



Parable Time

Give Less

Generosity • 2023

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25 min ▾

Beneath their smiles and friendly banter, the Carters and the Fletchers find themselves in a humorous yet heated rivalry fueled by jealousy and pride. As both families try to one-up each other, an unexpected turn forces them to reassess their values. This relatable and thought-provoking story reveals the true cost of materialism and inspires a heart of genuine generosity.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Will Carter	(male)
Nancy Carter	(female)
Tom Fletcher	(male)
Linda Fletcher	(female)
Banker	(male)
Beggar	(male)

Give Less

(Banker enters with paperwork and knocks at the Carters)

Banker:

Hmmph.

(Banker exits. Tom and Will enter)

Will:

Well would you look at that. Mr. Tom Fletcher up before twelve.
Is today a holiday or something?

Tom:

Mornin' Will.

Will:

Not too early for you, Tom? It's barely nine in the morning.

Tom:

Ah you know, thought I'd get my hands a little dirty before the heat kicks in.

Will:

Oop, careful. You don't wanna get a splinter in those soft, little hands of yours [chuckle].

Tom:

Funny, Will. Very funny.

Will:

Ahh you know I'm just messing with you, Tommy. I'm sure you're working hard..or hardly working [chuckle].

Tom:

He he. All jokes aside. What do you think?

Will:

About what, the bench?

Tom:

Yeah

Will:

I mean..it's okay I guess.

Tom:

Okay, as in..

Will:

Ahh, you know..it's a bench. Same as any other huh.

Tom:

Mhmm.

Will:

But who am I to talk? Look at my silly little bench, right?

Tom:

Right. Huh.

Will:

Not like yours looks so much better than mine or anything.

Tom:

Oh come on, yours isn't bad at all. It's..it's cute.

Will:

Cute..

Tom:

Yeah, it's a cute little bench.

Will:

Mhm. [pause] Welp, good talk.

Tom:

Hey, Linda's making some apple pie later today. Maybe you and Nancy wanna join for dinner?

Will:

Any other time Tom, we're busy today.

Tom:

Oh come on, you got plenty of time. It's what, nine? What do you say about six?

Will:

Splendid. Just splendid.

Tom:

Great. I guess I'll see you then?

Will:

Must have cost a pretty penny, huh?

Tom:

What?

Will:

Can you time travel with it too?

Tom:

Oh, my watch. Nooo [chuckle]. I wish.

Will:

What was wrong with the old one? It looked perfectly fine to me.

Tom:

Ah, it didn't really fit right anymore. Thought it was time for an upgrade, you know?

Will:

No. Tom. I wouldn't know.

Tom:

Right. Hey, if you want, I can give you my old watch? Maybe it'll fit you better?

Will:

No need, Tom. My clock at home works just fine, thank you. It just needs to tell time, right?

Tom:

Oh, yeah, of course. Just to tell the time.

Will:

Good. I'm glad we're on the same page.

Tom:

Sooo..are we still on for six? Will? Will.

Will:

Show-off. Cute little bench. You think your bench is so much better, do ya? Nancy! Nancy, come out here.

(Nancy enters from the house)

Nancy:

What's the matter, Will?

Will:

I'm getting rid of it.

Nancy:

Rid of it? Why would you do that?

Will:

He thinks it's cute.

Nancy:

Who thinks what?

Will:

Tom, with his fancy new bench.

Nancy:

And what's wrong with that?

Will:

He's trying to make us look poor, Nancy. I know it.

Nancy:

I'm sure he didn't mean it as an insult. Please, don't take it to heart.

Will:

I'm not taking it to heart. I'm taking it to the trash.

Nancy:

Will, hold on. It's a perfectly good bench.

Will:

That guy didn't work a day in his life, and the day he does, he decides to build a bench. How convenient, right?

Nancy:

William dear, calm down.

Will:

Just so he can sit on it and stare at his new watch.

Nancy:

Another new watch?

