

Small Intricate Pieces

By

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A short film

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EXT. GREEN FIELDS - DAY.

The sun envelopes the sprawling lush green fields, wrapping them in its yellow hue all the way to the edge of the -

EXT. CITY - DAY.

The suburbs are just waking up for the day; a couple jumping in the car off to work, the husband handing the wife his key's, a jogger waving at them from the street, as she is being handed a coffee from a stall, a postman handing a letter to a woman standing at her door, the postman nodding hello to the jogger as he passes her, each connecting like cogs that make up a big, beautiful, sprawling mix of life; somewhere in which are small, rather cute, terraced cottages.

INT. LIVING ROOM/BEN'S COTTAGE - DAY.

Inside one of them, the letterbox is pushed open, as a 'Sorry we missed you card' is pushed through, dropping to the mat, the letterbox flap snapping shut with a bang.

INT. BEDROOM/BEN'S COTTAGE - DAY.

Which wakes up BEN with a start. He pulls himself together, leans over and picks up the intricate looking clock on his side-table, checks the time, seems surprised. He gets up.

INT. KITCHEN/BEN'S COTTAGE - DAY.

BEN makes himself a pot of coffee. He glances at another ornate looking clock on the wall, investigates closer. He twists some dials at the back. Satisfied, he pours himself a coffee. As he's taking a sip, he notices the card on the doormat, walks into the -

INT. LIVING ROOM/BEN'S COTTAGE - DAY.

He picks up the card. As he finishes reading:

BEN

Oh for fu -

INT. LIVING ROOM/BEN'S COTTAGE - DAY.

Minutes later. BEN is on the phone, card in hand.

BEN

No, of course, I understand it's just next door, but.. well, yes, but I don't want to bother he - .. No, sure, I understand it's been signed for. Just not by me...Yeah, but I don't know her. No, I get that, and I really don't want to be a pain, but...Can someone come back and redeliver the package to me? PLEASE? Well, I understand you can't find it on the system, but my point is, you have delivered it. Just not to me. What if I paid for a courier? Yes, next door to here- Hello? - Hello?

INT. LIVING ROOM/BEN'S COTTAGE - DAY.

BEN stands at the door, trepidatious, panicked. He collects himself, then opens it slowly. He reluctantly puts one foot outside, but it's too much, he steps back in, slams the door.

INT. LIVING ROOM/BEN'S COTTAGE - DAY.

Moments later, BEN sits at the door. He's holding a litter picker, with a sticky note in its jaws. He opens the door. Panicked, he tentatively leans out into the -

EXT. FRONT GARDEN - DAY.

He has one hand on the floor outside. He leans as far as he can with the litter picker, toward next door. He can't reach. He's panicked, finding it harder to breathe. He crawls along slightly further, feet still in his hallway; he's in agony, tries to push the sticky under the door with the picker, but it hits the door and falls. He's feeling woozy, sick. He looks outward, for the first time, onto the

EXT. ROAD - DAY.

Where the JOGGER from earlier stops her exercise. She's staring at him, wondering what the hell's going on.

EXT. FRONT GARDEN - DAY.

BEN tries to smile, but instead almost vomits, retching.

EXT. ROAD - DAY.

The JOGGER, scared, runs off, fast.

EXT. FRONT GARDEN - DAY.

BEN gathers himself, then lunges forward, knocking on the door with the picker. He scurries backward to the safety of the -

INT. LIVING ROOM/BEN'S COTTAGE - DAY.

Where BEN slams the door. He's almost hyperventilating now, muttering to himself between breaths.

BEN

When...the...gear...and pinion...teeth are...are grinding, this...reveals that...the bushings...the bushings are worn.

It seems to do the trick, his breathing returning to normal with each word. Woozy, Ben stumbles to the couch, falls onto it, his eyes closing, Ben trying to fight it, but he dozes off. Until seconds later, a KNOCK KNOCK on the door, and he's awake, startled. He goes to the door.

BEN

Who's there?

KATE (O.S.)

It's Kate. From next door.

BEN

What do you want?

KATE

You left me a note.

BEN

Yes, I did do that.

Ben takes a few seconds to gather himself; he's reluctant.

KATE (O.S.)

I can come back later?

