

Little Moments

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It's the little moments that really count in life, and it's those little moments that Seth looks forward to whenever he spends time with Jessica, especially in this Murder, She Wrote Slice of Life.

"You are impossible, Seth Hazlitt."

"Only when I'm around you."

Jessica Fletcher laughed as they walked to Seth's car. It was a beautiful summer day in Cabot Cove – sunshine everywhere, blue skies, and birds singing in the trees. And, for any eager fisherman, the fish were biting to beat the band, which had meant a great day at the pond for Jessica and Seth. Between the two of them, they had hooked a dozen fish, and Seth was ready and raring to fire up a good old-fashioned fish fry once they were back at Jessica's house – if only they could stop arguing first!

"I swear that thing was right on the hook. I was *this* close to pulling him in, and we'd be serving him with melted butter tonight if somebody hadn't jumped a mile screaming."

"Seth, that is not funny! You know I don't like snakes!"

"Come on, Jess, you gotta admit it's a little funny. The great J.B. Fletcher, who writes about bloody murder and stares it in the face on a daily basis, comes unglued at the sight of an itty-bitty garter snake."

"I'll have you know that that itty-bitty snake was slithering up the leg of my jeans!"

"Ayuh, and with all that hopping around you were doing, you probably gave him a concussion shaking him back out!"

"Hopping around?"

"Yes, hopping around. I declare, Jess, it's a miracle you didn't make it rain!"

"Oh!" Jessica laughed and elbowed her best friend in the ribs. "Laugh all you want, but I am not the one who was robbed blind by a squirrel!"

"I wasn't robbed blind! The little bugger scampered off with a good lure, that's all."

"Seth, you left your tackle box open while you were taking a nap. You were robbed blind, blind as a bat!" Jessica chuckled heartily. "You say it's a miracle that I didn't make it rain? Well, it's a miracle to me that you can still see to drive!"

It was that comment that gave Seth an idea. Jessica had meant it in jest, but there was no reason why he shouldn't have a little fun with her, call her bluff just a tad. "All right, woman, if I'm so blind, you can drive us home."

"*What?*" Jessica's big blue eyes popped even wider and she burst out laughing anew. "Seth, you've lost your mind! You know I can't drive!"

"Can't or won't?"

"Seth." Jessica planted her hands on her hips. "If this is a joke, I don't find it funny."

"Good, because it's not supposed to be funny. I'm dead serious."

"You ought to know better than to use puns like that around me."

"Jess." They came to a halt in front of Seth's car and the doctor stood before his friend, who now had her arms folded over her chest and a whole lot of *don't joke with me* on her face. "What's gonna happen? We're out in the middle of nowhere. Nobody's gonna see us or know about it but you and me. You've never learned how to drive, so why not give it a shot now?"

"It's too late for me, Seth."

"Pshaw! It's never too late to learn something new. And maybe we can prove that you can teach an old dog new tricks."

Jessica narrowed her eyes at him. "Said the kettle to the pot. I'm not driving, and that is final."

Seth grinned at her. "Chicken."

"I am not a chicken!" She shook her head at him when he started making clucking noises. "Oh, very mature."

"Are you gonna get behind the wheel or do I have to start squawking?"

"Even more than you already are?" She shook her head and sighed. "All right, but I'm only doing this for you. I'm not making any promises."

"Just as long as you give it a whirl." He opened the driver side door for her. "In you get, my lady."

Jessica rolled her eyes at him before climbing in. Seth shut the door, walked around to the passenger side, and shut himself in beside her. "Okay, here we go. First, what do you do?"

"Well, I'm mechanically inclined enough to know that you start the car."

"Okay then, fire her up." He watched as Jessica turned the keys in the ignition and revved the engine up. "Now, put both hands on the wheel at ten and two."

Jessica frowned. "Ten and two?"

"Ten and two o'clock. You know where the numbers ten and two are on a clock? Well, that's where you put your hands on the wheel. Watch." Seth reached in front of her and modeled the exact position of his hands on the steering wheel. "Now you do it." As soon as she had her hands positioned, he said, "Good. Now put your right foot on the brake and press it down. You always do this when you're going into reverse. Your foot has to be on the brake and the car has to be fully stopped, else you're going nowhere."

Jessica gripped the wheel with her hands and glanced down at her feet. Carefully, she placed her right foot on the brake pedal and pushed down. "Now what?"

