



Drawing the Sandline

This is the very short story of a boy named Whilem and a girl named Lainey. The following is based on actual events... The names have been changed...

Whilem stared at the blinking cursor on his screen, contemplating the weight of the message he was about to send. *"So... Can we hang out again?"* Lainey's latest Facebook message buzzed on his computer as he worked on projects. Whilem sighed, knowing what he must do. He typed out his response, each keystroke feeling like a rusty nail in the coffin of whatever semblance of normalcy they had left...

"For the foreseeable future, no... I am sorry if this hurts you, but I need to be honest. I was done with all this two Fridays ago. As in, done-done..."

He paused, letting the words sink in, hit enter, and waited an hour. He checks back as he works and sees she saw the message. This wasn't easy, but necessary things rarely were. Lainey had a knack for turning every interaction into an emotional rollercoaster, and Whilem was tired of the bumpy as-fuck ride. He continued typing, laying out his frustrations and boundaries with a mix of blunt, heart-felt-honesty, politeness, and intention to do as least harm as possible. Next, he chose his words carefully.

"This is just too much for me to handle right now between the two of us, and I can't pretend I am good with it all. This isn't just about you; it's also about me. I know my limits, we passed them. And then some..."

He knew she would read this and twist it, making herself the victim in a story of her own creation. But Whilem had reached his tolerance... He wasn't willing to sacrifice what good time he had left to make his mark on this world and his mental health for her perpetual state of crisis of being a victim.

"I am not willing to work on these things either. I told you I was content with my solitude, and I mean it. Nothing comes between it. Even without the ex-boyfriend on the couch, his bullshit, and some of the other stuff, it just would have prolonged the inevitable."

Their brief, but gentle lovemaking had started innocently enough; a shoulder to cry on, a friendly ear. But Lainey's problems were like quicksand, and Whilem had foolishly waded in, thinking he could stay on solid ground. These are clouds, not ground... He should have known better.

"Are we still friends? Yes, but I can't be that distraction for you when things get tough. I don't have anything to give right now. Time is my only resource, and I'd rather spend it on tasks that make me feel accomplished, not frustrated about that effort and time."

Whilem's thoughts turned to his new potential contract in Tampa, the personal projects he had neglected, his health, his mental health, his time, good quality time left, his soul, his sanity. He had goals, and ambitions that couldn't be put on hold for Lainey's endless drama.

"Perhaps when we both get our lives in better order, we can revisit this, but not now. I can't give you a timetable for when or if that will happen. I need to focus on my health over the summer and fall, the work I might be doing, and my personal projects will take up about all I have to give."

He imagined her reading this, tears welling up, accusations forming in her mind. She wanted a friend to have carefree fun with without feeling guilty for it. She wanted a distraction to rescue her from herself. But Whilem was no hero; he was just a guy, damaged, working hard on himself, who had finally learned to say no.

"I get it, you want a friend. You want to feel good and have fun. I really didn't want any of that. I thought I was just helping you out. I had a soft spot that got very hard, massive, and too heavy to carry, very quickly. I walk in a desert. I had to drop the very hard, massive, heavy thing behind so I can make it through the desert."

The desert. It was a fitting metaphor for the barren wasteland of how this was playing out. He couldn't carry her burdens any longer; he had to save himself. He took both the red pill and the blue pill, gave Morpheus the finger, and jumped out the window, saying *"Fuck your desert of the real,"* all-the-way-down out of the simulation.

"I hope this makes sense and that you're not too hurt. I know it's disappointing, and I am sorry it had to come from me like this. I will respond when I have time to respond. My headspace is already on other tasks. Have low expectations... That's about all I got... Tried really hard to not say something to deliberately hurt here. That was not the intention and intention for me means everything... Signed, Whilem."

With a final sigh, Whilem hit send. The message flew off into the digital void of Facebook messenger, leaving him feeling strangely lighter. He had drawn his line in the sand, and now he had to walk away, leaving Lainey to navigate her own mess. An hour later, she blocked him for the second time in two weeks. Later, Whilem would learn from refreshing his browser page that she had blocked him before he sent off that last message. She would never know that Whilem attempted to be gentle with her and that this bugged him just as much. However, it sounds to me, the teller of this tale, that Whilem did the right thing. He did right by Lainey. Lainey just cannot deal with reality and that is why this happened to begin with. Moral of the story. Do not modify what and who you are for another. Modifying what you are is not the same thing as compromising for another. One multiplied by one does not equal two, it equals one and it always did and will. End of the story...



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