Ben takes a breath, opens the door, revealing KATE, standing there with a package, smiling.

KATE

I got a box with your name on it.

BEN

So I heard. Sorry about the note thing.
I'm.....

He trails off. Kate smiles, it's fine. An awkward silence.

KATE

Anyway... -

Kate hands him the box. She begins to turn back to her cottage.
Ben is uncomfortable, torn.

KATE

Good to see you again.

BEN

Did - Did you want to come in?

KATE

Oh, I don't want to intrude.

BEN

(Unsure of himself)
Oh, its no... it's...

KATE

OK, thanks.

Kate enters. Ben gestures for her to sit.

BEN

I've got a pot of coffee here that
should be - well, lukewarm.

KATE

Sounds delicious.

Ben pours her a coffee, hands it to her, sits in a nearby
armchair.

BEN

I am sorry for being a hassle. It's
just, I'm, well, I've, I'm -

KATE

(sympathetic)
A real homebody?

BEN

Good call, Dr. Freud-line.

KATE gives him a look.

BEN

Sorry. If I make jokes I forget to be nervous.

KATE

I make you nervous?

Another light-hearted exchange of looks.

KATE

It's no hassle. It's been a long time since I've been passed a note by a boy.

BEN

I tried to get them to redeliver it. But, they seem to have lost the record for it and then I said I'd pay for a courier -

KATE

(Interrupting)

To deliver it to yours from mine?

Ben nods.

KATE

That must have confused them.

BEN

She hung-up on me.

Kate laughs. Ben slowly starts to find it funny.

KATE

Who knows their neighbour's anymore anyway? It seems like a hangover from a long time ago.

BEN

Exactly. I said to her, I've met you, what was it, once?

KATE

3 months ago. My first night here. I borrowed your bottle opener.

BEN

Oh yeah. I'd written that off.

KATE

I knocked a few times to return it. Even brought a bottle with it, sometimes, but-

BEN

I must've been out.

Another smile at each other.

BEN

I don't normally have actual people in here. Well, my brother, but he barely counts.

Another shared smile.

BEN

I shouldn't say that. He does a lot for me.

KATE

Have you had it for long? Your... condition?

BEN

Since I was about 20. I started getting panic attacks. It was a whole breathing, passing out thing.

KATE

Well, the world's a big open scary place.

BEN

Yeah. It's weird, though, you know. The thing with the outside is.... I'm not scared of the space. It's what its filled with. In here, it's fine. Out there... the whole world seems so fast, like time's passing at triple speed, all rushing past. It's weird, it makes me feel... I dunno... ...claustrophobic.

An awkward silence. They like talking, but the truth is uncomfortable. A moment, broken by: -

BEN

(Joking)

It's people really. They put me right off.

Kate laughs.

KATE

You do that whole breathing in a bag bit?

BEN

When it's really bad. I have a trick that normally works. I recite something from a book. From my childhood.

KATE

Yeah? Some swashbuckling tale of adventure?

BEN

It's was the 1924 edition of The Pocket Watch Repairers handbook.

KATE

Sounds full of derring-do.

BEN

When I was younger I took my Dad's pocket watch apart, some family heirloom. I couldn't put it back together, so he made me learn from this book. Now I'm kind of a nerd when it comes to clockmaking.

KATE

See, that to me just sounds so good. To have a proper old-fashioned hobby. Everything these days is all about doing it for free until you can monetize it. I love the idea of doing something just for you, not to scrape out a living. What is it you do to earn a buck?

BEN

I'm a clockmaker.

Kate laughs. Ben laughs too.

KATE

Well, I'm on a roll. What is it someone or other said - if you do a job you love, you'll never work a day.

BEN

Well, I'm a clockmaker, so that's literally true for me. The industry's been on a bit of a slow-down. Since about 1954.

They both smile at each other.

BEN

So, how have you found it? Living here,
I mean.

KATE

Pretty good. I'm the new girl in town,
so I don't know many people, but, the
school I'm at is pretty good.

BEN

You're a teacher?

KATE

(Joking)

No, I'm sitting my exams.

Ben laughs.

KATE

Yeah, I teach physics. I thought I'd
have a reputation to match Einsteins.
Turns out I don't have the libido. Or
the hair.

A smile from Ben.

BEN

So what made you choose here? Work?

