

PARK BENCH

A Ten-Minute Dramatic Duet

by
Kristyn Leigh Robinson



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CHARACTERS: OLD MAN and YOUNG MAN

A YOUNG MAN sits on a park bench, typing on a laptop. After a few moments, HE looks up, squinting off into the distance, then, satisfied, goes back to the laptop. A few moments later, the OLD MAN comes along, eating peanuts out of a bag. HE hesitates in front of the bench where the YOUNG MAN is seated.

OLD MAN: Is anyone sitting here?

YOUNG MAN: *(looking up)* What? Oh. No. *(goes back to laptop)*

OLD MAN: Mind if I sit down?

YOUNG MAN: *(without looking up)* No, go right ahead.

(OLD MAN sits. HE continues to eat peanuts, breaking the shells open and occasionally tossing a peanut to a "squirrel." HE watches the people in the park.)

OLD MAN: I used to bring my kids to this park.

YOUNG MAN: *(distracted)* I'm sorry, what?

OLD MAN: I said, I used to bring my children here.

YOUNG MAN: Oh. *(nods, becomes interested in computer again)*

OLD MAN: Of course, that was years ago.

YOUNG MAN: Hmmm?

OLD MAN: I said, that was years ago. When they were young. When I was young, for that matter.

YOUNG MAN: *(absorbed)* Hm, well, lots of people bring their kids here.

OLD MAN: That they do.

(There is a short silence, then the OLD MAN offers the bag to YOUNG MAN.)

OLD MAN: Peanut?

YOUNG MAN: No, thanks.

OLD MAN: You sure? They're roasted.

YOUNG MAN: I'm sure. Cholesterol.

OLD MAN: They sell 'em all around the park here. Mostly retired guys, I think. Retired guys and bums. What do you do for a living?

YOUNG MAN: I, uh, I program software.

OLD MAN: *(makes a disgusted noise)* Oh, computers. I gave up on those long ago. *(beat)* Have any kids?

YOUNG MAN: Mmm? Oh. Yes. Two.

OLD MAN: Boy and a girl?

YOUNG MAN: *(slightly surprised)* Yes.

OLD MAN: Is that them over there? *(points, waves)*

YOUNG MAN: *(looking in the direction where OLD MAN is pointing)* Yes. Danny and Lisa. How did you know?

OLD MAN: They were waving at you.

YOUNG MAN: *(peering off)* They were?

OLD MAN: Pretty children.

YOUNG MAN: Thank you. *(going back to his laptop)*

OLD MAN: How old are they?

YOUNG MAN: Uh... Danny is ten, Lisa is seven.

OLD MAN: You bring them here often?

YOUNG MAN: Every weekend that it's not raining or snowing.

OLD MAN: *(nodding)* They seem to like it.

YOUNG MAN: *(distracted)* Kids like parks.

OLD MAN: Kids don't care where they go, do they, so long as it's fun. *(throws a peanut to a "squirrel")*

YOUNG MAN: Look, I don't want to be rude, but I really have to get this done. *(indicates laptop)* I'm on a deadline.

OLD MAN: Oh, by all means. Don't mind me.

(They sit in silence for a bit before OLD MAN speaks again.)

Pretty day.

YOUNG MAN: (*obviously irritated*) Yes. It is.

OLD MAN: Hard to imagine wanting to do work on a day like this.

YOUNG MAN: I didn't say I *wanted* to work. I *have* to work. I told you, I'm on a deadline.

OLD MAN: No, no, perfectly understandable. I certainly didn't mean to imply anything. Always used to work on Saturdays myself, you know.

YOUNG MAN: That so. (*goes back to computer*)

OLD MAN: Yep, used to work every Saturday, rain or shine. Wife used to watch the kids. 'Course, it was easier before the divorce. You married?

YOUNG MAN: (*sharply*) Yes. (*less pointed, defensive*) Well... separated. Not that it's any of *your* business.

OLD MAN: (*with a chuckle*) Okay, okay, I didn't mean to offend. It's just, you see a man in a park on a Saturday, and he's paying more attention to a computer than to his kids, and you think, "Now *there's* a weekend dad."

YOUNG MAN: For your information, I'm not just a "weekend dad." Things are harder today than they were in your day. Do you have any idea how much college costs?

OLD MAN: (*outright laughing*) You're thinking about college, and your oldest is only ten?

YOUNG MAN: You have to start planning early.

OLD MAN: I guess so.

YOUNG MAN: And I am not paying more attention to the computer than I am to my kids. They're... (*looks around to find them, then nods and gestures*) right over there.

OLD MAN: You know, I used to bring my kids to this park too.

YOUNG MAN: Yes, I know, you said that already.

OLD MAN: Did I? Must be getting old.

YOUNG MAN: Do you mind? (*indicates laptop*)

OLD MAN: No, no, don't mind me. I'm just sitting here, enjoying a pretty Saturday afternoon, eating my peanuts. (*beat*) You sure you don't want any?

YOUNG MAN: (*barely hanging on to his patience*) Yes, quite.

OLD MAN: Right, right. Cholesterol. (*eats a peanut*) I never used to eat peanuts, either.

YOUNG MAN: You know, I know what you're trying to do, with the lectures and all, but it isn't necessary. I have no intention of ending up like you.

OLD MAN: How's that?

YOUNG MAN: You know, a lonely OLD MAN in a park who feels compelled to project his own life regrets on someone else.

OLD MAN: (*with a chuckle*) All right, point taken. I'm sorry, I'll just sit here and eat my peanuts.

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