

“Come on. We have a shift coming up soon,” says Wyatt forging a smile and stretches out his arm to give her a helping hand up as she accepts.

The sun is still high in the blue sky but closer to horizon since they first came into the park. They still have plenty of time before their shift starts at Bunny’s but Wyatt only wanted to avoid getting deeper into the conversation of his not so fantastic life.

Wyatt and Vivien casually walk on the recently manicured grass as it didn’t stop the dandelions popping up just as fast. Vivien plucks a dandelion off the grass and looks at Wyatt.

“Do you know this one?” asks Vivien placing the dandelion under her chin, walking slower with Wyatt following her pace. “If there is a yellow reflection under your chin, it means you like butter.”

Wyatt looks at her chin but the involuntary smile doesn’t fool anyone. “I didn’t know that.”

“Is it yellow?” asks Vivien.

“Is what yellow?” replies Wyatt disengaged from the conversation and thinking about his grim past.

“My chin. Is it yellow?”

Since Wyatt is taller, he tilts his head down a bit to get a better look at the bottom of her chin. “Looks like you like butter.”

“Let’s see if you like butter,” says Vivien placing the dandelion under Wyatt’s chin. “Looks like we both like butter.”

They both smile as one is bogus and the other awkward. They near the sidewalk and are steps away from being out of Central Park.

The sudden unexpected appearance of dark gloomy clouds covering the sun doesn’t help much in the setting of the mood. The added sound of loud thunder in the distance foretells a transpiring rainstorm.

Vivien feels uncomfortable thinking she was maybe too forceful trying to get to know Wyatt a little better. Still trying to think of something to say to ease the situation, all she does is twirl the dandelion in one hand and stare at it. Then she contemplates and figures, what the heck. Vivien doesn't like to tell people she is an adopted child because of what happened in grade school. She told a classmate and the same one told the secret to everyone in class. They started taunting her that her real parents didn't love her or how her adoptive parents took her in because they felt sorry for her and a bunch of other mindless things kids might say to hurt each other. This went on for the remainder of the school year. She never cried about it at school but once she got home, she would cry and tell her adoptive parents what had happened. Some days were so bad Vivien would cry herself to sleep. After that ordeal, she vowed to never tell anyone she was adopted. It wasn't until today she would break that vow.

"Did you know," says Vivien nervously with crackling in her voice, "I'm adopted?"

She looks down at the dandelion, touching it delicately and at the same time getting a nauseating sensation. Suddenly, grape sized raindrops comes down one after another and hits the dandelion in Vivien's hand. Instinctively, she puts the dandelion in the pocket of her jacket from being harmed by the giant raindrops. The monsoon has hit New York City and is now coming down relentlessly. The red balloon tied around Vivien's wrist bounces up and down, and makes a sound as each giant raindrop hits it. Many people on the sidewalk run for cover and the ones who watch the weather forecast came prepared and pop open their umbrellas. Both Wyatt and Vivien aren't fazed by the downpour as they are weighed down by their sorrows.

Wyatt stops dead in his tracks. "Please don't do this, Vivien."

Rain pours down Vivien's face and eyeglasses making it difficult to see. She looks at Wyatt in confusion. "Do what?"

"You're only trying to make up for what I said. It's not your fault what I said and if I'm bummed out about it, it's my problem," says Wyatt with his hair and face now completely soaked.

Vivien with a look in her eyes, which is hard to tell if its tears or the rain, stares down at her feet to avoid eye contact. "I-I... just wanted to tell you something about me. That's all."

"No. What I meant was you don't have to say things you don't want because of me. You think you hurt my feelings by making me open up

about myself. You didn't. I'm good. Seriously," says Wyatt assuring her with sincere smile and tries to look into her eyes.

Wyatt wasn't thinking about his father any more, but more of the current situation. Every time he thinks about his father, he's in a dejected mood. It's a mood he tries to avoid as much as possible. It's not a pleasant feeling and can rub onto everyone around him like a bad contagion. And it's something he doesn't want to spread.

"Fuck you!" snaps Vivien in denial of Wyatt's argument as she wipes the wet hair out of her face and points her finger right to his nose to get the message across, shocking him by her sudden awakening. "I'm not trying to make you feel better by telling you a shitty fact about my fucken pathetic life! Spare me the fuckin' bullshit! You think I told you because I hurt your fuckin' feelings by trying to get to know you a little fuckin' better? Give me a fuckin' break! You're one vain fucker!"

In truth, deep inside Vivien's true suppressed feelings, really deep inside, but not too deep, a big sigh of relief comes. This was the one time it was worth it for Vivien to tell someone she was adopted and the payout was pretty good. But she's still a little pissed off. At the same time, Wyatt thinks Vivien is now in a funk because of him and doesn't want to end a great day with her being in a negative disposition. He tries to think of something to say or do to make the matter better knowing it's not all about him. They continue to walk shoulder to shoulder, then Wyatt places his arm around Vivien's shoulder and looks right into her big brown eyes.

"Don't worry 'bout a thing. It's all good," smiles Wyatt and gives a little wink.

Vivien responds by flicking her shoulder hard enough to make his arm fly off and punches him on the arm, added with a, "Fuck off, asshole!"

"Ow!" whimpers Wyatt laughing and massages his punched arm.

Vivien does a fake psych punch to his face as if to hit him really hard on the face and makes Wyatt flinch back thinking it would connect. Vivien still has an angry look on her face but isn't as angry as she seems. People walking by ignore the two screaming and fighting since it's mostly drowned out by the sound of the rainstorm, and also, this is New York City. Anything goes.

"Asshole!" shouts Vivien.

"What?" says Wyatt with a sad puppy-dog guise on his face. "You don't want to be my friend anymore?"

“Fuck off!”

