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That Guy

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THAT GUY

Claire Parde

CURLY HAIR, GREEN-SHIRT, PASTY-SKIN, TALL, SPINDLY, PALE-BLUE JEANS, OVERSTUFFED BLACK BACKPACK, WIRE-GLASSES HANGING FROM HIS POCKET, BROWN SNEAKERS, LOW-TWENTIES, GENTLE-APPEARANCES, AND A NARROW FACE. HIS WORDS WERE MUFFLED AS I INSTEAD CHOSE TO FOCUS ON THE DETAILS OF HIS PHYSICAL-STATURE. ONLY LATER DID I HOPE AND PRAY THAT HE DIDN'T NOTICE ME DOCUMENTING HIS EVERY FIBER.

Regardless of why, he evidentially noticed my lack of hearing-capabilities in that moment, and repeated himself. "Excuse me, ma'am?"

Crap. What did he want? What did I do? Where was I? Why was I here? Who was he? How did I look? What was my heart-rate? What time was it? How long had I been standing there? Would it be rude to ignore him and just turn around and keep walking? I barely had any answers in that moment of sheer nervous-girl panic, but I managed to determine that yes...yes it would be rude.

"Excuse me, ma'am, I just wanted to say how pretty you look today" He said quietly; obviously calculating the flurry of feelings on my face, and deducting that he better say something before I completely go on the fritz.

"Thanks," I think is what I said, but by the time the word was fully out, he was already waving and walking away.

Wait...had I just gone through however-many seconds of meltdown for nothing more than that? As he walked away, I remember this really weird feeling coming over me. It was a mixture of nausea, nerves, giddiness, pride, joy, icy, melty, shock, endearment, confusion, lust, embarrassment, excitement, and dread. How was I supposed to handle all of these? One minute ago my mind was focused on a sociology essay, and now I was having to in-depth analyze a social-situation; a fact which I was in no way prepared for, thanks to my complete lack of socialization (thank you homeschool).

No guy had ever said anything like that to me before. I mean, yeah, I'd been complimented before by a guy, but always in that unique double-edge sword kind of way, where you feel offended, and then guilty if you don't. Like when a guy goes, "whoa, look at you" or "you look like a firecracker." I'd heard that plenty, but...this guy was so respectable, sweet, and stingless. He wasn't after anything.

Yeah, I get that not every guy is after every unspeakable thing, but most guys at least want a conversation. Why didn't he? Why didn't he need one? Why was complimenting me simply enough? Oh, yay, more unanswerable-questions. Well, let's add one more to the laundry-list; what did he see in me?

Whoa, talk about chills. Just the thought of that one made me overwhelmed, flustered, red-cheeked, and just about everything else pleasant. I felt this warm sense as I thought about it longer, and had this epiphany; or, at least, what I would consider one a few years later, though unfortunately I don't have an epiphany-button that I can press at any moment and be all "Whoa! I just had a life-altering moment!"

He wanted nothing from me. He didn't need anything from me. He saw me as a complete-equal who was deserving of a compliment. In doing so, he helped me see myself as deserving, too.

He showed an interest unlike anyone before. He had no expectations for what we should be or should do. He didn't try to "pick me up" or give himself some sort of power. He didn't even need a conversation, because he knew that he wasn't owed a thing.

I didn't have to do anything for him. I was simply wonderful enough for that out-of-the-blue compliment. For a girl who has been told how ridiculous and idiotic she is countless times by countless jerks, actually understanding that is kind of incredible. Understanding that I didn't have to work for his attention. Understanding that I didn't have to pay him a debt of gratitude afterwards. Understanding that, despite how ridiculous and idiotic I so-often felt, he saw something brighter; something that even I couldn't fully see, but now know is there. I know they say you shouldn't feel important because some guy pays attention to you, but...sometimes it takes someone to help you feel important.

I DIDN'T HAVE TO DO ANYTHING FOR HIM. I WAS SIMPLY WONDERFUL ENOUGH FOR THAT OUT-OF-THE-BLUE COMPLIMENT. FOR A GIRL WHO HAS BEEN TOLD HOW RIDICULOUS AND IDIOTIC SHE IS COUNTLESS TIMES BY COUNTLESS JERKS, ACTUALLY UNDERSTANDING THAT IS KIND OF INCREDIBLE.

Later on, I would consider all of this to be a part of what I now think of as a natural-strength in my communication skills; a vibrancy towards others that not many have. Later on, I would understand that this moment, as wonderfully-confusing as it was, helped to establish the confidence I now stand and depend on.

I didn't know any of that, however, that afternoon as I stood in the J-wing, feeling my unforgettable mixture of nausea, nerves, giddiness, pride, joy, icy, melty, shock, endearment, confusion, lust, embarrassment, excitement, and dread. I just knew that he made me feel gosh-darn wonderful.

My hands were trembling as I watched him walk away. I was trying to comprehend this exchange when, all of a sudden, I heard his voice again.

“You dropped something”

Eyes widening, throat-catching, cheeks-flushing, stomach-churning, knees-shaking, and breath-shortening, I looked down to see my sociology-notes sprawled along the carpet at my shoes. Oh cool; I even got to leave a memorable impression.

