

He and She by: Alex Stevenson

Sitting on a bench at a playground, they watch as others play, have fun, and be themselves, they sat there and were unable to choose on what to do. Either to stand up and decide or to stay sitting and figure out who is the one that needs to go, knowing they cannot be together anymore.

"I want to go play," he said, looking at the boys playing tag and running around in the dirt and mud.

She was looking at them too, she turned and saw the girls playing house and swinging on swings. She then looked down and said, "I want to play too."

He looked at her, she looked at him, not watching as time goes by, as life changes.

"I am going to go over there," he said and stood up, before she snatched his arm, violently shaking her head. Her eyes wide with fear, not wanting to be alone again, hoping he didn't shove her aside as she did to him for so many years. He always forgave her, because if he didn't, she would never set him free.

"Not without me."

The sadness in his eyes. Having to choose between reality and being himself. He didn't want to play with her anymore, he couldn't. He wanted to play with other kids. He didn't want to do things alone anymore when she lost interest. He didn't want to have to choose anymore. He wanted to be himself, by himself. So that they could both live peacefully and happily.

He sat back down next to her, staring longingly at the boys, who are playing football. She did too, but having to be normal, she stared at a group of girls, who were painting their nails and talking about the cutest guy at school.

She was debating whether to let him go or to let herself go. They continued to sit and watch as the others went from children to pre-teens to adolescents. They were wanting to play, but not wanting to decide.

They always talk and discuss what were to happen if they chose, choose which one should go and interact. They can try and go together, but that wouldn't change a thing; they'd be right back to where they started, feeling worse than they already do. So, they talked about everyone else, rarely talked about change, rarely talked about themselves. Creating a bigger distance between themselves and reality.

"I like him."

"So do I."

"She's pretty."

"Yeah she is."

"I like how his sweater looks on him."

"I like the color of her dress."

"That guy looks nice in those jeans."

"He looks hot."

He and she always liked how others looked, never themselves. Always hiding, always watching others change; they lived in the shadows of their peers. They both loved, yet never approached anyone, out of fear over who they were with would think, if either him or her were to change. They are letting their fears control their minds, never facing what is in front of them, avoiding the real problem out loud. They were dealing with their problems inside, breaking themselves down slowly, already willing to give into the other, but too scared to make the first move.

He looks at the time, it's almost midnight. The time when Cinderella had to change back to her original self, the time when she chose to run from her prince instead of stay, she ran so that he wouldn't see her true self, in fear of rejection. It was their time to choose. Either to stand up and show themselves, or run away from what they want. But the fear of rejection kept them in their place.

They both stand, look each other in the eyes, and tell each other what would happen if one of them were to go and one to stay.

"Sister will be confused."

"Brother will ignore me."

"Mom will hate me."

"Dad would never talk me again."

"Friends will leave."

"Family wouldn't want to stay."

"Everyone will be disappointed in the decision."

She breaks the eye contact, cannot look at his pain, the longing he felt, made her feel it too. She sits down, unable to feel her legs, all the feeling of her body going toward the excruciating pain she felt in her chest, from the thought of being rejected and cast away.

He starts to pace. Trying to think of a way for them both to be happy, to find peace somewhere within themselves. But coming up with nothing.

"If you go, we'll be happy and be at peace. If I go, we'll never be free from the pain of not living."

He stops and sat down next to her and gently holds her hand. They both ponder over the facts that have been presented before them.

"If you go, everyone will be happy. If I go, everyone will be disgusted with the decision."

She starts to tear up. She doesn't want to be hated because of what she wants. He doesn't want to be hated for who he is. They want to live without the fear of rejection. They both just want to be happy with the final decision.

"When we do this, there is no turning back. We can never change the decision or we'll never be happy. We'll forever be hidden in the dark, never to be loved, never to find peace."

She sniffles, he can tell from her face that she has decided. A choked sob escapes his throat, one of sadness or one of relief, he doesn't know. She gives a shaky sigh, and takes a deep breath, then stands. He stood up with her and hugs her goodbye. Running his hand across her back, feeling the length of her golden blonde hair, knowing that this is the end. The end of of them. The beginning of being individuals, with one identity.

"Be happy with being you."

She walks away, not toward the playground, but away from it. She is walking to where she belongs, walking toward a place where it is peaceful and full of happiness. She is walking toward a place that they both know it is right. He watches her, until she leaves his line of sight. He gives a shaky breath, never having been alone like this before before.

He turns to sit on the bench, but can still feel the lingering effects of her presence there. He quickly turns around and walks toward the swings, staying at the playground, to try and find someone or something that is accepting. To find peace.

The feeling of someone approaching is new, foreign. It's uncomfortable and awkward for him, as a bronze skinned girl walks up to him and asks his name.

The boy smiles and says, "Alex."