

# **THE NOTE**

by

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**Characters:**

Smitty - Middle-age, earnest, if a bit hapless; in “retail,” but sees himself as an inventor.

Della - Older, smart; former stock analyst who lost everything but her dignity.

Passerby - Man, non-descript; okay if a bit mysterious (non-speaking part).

**Place & Time:** A city park; a summer morning.

**Set:** A bare stage, except for a park bench with a backpack underneath it, and a trash can nearby.

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At Rise: DELLA is laying on the park bench, asleep. SMITTY enters hurriedly UL, intently working his phone. PASSERBY enters UR, and SMITTY and PASSERBY collide, with SMITTY grunting in surprise. PASSERBY exits UL, making brief eye contact with a startled SMITTY. As he recovers, SMITTY will notice a folded-up white piece of paper (note) at his feet, and pick it up.

SMITTY

(Picking up note and calling off, UL:) Hey...HEY, is this –

(DELLA stirs and sits up, as SMITTY notices her for the first time.)

You see that?!

(SMITTY examines the folded paper, but does not open it.)

M-a-a-n. A guy can't even cut across the park in peace. You saw that!

DELLA

(Still waking up.)

What?

SMITTY

That! He ran right into me.

DELLA

I was asleep here.

SMITTY

Well, he did.

DELLA

If you say so.

SMITTY

(Examining folded-up paper.)

He dropped this.

DELLA

Dropped –

SMITTY

(Holding up paper.)  
This! Why would he do that?

DELLA

You ran into him?

SMITTY

He ran into me!

DELLA

Okay. He ran into you. Doesn't mean you have to scream at the top of your lungs.

SMITTY

I, I didn't scream. I tried to get his attention.

DELLA

Well, you got mine.

SMITTY

This *is* a public park. People can make noise in a park.  
(Referring to note.)  
I think he did it on purpose.

DELLA

You gonna make a federal case out of this.

(Referring to note.)  
Maybe he dropped it, maybe it's yours, maybe it was there already. Who knows, who cares.

SMITTY

No way. He looked at me.

DELLA

If it's important, he'll be back.

SMITTY

Right at me. It's like...

DELLA

What?

SMITTY

Like he knew what he was doing.

DELLA

You know that.

SMITTY

I saw what I saw...I think.  
(Several beats.)

DELLA

Well, what's on it?

SMITTY

I'm not – it's not mine.

DELLA

(Tries laying back down.)  
Maybe it's got a name, address. You can *track him down*. Goodbye.

SMITTY

You saying I should look at it?

DELLA

Don't draw me into this. It's litter! Eat it for all I care.

SMITTY

Well, like it or not, you're a witness.

DELLA

(Sitting back up.)

To what?! You going ape over a scrap of paper? Like it's a bomb or something.

SMITTY

(Seeming to agree.)

Yeah. Yeah, I see what you mean. I can get that way. Thanks.

(Indicating he'd like to sit down.)

Mind if I –

(DELLA relents, and moves over. With intention, SMITTY takes a series of deep breaths, then turns the folded-up paper over and over in his hands.)

I didn't mean to wake you. I didn't see you. People can make noise in a park.

DELLA

Not at the crack of dawn.

SMITTY

(Checking time.)

It's eight-thirty.

DELLA

My crack of dawn.

SMITTY

I'm Smitty.

DELLA

(Sighs.)

Della.

SMITTY

You from around here, Della?

DELLA

You're sitting on my bed.

SMITTY

You're, a...

DELLA

Homeless? I see myself more as a vagabond, nomadic. This is my summer home.

SMITTY

(Several beats.)

Mind if I ask what happened?

DELLA

Yes, I do.

(Several beats.)

You're the nosy kind. Cryptocurrency's what happened. I was an analyst, riding high. Got sucked into the vortex, along with my clients. Lost everything, including my ambition. A modern day parable. Don't trust anything you can't wrinkle. That good enough for you?

SMITTY

(Nodding.)

I guess I am nosy. I mean, I hope, in a sincere kinda way. At least you went for it. I couldn't tell a bitcoin from a plug nickel.

(Distracted by note.)

You think I'm a nut job.

DELLA

Well, you're acting nutty. So, what's your story? You escape from somewhere?

SMITTY

Oh, I'm a pretty ordinary guy. Mosta the time. I'm in retail. An inventor on the side.

DELLA

Of what?

SMITTY

Nothing so far. I think my counselor thinks I'm a nut job. She hasn't said it out loud. I've, a, been struggling some, if you wanna know the truth. Today started off so great. My feet don't hurt, I get *Wordle* in six.

(Again referring to note.)  
You didn't see him –

DELLA

(DELLA shakes her head.)  
How do you know it wasn't there before you bumped into him?

SMITTY

Before he bumped into me.

DELLA

What were you doing, right before?

SMITTY

I, ah, was a, checking my phone.

DELLA

Your phone.

SMITTY

Yeah, I'm waiting on some tickets for the cruise to show up. I shoulda got them yesterday.

DELLA

Sounds like *you* bumped into him.  
(Referring to note:)  
That could have been there all along.

SMITTY

Boy, he looked right at me.

DELLA

Yeah, you said that. You did run into him in an empty park! Wouldn't *you* look at you?



SMITTY

I guess. But, it wasn't like that. It was like he *knew* something. About me. Don't you sometimes –

DELLA

(Snatching the note from SMITTY.)  
We're going in circles here, Smitty.

SMITTY

Hey!

