

This Is Not A Love Story

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EXT. GAS STATION, DAY

GRACE is standing by the car, pumping gas. PAUL, tall, skinny, pale and nervous, comes out of the gas station holding a bag of corn nuts. He walks up to her and holds out the bag, very stiffly and awkwardly. He's keeping himself as far away from her as possible.

PAUL

I bought you some corn nuts.

Grace looks at them, then at him, very suspiciously.

GRACE

Why are you being weird?

PAUL

I'm not being weird.

Grace points at the corn nuts.

GRACE

This is very weird.

PAUL

Look, I just care about your blood sugar and thought maybe you'd like a tasty snack-

Grace swats the corn nuts away.

GRACE

Knock it off. It looks like you're trying to soften a blow of some kind. With corn nuts. Which is just a terrible plan.

She looks him up and down.

GRACE

Are you trying to distance yourself from me?

Paul takes a step backwards.

PAUL

No.

GRACE

You just literally distanced yourself from me.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL

Nah, there was just... a... caterpillar, on the ground, there, and I didn't want to redistribute my weight and potentially injure him.

GRACE

Look, will you stop the weirdness with the nuts and the caterpillars and just say what's happening here? I feel like I'm being ambushed.

PAUL

I just don't think we should do this anymore.

GRACE

(quickly)

I am being ambushed.

She exhales quickly.

GRACE

Do what? What do you think this is?

Paul makes awkward hand gestures. He's at a loss of words.

GRACE

Oh my God. Do you think I *like* you?

PAUL

Uh...

GRACE

You do. You think I like you and now you're trying to spare my feelings. You *dick*.

PAUL

I just think things are getting a little complicated.

GRACE

If it is, then I'm not the one that's making it that way!

PAUL

Are you saying *I'm* the one making things complicated?

(CONTINUED)

GRACE

I don't know, you were the one who put your face super close to my face that one time!

PAUL

Yeah, well you're the one who keeps touching your arm to my arm!

GRACE

I couldn't have made my arm touch your arm unless your arm was there to also touch my arm! It takes two to make an arm touch situation possible, that's just hard math.

PAUL

Look, I just want to know what's going on here. If you're trying to make this be a not-friend thing.

GRACE

I thought we were just friends. That's what you were thinking, right?

PAUL

Yeah, of course.

GRACE

Good. what friends don't do to friends, is make them have awkward conversations about their feelings thinly veiled by unassuming offers of corn nuts.

She leans back against the hood of the car, arms crossed over her chest.

PAUL

Okay, so. Just friends?

GRACE

W- if that's what you want, yeah.

PAUL

W...

GRACE

What?

PAUL

Yeah. That won't be weird, right?

GRACE

It'd only be weird if one of us had feelings for the other. And neither of us does, right?

Paul hesitates.

PAUL

Right.

GRACE

Okay. Then we're good then. There's no problem with us just being friends.

PAUL

Yeah.

Awkward pause.

PAUL

Yeah, I just don't think I could-

GRACE

Yeah. Me neither.

Paul leans on the car next to Grace, sitting stiffly apart from one another. Grace grabs the corn nuts and starts eating them, still silent.

Cut to:

INT. GRACE'S ROOM, DAY.

Several hours before. Grace is talking to her best friend, Stacy. Wherever they are, Grace has found a way to be lying facedown, so her first few words are muffled.

GRACE

I. Am. So. *Screwed*. He knows I have a thing for him. There's no way he couldn't know.

STACY

What happened?

GRACE

I grazed his arm with my arm, like, three times. I was so obvious. He's

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GRACE (cont'd)

gonna panic like a scared little furry thing and never talk to me again. I've just ruined a three year friendship, all because I can't control myself. Damn these lusty arms!

Stacy looks at her like she's being a bit crazy, which is valid. Grace rolls to her feet and clomps over to Stacy's desk.

GRACE

Do you have anything made of chocolate?

STACY

You mean aside from all the stuff you already ate?

Grace ignores her, rooting through Stacy's drawers on her hunt for chocolate.

GRACE

We're going for a drive later. He's probably taking me to an area I'm unfamiliar with and leaving me there so I never find my way home, like people do to their pets.

Stacy looks at her.

GRACE

WHAT? It happened on Homeward Bound. It could happen to me.

STACY

You know, he could like you too.

Grace halts her search, having discovered half of a year-old chocolate Easter bunny.

GRACE

No. If he liked me, there's no way he wouldn't have said something about it by now.

She sighs and looks down at the bunny, and with an air that there's nothing left to be done, takes a big bite.

Cut back to:

EXT. GAS STATION, DAY

The two are still sitting side by side in silence, Grace still awkwardly eating the corn nuts.

Cut to:

EXT. PAUL'S DRIVEWAY, DAY.

Paul and his best friend KYLE are washing Paul's car and talking.

KYLE

Dude, this has been going on for too long. She's great. You guys are great. Will you just do something about it already?

PAUL

I am! I put my face right up next to her face that one time.

Kyle looks at Paul.

KYLE

It's a long term strategy, okay? Besides, I think she just wants to be friends. I don't want to mess that up. I just want whatever she wants.

Kyle gives Paul a look eerily similar to the look Stacy gave Grace a page ago.

PAUL

What? I *did* the face thing! I'm not Superman, okay?

Paul stares into space, thinking hard for a second.

PAUL

We're going for a drive tonight. I don't know. We'll see.

KYLE

Going for a drive... Is that why we're washing your car right now? For tonight?

Paul hesitates.

(CONTINUED)

KYLE

Are you serious?

PAUL

What? I just want it to look
nice...

KYLE

Dude! It's freezing out here! You
suck!

He throws a sponge at Paul, who halfheartedly deflects it.

Cut back to:

EXT. GAS STATION, DAY

Grace and Paul still sitting, Grace still eating the nuts. Paul looks straight ahead in grim determination. After a couple seconds, he reaches toward the bag of corn nuts. Grace looks towards Paul, reacting to his movement, and the two lock eyes for a couple of seconds. She shakes the bag at him and he grabs a few, brushing her hand as he does so. Both look forward again, a twinge of laughter in each of their faces.

THE END