

Good People

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I never did climb the tree before today because I was always scared. Philly had climbed every day because she was reckless and she was never scared. She always said it was because it was pretty at the top. I never took the offer until today. I had realized now, I wasn't scared of falling. Maybe I wasn't scared because it always felt like I was falling.

But I wasn't falling, not physically anyways. My hands had been firmly planted on the branches. Looking up through the leaves I caught a glimpse of the dark smile on Philly's face. "You stuck?"

"No. I'm just thinking," I said. "I'm not exactly experienced when it comes to risking my life doing stupid things like this." Philly smirked and disappeared into the treetops again.

I thought back to what Cara had said at the gas station half an hour ago. The things she had said hadn't necessarily hurt like she had intended. It only led me to think. To her I wasn't a good person. I wasn't a good person in my terms either. I couldn't think of anyone I was considered a good person to besides Philly. Philly was a good person. She was the only person in the world who was indisputably good. So why had Philly asked me to come to the tree every day, even after I had repeatedly said no, when I was bad and she was good?

She knew I didn't want to climb the tree but she always asked. Perhaps I had no fear of falling but I had no desire to die. It wasn't that I wanted to be dead. I wanted to stop falling. I wanted to just stop existing over all. Sometimes people assume that not wanting to exist is the same as wanting to die, but when you're dead you still exist in everybody's mind. Even if I were to die I would still be bad. If I didn't exist I wouldn't be either.

"Come on, Rupi," Philly called, "You're incredibly slow."

"Shut up and give me time. I don't climb trees," I snapped. I looked back up from my spot to face Philly who no longer looked teasing. She reached out a hand and helped me up the rest of the way, pulling me up and pointing my feet to the correct places.

I dropped down next to Philly and a rush coursed through my body. "I see why you like it here. It's quiet."

"It's not quiet at all," Philly noted. She was right. The cars on the street below us were loud because it was rush hour and the intersection was always loud at 5. We were looking over the most urbanized section of the relatively small and suburban town.

"It's not quiet like that. It's quiet in a different way."

"Spose so," Philly whispered. Then we fell into silence. The tree had given me the ability to not exist for a moment, to watch the world from the outside where no one could really see me. It occurred to me then that maybe Philly always climbed this tree because she wasn't afraid of falling either.

"Philly, am I a good person?" I asked her. She seemed confused and I understood why. I had broken a silence, a good silence. "Because sometimes I'm mean and sometimes it's to other people but sometimes it's to you."

"You're just going through something right now. I can understand." Philly said. I frowned at that because Philly was too good. She always believed it was innocent until proven guilty when the rest of the world had it vice versa.

"I'm not asking you to make excuses for me. I'm asking you to hold me accountable." I pointed out. Philly just nodded.

Philly hesitated before speaking, "You are a good person, and that's not me lying. I think you're a good person who makes some bad choices, but that doesn't necessarily take away everything good you've done. Why are you thinking all this?"

"Earlier today Cara was talking to me. It wasn't like she made me believe I'm not a good person, I always knew. I'm too selfish to be good. But there's something about hearing someone say it out loud that really solidifies it." I watched as Philly hummed. I wanted her to think about it, really think about it, instead of assuming I've always been a good person.

"You know sometimes, people think anyone that's ever hurt anyone they care about is bad. In their eyes that's who the bad people are. They don't think that the good things can outweigh the bad things, and sometimes they don't. The thing is, good things weigh about the same as bad things. People, people just don't know what your good is. I know though. I know and I can tell you that you're good."

"I don't know if I agree."

"People teach you to always be good," Philly pulled my arm towards her and began writing. "They say never do a bad thing in your life and that's true, that's what you should always try to do. But just because you should always try to be good doesn't mean that good and bad don't weigh the same. The bad things don't outweigh the good and the good things don't make the bad things invisible. People like Cara, they don't know everything about you like I do. They don't know that you're good. You're good."

I looked down at my arm where the word good had been written in big bold letters. "It feels like I'm wearing a lie."

"Every time it feels like that... think about whether I'd lie or not," Philly said, "I don't lie."

"Sometimes you see too much good though," I pointed out, "Sometimes you see only the good."

"I can see the bad, but I always focus on the good," Philly said the last part in an almost whisper, "And I never lie."