

Wasted Petals

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H E'S YOUR MOTHER," said the tall, lanky man behind the large oak desk, causing the petite strawberry blond sitting across from him to spew her natural spring water all over it.

"Oh, for God's sake, Doc!" she squealed, wiping the dribbling liquid from her chin and brushing off her forest green cashmere sweater with the other. "Remind me again of how much I'm paying you to come up with cock-a-mamey crap like that! Now I know what you got your B.S. in!" She sputtered, pointing at the framed diplomas on the wall behind him. "B.S.!"

"Really, think about it. This guy is your mother, figuratively speaking, of course," he insisted, chuckling to himself. "Every aspect of him that you are obsessed with is exactly the same one you despise in her. They are exactly alike, except you want to heal him, but you can't tolerate her."

Crushing up her Dixie cup and tossing it in the wire wastebasket next to his desk, she picked up her backpack, tossed it over her shoulder, and quipped, "Thanks so much, Doc. Now my life is as straight as Boy George. Gotta go."

"Before you run away again, Gabriella..."

"Gabby!" she cracked loudly with her back turned, shaking her head at his insolence.

"Okay," he conceded, carefully examining the back of her rigid form before continuing. "Before you run away again *Gabby*, answer this one question."

"What?" she replied stiffly, her back still turned.

"Why did you come to me in the first place and why do you continue to do so?"

"Foul ball, coach. You said one question; that was two," she countered, still facing the closed door, but this time placing her hand purposefully on the door-knob and turning it.

"Okay, Okay," he sighed, throwing his hands up in defeat. "I recognize the

basis for your therapy; however, each session tends to get shorter and shorter, less is said, and each visit concludes with you flying out the door. There is no progress here, so why continue to see me?"

"Because, I can't get lukewarm bottled water in a fancy paper cup anywhere else in town!" she snapped, dropping her hand from the doorknob and placing it on her hip.

"Jeesuuus..." he breathed, rolling his eyes up into his head, simultaneously rocking back in his chair, and placing both hands behind his head.

"Okay, all right," she said, and dropped her backpack at her feet with a loud *thud*, then turned only halfway around, still not facing him, but focusing her eyes on the ceiling instead.

"I'm redecorating my apartment and I'm trying to steal your *fabulous* designer décor. Love it," she replied, making a kissing sound with her mouth and fingers, waving her arms around the small room in a dramatic sweeping motion towards the dull beige carpet, sparse brown furnishings, and flat white walls that were void of pictures except for his diplomas.

"How many degrees in B.S. did you say *you* have?" he muttered, flipping through some papers in front of him, ignoring her antics. "I can't seem to locate it on your history? Oh yes, here it is; junior year, Associate in Arts," he mused, lifting his glasses and rubbing his bearded chin thoughtfully. "You missed your calling, my dear; a B.S. is what you really should be working towards. You're a natural."

"No, really, the truth of the matter is that for the past eight months I have had the strong suspicion that *you* are my mother!" she yelled, finally facing him and pointing an accusing finger at his chest.

Just then the office door swung open and the receptionist stepped in looking strangely from one to the other.

"Is everything all right, Dr. Hardy?" she asked wearily, clutching a mobile phone to her chest.

"Fine!" Dr. Hardy and Gabby responded in unison.

"Everything is fine, Kim. Thank you," he said, shooting his patient a scolding look. His patient turned her back, stuck out her tongue, and made funny faces mocking him.

"Would you like me to leave the door open?" asked the concerned receptionist.

"No," said Bob. "That will not be necessary. It is quite normal..."

"...For a medical facility that treats the 'emotionally unstable,'" Gabby interrupted, making quotation signs with her fingers.

“Are you new here?” she asked Kim. “Whoa! Wait a minute. Maybe *sheeee’s my mother*. Whadda ya think, Doc? Could she be my mother? Are you my mother, Receptionist Kim?” Gabby rambled, as the confused woman stood staring at her, unsure if she should answer or not.

