

Oscar and Barbara's Wild Ride

Meet Oscar. A pudgy?...tubby?...okay, fat short man with a fedora full of dreams. Why does he wear a fedora? I don't know. Maybe because it goes well with his gray trench coat. Anyway, Oscar was at the office. What office? He never says. It's just the office. He got there early today, just like any other day. Any other same old day. Nothing was ever new or exciting around there. But I guess it was always safe and serene, so it balanced itself out. Nobody could really complain about it. It was more than a cubicle, so that was good. But the chairs were still wooden and it always had some old dusty smell. Especially this time of year. You could always open one of the windows to let it air out, but it was so cold outside that nobody really wanted to. Oscar sat at his desk with his feet on the table. Eating his morning breakfast—and when I say eating, I really mean eating! He chomping down on that chicken sandwich. You almost felt sorry for it—Oscar waited for his forever late coworker to arrive. BARBARA. It is not unusual for her to be running a little late for work, but today she was running late big time. Three minutes late is one thing, but a full fifteen minutes is a big deal to for her. Something must be wrong.

Oscar and Barbara were just two coworkers. They both worked assiduously each and every day, but they never seemed to be able to climb up that social ladder. For thirteen years the two would come in bright and early, punch in their time cards and get to work. Nobody could do their jobs better than they could. The two were a duo that could not be beaten. "A match made in Heaven!" Oscar would always quip. Perhaps there was more to this statement than he let on. Okay, there was. You see, he has always said this. Since their early days together in high school even. She was the one who always seemed to right there by his side. When the cool kids would tease Oscar for being too fat or too poor, Barbara was always there to take up for him. Back then Barbara was Oscar's only friend. She went with him to the games and even the spring formal, but

she never viewed him as anything more than a friend. In fact, she never really sensed that Oscar was capable of having any type of desire for her in that way. All he really ever seemed to care about was eating his favorite chicken from his favorite chicken joint Chickaroos. She never considered that the man set freshly picked flowers on her desk every day for any true reason. Because Oscar sensed this, he always kept his feeling to himself. He was way too shy to tell her anyway.

So, one day in the office Barbara came storming inside. "I can't take this anymore!" She exclaimed as she slammed the door shut behind her, blocking the November wind from rushing inside.

"I know, it's cold. But it is mid-November so one should note that--"

"I'm not talking about the weather. I'm talking about my life! Our lives!"

"You want change something about it?" Oscar said eagerly as he rose from his office desk with his hand clasping his hat on his head trying to hold it down.

"Yes. I want a promotion."

"Oh." Oscar sat back down knowing it was too good to be true. "Just settle down and take it easy. We might not be millionaires sipping champagne by the beach or anything, but we could always sip some champagne hear..." He coughs to add humor.

"I'm serious!"

"So am I."

"We've been doing our part here for so long. Day in and day out to no avail. I was late today because I had to pick up the boss man's coffee and dry-cleaning."

Oscar shrugged and leaned back in his chair. "Yeah, last week he had me re-tar his driveway. I guess he has been a little demanding lately."

"Lately! He's been doing this for thirteen years! I heard in the hallway that he was giving his daughter the promotion."

Oscar leaned forward and placed his elbows on the desk. "I didn't know he had a daughter."

"Nobody did because she doesn't work here! She just asked for it, and he gave it to her. It makes no sense, and it's unfair. Don't you think that it's time for us to get rewarded or something?" She stared pacing back and forth.

"Yeah, or something," Oscar said looking down. "My head hurts." He noticed his barren chicken sandwich wrapper. "We could always go to Chickaroos."

"Is that all you ever think about? You just left there!"

"Look sometimes people need to relieve themselves by doing things outside of work, if you catch my drift." Oscar lowered the brim of his fedora.

Barbara looks at him surprised. "You don't mean?"

Oscar nods his head and raises his brow. "Oh, I mean."

An hour or two later, a man with a briefcase and a woman are running out of Chickaroos frantically. It's Barbara and Oscar. "That's not what I meant at all!" Oscar exclaimed while trying his best to put on his trench coat. He was having a hard time running while trying to tudge his coat sleeve over layers of arm fat. But that's not what's most important at the moment, since police sirens can be heard in the distance, and they appear to be getting closer! "Did you have to pull out a jackhammer?"

"Yeah, because the blowtorch and unicycle clearly weren't going to get the job done. You know that. That's what I thought you wanted me to do!"

"How could you have possibly thought that I meant THAT?!?" Oscar laments as his run becomes more of a power walk. "Just because the boss-man's daughter's car was in the parking lot, doesn't mean that you had to touch it! This isn't exactly *Waiting to Exhale* or anything."