DELLA

(DELLA opens and reads the note to herself.)  
Nice penmanship.  
(She folds it back up and gives it back to SMITTY.)

SMITTY

What's it say?

DELLA

Your note.

SMITTY

(Unfolding the note, he tries to read it, then turns it right-side up and reads it to himself.)  
I knew it. I told you.

DELLA

Told me what?

SMITTY

This is bad.

DELLA

You think you might be overreacting?

SMITTY

Says the queen of underreact! I don't know why I said that. My minister says – well, former minister; before the divorce...I still see him once in a while. I don't have a lot of, you know, support. The kids are gone, off, yunno, living their lives. Anyway, he says I've got *angryitis*, suggested I need to "replenish my soul." Get away, maybe take a cruise.

DELLA

A cruise. Whatever happened to prayer?

SMITTY

His wife's a travel agent. She gave me the family rate. My ex, Rayanne, offered to go with me, since I never took her anywhere when we were together. Says we'd have to sleep in shifts, and I'd have to buy her like a case of *Dramamine*.

(Referring to note:)

Now, *this*!

DELLA

What are you talking about?

SMITTY

(Reading note aloud:)

"You have 10 minutes left."

(A beat.)

This is a death warrant!

DELLA

Really. Kinda dinky for a death warrant.

SMITTY

Wadda you think?

DELLA

*If* it was meant for you, which I doubt, a piece of street theatre, a prank. See how you react. They could be watching from a drone camera right now, yucking it up. Those things may be strewn all over the park, the city.

SMITTY

(Glancing at the sky.)  
No, this, this is Him telling me to get ready. In a hurry.

DELLA

Who? God?!

SMITTY

Yeah.

(A beat.)

Oh my god! Geez, ten minutes. What, I've only got ...when did I...you think it starts when I picked it up, or when I read it?! No, no, it's gotta be when you read it, right? It wouldn't be fair just picking it up.

(Looking at time.)

That means maybe four, five minutes left before I *croak*. Max!

DELLA

Maybe try some more of those deep breaths.

(SMITTY does.)

Good. Better. Okay, now look at it, Smitty.

(SMITTY looks at note.)

"You have 10 minutes left." Where does it say anything about dying. Or left *to live*. This could be what's left on a parking meter for all you know.

SMITTY

I don't even own a car. No, no, ten minutes left - *left* is the end. The *end* end. You're just trying to make me feel better. He looked right at me! We're wasting time here, Della. I've been given this, this chance to get, a squared away.

DELLA

Do you want to die?

SMITTY

No, who wants to die! Not me.

DELLA

Then why read it that way. You're so special you get a 10-minute warning? Like you're the chosen one.

SMITTY

No.

DELLA

If this was happening to you, wouldn't everyone get a 10-minute warning?

SMITTY

Maybe everyone does.

DELLA

What are you talking about! So what happens to those killed instantly, huh? Where's their ten minutes?

SMITTY

Yeah, I see what you're saying. But sometimes things can seem one way, but they're another. You know what I mean? When I was little, my dad used to say it's a *pairaducks*. See, maybe somebody else gets a different kind of ten minutes. Seems like He could start and stop a clock any way He wants. No, it's about having faith. Everybody gets a, yunno, private moment to look at their life. We just don't know it's coming 'til it happens. You get to figure out where you mighta gone wrong, ask forgiveness. So, you can, yunno –

DELLA

- get to heaven?

SMITTY

Yeah. Only...if this is my moment...

DELLA

...

SMITTY

Why are you here, part of it.

DELLA

Exactly. Why *would* I be here? It makes no sense, right?

SMITTY

But God don't hafta make sense.

(A beat.)

Oh my god! You, you're not you...a, a witness. You're here, you're here to help! Me. You're like, a, a, that a Clarence, yeah, Clarence from *It's A Wonderful Life*! You're an angel, right?!!

DELLA

Hell no, I'm an atheist! And, by the way, it's a shitty life.

SMITTY

...

DELLA

But here's some good news - your ten minutes are up, Smitty. Come and gone.

SMITTY

(Looking at time.)

Huh. Boy, what, now. Oh, geez, I gotta get to work!! No, no, wait. Today Friday?

DELLA

(Picking up her backpack from under the bench.)

All day.

SMITTY

I've got late shift on Fridays.

(Referring to note.)

This's got me all cattywampus. Think maybe I'll head to midtown, see about these tickets.

DELLA

(Referring to note and nearby trash can.)

Maybe you should toss that.

SMITTY

Yeah...

(Crossing to trash can.)

...no...I don't think so.

(He carefully puts the note in his wallet.)

Sorry 'bout all this.

DELLA

I was half-awake anyway. My stomach was starting to growl.

SMITTY

Yunno, I really don't wanna go on a cruise with Rayanne. Whadda you think?

DELLA

You had anything to eat?

SMITTY

Ah, one of those energy bars.

DELLA

There's this greasy spoon over on Amsterdam.

SMITTY

Why not! We can go Dutch.

DELLA

I'm not Dutch, either. Your treat – today. Least you can do.

SMITTY

(Seeming to agree.)

What a morning, huh.

(Taking in the world around him.)

Will ya look at all that blue sky. Hey, is that a drone?

DELLA

(Looking up.)  
That's a red tailed hawk, nitwit.  
(On exit.)  
You coming?  
(DELLA exits.)

SMITTY

Yeah.... *Wow!*  
(SMITTY exits.)

End Of Play

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