

Lock and Key

It was exactly midnight. I sat peering through my bedroom window, wondering what the man in a black balaclava was doing, rifling through my neighbour's dustbin. I continued to watch. I saw my neighbour come out of his house to put something in the dustbin himself. To my surprise, instead of screaming at the stranger, they started to have a conversation and I just happened to overhear. It was something around these lines.

"Take the balaclava off, I'm well aware it's you." I saw through the corner of my eye, a hand reach out and pull off the balaclava. I caught a glimpse of the face, and to my astonishment it was my neighbour's best friend with a look of anguish on his face. "You're so immature. Every month, you promise to move on, so you storm to my house and throw away the necklace. But after just a few hours, you go searching for it again. Also stop with the balaclava business, it makes you look like a burglar and we all know you wear it so that we don't shout at you for not moving on. Tell me the story behind the necklace again, will you?"

I eagerly waited for the answer as my curiosity took a hold of me. The best friend visibly hesitated, and I noticed that he seemed to be sensitive about the topic. "I've told you so many times that I'm not immature! It's just hard to move on. Put yourself in my shoes and you'll realise it's not that easy. And it's not just any necklace, ok? It's the only thing I have left from my mum. She gave it to me when I was just 8 years old, whilst saying these reassuring words; 'Yours is the key and mine is the lock. With this no matter where in the world we may be or who we are with, we will always, ALWAYS be together. No matter what. And we will find each other once again.' I can still vividly picture her face in that moment."

The young man sighed, the dim streetlamp revealing his pained eyes, and he tried to brush it off with a half-hearted grin. My heart felt as though it had broken into a thousand pieces, thinking about how painful waiting for his mother must be. "Then just look for her! I've told you so many times. You always refuse profusely. I don't understand?"

"There must be a reason she's not looking for me, right? My mom's probably living her own life. What if finding her, messes it all up for her? And if I'm honest, I'm scared. That she'll reject me, that I'll be abandoned again. It's enough for me to think that she's alive and is wishing the best for me. I can live like that. I can live with that hope."

As I saw my neighbour comfort his best friend, I realised he was crying. Tears rolled down his damp cheeks, the silence of the night saying more than words ever could. I couldn't help but cry with him. I may never know what happened to his mother, and he may never find out. But I realised that night, that there's always more than what meets the eye. That once in a while, when we need to, we all wear our black balaclavas, rifling through our memories desperately trying to find something we lost. Trying to hold on. Trying to live.

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