

Thoman

1.11

Poindexter Skating Rink

Falling . . . in Love (The Birth of the Toymaker)

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As Thoman recounts the following story, he loses himself in the past, and for the first time, the audience sees the color and the “spark of life” that used to be his—the life that “life” has taken from him.

Thoman gives Claire a playful dirty look after her last comment.

Thoman

Anyway . . . One day as I was doing my routine on a small stage between a plate-juggling giraffe and a ballerina elephant, in came a large group of children. It was very hot that day—must have been a hundred degrees. The kids were sweaty and crabby and they crowded around us. I’m dancing along now and it’s really starting to get hot, so I’m getting tired and my energy’s dropping. And then, the most beautiful girl I had ever seen came in behind them. Well, I couldn’t slack now, so I really ramped it up. I was totally distracted by her and she knew it. She gave me a smile—my adrenaline went through the roof. I started tapping harder and jumping higher. Completely forgetting about my strings, I jumped and spun in the air. One of the strings looped around the juggling giraffe’s head. **(Claire laughs.)** Yanked him off the stage. His plates went flying everywhere. One flew across the stage and shattered on the ground just as the elephant was stepping into an arabesque balance. She loses her balance, tumbles backwards, grabs the backdrop on the way down and rips it down completely. Crash!

By the time the dust settled, I think it was the most embarrassing moment of my life.

So then, Ella comes up to me and says, “That was the funniest thing I’ve ever seen in my life. What do you do for encores?” I didn’t know what to say—^{quickly}I was thinking “Just kill me now”—I said . . . “Calf roping” **(Claire giggles)**—then she giggled. And I was in love. One week later, we went on our first date, and I made her a marionette to remind her of that day we met.

Claire

You made her a toy?

Thoman

Yes, it was actually the first toy I gave to someone.

Claire

I bet she loved it.

Thoman

She was crazy about it. In fact, she wanted me to make more for the kids that came in that day.

So that's when you started making toys!

Yep. That started it all.

You really loved her, didn't you?

(A little slow to respond) Yeah, she was pretty amazing.

Claire

Thoman

Claire

Thoman

....

Thoman, Pastor John

2.1

St. Thomas Community Church

When Gifts Meet Needs

Thoman runs straight to the church.

Thoman

Pastor John?! Are you here?

No answer.

Pastor?

Still no answer.

John? **(Pause)** Ella, did you hear that? She made the doll talk? Did you hear it?! That nuisance of a girl, that . . . stubborn, feisty, nosy, little misfit! Uggh! She's just like you!

Pastor John enters.

Pastor

Hi, Thoman.

Thoman

Hello, Pastor!

Pastor

Please, "John."

Thoman

John.

Pastor

So any answers yet?

Thoman

No . . . I mean, yes! I think. But the answers hurt too much.

Pastor

Thoman, sometimes we have to return to the place of pain to find the door to peace.

Thoman processes a moment.

Thoman

Uh . . . yeah . . . but I . . .

Pastor

Thoman, God loves you. It's evident. He's not going to just leave you alone. And you have something important to share with the world. I don't know what that is, but you have a calling; and you have the gifts to live up to that calling. Whether that's a small thing or a big thing. You have a special . . . spark from God. Life happens the way it's supposed to when that special spark connects with some receptive need. You see? Whatever that is. Whoever that is. Big or small. Life . . . joy, energy—good things happen when gifts, meet needs—puff! Life! Animation! Love. You've experienced that love. Now sometimes things happen, the dark, hard things of

life—you know about that—they try to put out that . . . **(Looking for the right word)**
connection from God. See. But God doesn't want it to stop. It's a part of who he is. And that's
why he doesn't quit pursuing us. And he will continue to pursue you. And he answers prayers. I
imagine that's what you're wrestling with right now.

Thoman

So what do I do?

Pastor

(Pause) Let him catch you.

**After a contemplative moment, Thoman grabs John's hand and firmly shakes it, then exits.
The pastor follows him towards the door**

Thoman, Clair

2.4
Jail

Broken and Unwanted

An hour later, Claire goes to the jail and requests to see Thoman. She talks to him about the toys.

Thoman

So is this what you meant, John: let God catch me? Okay, you got me. Although, I'm not exactly sure how this works. . . . is it supposed to be like this? I mean, **(Pause)** I'm in jail—and for nothing I've done!

Claire enters the jail room. They make eye contact, but Thoman says nothing.

Claire

Mr. Baker . . . I'm so sorry.

He doesn't respond.

I just wanted to . . .

Thoman

What do you want? Why can't you just leave me alone?

Claire

(Pause) I'm sorry. **(She goes silent.)**

Thoman

(Growing more irritated) You follow me around, you destroy my privacy, you break into my house, you . . . ruin my life. Why? What do you want?!

Pause.

What were you doing there?

Claire

The toys. I just wanted to . . .

Thoman

I told you not to go in the back room.

Claire

But why? And why all those toys . . . There were so many? Why don't you give them away?

Thoman

They are defects. They don't work.

Claire

What do you mean they don't work? They were just . . .

Thoman

(Growing more irritated) They're broken and they're worthless, and I can't fix them.

