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The Sandcastle Architect

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Noel, an imaginative dreamer, yearned with childhood insistence for a piece of summer bliss. She had set her eye-line to warm July. Not again would she face that Billy Pham, who ruined her creations in the sand box.

That Billy... he always had to derive his fun at setting her back; proclaiming his dominance over all of her joy.

School did finally recess. Mom and Dad promised to drive her to the beach. Ah, the beach! Summer sunshine, miles of strand, sea-born air, shells, and space for building sand castles, were all in one place!

The day came.

Mom packed up a bag with fruit and sandwiches. She also, of course, packed along with that, Noel's little sand bucket. Sure, Noel could trap sand-crabs with it, digging into sand as the waves washed ashore; but better than that, she could use it to shape towers likened to the tower right out of the tale "Rumpelstiltskin"! Or, other large castles, from a host of stories!

The day progressed; castles were built. Best of all... that Billy was not around to bombard and demolish. How she admired those castles from afar, as Momma put some more sunscreen on her face... especially on her nose.

Then, as Noel looked onward, the one she had first built closest to the waterline washed away.

Then another one washed away.

Just like that, her little treasures washed away!

Years passed, and Noel aged. Her passion for building never left her side. She graduated with a college degree in architecture. Amazingly, she quickly also found work as an architectural firm's apprentice!

One evening, she went out on a dinner date with a young man vying for her affections. He followed his intrigue into Noel's autobiographical retelling of her passion for buildings, with questions. She also joked about that Billy Pham. But clearly, Billy was still a thorn in her side, and her date could tell.

So, he told her a story about loss. He wanted to free her from that memory of injustice - Billy's sandcastle destructions. "How could he do such a thing to my castles?" she still asked with ardent emphasis!

Through the course of this date, she began to view another perspective for the very first time. It was one that was not as self-centered. That while Billy annoyed her, he was seeking joy in his own way too. Sure, it was at her expense. But, keeping a sandcastle permanent is impossible. It's just not meant to be! She continued her endeavor however, to the design of structures, portraying permanence that stands up to time. But, was that just a big delusion as well? Well, yes, but to a lesser degree. The important thing, her date had said, "was to remember that concrete, wood, nails, even rivets, might not be destined to reign!" And so, her creations to this day, still might not be permanent. "Does nature wash them away too?" asked her date, with philosophical aim and provocation.

She did begin to view Billy more forgivingly. And, she believed herself to have simply been more mature than he. Sure, he liked to tear down. And, she liked to build. She realized too that it must be true, that loss is always there no matter what one does, in various shape and form.

Buildings however, do last longer than sand castles - and designing them, still was her greatest joy and accomplishment of all.

Later that night, Noel got to thinking. Her date did too. He and she both saw things a little bit differently than they had before the dinner. You could say the two were building a different kind of structure... a relationship. This relation might endure longer than any summer sandcastle. One that could even outlast a building she designs! One that would be every bit of magic, that the sandcastle was to her as a child. Is it true, that magic reside only in the shortest of joy?

True, Billies out there - regardless of their age and no more mature in spirit, might be tearing down other peoples' castles elsewhere. But, just maybe if Billy had been given time to find a castle he could call his own; maybe with the help of a date as generous as hers, he too just might learn that there is joy in building. And, she might also learn that a building is not always forever.

More, both might just then come together to see, that the

most enduring buildings which inspire the imagination of a child...
beyond sand and water, reside most prolonged, in one place alone:
the human heart.
The End