The Way It Would Be

Anonymous

Abstract
If I were to tell you yes, this is the way it would be:...
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If I were to tell you yes, this is the way it would be:
I would just remember that when you asked me we were on a hill in a little stand-still world wrapped up in moonlight. It was during one of those false previews of spring that come in midwinter and make the dead, brown leaves wake up to rustle. I would remember that, and nothing else would matter, because, you see, we remember the things we want to remember.

I would ask you not to hate me with your best mind for saying yes, at the same time you were hoping that I would. Because I have thought it over, with my heart and my conscience, with poetry and with music, and yes, I have even used cold, clear logic.

I have thought it over with my mind, although I do not think that minds have any place in this. They are much too deadly realistic. They show the intense blue of skies to be the reflection of light on dust particles. They show the glittering needles of star light to be the combustion of rare gases. They take flowers apart and make them into pistil and stamen, and they make love an animal instinct. Therefore I turn away from my mind, because I think I am like the little dancer on the musical powder box, who turns on one toe when the music begins to tinkle.

But if I believe that man is no better than beasts, that he has evolved from a one-celled animal, and that the modern conception of love is only the product of man's silly vanity, then I can say, too, that men have made conventions.

I can say that men have made rules and they mean nothing. I have heard all the arguments. I know them instinctively. I have heard “save it for your husband,” or words to that effect, and they come close to being the best argument. In fact, it is because I believe this that I would say yes. If I can never marry you, if this is the most of you that I can have, then I will take it. Saving it for your husband is another way of saying save it for the one you love, and I know that if I lived a thousand years and married a thousand men, I would not love one of them more than I love you. I would not be sorry.
Most of all, I would ask you not to think me a child. Comparatively, I suppose we are both children, but psychologists believe children have the greatest capacity for living.

So I would ask you to give me credit for thinking it over. Then I would remember that I love you, and that would be all that mattered.

That's how it would be if I were to say yes.

* * *

If I were to say no to you, I would say this also:

First of all, please see that I am not making a hypocritical, pious plea for chastity, for chastity neither came in nor went out with button shoes.

Neither am I being insensibly practical. On the contrary, I am being as romantic and as vainly idealistic as it is customary for human beings to be. I think that you are as unknowing as the precision machine that makes the stiff little dancer turn on the powder box. You make the music tinkle, and you have made the doll dance, but you do not believe that she is real.

I am like that doll, because I don't want to be thought of as a pretty, painted machine. I want you to believe that I am really dancing. I want you to believe that I have a mind inside my porcelain head, a soul beneath my pink glass dress, and a heart that sinks when the music stops. It is not actions in themselves that are wrong, but the motives that prompt them.

The scope for doing wrong lies in our reasons for doing things. That is why I dance so hard, and try to make my smile wider than it is painted.

You see, I have a dangerous little bit of learning. I have been spoon-fed since childhood on Women's Rights; education for women has been instilled into me. But it is more than that. It has a more personal touch. Women today want to be respected for what they are. They want to be accredited with minds as well as bodies, recognized as individuals. I am very tired of being told that I am beautiful. When you say it, I want to stick my fingers in my ears and scream. I would much rather hear you say that you love me because we laugh at the same things, or because we agree on the silliness of people, or because I can read your mind, or just because I'm me.

You said that I would never find any man who wanted me more than you do, but I know so well that you are wrong. Be-
cause some day I will find someone who will want all my ideas, and all my feelings, and all my opinions, and then it will be right.

Perhaps if you had used a line, you would have gotten farther, but you have been fair, and I respect you for it. So I would give you credit for being completely honest with me. Then if it would not sound too righteous, I would say that you were the only wrong thing in it. I would say that it would have been so near to right, because I love you.

That's how it would be if I were to say no.
That's why I'm saying no.

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**Sunday I**
Terrance Hallagan

The loud bells  
Clang overhead  
As people shuffle into pews.

Two little flames  
Flutter like butterflies above the candles  
Among the soft white flowers.

Gabriel stands  
On his shaft of sunlight  
That fastens itself to the altar steps  
And stretches  
Through the wall to... .

The rhymed clanging stops  
With one stray chime.

The people stand  
Then drop to their knees  
With the muffled sound  
Of dominoes set in line  
And clicked with a finger.