Barbar turned to Oscar, "What else was I supposed to think when you said to relive ourselves at Chickaroos?"

"I just meant to have dinner! That's how I relieve myself when I get stressed."

"Well I guess you're starving now."

"My head hurts."

A winded Oscar motions for the two of them to hide in a train yard. One freight train had an open boxcar door. Barbara tells Oscar that's she's going to go with the train. Although Oscar could easily hoist her inside, he couldn't manage to climb inside himself. He tried convincing Barbara to stay. "Barbara, it's not a passenger train. It's a freight. You don't know where you're going or even if it will take you all that far. They could just be switching cars."

"I don't care. It's time for me to move on with my life," Barbara said as she threw her head back and flipped her hair against the cold wind. It was rather overdramatic.

"What!"

"Come with me." She extends her hand with an innocent yet dangerous expression on her face.

"If that door closes, it's quite possible that you'd suffocate from the heat and--"

"Oscar! Be a man for once and take a chance."

"No," Oscar said sternly. "I don't know how."

Barbara raises her brow. "You don't know how? It's easy just—"

"I mean I do, but I can't."

"I don't know what you're talking about anymore, Oscar; but right now, I really can't stress enough how much I don't care." He was obviously heart by this, but Barbara didn't seem to notice.

"What's happening to us, Barbara? I know you wanted a promotion. I did to. But for you to just snap like this is a bit much, don't you think? We have—well we had—good lives. Let's go back and apologize."

"Well, I guess this is our valediction," replied Barbara as she looked left and right making sure that they weren't being followed. She really wasn't paying attention to anything Oscar was saying by this point. It's actually a little amazing just how nonchalant she is to Oscar's sincerity. Why does he like her again?

"Are you sure you want to leave?" asked a sad faced Oscar.

"Yea, I'm sure," she responded.

"Because you don't have to."

"I know."

"I mean you really don't have to. We could work this out and--"

"Look we both know that can't happen."

"We won't know unless we try," he says as a helicopter flies over the train yard.

"But that's just it. What are we TRYING to do here? Maintain something that was never really there?"

"It's there! It's always been there. It's real."

"No, it isn't. We were just too dumb to realize it before."

"Well, maybe I'm still too dumb."

"Maybe. But I'm not. It doesn't even matter anymore. They're probably scouring the place like no tomorrow by now. We've lost. I'm sorry, but it's time to face facts. I never dreamt of wasting your time."

"You never wasted my time. Everything we ever did together was time well spent. Believe me, we can still make this work. I... I need you!"

"You NEED whoever I used to be. But I'm not her anymore. That girl is gone. I have no idea where she is. Believe me, if I did, I'd find her and ask her where she ran off too."

"But that's just it. She's not gone. She's still alive and well. Just asleep; that's all. She just needs her prince to come wake her up."

"Well he should have come earlier."

"Look, just tell me what's wrong. Where did I mess up? Tell me something so I can go back and fix it!"

"There's nothing either of us can do about it! Don't you think if it were, I would try to go back and fix it too? But it's not."

"You don't understand. I'm not talking about the promotion anymore. I talking about--" (Sirens began to ring and dogs began to bark.)

"I'm sorry, but I have to go," she said right before he stepped away from boxcar. The train began to move, and the two looked at each other one last time.

"I hope you find everything you're looking for."

"Yeah, you and me both." As the train pulls away, she walked further into the boxcar and disappeared from sight.

The train slowly began to pick up the pace down the tracks. Oscar put his hands in his pockets and took a deep breath. You could see the condensation of the cool crisp air leaving his mouth. He just thought to himself, *"She doesn't even know where she's going."*

But suddenly the train stopped. Oscar turned around and saw that the engine had turn off its lights. "Man, this is enough for the night," said the tired engineer. "How's a guy supposed to switch freight in one night back and forth in the same yard all by himself without going mad....." His voice trailed off as he walked farther into the night. A confused Barbara stuck her head out of the boxcar.

"Barbara!" Oscar exclaimed as he ran toward her. He grabbed her as she came out of the boxcar.

"Look, I will be a man and just say this: Don't ever leave me again. I love you!" Barbara looked surprised yet delighted as they embraced each other.

"Oscar, I had no idea." Seriously, she's just now getting it?

The moment was almost magical. The two had almost forgotten the world around them. Just then helicopter lights shined down on them. "Put your hands up, you're surrounded!" a police officer's voice boomed.

"This was all your idea." Barbara groaned.

Oscar looked with squinted eyes at Barbara. "My head hurts."

The End