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Intro to Fiction

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No Such Thing As A Boy Best Friend

I never really struggled with making friends. It almost always felt like a gut feeling I followed. But it's those people that really take the time to know you that feel the most special.

That's how Thomas knows me. From my best to worst days, he can read my mood better than anyone, like a chapter book from beginning to end.

Our friendship began the way it does with most people. At the beginning of our freshman year of high school, we lay on the fluffy green grass taking turns asking each other easy trivia questions about each other.

"What's your favorite color?" he asked me while enjoying his mint and chip ice cream.

"Green" I responded. "Whose your favorite Marvel hero?"

He looked up from eating his ice cream and said, "Spider-Man, obviously."

Little did he know, though, that Spider-Man held such sentimental value to me. Growing up, my brother and I loved watching Toby Migure swing from building to building on our living room television practically 24/7.

"In that case, I think we're going to be really good friends," I said smiling.

"Best friends," he asked me.

I laughed. "Yes. Best friends."

He smiled back and laughed. “You’re never getting rid of me, then,” Thomas declared matter-of-factly. As he said the words, he absentmindedly wiped vanilla ice cream off from my cheek.

From that day on, we were inseparable.

In 9th grade, my parents were a bit strict. Granted, I was a 15-year-old girl trying to make adult decisions. But when it came down to hanging out with my friends, it was always about “Who’s going to be there?” and “Where are you guys going?”

Most of the time, Thomas and I would only hang around with our group of friends, and it was rarely just him and I. I remember texting the group chat if they wanted to go see the new *Star Wars* movie that had just been released. Everyone said that they couldn’t make it. Everyone except Thomas. I could already imagine how my parents were going to react to this. But, there was no backing out of the plans that I suggested. After I got home from school that day, I waited a bit before going downstairs to ask my mom about my movie plans.

“Mom, can I go out with my best friend?”

“Best friend?” she questioned.

“Yeah, Thomas. That boy in my class,” he said nonchalantly.

“He’s not your best friend Jean. You barely know him.” I could sense a hint of annoyance in her response.

I rolled my eyes.

“Well, I asked him if he wanted to go see the new star wars movie tonight so I was wondering if I could go.”

Her response was simple. “Ask your dad.”

I remember the feeling all too well. Asking my dad if I could go to the movies with a BOY set off a panic I had never experienced. I decided to calculate my moves carefully, meaning I had to approach my dad when the mood was right. That perfect opportunity presented itself at dinner time.

“Hi Dad,” I said in a sing-song voice. I quickly noticed the unexpected eagerness in my tone, and he did too.

He immediately raised his eyebrows as he responded, “Hey blue jeans.”

“How was your day,” I asked him as I made my way across from him at the table. I wanted to kick things off with smooth small talk first.

“You’re asking me about my day,” he asked hesitantly. His eyebrow raised even higher and he looked at me suspiciously. He was catching onto me. I tried to play it off and pull it off as a joke of it, but it didn’t get me that far.

“Can’t a daughter ask her dad how his day’s been,” I replied laughing.

“Yeah if she actually meant it.”

So much for easing into it. “So Dad I-”

“What do you want,” he asked abruptly.

“I wasn’t even finished, how’d you know I want something?”

“Because any sentence that starts with ‘so dad’ always means you want something.”

“Oh. well, I was just going to ask if I could go to the movies with my friend Thomas.”

He paused for a moment as if he needed to take a moment to reflect on what I had just told him.

“You want to go to the movies. With a *boy*” he repeated as if he needed further clarification.

“Yes.”

“Alone,” he emphasized.

“Yes.”

“Ohhh ok ok...yeah no,” he sarcastically laughed.

“Why not,” I asked.

“Because I’m not letting you go out with some boy you don’t even know. Some boy I don’t even know for that matter” he stated matter-of-factly. “If you want to go, your mom has to join you.”

“What! Seriously?!” I couldn’t believe him. There was no hiding the shaking of my voice. All I could think about at that moment was how embarrassing it would be to have my mom there. I love her deeply, but what teenager wants to go to a movie with a boy and her mom? Alas, it did indeed happen. Not only did my mom drive Thomas and me to the theater that day, but she also sat right next to us the entire time. I couldn’t help but feel embarrassed, but I don’t think Thomas seemed to notice or mind.

