

It's Valentine's Day and I'm driving to my father's mistress' house thinking of the things I'll say to her when we meet. *How does it feel to sleep with a married man? Did you become a man stealer or were you just born that way?*

My day has been an absolute mess, aside from getting stood up on Valentine's Day I find out my dead father had a secret side piece. I hop out of the car and hurry to the door, I'm being forced to wait outside in the pouring rain, wearing nothing but a skimpy red dress. I am freezing, my dress is ruined, and I look like a mess when the door opens relieving who I assumed called me to collect my only piece of inheritance: an old clock.

"Hello you must be Daisy, Earl's daughter. I'm Stephine, I was your father's girlfriend. We spoke on the phone." She had a warm wide smile on her face and held out her hand for me to shake, I didn't take it. Just stood there staring at her with a cold expression.

She seems to understand that I just want to get this meeting over with and clears her throat, "Um well please come in. You can wait in the living room. I'll grab you a towel and som-"

I abruptly cut her off mid sentence "No thank you." Despite how Freezing I am, my stubbornness won over.

"Oh... okay I understand well then you can follow me to your father's office. Before he passed he asked me to give you something." She leaves to grab it then comes back and hands me a letter.

"He wanted me to give you this. I'll load the clock into your car while you read, Sweetheart." I truly have no interest in hearing anything he has to say to me, dead or alive, but I couldn't deny him his final wishes no matter how much I was tempted to. I peel open his letter and find a key inside the envelope. I pocket the key and read the letter.

*Dear Daisy,*

*Hello Sweetheart I know you're probably wondering why I've been cheating on your mother. Well truth be told your mother began the cheating. When I confronted her about it she didn't deny it and continued her mupilte affairs. I could never bring myself to leave her though. Stephine was the only one who knew about it, and eventually I realized I cared about her the way I used to about your mother. I never wanted to hurt you in the process so that's why your mother and I decided that we should keep it a secret from you, but since it's almost my time I thought you deserved to know the truth and the whole truth not just your mother's side. The key inside this envelope is meant for a box underneath the Largest oak tree in the gardens at Glendals retirement home for Seniors.*

After Stephine puts the clock in my car I head to the senior home thinking about my father's letter. *My mother had been cheating too? Did she not love him like I believed she did? Did they not love each other enough to be faithful to one another?*

I have always tried to make my relationships live up to theirs, but now I know their whole relationship has been built upon lies. How am I supposed to believe in love when the one couple I thought of when love came to mind had just ruined the picture perfect image I built for them over the years.

Did I really even know my own parents?

I try to push those thoughts away when I park next to the gate that separated me and the retirement home's garden. I throw my high heels in the back of the car. They're already ruined with mud. I might as well walk more comfortably now. Thank the gods the rain has stopped. I

stride towards the gate with shaky legs, and stand there for about a minute calculating how I'm going to get inside.

I try to jump the gate but my dress ends up getting stuck on the gate and rips the dress in a way that makes it look like it has a thigh slit. I make it to the other side but not without my leg ending up cut.

Just my luck.

A bright light flashes in my eyes. "Who are you and what are you doing here?" A male voice asks me.

"If you move that light out of my eyes I may answer you." I respond.

Once he moves his light my eyes adjust to the darkness. I see a tall man in an officer's uniform standing in front of me.

"I'm here because my dead cheating father thought it would be a good idea to ruin my life." I say while sitting half up still on the ground.

I must look like a complete mess to him. Considering my dress is torn, I'm wearing no shoes, and I decided to wear non waterproof mascara. He simply looks at me and repeats his question for the second time. I stand up and begin dusting myself off.

"I'm no one, so if you'll excuse me I need to get to some random oak tree and start digging in some random spot." I tell him this time only half-heartedly. He stares at me for a split second as if contemplating if I'm telling the truth or not.

"Need any help?" He asked me. I assume he's joking so I do a sarcastic laugh but stop, when I look at his face and see there is no trace of humor, only amusement.

"You're serious?" I ask him incredulously .

“Well I have 2 different options on how to spend my Valentine's Day: A. Guard that ficus tree over there, or B. Help some random girl who looks like she's been through too much for one person tonight dig in some random spot. And I've got to tell you I'm leaning towards the latter.” He answers. If he helps me I can get this awful night over with a lot quicker.