Claire

But they were . . .

Thoman

They are all bad and nobody wants them! Why can't you understand that?

Claire

I understand that. But didn't they used to belong to people? I don't understand. You say they don't work, but I just saw . . .

Thoman

(Progressively getting winded)

Listen, young lady! Those toys used to belong to children and they worked, but they stopped working. So they sent them back to me. But as you can see, I can't fix them. I don't know how to fix them. I don't know how to make them work again. And that is why they are still here! Okay?! I am not some great toy maker! I don't have some special gift. I don't have some anything. So will you please leave me alone?!

Thoman slumps down on his cot very defeated and ashamed. There's a silence, and Claire sees Thoman's deeper hurt and pain.

Claire

They're for her aren't they?

Thoman

I beg your pardon?

Claire

The balloons, the roses, **(Claire begins to cry)**—they're for your wife, aren't they? You miss her a lot.

No one says anything for a moment, as Claire's and Thoman's sadness seem to connect and merge.

Claire

You're lucky.

Thoman

Excuse me?

Claire

(Upset) At least you loved someone, and they loved you back. At least you had a family to care for, to laugh and cry with. I've never had a family. No one has ever made toys for me or bought me flowers or given me balloons. At least somebody wanted you. No one ever wanted me. I don't know what it feels like to have someone say, "I love you."

(A little angry) Hundreds of kids like me would give anything to have just one of your toys and you're living there in that dump feeling sorry for yourself. Why have something like the ability to give people joy if you keep it all to yourself? What's the use? And you do have something special, something like no one I've ever known.

But now you're just a scared, mean, selfish old man. *Goodbye!*

She starts to leave.

Thoman

Claire!

Claire

(Mad) And you don't have to worry about me anymore because I'm leaving. I'm being adopted by wonderful people, and I'm happy about it.

(She starts to leave again but turns again.)

I can't believe I wanted you to be my father. I never want to see you again. I . . . I hate you!

Claire storms out of jail room.

Thoman

Claire!

Thoman stares in shock at the statement the young child just made.

Thoman

Adopted? **(Pause)** Why, God?! Why are you doing this? I was fine. Okay, I was miserable! But, I was fine with miserable! I was okay with miserable. And now this. What do you want?

Lights out.

Thoman, Clair, Ms. Applegate, Bethany

2.9

Foster Home

“My Dearest Claire”

Claire and Bethany are sitting on the couch. Claire is packing.

Bethany

I'm so excited for you, Claire, but I can't believe it's happening.

Claire

I know. I can't believe it either. I'm actually going to have a family.

Bethany

Jokingly> Oh, take me with you please.

Claire

I wish you could go with me. We are sisters you know! It feels like we're sisters anyway.

The two girls giggle as Ms. Applegate enters their room with a letter and a package.

Ms. Applegate

Claire, are you almost all packed?

Claire

Just about, Ms. Applegate.

Ms. Applegate

Well, why don't you take a break for a moment and take a look at this.

She hands the letter to Claire.

Claire

It's from Mr. Baker.

Claire stares at Ms. Applegate.

Ms. Applegate

Well, read it sweetie (**placing the package on the bed**). I think this goes with the letter. Bethany, will you come with me into kitchen? I need your help with the pumpkin pie.

Bethany

Do I have to?

Ms. Applegate throws her thumb toward the kitchen and gives Bethany an authoritative look.

Bethany

Yes, ma'am.

The two ladies leave. Claire begins to read the letter.

Claire

My dearest Claire,

I know that you're leaving, and I don't know if this will mean anything to you now or not. But, I didn't want to say goodbye the way we ended things. I'm so sorry for how I've treated you since, well, pretty much since the first day we met. I . . .

Thoman (vo)

I wasn't fair to you, and I really didn't give you a chance to get to know me because I was afraid . . . of you. The truth of the matter . . . Ten years ago when my wife Ella got sick with the flu and died, I pretty much died with her. I was mad at them for making her sick. She loved working with the kids. For years we tried and tried to have our own children, but nothing. Then finally a miracle: she was pregnant and . . . well, then . . ., Paris told you the rest. I just couldn't handle it. I've been mad at the world ever since. I was mad at God. Then you came along, and I felt something that I hadn't felt since Ella was alive. A spark. And that scared me. I was afraid to let you in. And I really didn't know how—it's like that part of me was broken, and I was afraid to get close. You startled me, and I'm afraid I was too blind to see how wonderfully unique and special you really are. I was afraid to go back to that feeling of loving someone, knowing that I could lose them again. So . . . I hope you can forgive me enough to accept this gift. I hope that your new family is a great one. You deserve it. I too am leaving. I'm moving away from this place. The memories here are too strong, and I need a fresh start. I want you to know that you have changed my life, and for that I am grateful. You helped me realize that just because something is old or broken doesn't mean that it's ready to be thrown out. I love you, Claire, Thoman.

Claire opens the gift, and it's the doll that spoke to her. Her eyes well up with tears.

Claire

^{Sadly}>Mr. Baker.

She takes the doll in her arms and rocks it. It warms up . . .

Doll (vo)

^{Tenderly}>I love you.

Claire begins to cry.

Lights out.