

All is Fair
by
Patrick Gabridge

Patrick Gabridge
19 Netherlands Road, #1
Brookline, MA 02445
(617) 959-1437
pat@gabridge.com
www.gabridge.com
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A play for the woods and/or a meadow.

CHARACTERS:

Stephanie: 30s

Trina: late 30s or 40

Felix: 30s

SETTING: A meadow with trees or forest. A picnic basket and a guitar rest on a blanket in the center of a clearing. After a moment, Stephanie runs into the area, hotly pursued by Trina. Stephanie is in her late-20s or early 30s and wears shorts and t-shirt. Trina is in her late 30s (or 40), and wears a dress--slightly torn and grass-stained.

TRINA

I've got you this time, Stephanie.

STEPHANIE

In your dreams.

(Stephanie dives for the guitar and strums it before Trina can tag her. Trina freezes.)

STEPHANIE

Felix! Felix, I got her.

(Felix walks into the area. He's also in his 30s. (Note: Felix does not speak vocally. The lines indicated for him are expressed through gesture or through the guitar.) Stephanie circles Trina.)

STEPHANIE

Hard to believe there once was a time when Trina Dolan was the unparalleled tagmaster of the 6th Street Neighborhood. No one could touch her and she could catch any one she wanted. Amazing how time takes its toll.

FELIX

[Not much of a toll.]

(He picks up the guitar and starts to play (directing his effort towards Trina). He's horrible. Stephanie plops onto the ground and relaxes.)

STEPHANIE

I could stay like this for hours. The summer sun, tall grass, flowers blooming. Listen to the sound of the rushing water, birds singing, guitar caterwauling. Just spend a little time in peace, with my friend, watching our mindless mannequin.

(Trina frowns almost imperceptibly.)

STEPHANIE

Did I sense a frown? No unhappy faces, Trina. You know the rules. Completely frozen is completely frozen. Felix, would you knock it off?

(Felix turns to Stephanie and tries to talk to her with the guitar.)

STEPHANIE

What? What are you trying to say?

FELIX

[Be nice to Trina. Just be nice.]

STEPHANIE

I don't get it.

FELIX

[Stop picking on Trina.]

STEPHANIE

Not even a glimmer. Face it, Felix, you're no Orpheus. There's no voice coming out of that guitar. Hell, there's not even any music coming out of that guitar. Why don't you just admit that you made a mistake?

You should have waited until you could actually play the guitar before you traded in your voice. Some people just aren't musical. (she takes his hand) At least you've got the calluses. That's something... Whoever made you want to do this, have you thought that maybe she's not worth it? It's been two weeks--has it gotten you what you want? Will it ever? There are better places to divert your energy.

(She takes a drink out of the picnic basket and approaches Trina.)

STEPHANIE

Enough with the guitar. You're driving me crazy. Have a drink.

(Stephanie pours the drink on Trina, who doesn't flinch. Stephanie lies in the grass as Felix tries to dry Trina.)

STEPHANIE (Cont'd)

A nice afternoon like this puts me right to sleep. Good time for a nap.

(She closes her eyes and pretends to sleep. Felix puts the guitar in her hands.)

FELIX

[Release Trina.]

STEPHANIE

What? Oh, Trina darling. I forgot about you completely. Let's wait another five minutes.

FELIX

[Now.]

(Stephanie strums the guitar. Trina is released.)

TRINA

You're not very nice.

STEPHANIE

Don't be such a baby. Remember when you and Rick put ants in my ears? That was not very nice.

TRINA

That was fifteen years ago.

(Felix takes the guitar and starts plucking at it again.)

STEPHANIE

How about when Joseph put ice in Melody's pants?

TRINA

Must not have bothered her that much. She still married him ... I wish they were here.

STEPHANIE

She's nine months pregnant. She can barely waddle down the hall, you can't expect her to play full-contact tag.

TRINA

You're right.

STEPHANIE

I talked to Joseph yesterday, he's a nervous wreck. I'll bet ten bucks he faints the second she goes into labor.

TRINA

Everyone has their lives now.

STEPHANIE

The others should have come. Tradition is tradition.

TRINA

People get tired of games. This could be the last year.

STEPHANIE

The others will be back. It's just a slow year.

TRINA

Maybe we've outgrown it

STEPHANIE

I pray to God that we never get too "mature" to play one game of tag a year.

TRINA

It's no good without them here. I'm going home.

(She walks away.)

STEPHANIE

You can't. We just started.

TRINA

I hate getting caught. Maybe we should set some sort of time limit. I hate standing there forever.

STEPHANIE

That's the whole point. That's the fun.

TRINA

Fun for you. You never get caught.

STEPHANIE

Felix gets caught, he doesn't complain.

TRINA

Don't get me started on that.