“You know, you should get a swear jar. A quarter for every swear word. Just in the last three minutes you totaled about twenty bucks. Maybe more.”

“Fuck you, asshole!” screams Vivien taking another swing at Wyatt’s arm and misses as he takes two quick steps back.

Wyatt sticks two fingers in her face and laughs. “That’s another two quarters for two swear words.”

“I should kick your fucking ass, asshole!”

“Yeah?” says Wyatt looking at her straight in the eye smiling. “You’re going to have to catch me first!” Wyatt sprints off like a gazelle being chased by a lioness in the plains of Africa.

“ASSHOOOLE!” screams Vivien running after him with the red balloon tied to her wrist not far behind and never able to get ahead.

They start chasing each other through the sidewalks of the monsoonal city, weaving through the pedestrians, almost knocking down a few and infuriating even more who were already ticked off by the downpour. Vivien’s frustration turns into joyfulness and Wyatt’s sorrow turn into happiness. They both start laughing. They couldn’t laugh any harder or be any happier, even if they were getting a triple scoop of ice cream for the price of one or riding a never ending merry-go-round. Vivien eventually catches Wyatt and jumps on his back. Her arms flung around his neck and her cheek right next to his, she catches a scent of his wet hair making her feel giddy-good. It’s the same euphoric feeling you get when you’re in love with the person you had a crush on forever and it finally comes true. Her endorphins start to kick in, taking away the bad, and into her comfort zone. It’s exactly like when she was a child waking up from a nap to her parents smile or the aroma of freshly baked brownies. It’s the feeling when you’re in a state of splendor. And Wyatt is more than happy to piggyback her around town as he weaves running through the crowd on the sidewalk in the heavy downpour. Some people are annoyed by their antics while others wonder what their secret of happiness is. They laugh out loudly like it was only the two of them and no one else in the entire city.

In the last fifteen minutes, Wyatt and Vivien may have found out more about each other than they have since they first met a month back. Sometimes when a person meets someone, the comfort level may vary. If someone finds a person to be trusting, they may hit it off immediately, and let their guard down and speak more openly. Time

may also be a factor. And if it takes forever to trust someone, maybe they shouldn't to be trusted. This wasn't the case for Wyatt and Vivien.

Wyatt and Vivien have their apartments in front of each other on the fourth floor of the building. They stand in front of Vivien's door, face to face, completely soaked to the bone leaving a puddle by their feet and a red balloon floating above between them. All the bad vibes are long forgotten.

"You're such a gentleman walking me to my front door," says Vivien in an old western accent and exaggeratedly fluttering her eyelashes in a comical way.

"Well, seeing it was on my way and my apartment door is right by yours," says Wyatt pointing behind to his door with his thumb.

"I had a great time today," says Vivien. "It was really fun."

"I had a great time too and I'm glad you forcibly dragged me out," jokes Wyatt.

"Hey, it was the only way to get you out to the museum," says Vivien and suddenly feels frisky and in the mood. "You know, we still have about twenty minutes before our shift starts."

She plays with her doorknob seductively and has the bedroom eyes going, knowing twenty minutes won't be anywhere close to the time required to hit the satisfaction level. Still it's far better than nothing, or the mail-order toy she was too embarrassed to buy in person at the adult store. Vivien has an inviting smile and then puckers her lips while simultaneously closing her eyes, leaning closer to Wyatt to get a kiss.

Wyatt looks at his watch and clueless to what Vivien is trying to transpire. "Gosh, you're right. We only have twenty minutes. Better get ready for work and change out of these wet clothes. You better do the same before you catch a cold. See you downstairs, okay?"

Wyatt gives a little wave of the hand, turns around to his door behind him, unlocks it, enters, and closes the door. Vivien opens her eyes in disappointment.

"Is he gay or something? And by that I don't mean happy," mumbles Vivien angrily to herself and goes into her apartment slamming the door behind her.

The thing about Wyatt is, a female could say to him kiss me, spelling it out letter by letter, and he still wouldn't get the point. He's the kind where they have to do all the work and make the first moves. Vivien's frustration can be understood since it has been a long time she played

the game of in-and-out-and-repeat-until-satisfaction-has-been-reached with another guy. Sexual frustration can be the worst of all frustrations. At least she has her toy in her dresser, ready and waiting. Knowing Vivien's luck, the battery is probably dead from frequent use. She might have to use the angry manual power which would probably be more intense and satisfying than the power of the battery. If she's quick about it, she might make it in time for her evening shift.

Downstairs at Bunny's, the evening rush has begun as the customers are beginning to fill up the establishment. Michelle is surprisingly looking busy running around table to table placing and taking orders. Outside the kitchen is Arthur and Wyatt.

"Have you seen Vivien?" asks Arthur.

"Yeah, about half an hour ago by her apartment," replies Wyatt.

"She's fifteen minutes late."

"If she's not here in five, I'll go get her."

Arthur only grunts and goes into the kitchen. Wyatt scans the entire restaurant to see if he can find Vivien. He finally sees Vivien entering from the main entrance of the restaurant and approaches her.

"Arthur was looking for you. What took you so long?" asks Wyatt.

"Yeah, um, just had some personal things to take care of," replies Vivien.

"You okay?"

"A lot better now," replies Vivien in a satisfied manner.

"Anything I can help you with?"

"Maybe half an hour ago."

"You sure I can't help now?"

"The moments gone."

"Huh?" questions Wyatt as if she's talking Martian.

Vivien walks away leaving Wyatt in a state of confusion and wondering what that was all about. Vivien's actions and behavior may be incongruent to her looks of the innocent shy girl. She does and lives by no constraints, satisfying and feeding whatever hunger she has, whether it be intellectual or physical. But profoundly more on the physical side of things.