Will:

Gold, Nancy. A gold watch. What do you need a gold watch for?

Nancy:

I don't know.

Will:

Exactly. He just wants to rub it in.

Nancy:

Honey, let it go.

Will:

No. I'm going to the watchmaker.

Nancy:

With what money?

Will:

Who knows. I'll borrow it if I have to.

Nancy:

Borrow it? And just who do you think is gonna give us another loan?

Will:

I'll figure it out.

Nancy:

We're already three payments behind on the house, Will. We can't afford to borrow more money.

Will:

Nancy, I will not have Mr. Tom Fletcher walk all over us like that. I can afford a fancy watch too.

Nancy:

Will..

Will:

I'll be back before dinner. We're going to Tom's place.

Nancy:

[inhale/exhale]

(Will and Nancy exit. Tom and Linda enter)

Tom:

There it is..

Linda:

Oh Tom, it's beautiful.

Tom:

You really think so?

Linda:

Do I? Why, why, it's perfect! You're just the best Tommy, thank you.

Tom:

Ah it was nothin'.

Linda:

Now if only we had a garden.

Tom:

A garden?

Linda:

[clapping] Ahh! I can see it already. The daisies will go there, and the lilies there and..ohhh Tom, do you think we can get a garden?

Tom:

Uh..

Linda:

Then we could sit here in the evenings and admire the flowers, all on our new bench. Now wouldn't that be nice?

Tom:

Yeah..I'll see what I can do.

Linda:

I know you'll do a great job, thank you Tommy.

Tom:

Oh, I was talking to Will. I thought it was a good idea to invite them for dinner.

Linda:

Oh, you did?

Tom:

Will it be okay?

Linda:

I mean, you're the man of the house, why does my opinion matter, right? Huh hu.

Tom:

You sure? I could tell him something came up.

Linda:

No, nooo. It should be fine I guess.

Tom:

If you say so..

Linda:

Next time, maybe you can let me know before you invite someone? You know, so we can prepare better and all huh. Do you think you can do that Tom?

Tom:

Sorry dear, it didn't cross my mind.

Linda:

Oh it's okay. I know you'll never do it again. Right, honey?

Tom:

Right.

Linda:

Good. Did he say anything about our bench?

Tom:

Ahh, not much.

Linda:

Did he like it?

Tom:

I think so..he said it was okay.

Linda:

Okay? When was the last time he looked at his bench?

Tom:

Well, he didn't say it was bad.

Linda:

But he didn't say it was good either.

Tom:

I'm sure it's nothin'.

Linda:

You know what I think, Tom? I think he's jealous.

Tom:

What makes you think that?

Linda:

Clearly our bench is better. He just doesn't wanna admit it.

Tom:

Nooo, I don't think so.

Linda:

Don't be so blind, Tom. I mean...you don't see it? Will drools when he looks at our house. And don't get me started on his wife, she's just burning with jealousy.

Tom:

Linda..

Linda:

Every time we get something new, they get the same thing. Well ours is always better of course, but needless to say, they're jealous. That's all.

Tom:

Maybe you're just overthinking it.

Linda:

No Tom. I wouldn't be surprised if they get a garden too when ours is done. You need to show them that we're better. Actually, why am I telling you? You're the head of the family. You'll figure it out. [innocently] Right, honey?

Tom:

Well, I don't think it-

Linda:

Good. I'll go get that pie started. You set up the table. I mean..do you think you can set up the table, honey?

Tom:

Anything for you my dear.

(Tom and Linda exit. Will enters with a new watch)

Will:

Tom, Tom, Tom. Just wait until you see this. Nancy! Are you ready to go?

Nancy:

Almost. Should we bring iced tea or lemonade?

Will:

Neither.

Nancy:

What do you mean, neither?

Will:

They invited us over. They should have drinks.

Nancy:

Now you know we can't come empty handed.

Will:

They have the money, they can buy their own.

Nancy:

That's not right, Will. We need to be friendly.