"Now, take a look at this." He indicated the gearshift. "It's in Park right now. You're gonna take the gearshift in your right hand and pull it back one spot to R, for Reverse. Once you're in Reverse, put your foot on the accelerator and give it some gas to back up. Got that?"

"I think so." Keeping her foot pressed on the brake, Jessica grasped the gearshift in her right hand and pulled it back to Reverse. The instant the car began to move, she gasped, but gave the accelerator a gentle tap. The car continued to back up, and Jessica slowly smiled, pride swelling within her heart. *I'm driving! I'm actually driving!*

Suddenly, a deer leaped out of the nearby bushes and cleared the hood of the car in one jump, startling Jessica so badly that she cried aloud and mashed the accelerator to the floor. The car shot backward over the grass and, ten seconds later, slammed into the trunk of a tree with an almighty crash.

Seth sat quietly, too shocked to yell or even to worry about his car. And in that silence, he heard Jessica, in a whisper so soft that it was almost inaudible, say something he never thought he would ever hear out of her mouth: a certain word beginning with the letter S. And if that didn't jack the shock factor straight through the roof. "*Jessica Fletcher!*"

As though just then realizing what she had said, Jessica's eyes nearly popped out of their sockets. Both of her hands flew over her mouth and blood rushed into her face all the way up to the roots of her blonde hair. "Oh, merciful heavens... what did I just say?"

"Let me put it this way, Jess. If you spelled Chitty Chitty Bang Bang with an S, we'd have both the word you said and a dead-on description of you backing us into a tree."

"Oh, Lord..." Jessica's hands now moved up to cover her whole face. "First I get so scared that I back your car into a tree, and then I actually curse. What must you think of me?"

Right now, I'm thinking you look too darn cute to fuss at, Seth thought, trying his hardest not to smile. Her face was flushed a brilliant shade of magenta and her eyes were still as wide as silver dollars; undoubtedly she was waiting for him to explode. But Seth just couldn't find it within himself to be angry with her. Rather, he slipped an arm around her shoulders and hugged her close as best as he could. "I think you're human, Jess. You got scared and made a mistake. It was just an accident, that's all."

"You're not angry with me?"

"No! A little shocked, maybe, but I'm not mad. The worst that's probably happened is some damage to the bumper; nothing that a mechanic can't fix. I'm just glad you're all right. I'd sooner have a damaged car than a damaged you."

"A brain-damaged me is more like it," Jessica groaned. "I can't believe I made such a stupid mistake."

"Jess, you're not perfect, you know. Nobody is."

"I know that, but still..."

"Still nothing, woman. There's nothing fun in being perfect; it makes life too blessed boring. And trust me, you are far from boring. Don't try to be perfect. I'd rather have you just the way you are."

Jessica chuckled and leaned her head against his shoulder. "You may be a grouch sometimes, but you always know just what to say."

"S'what I'm here for." He hugged her one more time and opened the passenger door. "Come on, switch me sides. It's high time we got home and fried us some fish."

"Good idea," Jessica said as they got out and switched sides in the car. "I've had quite enough adventure for one day."

Later that night, after the fish had been fried and eaten and the moon had risen over Cabot Cove, Jessica and Seth were snuggled up on the couch watching *It Happened One Night*. However, Jessica, spent from the day's adventure and her earlier morning block of typing, zonked out halfway through the film, her head resting on Seth's shoulder. Seth didn't mind one lick, save for the fact that his arm was beginning to fall asleep. Thousands of little needles stabbed at his flesh and his first instinct was to move it and give it a shake... but he didn't have the heart to wake Jessica up.

He shifted slightly to better accommodate his arm without moving it and she stirred, but relaxed in the next instant. Seth smiled lovingly at her as she also smiled, albeit at something in her dreams. *I'm holding an angel in my arms*, he thought, gently stroking Jessica's hair and running the soft

golden locks through his fingers. He dropped a tender kiss on the top of her head as she slept. *Sleep on, Jess. I'm here for you.*

It was a moment that had happened before, but Seth lived for these moments. Moments like these were times when they could both be together; to joke and laugh, to help each other out of scrapes, and to sit in the silence, when looks and smiles could say more than words ever could. And when Jessica was away, Seth counted the days until she returned and they could share another moment together. He hoped that one day he would find the right moment to tell her what was really on his heart, but for now, he was happy just to hold her in his arms. Some little moments were worth waiting and living for.