(Felix pays a lot of attention to Trina now, walking around her, playing.)

STEPHANIE

Felix has made a decision, possibly rational, and we need to support him.

TRINA

It is definitely not rational.

STEPHANIE

I'm sure it is, in a twisted sort of way.

FELIX

[Very rational. Love me, Trina.]

TRINA

He hasn't proven anything. Except that he has the mindset of a child and the willpower of an adult.

STEPHANIE

More willpower than the average adult

TRINA

Thrilling. Two weeks of musical silent treatment. I deserve better.

(She keeps walking. Felix follows her).

STEPHANIE

Don't go. I'll be nicer, I promise. Felix will be quieter. Won't you, Felix?

FELIX

[Sure.]

STEPHANIE

Just a couple more rounds. Please, Trina. Felix and I will both behave.

TRINA

No.

STEPHANIE

I'll give you a bigger head start. (whispers) I'll try to catch Felix first.

FELIX

[That's not fair.]

TRINA

No thanks.

STEPHANIE

Then you admit defeat.

(Trina stops in her tracks.)

TRINA

What?

STEPHANIE

It's the same thing as breaking the freeze.

TRINA

No, it's not.

STEPHANIE

I am the sole champion. The only one not to break in the History of the Game. Fifteen years of Mastery.

TRINA

It is not the same thing. What kind of rule is this?

STEPHANIE

You're forfeiting.

TRINA

I'm just going home. There's no minimum number of rounds.

STEPHANIE

You're wimping out. Afraid you can't stay still if I catch you a couple more times.

TRINA

I am not.

STEPHANIE

That leaves me the winner.

TRINA

Felix?

FELIX

[Stephanie's right.]

TRINA

Thanks a lot.

FELIX

[It's not my fault.]

TRINA

You can't hold me hostage.

STEPHANIE

You can go if you want. I don't care.

TRINA

I'll stay.

STEPHANIE

Good. I'm "it."

TRINA

And if you catch me this time, you won't be cruel?

STEPHANIE

Am I ever? Okay, okay, I'll be good.

TRINA

(to Felix) And you ... Just give me a little room, until you're ready to actually speak to me.

FELIX

[I can't stay away.]

STEPHANIE

Ready?

TRINA

Standard count. I don't want any special favors.

STEPHANIE

Thirty. Twenty nine. (she counts down to zero)

(Trina and Felix run off in different directions.)

STEPHANIE

Zero.

(She runs after Trina.)

(After a moment, Trina runs back on, pursued by Stephanie. She almost makes it to the guitar, but Stephanie tags her just in time. Trina freezes. Stephanie picks up the guitar.)

STEPHANIE

Felix's voice. It can set you free, can't it? Not without my help.

(Felix enters, looking at the guitar.)

FELIX

[You can't hold the guitar. That's not fair.]

STEPHANIE

Don't worry, Felix. I'm not interested in tagging you. I'm much more interested in Trina.

(She sets down the guitar, making sure Felix isn't going to go after it)

STEPHANIE

Don't you think she looks a little plain?

FELIX

[No.]

STEPHANIE

Make-up just won't hide those little wrinkles. We need something more. Some decoration. I think she needs some green.

(Stephanie "decorates" Trina with leaves and grass.)

STEPHANIE

It's nice. But it still needs more color. Felix?

(Felix picks some flowers then prances back to Trina, bows deeply, and places the flowers on her (after kissing them first).)

STEPHANIE

Very sentimental. But I think she needs something more regal, more imposing.

(She places a long stick in Trina's hand.)

STEPHANIE

A regular Athena. The problem is that she seems so natural. We need something to say "This is a work of Art." A marker. Otherwise people will just walk right by.

(She starts to gather sticks and places them in a pile at Trina's feet. Felix helps.)

FELIX

[Perfecto.]

STEPHANIE

Here stands a great work of Art. The Gods themselves would be proud.

(Felix applauds.)

STEPHANIE

When you look at her, she begs to be touched. Unfortunately, she is untouchable.

FELIX

[Untrue.]

He strokes Trina's face gently.

STEPHANIE

That's all you'll ever get back from her.

(Felix heads for the guitar, Stephanie steps in his way.)

STEPHANIE (Cont'd)

Not yet. Let's see how much patience Miss Trina really has.

(She kisses Felix hard. He freezes the instant she touches him. She folds his arms into an embrace around her. She keeps kissing him, feeling him, trying to get him to respond, but nothing works. She unwraps herself from Felix's embrace.)

STEPHANIE (Cont'd)

Devoted puppy dog. She kicks you in the face and you lick her foot. I ought to leave you both frozen, standing there-- "unrequited love." She's a master of the game, Felix. She won't move.

(Stephanie picks up the guitar.)