

Christmas Breaks

by
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CHRISTMAS BREAKS

A cafe. Table and three chairs. Marcie, an attractive young woman in a festive dress waits, stirs her drink.

PETER enters, carrying several wrapped presents. He's dressed in a suit and overcoat. They kiss and take their seats.

PETER

Sorry I'm late. Have you been waiting long?

MARCIE

Since five.

PETER

I'm really sorry. There's so much to do, with the holidays.

MARCIE

I understand.

PETER

Really?

MARCIE

Sure.

PETER

That's great. Really, that's great.

(beat)

MARCIE

Why don't we go to my place to open presents?

PETER

Your place is so cramped.

MARCIE

Cramped? I thought you liked my place.

PETER

It's fine. Really. It's just cramped.

MARCIE

Okay. How about your apartment? It's huge.

PETER

No. This place is so much better. The site of our first rendez-vous. How many lazy Saturday mornings have we spent here?

MARCIE

You're such a romantic. Let me see those boxes. Do you have something special in there for me?

PETER

How do you mean?

MARCIE

You know.

PETER

All gifts are special. That's the whole point. The whole idea of giving something to someone else, free, no strings attached, it's such a weird concept.

MARCIE

I love Christmas.

PETER

Yeah. I know.

MARCIE

I got something special for you.

PETER

What is it?

MARCIE

It's a surprise. But you're really going to like it. We're really going to like it.

PETER

Maybe you should open yours first.

MARCIE

You can at least read my card.

She hands him an ornately decorated envelope. He opens it and reads.

PETER

This is great. Poetry.

MARCIE

I wrote and illustrated it myself. Bet you didn't know I could draw reindeer.

PETER

I had no idea.

MARCIE

I mean every word.

PETER

I know you do. Really. So... Why don't you start with this?

He hands her a small package. She opens it. It contains several books.

MARCIE

Books. Wonderful! (anticipating) Maybe some Emily Dickinson? (reads the titles) "Improving Yourself in Every Way." "How to Lose Weight and Keep it Off." "How To Cope When You Don't Deserve The One You Love."

PETER

You know how easy it is to pick up a few pounds over the holidays.

MARCIE

Right. Of course. Thank you, Peter.

PETER

There's more.

MARCIE

Good.

He hands her a thin package. She opens it and takes out a certificate.

MARCIE

"One free plastic surgery at Dr. Randolph Vishnu."

PETER

You can use it for whatever you want. Cheeks, eyes, tummy tuck, breast augmentation.

MARCIE

Which do you think I need the most?

PETER

Start wherever makes you happy. He's really a talented man, a miracle worker.

MARCIE

Peter.

PETER

Wait. There's more.

MARCIE

I don't think I can stomach any more.

PETER

Stay right there.

He exits. Then he returns, leading another man, DAVIS. Davis looks very nervous and confused. He wears a tweed jacket and carries a bouquet of limp carnations. Peter pulls a red bow out of his pocket, and drapes it over Davis' shoulder.

PETER

Marcie, this is David.

DAVIS

Davis. With an S.

PETER

Davis.

DAVIS

Hi. It's, uh, a pleasure to meet you, Marcie.

PETER

The flowers.

DAVIS

Oh, these are for you.

She takes them, reluctantly.

MARCIE

What the hell is going on?

DAVIS

That's an excellent question.

PETER

I found Davis through the personals. So you could hit the ground running. I know there's the big office party tonight, and...

MARCIE

You can't go?

PETER

No. I mean, I don't want to go. Well, that's not quite it. I don't want to go with you.

MARCIE

What?

PETER

I don't think we should see each other anymore.

DAVIS

Maybe I should leave.

PETER

Stay. Definitely stay.

MARCIE

How can you do this to me, now?

PETER

I've been hinting for months, but... it just keeps on going. I... This is just the way it has to be. Sorry. You're great, but, to be honest, not great enough. (to Davis) At least for me, really, she's wonderful.

MARCIE

Peter. Please don't do this.

PETER

I know how you feel. Well, I don't, but I can imagine. Look, I have to run. Dinner meeting at Maxine's. Maybe we can still be friends. No. That never works. I won't forget you. Honest. I have to go. Have a good night.

Peter exits quickly. There is a long, awkward silence.

DAVIS

Are you all right?

MARCIE

No. I don't think so.

DAVIS

Maybe I'll stay. Just a minute. Until you feel a little better.

He sits.

MARCIE

What am I going to do? It's not right. That was not right. Not to do it like that. Whatever happened to closure? I can not accept that. Do you understand, I can not accept that.

DAVIS

I'm sure you'll find someone else. Someone better.

MARCIE

Oh, like you?

DAVIS

Who knows. (recites) "Elysium is as far to the very nearest room, if in that room a friend await felicity or doom. What fortitude the soul contains, that it can so endure the accent of a coming foot, the opening of a door!"

MARCIE

Emily Dickinson.

DAVIS

Your ad said you liked it.

MARCIE

Peter's ad. What exactly did it say?

DAVIS

Oh. (pulls it out of his pocket and reads) "Single, white female, twenty-seven, on the rebound, need a shoulder to cry on. Just lost a great hunk of an executive fast-tracker. I'm occasionally clingy, over-romantic, obsessive, unpredictable. Like long walks in the snow, old movies, Emily Dickinson. Tired of the with-it, overly successful type, ready for someone ordinary. Enclose picture."

MARCIE

You actually answered this?

DAVIS

It seemed very honest. Direct. Seems like there's not much of that these days... What are you doing for Christmas?

MARCIE

My plans seem to have changed.

DAVIS

I have zero plans. Maybe we could...

MARCIE

Maybe. There's something I need to take of first.

DAVIS

Okay.

MARCIE

Peter, you know I was talking-- [about my gift]

DAVIS

Davis. My name is Davis.

MARCIE

I'm going to call you Peter.

DAVIS

Are you sure that's a good idea?

Marcie takes a small package out of her pocket.

MARCIE

Peter, I think you should open this.

DAVIS

But I'm not-- [not Peter.]

MARCIE

Open it.

He takes the package and opens it. Inside is a ring box.

DAVIS

I really don't think-- [this is a good idea.]

MARCIE

Go ahead. Look inside.

He opens it and pulls out an engagement ring.

DAVIS

Oh, my. I see you did have plans for Christmas. Important plans. So this all came as a...
It's a very nice ring. But-- [we just met.]

MARCIE

I think you should do this right.

DAVIS

Excuse me?

MARCIE

On your knees, Peter.

DAVIS

Sure. Right. Of course.

He kneels by her side.

MARCIE

Thanks. Go ahead.

DAVIS

Marcie.

MARCIE

I can't believe this. I never expected this, Peter. I just... This is such a shock.

DAVIS

But surely you've known how I feel.

MARCIE

Keep going.

DAVIS

Marcie, over the past x months. X equals?

MARCIE

Seven.

DAVIS

Over the past seven months, I've been like a man who's discovered the formula for a happy life. Without you the equation doesn't balance. I need you to be my independent variable. To quote Emily herself, "love is anterior to life, posterior to death, initial of creation, and the exponent of breath." Keep me breathing, Marcie. Fill my life with love. Marry me.

MARCIE

Oh, Peter.

DAVIS

Will you be mine, for infinity?

MARCIE

No.