“Well as a matter of fact I am in need of a shovel, so if you have one that would be helpful.” I tell him and sneeze at the end of my sentence. I guess the rain did more damage than I thought because I can feel a cold coming on.

“I have a key to the garden shed and if you ask politely I may just give it to you.” I was stubborn but I wasn't stupid.

I let out a deep breath before I ask him in a defeated tone “Please help me find a stupid dead man's box. I would really appreciate it. And to answer your earlier question my name is Daisy.”

He hands me his jacket, as he passes me. “That's all I needed to hear. Put that jacket on, it's freezing out here. I'm Tom by the way.” I put on his jacket and jog to catch up to him. “So now that I'm helping you, can I know the full story as to why we're looking for a dead man's box on Valentine's Day?”

I don't know if it's because I just need to tell someone about this awful night or if it's due to his calm presence, but I tell him everything. Starting with forgetting my eggs at the grocery store this morning to when I met him. When I finish telling my story I finally look at him. He looks shocked.

“That all happened to you within the span of 24 hours? Is that even possible?” He asks me.

“Yup but if I’m being honest none of the other stuff matters. I just keep thinking: *Were they even happy together?* They were the reason I started believing in love. My whole Idea of love feels so... different now.” I let out a deep sigh. I’ve been wondering: *Did they only stay together for me? Did they ever love each other? Was it my fault that my mother cheated?*

“There are many different ways love can be defined by, trust me you’ll find a new one.”

I look at him with a soft expression.

“Thank you for helping me tonight.” I tell him “You know most people who see someone jump over a fence would call the police and not help them with what I’m 90% sure is illegal, on Valentine's Day no less, but not you and I appreciate that.”

We start to dig around the tree as he tells me about his day. Right when he’s finishing up with his story my shovel hits something and makes a loud thud. He rushes over to help me dig. We finish digging and find a green metal box, it has my name engraved on the top of it.

I bend down to pick up the box, and start to feel a bit weird about this. Why would my father bury a box (beside the fact that he was an idiot)? What’s so important that he didn’t even trust his stupid girlfriend to give it to me?

Tom must see the look on my face and realize I’d rather be alone when I open it. “I’ll go and put these shovels away.” He tells me gently.

I pull out the key that is still in my dress pocket, take a deep breath, and open the box.

## 7 Years later

“TOM!” I scream. “Debbie needs a diaper change, and please make sure Piper is asleep.”

It’s our 5 anniversary today and Tom’s sister is going to come over to babysit the kids so that we can go to our dinner reservation which we are already 20 minutes late for.

Once I’m finished getting dressed and Tom is done giving his sister a VERY detailed list of instructions for the girls we head out.

“Happy anniversary.” Tom tells me once we park in the restaurant's driveway. I turn to face him and he hands me a box.

“What? I thought we said no presents this year.”

“I saw the PC in the closet and figured I had to one up you.” I tried very hard to hide his gift, but I should have guessed he would find it. I should have left it at Stephanie's house.

Over the past few years Stephine has reached out to me and tried to get to know me. At first I was hesitant, but eventually decided to get to know her. She’s told me so many stories about my father, and a side of him I never got to meet.

“Oh so you found that?”

“Yeah sweetheart I found it.”

I open the box and see a beautiful heart shaped necklace with one jewel in the center. “Look inside the jewel.” he tells me so I peer inside the jewel and see a photo of our family at our local pumpkin patch.

“You’re going to make me cry and I didn’t wear my waterproof mascara.” I say to him, I bend my body over the car and hug him. “Thank you.” I whisper and kiss his cheek.

“You know a great way to thank me would be telling me what you found in that box 7 years ago.”

“Now that’s a secret I will take to my grave” I tell him.

No one other than me knew what I found in the box my father left me, and I didn’t want them too.

What was in the box didn’t matter, the only thing that mattered was that I finally understood why my parents kept this secret from me. It wasn’t because he didn’t know how to tell me. It wasn’t because he didn’t love me. It was because he was waiting for the right time.

“Let’s just say I finally figured out what he was waiting for.”