

The Lavender Rose

Human nature, it ain't necessarily pretty. Please, don't misunderstand me, I am not a pessimist. However, I am not, by any definition of the word, an optimist either. I am a realist. The pessimists see the glass as half empty and the optimists as half full. I see it as a glass twice as big as it needs to be. I've also decided, although I'm not sure "decided" is the right word, that I have to live up to some higher morale standard than your average human being. I don't know where I got that programmed into my brain but as they say in that pasta sauce commercial: "It's in there."

I have become the Cyrano de Bergerac of my own day and age, I don't say that lightly, because unlike everyone else it means something to me. My life, in many ways, has reflected his, and like him there is a woman of exquisite beauty in my life that is totally unattainable to me. Her name is Leighann, the word of two syllables assigned to a picture of an angel painted on the canvas of my heart.

I sat alone at the piano, thinking of all of this, with two lonely candles providing the only light in the room from atop the piano. My fingers embraced the keys with delicate caresses, playing a song I had written for her and never let her hear. Stopping, I reached up and loosened my lavender tie and unbuttoned the top button of my black shirt. With my collar loosened I returned to the keys, but my mind was on losing her, and how evident it had been tonight. I played on, eyes closed.

I don't know how long it was before the knock on the door silenced my fingers, but when I glanced up at the clock it was three thirty in the morning. I rose and went to the door, unlocking it and not really caring who was on the other side. Pulling it open the familiar pang filled my heart as her silhouetted figure filled the space before me.

"Leighann?"

She stepped into the light of the room, still wearing the purple, crushed velvet dress she had been wearing earlier. Its surface cried out to my hands, begging them to touch its surface, yet I refrained, stifling my desire for the feel of its surface, and the woman that lay beyond.

“Sorry for coming by so late. Did I wake you?”

She knew very well that she had not awakened me from sleep, but she was unaware that she had awakened my senses. Her voice sounded as soft as her dress.

“No, I was up. Come in.”

She made her way into the front room, sitting on the couch and placing her small purse on the glass top of the brass coffee table. I closed the door lightly and returned to my perch on the piano bench, facing her instead of my old friend. The candle light cast a warm glow across her skin as it danced atop the piano to a tune neither Leighann nor I could hear.

“After you dropped me off at home I called Ron’s house and Genie answered.”

Her voice was filled with tears, although her eyes showed none. It pulled on the strings of my heart, but the news of his critical mistake focused my attention to a possible window of opportunity as she continued.

“I asked to talk to him and she said he was asleep and she didn’t want to wake him. Then she just hung up. Can you believe it?”

She stared down at the floor and shook her head sadly, and I felt like jumping up in victory and screaming: “I told you so!” As if the forty niners had scored the winning touch with five seconds on the clock. I stayed glued to my seat, she needed me, and once again I put her needs beyond my own; a habit I was becoming more and more frequently engaged in.

“That’s why I won’t get involved with anyone, because men are only after one thing, and once they get it there gone. I have never been number one in anyone’s life. First Brett leaves me for Michelle and now Ron for that tramp Genie.”

And that’s when it happened, something just snapped in me, I could almost feel it. It was like a rubber band that had been wound too tight. Suddenly it was as if I was outside

myself watching. I rose up from the bench and stood across from her, almost slowly but as if building momentum.

“That is the biggest bunch of bullshit I have ever heard in my entire life!”

My voice had come out far louder than I realized and she gasped in shock. I had never spoken so harshly in her presence, let alone to her.

“Your problem is that you don’t want to be number one in *anybody’s* life, you want to be number one in *somebody’s* life. It isn’t enough for you that a guy likes you, no he has to be good looking, perfect height, perfect weight, perfect build. That’s what you want, not someone who will be there when your at the lowest point of your life, not someone who likes you for you. The highest priority you hold in those guys lives are how often they can slid in between you legs, and you let ‘em. Even when they treat you like shit, you let them hang around and fuck you without one once of sincerity in there hearts.”

She stood up, shocked, amazed, I’m not sure which.

“I have to go,” she said, tears welling in her eyes.

“No, no. It’s time for the truth. I have witched you go form guy to guy over the last ten weeks, telling me you want someone who cares about you, someone who loves you, but that’s not you want.”

“Yes it is!” She screamed back in tears.

“No! You don’t want that! That scares the shit out of you! You want to know how I know, Leighann? I’ll tell you how. It’s no secret how I fell about you, all our friends know and I know they’ve told you. But you’d rather opt for a lie in a darkened room with someone inside you who could give a damn about how *you* feel. All because in your world I’m not a *somebody*, I’m a *nobody*!”

Running out of breath the room filled with silence and the realization of what had just transpired slammed into me. My wind screamed: *What the hell did you just do?* She fell back into her seat as if I had shoved her, and she only looked up at me, fumbling for some verbal defense or response, but she could offer nothing. I settled back onto the piano bench,

trying to regain my sense of serenity; fearing the silence that now filled the room. I had changed things between us. After tonight the way she treated me would be different, regardless of how she felt. Perhaps it would be for the better, but the realist in me knew better.

A tear idled down her cheek and I felt the quilt swarm in around me. I had never seen her cry before, and until that moment I wasn't even sure she was capable of the act. I knew she was physically capable of crying, but I had seen her heart broken twice in ten weeks and I had never seen her shed a tear in my presence. Perhaps the worst part of it all was it was I who finally pushed her to the act. I wanted to tell her I was sorry, hold her and tell her everything was going to be okay, but I wasn't sorry. I had meant those things, I had felt the pain every time she passed my affections over, and damn it I wasn't the least bit sorry for the truth of it all.

She reached up and unpinned the Lavender Rose corsage I had bought for her only ten hours ago. Holding it in her hand she lifted it to her nose to smell it. She handled it far more delicately than she had earlier and it struck me as odd. The silence was unbearable as she closed her eyes and inhaled. Slowly she let her breath escape and lowered the dying flower to the glass top of the table and picked up her purse slowly.

She stood up and I joined her. She was going to leave, and now I knew it would be the last time I ever saw her again. She walked softly to the door and I opened it reluctantly. She started to make her way out of the door, out of my life and then stopped and turned to raise her teary eyes to meet mine.

"You are too special for me, I don't deserve you," she offered, sniffing.

She returned to her escape, but my hand shot out, grabbing her arm gently.

"God damn you, don't end it like that, Leighann. Not on a lie." My voice was far more gentle than it had been only moments ago, but the intense sincerity remained.

Suddenly she launched toward me and suddenly my moth was aflame with the sweet and exotic fruit that was her kiss. How and why suddenly didn't seem important, only that it was happening, that I wanted this, and in her kiss lied her soul's confession. I pulled away reluctantly, wanting her more in that moment more than I had ever wanted her before, but

knowing that I would only be another name on her list. This was all she knew, this was her way of trying to save my affections for her, to take me to bed, to give me what all the others had wanted.

“I love you,” she whispered, still a little horse with tears.

“I wish you did.” I said and pulled away, holding open the screen door for her to leave.

Another tear fell from her welling eyes as she turned and left. I closed the door, the click of the latch ringing out with finality. I turned and walked across the room to the spot on the couch where she had been sitting and took her place. Picking up the rose I stared at it, not really seeing it, but seeing only her body escaping into the night, knowing it was how I would always remember her. Would it have mattered if I had slept with her? Would my morale code have fallen so far? I don't know. I see her around from time to time, she pretends that she just hasn't had time to call and I let her. I hear she's moving to San Diego to be with her new boyfriend. Funny how somethings change with time, and sad how some stay the same.

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