“I know the fact that you’re Asian may pose some doubts,” Gabby continued. “But, with medical science and freaky genetics, a woman can now spit out eight younguns at one time in all assortments. White, black, Asian, Mexican, Calico, Presbyterian, Vulcan, alien hybrid; I believe Mulder, too...”

“That’s good enough,” Dr. Hardy said, trying to intercede.

“...Three tall, two medium, one short, uh... for cleaning things down low. Purple eyes, pink hair, and I *must* have it match the Bill Blass toss pillows I just purchased for the new family room,” her escalating Betty Davis impression ground to a halt as Bob finally slammed his notepad on his desk. Gabby and Kim jumped in response to the unexpected noise, jerking their heads around and looking at Bob as if to say, “What’s your problem?”

“Please close the door, Kim. That will be all,” he instructed the wide-eyed woman.

“Yes, Doctor. Call if you need anything,” she said, closing the door behind her.

“I would like...” Gabby started, placing her order for the receptionist.

“Gabiella!” Dr. Hardy taunted, knowing this would put an end to her rambling.

“Gabby! Damn it! Gabby!” she yelled in response.

He didn’t flinch, but cautiously said, “He doesn’t love you.”

“What the hell did you say?” she growled, whirling around to finally face him.

“Since you do not seem able to answer my question, I will give you my professional opinion as to why you keep coming into my office twice a month behaving like a maniac,” he proposed, while placing his elbows on his desk and clasping his hands together.

“You just told ‘Receptionist Mother Kim’ that my behavior was, quote, ‘quite normal,’ unquote,” she challenged, her small shoulders heaving and visibly trembling now.

“Yes, well, perhaps I should consult with a therapist myself. I have the distinct feeling that by the time you and I have made any documented upward progression, I will be too far gone to realize it.” He picked up his pen and twirled it between his fingers. “Nonetheless, you must get through this state of avoidance and denial, Gabby, before you self-destruct,” he said softly. “The fact of the matter is he does not love you. You know it and cannot face it.”

“More crap,” she said flatly, once again turning her back on him as her breaths quickened and her voice cracked.

“The answer to the question is that you keep coming to me until *I* tell you that he loves you, because *he* hasn’t. He doesn’t, and he never will,” he suggested quietly, while carefully watching her afternoon shadow on the wall.

“That’s...it’s just...crap...you don’t...” she muttered incoherently and shaking her head in denial, then wrapping her arms around herself for protection.

“Every session is a fishing expedition. You keep coming to me for ‘how to’ information on what to do, say or how to act, in order to get those three words out of him that you so desperately want to hear and you’re frustrated because I am not telling you how,” he informed her solemnly, noticing the negative shaking of her head did not stop, nor did the trembling of her shoulders. Yet he continued.

“I can’t give you that information, Gabby, but I can tell you this. You cannot force him to love you. Each week it’s the same routine: ‘he loves me, he loves me not’. Stop wasting your petals on something that will never be. Pick them up and move on. He simply does not love you, Gabriella,” he finished dryly, dropping his pen into the glass penholder on his desk with finality.

“GAAABBBYYY!!!” she screamed like a wild wounded animal, her chest furiously pumping in and out as her breath struggled inside of her.

Whirling back around, she snatched the glass penholder from his desk and smashed against the wall sending shards of glass all over the room, this time ignoring the dribbling liquid running onto her sweater. She stared at him for a moment with a look of hatred and disgust that was obviously meant for someone else. Snatching up her backpack, she flung open the door, banging it against the wall with a loud crash. She ran out, not bothering to close it behind her.

Bob sat still for a moment then silently dialed the front desk from his intercom.

“Yes, Dr. Hardy,” answered Kim.

“Kim, could you get custodial services to bring a vacuum to my office?” he inquired.

“Right away, sir,” she responded.

He hung up the phone and began shuffling through the papers on his desk. Suddenly stopping, he glanced over to the shards of glass on his office floor and began to study them carefully. Then he reached into his shirt pocket for a pen and made the first positive remarks on the blank progress report of Gabriella Sinclair.

“See you next week, Gabby,” he said to himself and prepared for his next appointment.