KATE

Kinda. When I was a kid, I always had
this idea that one day there'd be a
knock on my door. I'd open it, and some
dashing, debonair handsome man would say
'hey' and I'd fall in love and he'd
whisk me away for a life of adventure.

BEN

I guess he didn't knock.

KATE

No. And then one day I woke up and
realised I was a teacher in the school I
attended as a kid.

BEN

And now you're here. No man needed.

KATE

(Joking)

One up for the feminists. I mean, I tried the sports car and the younger woman. But, being a heterosexual non-driver, it didn't really work out. I had intended to go further than a couple of hundred miles away.

For a second, Kate seems melancholy.

BEN

(Trying to lighten the mood)
Pfft! Public transport.

Kate laughs, snaps back to life. A beat.

KATE

Einstein wasn't all sorted himself you know. He lost things and he couldn't understand directions. Or do anything practical. I'm very much like him. I just left out the genius part.

Ben laughs. He's almost relaxing now.

BEN

Maybe at some point in the future you'll discover.... er... a new equation or something.

KATE

Physics not your strong suit? I think I'm too old to have a Eureka moment.

BEN

Wasn't that Archimedes?

KATE

I like to mix things up.

More shared smiles.

KATE

So, why clockmaking?

BEN

I think it comes from when I was a kid; repairing those watches was magic to me. Finding those small intricate pieces, broken in the centre of so many others;
[MORE]

BEN (CONT'D)

and with just a little care and attention, they reach out and touch, bringing the whole thing back to life. When you hear that tick, it's like the first beat of a long silent heart.

There's a moment of silence while Kate lets that sink in; she seems almost *moved* by Ben's passion for his art. Then, after a beat, that smile:

KATE

(Teasing)

Wow. You *are* a clock geek.

BEN

Well, the chicks dig it. Plus, I can do it from home. The last one I did, I don't even think of it as a clock. This guy, married 47 years, he wants to make this grand romantic gesture to his wife. He has me build him this beautiful piece that's completely unique; it was a keyless, three-barrel double-dial, with a date and year display, that had a special button. When you press the button, it reset the dials to 7.23pm on March 21st 1967, the exact time they met. He said he wanted to be able to take her back to that moment whenever they wanted.

For the second time in a minute, Kate finds herself unexpectedly moved by a man talking about clocks.

KATE

That's lovely.

A pause, the romance of the story hanging between them.

BEN

So, that's how I spend my days. Building clocks for old men trying to rom-com the old lady one last time. Just me and the clocks alone in the cottage.

KATE

Except today.

BEN

Yes. It's been nice. Although, to be
[MORE]

BEN (CONT'D)

honest, I don't mind my own company. I'm
happy by myself.

Kate instantly looks uncomfortable. She begins to shuffle round,
thinking then gets up, ready to go.

KATE

Well, sure, I guess I should go. I
don't want to overstay my welcome.

Ben suddenly realises what's happened, a look of worry across his
face.

BEN

Oh, I didn't mean..... I mean, I....

Kate goes to the door.

KATE

No, it's fine, I should be getting on
anyway. I'll see you around. Or I
guess... well.

She opens the door, turns back one last time. Ben stands up,
holds the door for her.

KATE

Thanks for the coffee.

Ben goes to say something, but doesn't, it's uncomfortable. Kate
leaves. Ben shakes his head, disappointed in himself. He drops
back on the settee, shakes his, laughs to himself, dejectedly.
His eyes fall on the package, picks up the box and tears it open.
He looks inside, confused, then amused. He pulls a bottle opener
out of the box, with a note wrapped round it. Ben opens the note
and reads: 'Fancy a drink?' He laughs.

BEN

You arse.

He stands up, opens the front door. He looks out into the world,
the panic starting to build inside of him.

INT. KATE'S COTTAGE - DAY.

KATE enters her house, throws the keys on the side. She stands at
the kitchen counter, thinks for a second, then laughs, a
melancholic laugh of disappointment. She shakes herself out of
it, walks toward the living room, when she hears a knock at the
door. She walks to the door, opens it, to see BEN, sweaty,
dishelved, breathing heavily in the midsts of a panic attack and

on his knees at the door.

BEN

(Breathless; in panic attack)

Hey!