

Poorly Wrapped

By Tara Meddaugh

A play in one act

EXCERPT

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Poorly Wrapped

Character Breakdown (1 m, 1 f)

CLARK

A young sales clerk, 20s.

GRACE

A beautiful young woman, 20s.

Setting

A gift shop on an island. Set and props may be minimal, merely an impression of the location or items mentioned.

AT RISE: A beautiful young woman,
GRACE, browses around a small gift shop.
A young, awkward employee of the shop,
CLARK, watches her.

CLARK
That's a disposable camera.

GRACE
Hm?

CLARK
That's what you're looking at.

GRACE
I know that.

CLARK
Oh, right. Because it, uh, because it says, on the box. And, you're, you're—

GRACE
I'm holding it.

CLARK
Right.

GRACE
And reading the words. On the box.

(pause)

CLARK
That's an underwater disposable camera.

GRACE
That's why I'm looking at it. I don't need a regular disposable camera. I don't even know why you'd sell those anymore.

CLARK
Someone bought one last summer.

GRACE
Well, they're dusty.

CLARK
Are they?

(rushes over to start dusting the cameras off with his shirt)

GRACE

You're getting dust on yourself.

(backs away)

And in the air! Don't do this while I'm standing right here!

CLARK

Do you want me to—to—to clean you off? I'll—here.

(he brushes off her legs. She lifts her arms slightly to give him room and lets him)

(he looks up at her)

You look like a movie star.

(pause)

GRACE

I don't want to pay \$10.99 for this underwater camera.

(pause)

CLARK

You can have it for eight.

(pause)

GRACE

Are you the owner?

CLARK

Um...Yeah. Yeah, I'm the owner. So I can do whatever I want.

(pause)

GRACE

That's very generous of you to use your power so kindly.

CLARK

Thank you for noticing.

(pause)

Look, I don't mean to play my cards right away, and I know I just met you, but...but...I'd really like to offer you the camera for five.

(pause)

GRACE

Five dollars?

CLARK

Is that okay? I don't want to make you feel strange—I just—

GRACE

It doesn't make me feel strange.

(pause)

In fact...it seems very natural.

(pause)

I'll take it.

CLARK

The camera? Great! Great, then I'll just...I'll just wrap it up. Or, I mean, you probably don't want it wrapped, I just—

GRACE

No, it's not a gift.

CLARK

Of course not. Course this underwater camera isn't a gift. You know not a lot of stores even have them anymore.

GRACE

I know. I've been searching all day.

CLARK

Your search ends with me then.

GRACE

Your store.

CLARK

Me.

(pause)

GRACE

Your store.

(pause)

CLARK

Are you going to take pictures of fish?

GRACE

The only fish around this island are gray.

CLARK

Do you like gray fish?

GRACE

Not at all.

CLARK

So...so, what are you going to take pictures of? Are you, uh, are you, maybe, having a destination wedding, or, or, or something like that?

(pause)

GRACE

I think you're asking too many personal questions now. Do you think that's right for you to be doing that to your customer?

CLARK

Oh, well, I guess—I'm sorry—I guess, I sorta see you now as more than a customer. You seem more like...someone else.

GRACE

Well, maybe I'd...be...more like someone else if I didn't have to buy anything. If I really weren't your customer.

(pause)

CLARK

Oh...well...okay, then.

(pause)

Don't be my customer anymore. Be more than that. I'll just—I'll just give you the camera.

GRACE

You would do that?

CLARK

I would. If that would make it okay for me to talk to you more. To ask you about things, personal things.

GRACE

It would certainly make me feel more comfortable.

CLARK

Okay. Then here. I'll give you the camera, and now you're, you're just a beautiful woman who walked in here and who I decided to give a camera to. You're not a customer. Just a woman. Just a young, beautiful, beautiful woman in this store.

GRACE

The store that you own.

CLARK

That I own.

(pause)

GRACE

I'm going to a carnival.

CLARK

A carnival? Where?

GRACE

Far away from here. Outside of this island. This wasteland.

CLARK

I didn't know there was a carnival going on.

GRACE

There's always a carnival going on. You just have to find it.

CLARK

And you like to take pictures of it? Of the animals?

GRACE

I don't think there will be animals at the carnival.

CLARK

Aren't animals always part of a carnival?

GRACE

You're thinking of a circus.

