That Perfect Girl is Gone

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In this third entry in the *Frozen* series, we shift to Seth's POV as he and Jessica shove off for their fishing trip. I'm sure a lot of us would have liked to know what followed the end of *Mirror, Mirror On the Wall, Part 2,* and this "deleted scene" is just my take.

Written for the Definitive Guide to *Murder, She Wrote*'s Fanfic 100 Challenge. Prompt: *Focus.*

She's beautiful.

Not for the first time, Seth found himself focusing an admiring eye on his best friend. In her baseball cap, jeans, and cream sweater, she would hardly be called Miss America, but she could never have looked more beautiful to him than at that moment. For once, she didn't look like the "perfect" J.B. Fletcher. She looked *normal.*

A smile crept across his face as he approached her in the bow of Caleb's boat. She turned at the sound of his footsteps and returned his grin, then took off her cap and shook her hair out in the ocean breeze. A simple act, but it made warmth seep into his stomach as sure as if she'd kissed him. Those beautiful blonde curls, always immaculately styled, were ruffled and fluttering as the wind played with them. *Here, let me help you,* Seth thought to the breeze, snaking a hand up behind Jessica and tousling her hair even further.

"Hey!" she cried, a laugh flying free of her mouth as she smacked his hand away. "What was that for?"

Seth grinned. "Well, the wind was messin' up your hair. I thought it might need a little help."

Jessica shot him a cynical look, reflexively reaching up to smooth her hair. "And you thought you'd just take the liberty?"

"Ayuh, I did. I like it messy like this. It doesn't look *perfect* for once."

"Oh, Seth, please. My hair isn't always perfect."

"I know. It's just nice to see you let loose for a change." Seth placed a hand at her back and rubbed gently, his thumb tracing a shoulder blade. "What made you decide to let loose?"

Jessica's eyes twinkled. "What made you decide to wait for me?"

"I asked you first."

"You're impossible."

"And you with the compliments. Answer the question."

Jessica poked a finger into his stomach, relishing his chuckle. "Well..." She paused to rake a hand through her already-unruly curls. "I've had a lot to think about in the last couple of days, including everything you said to me. I love my writing... but I also love *living.* You were right. I've been working too hard lately, and if I keep focusing only on that, it'll consume me. I was neglecting my life and I was neglecting you."

The words twisted Seth's heart. "Aw, Jess... you weren't neglecting me. I just..." He inhaled a great gulp of salt air. "God, woman, I miss you so much sometimes it hurts. You mean more to me than anyone else. And I said the things I said because I didn't want to see you give *so* much to everyone that there was nothing else left."

"Long story short, you didn't want me to tire myself out trying to be perfect." He nodded and Jessica pulled him into a hug. "Seth, I know that. I realize that now. I'm just glad I saw it before..."

She went silent against his shoulder and Seth tightened the hug. He knew she was thinking about how he'd almost died. "Shh. Don't think about that anymore. I'm here, Jess. I'll always be here."

"Thank God." Jessica kissed his cheek. "I'm relieved whenever I'm with you, because then I don't have any pressure, no limelight. I don't have to be J.B. Fletcher when we're together. With you, I can just be Jessica. The perfect girl is gone."

Seth tilted her chin upward to meet her gaze and smiled. "Don't worry, Jess. You'll always be perfect to me." They stood together in the bow like that for a long time, arms wrapped around each other. The past was behind them and a new horizon lay ahead, the sparkling ocean welcoming them into the future.