Will:

When were they ever friendly to us?

Nancy:

They invited us over for dinner, did they not?

Will:

Yeah, just to show off their stuff.

Nancy:

I don't get it Will. When did you start getting so riled up about everything?

Will:

Ever since the Fletcher's got up on their high horse.

Nancy:

What are you talking about?

Will:

First the house, then the bench, then the watch..uhh, I can't with these people.

Nancy:

Now why should that bother you? Sure our house might not be the best in the town, but we should be grateful we have a house.

Will:

It's not about that, Nancy. I am grateful. I just don't like the way they make us look bad.

Nancy:

Having more stuff won't make us any better.

Will:

It ain't fair, alright. I get up before six, I skip lunch, I work twice as hard as he does, and for what? A cute little bench and a half broken shack?

Nancy:

William Carter. Thank God we have a shack. Ever since you started looking over at that Fletchers yard, all you can think about is money. Don't you forget that we all end up just the same, six feet under ground. Now you can live your life chasing every last dollar just to make yourself look better than Tom Fletcher, or you can enjoy your God given life and serve those around you. [inhales\exhales]. Now can we please just have a peaceful dinner with our neighbors?

Will:

[inhales\exhales] Yeah. I guess we can bring both.

Nancy:

Thank you.

(Will and Nancy head over to the Fletchers)

Tom:

Will! Nancy! Good to see you.

Nancy:

Why, thank you Tom. It was so kind of you to invite us.

Tom:

I'm glad you guys could make it.

Nancy:

Where can I put the drinks?

Tom:

Oh, you didn't have to.

Nancy:

It's the least we can do.

Tom:

There's fine.

Nancy:

What a lovely bench Tom, did you build it yourself?

(Linda enters with a pie)

Linda:

He sure did. My Tommy is a handy man.

Nancy:

Linda! Good to see you. That pie sure does smell good.

Linda:

Yes it does, and it should taste just as great.

Tom:

Well, now that we're all here, how about we say grace and dig in? Would you like to lead us, Will?

Linda:

Tom, don't embarrass our guests. You're the man of the house, you should pray.

Will:

I can do it, it's no problem.

Linda:

No Will. Tom can pray just the same. Thank you.

Tom:

I was just thinking our guests can do the honors.

Linda:

Tom, pray.

Tom:

Go ahead Will. I'll close if anything.

Linda:

You know what. I'll pray. [innocently] The food's getting cold. [chuckle, pause] God. Bless this food that it's good for us and that we may always have enough, and more. Amen. [pause] Well, let's not just stand here. Grab a plate. Here you go Tom. Nancy, there's one for you and Will there.

Nancy:

Go ahead. We'll go after you guys.

Linda:

No, no. Guests first. Please.

Nancy:

Are you sure?

Linda:

I insist.

Nancy:

You're too kind Linda, thank you.

Linda:

Not as kind as you, Nancy.

(Beggar enters)

Beggar:

Uh..excuse me kind people. I don't mean to interrupt, but do you have anything to spare for a poor soul like myself?

Tom:

Oh, of course. I'm sure we can-

Linda:

Sorry, we would love to, but there's already four of us and it's just a tiny little pie, you know. It just wouldn't be enough.

Beggar:

I understand. Maybe a piece of stale bread or something? Anything helps.

Linda:

Gave the last one to the pigs, sorry.

Tom:

Are you sure? I thought I saw some in the cellar.

Linda:

Gone. Threw it out this morning.

Tom:

This morning? You didn't come out until noon.

Linda:

Oh. It must've been last night then.

Beggar:

It's not a problem. Thank you for your time.

Will:

Hey. I think we have a little extra back at the house. It's not much, but if you want it..

Beggar:

Thank you sir, thank you.

Will:

Sit tight. I'll be right back.

Linda:

You know what..I just remembered. I think we just might have something after all. Wait here.

Beggar:

Thank you ma'am.

