

Another Night on The Bench

It is a starry night at the Lookout. Joey, a seventeen year old boy, is sitting on a wooden park bench, engrossed in writing in his Secrets Notebook.

Joey: The other 28 and a half living inhabitants of Bucket think I'm weird but I don't agree. I think it's them that are weird. I mean, they don't see what really goes on in this town and they don't seem to care. And then they call me a weirdo... no, that doesn't sound good at all... eccentric for wanting to tell the truth about things that are in their best interests. I don't think it's strange to be a collector of secrets and want to tell people that our town's mayor is a money-laundering crook. Here's what I know, which comes right from the man himself.

Clementine, a ghost, appears behind and interrupts him.

Clementine: (annoyedly) Joey, it's a quarter to 2 in the morning. Living people are usually asleep right now, not writing in their diaries on a park bench in the middle of nowhere with a torch.

Joey: (snarkily) It's not a diary entry, it's the introduction to the next article I'm writing for the Bucket College Voice.

Clementine: (confused) What's that?

Joey: The newspaper. My high school's newspaper. Also, I don't need sleep. I need to make this perfect.

Clementine: (wearily) Everyone needs sleep, Joey.

Joey: You don't need sleep.

Clementine: I'm a ghost. You're a mortal.

Joey: (snarkily) And I'm fine, thank you Clementine.

Clementine: (wearily) Joey, you've been here every night this week.

Joey: (matter-of-factly) Technically, I...

Clementine: I know you got here at 3am on Monday but the point stands.

Joey: What's your point?

Clementine: The other ghosts are getting annoyed.

Joey: (confused) Why? I'm not that loud and I respect boundaries. I'd say I'm pretty good. Rude.

Clementine: (sadly) They're annoyed because they're worried about you. You need to go home, kid.

Joey: (snarkily) You sound like Tuesday, my foster mom, always on my back about something or other.

Clementine: Sounds like she cares.

Joey: (annoyedly) Also, that house is not a home.

Clementine: What's the difference?

Joey: A home is where you live with people who love you. They don't love me at that house. I know it. They whisper about me. They think I don't hear but I do.

Clementine: What are they saying?

Joey: They think I'm insane.

Clementine: Hmmm. Well, you do talk to ghosts.

Joey: You talk to me!

Clementine: Is there anyone else you can stay with?

Joey: (snarkily) No. All my relatives are gone. And *living* friends? Forget that.

Joey sighs

Joey: (sadly) This place, my writing and my ghost friends are the only things I have left in the world.

Clementine sits down on the bench beside Joey

Clementine: (kindly) Did they start out like this? Talking about you I mean.

Joey: What do you mean?

Clementine: (kindly) Did you give them a try?

Joey: (annoyedly) No. I *know* that they're going to disappear just like my parents. Now, I'm going to go to sleep on this bench and you're going to leave me alone.

Clementine: (sadly) Joey, please. I'm just trying to..

Joey: (angrily) Give up! Just drop it.

There is an uncomfortable silence.

Clementine: (annoyedly) If you're not moving, I'm not either.

Joey: Good luck standing there all night because I'm going to sleep right here. You're not going to convince me to go back.

Joey lies down on the bench and closes his eyes. He opens them again when he senses that Clementine is not moving.

Joey: I didn't know you were being serious.

Clementine says nothing.

Joey: Alright, good night.

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The next day is a cloudless one in the town of Bucket. A tired Joey is currently walking towards the bookstore where he works. Clementine is following him.

Joey: Look, I moved off the bench. Will you please leave me be now? I have a full day of work and I'll be managing the store alone because my manager had a few too many last night.

Offstage character: WHO YOU TALKING TO, KID?

Clementine: You need to at least give your foster family a try.

Joey: This again. I'm gonna have breakfast at the cafe. Can you pay?

Clementine: (sarcastically) Sure. With all my spirit Dollars.

Joey rolls his eyes

Joey: Fine. I'll pay for my own breakfast.

The pair sit down at a table.

Joey: What can I do for you to make you give this up and butt out of my personal life?

Clementine: You could talk to Tuesday.

Joey: No.

Clementine: Okay, then. There is something I forgot to do before I died.

Joey stops. He has a weary expression on his face.

Clementine: I need you to give this to my daughter. I wanted her to have it but I didn't see her before I died. We had a...complicated relationship.

Clementine hands Joey a necklace.

Joey: Okay, where do I find her?

Clementine points at the bookstore.

Clementine: She'll be at the bookstore. She's a woman with brown hair, quite short.

Joey: Ok. You promise that if I do this, you'll leave my personal life alone.

Clementine: I promise.

Clementine and Joey shake hands.

Clementine: Good luck.

Joey walks into the bookstore. It is empty except for his foster mother, Tuesday.

Tuesday: (surprised) Joey!

Joey looks shocked. He realises that Clementine tricked him into a conversation with his foster mother.

Joey: Hi.

Tuesday: I haven't seen you for a week. I've called the police a million times but they didn't do anything. I was so worried about you.

Tuesday notices the necklace in Joey's hand.

Tuesday: What's that?

Joey: Oh... um... your mother gave it to me.

Joey looks annoyed at himself.

Joey: Your mum said that she wanted to give it to you for your birthday, the day she died. But she never got the chance.

Tuesday looks shocked.

Tuesday: Yeah, we had a...complicated relationship.

Joey: That's what she said.

Tuesday: I loved her but I always thought that... she was... disappointed in me.

Clementine moves out of the shadows to Joey's side.

Clementine: I was never disappointed in her. I thought she was brilliant. I loved her a lot. I loved her so much, my darling Tuesday.

Joey: She says she was never disappointed in you. She thought you were brilliant. She loved you a lot.

Joey still looks awkward. When they break apart, Joey places the necklace quickly down on a table.

Joey: You like me?

Tuesday: Of course, I do. Why wouldn't I?

Joey: I... I just thought that... you thought I'm crazy.

Tuesday: Of course, I don't. I prefer weird people, Joey. People like you make life worth living. I wanted to get to know you better but you kept running off.

There is a moment of silence.

Joey: I'll see you later. Back at the house. I promise I won't disappear.

Joey stands outside, trying to make sense of it. Clementine comes up behind him.

Clementine: I thought that went well.

Joey: Uh-huh.

Clementine: I reckon it's a new start. An opportunity to break down your barriers and let go of the past.

Joey: My parents disappeared at that lookout when I was ten. I waited on that same bench for them to come back for ages. They never did.

Joey turns to Clementine

Joey: I don't think I'll stay at that bench anymore. I'll still visit but I don't need it. I have somewhere else now. A home.