(pause)

CLARK

I rode a ride with my sister once, when we were kids, this ride in a giant strawberry or apple or some kind of fruit, and when you sat on the inside, there was a steering wheel—green, like it was a leaf—and it would make the fruit spin around.

GRACE

I know that ride.

CLARK

And my sister kept turning the wheel.

GRACE

That's very common.

CLARK

And she turned it so many times, and I kept telling her to stop and slow down, but she just kept screaming and laughing and telling me to quit being a baby.

GRACE

It's very unattractive for a man to be a baby.

CLARK

So...so...So when I got off the ride—

GRACE

You threw up?

CLARK

Yeah. How'd you—

GRACE

It just sounded like that's where the story was going.

CLARK

Oh. I guess, I guess that story is not very special.

GRACE

It's not—for carnivals. When it comes to gift shops, it would be though. It's all context. If you threw up here, in the gift shop, because you spun yourself around the cash register or something...that would be unique.

CLARK

Yeah, I haven't done that.

GRACE

Well, you have plenty of time to make original memories.

CLARK

I guess.

GRACE

Would you mind gift wrapping the camera?

CLARK

I thought you didn't—

GRACE

I didn't. When I was a customer. But now that I'm just a...beautiful woman—that's what you called me, right? Then maybe I do want the camera gift wrapped. Maybe it would make me feel special. Since it's a gift.

CLARK

Oh, well. Yeah, see, we actually don't gift wrap. I don't even have any paper or tape.

GRACE

Then you really shouldn't have offered.

CLARK

I know. I just got, I don't know, I was a little flustered, I guess.

GRACE

Well, if you offer something like that, it can really disappoint a girl when you don't follow through.

CLARK

I'm sorry. You're right. You're so right, and I shouldn't have said it...

GRACE

You shouldn't have..

(pause)

But you do sell wrapping paper. I see it over there. This is a gift shop after all.

CLARK

Oh, yeah, we sell it.

(pause)

GRACE

I like the purple wrapping paper. Right there. The one with the sparkly butterflies on it. See how the butterflies are sparkling?

CLARK

Blue and pink and orange.

GRACE

Red and green too.

CLARK

I guess I could...I mean, if I open the wrapping paper, I can't sell it then.

GRACE

No, you can't.

CLARK

And I'd have to open some tape too. I have the scissors though. They're in that drawer over there.

GRACE

That's good.

(pause)

CLARK

But I don't know if I should open it up. That's quite a few things that I won't be able to get the payment for.

GRACE

Well, I'd hate to see our relationship change back to being a customer and shop owner. I'd hate to see that because I was going to tell you a few other personal things. Personal things I would never say if I were just a customer.

CLARK

Really?

GRACE

Yes.

(pause)

CLARK

Things that you like, maybe?

GRACE

Maybe.

CLARK

Things that you'd like to do? With other people? Like me?

GRACE

I don't know. I had so many things I was going to tell you, but now I'm just not so sure.

(pause)

CLARK

Well, I can wrap the camera. That's not a problem. I'd like to wrap it. I'd like to wrap for you.

GRACE

With the butterfly wrapping paper.

CLARK

Yes.

(pause)

Okay! Okay, so I'll wrap it.

(opens wrapping paper and tape)

What were you going to tell me?

GRACE

What would you like to know?

CLARK

Do you...do you sleep in a nightgown?

GRACE

Now, I don't know your name yet—

CLARK

It's—

GRACE

I don't know your name, but if I did, I would use your name right now and say to you, "Insert Name, that's not a very appropriate question to ask someone you just met."

CLARK

I know. I'm sorry. I'm Clark, and I'm sorry. You're just so...I meant to ask something else. Something like what your favorite ride is at the carnival, but it just, it just slipped out and I'm sorry.

GRACE

That's okay, Clark. I'm not mad at you—because you've treated me so well so far.

CLARK

Thank you.

GRACE

It's just hard when a girl like me is trying to talk with a guy like you and he brings up the issue of sleeping...in a bed...in a nightie...or whatever it is that I happen to sleep in, that you don't know yet, but can't help wanting to know.

CLARK

Yeah...

(pause)

GRACE

You haven't started wrapping yet, Clark.

CLARK

I—oh, right. I, I need to cut the paper.

(pause)

END OF EXCERPT

For more information or for the complete play, *Poorly Wrapped*, please visit:
<http://www.tameddaugh.com/poorly-wrapped>

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