Will:

Another day and it would've gone bad. You came just in time.

Beggar:

Bless your heart. Thank you, good sir.

Linda:

What are those stale crumbs gonna do for him, Will? Here. I got you a fresh loaf.

Beggar:

Oh my, I don't deserve this.

Linda:

Ah it's nothing, save your breath.

Will:

Bread won't do him any good if he doesn't have anything to drink. Here. Take some lemonade.

Linda:

You know what, just take the pie. We needa go on a diet anyways. Right? [chuckles]

Beggar:

No, I couldn't.

Linda:

Hurry up before I change my mind.

Beggar:

God bless your hearts. You don't know how much this means to me.

Linda:

Go on now. Have yourself a wonderful day.

Will:

Hold on. Maybe this can buy you a room for the night.

Beggar:

Sir, I can't accept this.

Linda:

You're right, and you shouldn't. Will needs it more than you do.

Will:

It's not giving until it hurts, right?

Linda:

You want it to hurt huh? I can make it hurt too. Tom, take off your watch.

Tom:

Linda, this is not a competition.

Linda:

Absolutely not. I'm just in a very giving mood today.

Tom:

Are you sure?

Linda:

I said take it off.

Tom:

But you really like this one.

Linda:

Here. Sell it. You can live on that for a year if you want.

Beggar:

Ma'am. Your husband is right. This is already more than enough.

Linda:

Don't listen to him. I'll say when it's enough. We need to be cheerful givers, right honey?

Beggar:

But I could never repay you.

Linda:

And you don't have to. We're giving after all, aren't we?

Beggar:

[sniffing] This..this is life changing.

Linda:

It's not ours to give in the first place. All glory to God, right.

Will:

You know, I just feel the need to bless our friend here a little more. If that watch can buy you one year of shelter, this one can buy you two more.

Linda:

Where on earth did you get that?

Will:

You think your husband's the only one that can wear a nice watch?

Nancy:

Will!

Linda:

Tom, you told me you bought the best one they sold.

Tom:

At the time it was.

Linda:

Well...well...Uhhh.

(Linda exits)

Nancy:

I am so sorry about this Tom.

Tom:

I don't know what happened. She usually doesn't act like this.

Nancy:

It's been a pleasure, please excuse us.

Beggar:

I guess I'll go now. You guys have a lovely day.

(Beggar exits. The Carters return to their house)

Nancy:

William Anthony Carter. What were you thinking?

Will:

What? I was giving.

Nancy:

No, Will. You were not giving. You were competing.

Will:

You told me we should serve, so I did.

Nancy:

Unbelievable. Un..believable.

Will:

I mean, I guess the watch was pushing it a little..

Nancy:

A little? Will, it's not giving if you're just trying to show off. God looks at your heart, not at the cost of your watch.

Will:

I'm sorry Nancy, I guess I got ahead of myself.

Nancy:

I'll admit. You did a nice thing by giving him some bread. That was very thoughtful honey, but you didn't need to give more than the Fletchers just because.

Will:

I just thought, maybe for once we could come up on top, you know? You deserve so much better than this Nancy.

Nancy:

Will..

Will:

I wake up every morning thinking about how maybe one day, one day, I could change our lives. If I just worked a little harder, if I just made a little more money..then, then maybe one day I could get us outta this dump.

Nancy:

Honey..

Will:

I could finally afford to buy my wife everything she always wanted. A new dress, a new ring, maybe some flowers, or, or just take her out to a nice restaurant for once.

Nancy:

Will, I don't need any of that. I have so much more than fancy nice things and a nice place to eat. I have you Will. God gave me you for a short time, and I don't want to live every day just seeing you waste away your health for some silly little things. I need you William Carter.

Will:

Oh Nancy, I'm so sorry.

Nancy:

I won't love you any less without that stuff, and you need to understand that.

Will:

Why are you so good to me?

Nancy:

When you married me, we made a promise. Rich or poor, sick or well, good or bad, we're gonna love each other. So that's what I'm gonna do.

