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GHOSTS OF QUIZZES PAST by M.G. Davidson and Jason Pizzarello

(JJ, a mischievous high school student, is defended by his father to JJ's tough teacher.)

DAD: Mrs. Allensby. I'm sorry. I have the utmost respect for educators like yourself. Why? Because... Teachers are an incredible resource. They work long hours for little pay. They receive modest health benefits and retirement resources. They deserve every single penny they get because they spend OVER SIX HOURS a day not just SUPERVISING children, but actually educating them. Often, in our nations overcrowded classrooms, teachers are responsible for up to THIRTY or THIRTY -FIVE students at any given time! They are often blamed for administrative blunders, shotty curriculum they are given no say over, and poor test scores in schools with incredibly limited resources or a high volume of special needs students where those external factors are not considered. They are seriously doing GOD'S WORK, all for the bargain price of what essentially amounts to minimum wage. They are severely underappreciated and they deserve to make millions of dollars a year for putting up with a broken system all the while still nurturing and genuinely caring for thousands and thousands of students over the course of each of their respective careers. EVERY SINGLE ONE OF US should go out and find a teacher and give them the BIGGEST hug imaginable and thank them for their extraordinary service. IMMEDIATELY.

(He pauses.)

BUT.

I have to tell you, I work three jobs. Usually the graveyard shift. I get home from work at the frozen meat plant just after JJ leaves for school. I sleep for a couple hours until eleven A.M., when I wake up to go to my shift at the restaurant. Then I rush home for about ten minutes to say hi to JJ and his mom and then I take a shower and head off to work again. Weekends I haul metal at the scrap yard. I'm doing this so JJ can go to college. So he can have what I never had. So he can make something of himself.

101 BREAKUPS

by Jason Pizzarello

(Jack and Jill have bumped their heads and fell in love along the way, so Jill thinks.)

JACK: We have to break up. *(Beat.)* Sorry. *(Beat.)* I know we're not even together but I see where this is going. *(Beat.)* And I know we just said we love each other! I know. It was beautiful. I meant it. I do. And I think we'll date very briefly before we get engaged. I don't have any doubt about that. And we won't wait long because we won't be able to. We'll have the most beautiful wedding. Not in this park. But near a waterfall. We'll barely be able to hear our vows over the rushing water. And we won't wait long either before having a little bird in the nest. A girl. And then another. A boy. And then another. A girl. And as we raise our three amazing children—oops we had one more—four. Our four amazing children we struggle and fight and make up and challenge ourselves again and again and fall more and more in love. Before we know it our children have children of their own. Except for that last one, he's in the peace corp. Anyway, life doesn't pass us by. We absorb it. And we grow old with grace and ease and still after all those years, are madly in love. And at the end of our lives we can't imagine it going any other way or ever being apart. The thought of being apart even in death, breaks me. I can't. I can't handle the loss of you. The pain of losing you is worse than never having you in the first place. And so I think it's better if we just...don't.

SPOON RIVER

adapted by Jason Pizzarello

(Reuben Pantier steps forward from his grave. Early 20's good looking, charming.)

REUBEN PANTIER

I was Reuben Pantier.

(He looks at Emily then back out.)

Well, Emily Sparks, your prayers were not wasted,
Your love was not all in vain.
I owe whatever I was in life
To your hope that would not give up on me,
To your love that saw me still as good.
You were the only one.

Oh, Emily.
Let me tell you the story.
I'll skip the part of my father and mother—
Everyone's seems to know it.
After that when school was finished...
How do I say this?
The milliner's daughter, Dora, made me trouble.
And so I went out in to the world,
Where I passed through every peril known
Of wine and women and joy of life.

One night, in a room in the Rue de Rivoli,
I was drinking wine with a black-eyed lady,
And suddenly tears swam into my eyes.
She thought they were amorous tears and smiled
For thought of her conquest over me.
But my soul was three thousand miles away,
In the days when you taught me in Spoon River.

And because you couldn't love me from afar,
Nor pray for me, nor write me letters,
The eternal silence of you spoke instead.
And the black-eyed lady took the tears for hers,
As well as the deceiving kisses I gave her.

But somehow
Somehow, in that hour, I had a new vision—
Of you.
Oh, Emily Sparks!

(Reuben, pleased with himself, returns to his grave.)



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