Freshman year flew by and the next thing we knew, we were seniors. It was so exciting to think about all of our senior events but I think what we most looked forward to was prom. The girls went shopping and purchased their dresses together, meanwhile, the boys were simply in charge of coordinating their ties to their date’s dresses.

Thomas and I were the only two left in the bunch who didn’t have a date. My friend Celine didn’t have a date either so it didn’t feel odd to go with friends. However, eight days before prom Thomas showed up at my front door holding flowers and a sign that read “Jean, we’ve been friends forever so how about we go to prom together?” In utter disbelief, I said yes.

Prom was a mess within itself. When we arrived, there was a long table at which we sat at. Unaware that all the dates were sitting next to each other, I had chosen to sit next to my friend Celine. She had been the only one of our friends without a date and I didn't want her to feel left out. People were quick to make snarky remarks.

"Oooo Thomas, looks like your date doesn't like you very much."

"That's a bit fucked up for your date to leave you like that Thomas."

At that moment I couldn't hear what was going on. We were on opposite ends of the table. There wasn't a negative thought running through my mind. Just pure bliss. Thomas and I even made sure to take the traditional prom photos at the photo booth before making our way to the dance floor. That night felt like it was taken straight from a teenage coming-of-age film. Perfect from my point of view.

Many days went by after prom night and Thomas and I rarely spoke. This extra distance felt unnatural for us, so I decided to send him a text.

"Hey dude, I had a really great time at prom! How have you been? I haven't heard from you in days."

"Hey, I've been fine."

"Is everything ok?" I could immediately tell that everything was in fact not okay.

"Yeah." That one-word reply told me everything I needed to know.

"Are you sure Tom? You know I'm here if you need anything."

"Look Jean, this isn't exactly how I imagined telling you this, but I like you. I've liked you since the very moment I met you in the ninth grade. I didn't want to tell you before because I was afraid of how you would react and I don't want to ruin the friendship that we have. I'm not going to lie to you, but when you didn't sit next to me at prom, it really stung. I was the only guy

sitting there without his date. And if that wasn't embarrassing enough, you basically ditched me the entire night after the first song we danced to."

I had no words. No thoughts. Just shocked. All this time and I had never noticed. I was completely oblivious. For four years! I thought we were just the best of friends. So many past moments between us were beginning to click. All I could think about at that moment was how sorry I was to make Tom feel this way. I was even more sorry to have to break his heart.

"Tom, I'm sorry I made you feel that way. Please know that it was never my intention to single you out. I was just trying to have a great time with you and all of our friends, but I can see now how that may have come across as ignoring you the entire night. I don't ever want to hurt you, Tom."

I knew he was waiting for me to address the elephant in the room, but everything that I wanted to say was not going to come out the right way. I wanted to tell him that I loved him - but as a friend. That I couldn't imagine my life without him - but as my friend. He was my favorite person and practically my brother. But these are all things he wouldn't want to hear. I knew my words would sting deeply if I told him how I really felt. I loved him too much to break his heart, so I did something that at the moment, I thought would let him down easier.

"I'm sorry Tom, but...I have a boyfriend."

I lied to him.

Statement of Intent

I personally don't think that this story is my strongest piece of writing. If anything, I look forward to making edits in the second draft to better improve my story.

My intent behind writing this piece is to depict the narrative of a girl and a guy being "best friends." This common trope in stories and my personal experience with it in real life inspired me to shed a different perspective on the topic. I have also come across many people who have their opinions on those types of relationships, which further led me to put a different twist on this narrative. I wanted to try and describe what the "guy and girl best friend relationship" is like from a woman's perspective. I took inspiration from romance films, such as *Love, Rosie*, however, I didn't really want to follow the stereotypical friends-to-lovers trope. I wanted to depict something that felt more real and vulnerable. I also wanted to add a twist to it. To me, that means the protagonists don't necessarily have their "happy ending" which is commonly shown in "friends to lovers" movies.

I would very much appreciate any feedback to improve my short story. Some key points I would like feedback on include making sure I am writing in the past tense since the main character, Jean, is reflecting on this past experience. Second, I am most concerned about how Thomas and Jean's relationship is coming across to the audience. Are you able to tell that there is something there? Or is building their connection something I still need to work on?