Will:

I don't deserve you Nancy. I've been so foolish.

Nancy:

None of us deserve anything. But that didn't stop God from loving us. If Christ gave up his life, then we need to learn to give too.

Will:

Yeah.

(Banker enters)

Banker:

Is this the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Carter?

Will:

That would be us.

Banker:

Hi. I'm Bill from the bank. I came by earlier today to deliver you this notice. We're taking the home.

Will:

No no no. This can't be.

Banker:

Your house payments are months overdue. You got three weeks to move out.

Will:

But we filed for an extension. This is a mistake.

Banker:

I'm afraid not.

Will:

Sir, there must be something we can do?

Banker:

There is. You pay, you keep the house. Otherwise, move out.

(Banker exits)

Will:

Oh Nancy. I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

Nancy:

I just need a minute [sniffles].

(Nancy exits into the house)

Will:

God, what was I thinking..

(Tom and Linda enter from the house)

Linda:

No Tom. He started it.

Tom:

Well, it's only right if we go and apologize.

Linda:

They should be apologizing to us.

Tom:

They were our guests, Linda.

Linda:

And I can't believe you just sat there and didn't stand up for me.

Tom:

You weren't exactly in the right here, honey.

Linda:

Uhh. Whose side are you on, Tom? Don't you start defending Nancy now.

Tom:

Nancy? This is between you and Will.

Linda:

I heard the way you were talking to her. You think I don't see anything?

Tom:

[sternly] Linda.

Linda:

You think she's better than me. You just wish I was more like Nancy, don't you.

Tom:

[raised voice] Linda that's enough. There will be no more jealous talk in this household. Is that clear?

Linda:

But Tommy..

Tom:

No more Tommy.

Linda:

You don't love me.

Tom:

Now you better behave yourself like a respectable individual. We're going to apologize, and that's final.

Linda:

Hmph.

(Tom and Linda go over to the Carters)

Will:

Tom, Linda. What brings you guys over?

Tom:

Hey Will, can Nancy come out here for a minute?

Will:

Nancy! Tom's here with Linda.

(Nancy enters from the house)

Tom:

Hey, we just wanted to apologize for what happened back there. You can be sure it won't happen again.

Will:

Oh, well...

Tom:

Maybe we can try it again some time?

Will:

I..I don't know what to say.

Tom:

Come on. It's all in the past now.

Will:

It's very thoughtful Tom, it's just, I don't think we'll be here for much longer.

Tom:

Oh, no?

Will:

Yeah. We lost the place.

Tom:

Oh no.

Will:

Yeah.

Tom:

How long do you have?

Will:

Three weeks.

Tom:

I see.

Will:

Yeah...I had it coming though. I've been such a fool.

Tom:

Will..don't say that.

Will:

No, no. It's not right, Tom. You didn't deserve the way I treated you..[inhales/exhales] I guess, jealousy got the best of me.

Tom:

Listen. We got an extra room if you want.

Will:

No, we couldn't Tom.

Tom:

Honest. Stay as long as you need.

Will:

Nah, nah. Don't worry about us, we'll figure something out.

Tom:

Look. Stay with us. Save up a bit, and you can buy it back.

Will:

I don't know Tom..

Tom:

I can use your hand around the yard. Maybe you can teach me a thing or two..

Will:

You mean it?

Tom:

Come on, we'd be delighted to have you.

Will:

I'll pay you back, whatever you need.

Tom:

Don't sweat it. Go on, grab your stuff. We'll have it ready by the end of the day.

Will:

Gee..thank you Tom. It really means a lot. Come on Nancy.

(Will and Nancy go into their house)

Linda:

Honey, remember what I said about talking to me before inviting someone over?

Tom:

Yeah.

Linda:

You didn't even think about asking what I thought. You just did. You just invited them for who knows how long.

Tom:

I thought you said I was the man of the house?

Linda:

Hmphh.