

A simple exchange of niceties

[Experience](#), [Human Nature](#)



A simple exchange of niceties An insecure, pregnant, presumably young woman, who finds a certain security in a bench - that is what the short story, A simple exchange of niceties, written by the author Joanne Feeder, is about. The narrator makes everything depend on how the bench defines her and what it brings to her life. When it is occupied, she walks past it and accepts it. When it is not, she feels as if it is hers entirely and gets annoyed when other people come and sit next to her.

So the day that someone does sit next to her, and not only that, but also talks to her about their problems, she again lets the bench decide her fate and destiny. The Story is written in first person narrator's point Of view. The narrator is a presumably young girl, who got pregnant. She did not plan her pregnancy. She is a very insecure girl, who throughout the story uses a lot of negative language towards herself. In general her language is very young, informal and very much spoken language.

She uses terms like " to be scraped out of me" (page 1 line 5) " it was a bucking cigarette that got me into this mess at the first place" (page 2 line 51) when talking about her future abortion and how smoking is bad for a pregnant woman. The story is filled with her thoughts and inputs such as " Did it look like didn't mind" (page 2 line 72). This makes the readers get a more personal connection with the narrator, since not only her situation, but also her thoughts about it are explained. That the narrator is insecure is showed during the story.

How the guy she got pregnant with and her best friend, Barbie, calls her a trashy where and she just accepts it. She has no opinion of her own. This

may have started with her bad relationship with her mother. She feels unloved by her mother, feels as if she were a mistake that should have never been born. She feels she is someone who would never go anywhere in life, someone who could never accomplish anything. Again she is very hard on her insecure self, never even asking the mother if this was the actual case. The narrator does not like other people, is shy and afraid of sharing her bench.

The bench is her safe place, something that is always there, almost like a friend she has. The bench might stand for how she is afraid to share intimacy. The intimacy of sharing a bench, sitting next to each other and having a conversation. The intimacy of sharing a relationship.

Whenever money sets next to her on what she sees as " her bench", she gets upset and feels like her personal space has been invaded. In the text she explains how she does not mind sharing, it is not that, she just wants to have an exchange of niceties and that is it. It's not that I don't like sharing. I'd give anyone the shirt off my back or the food off my plate... I just like to be consulted first" (page 1 line 20). But how can she not be okay with sharing her bench, when she is okay with sharing other stuff? Even with the exchange of niceties, she still gets annoyed and feels invaded of her personal space. But as she meets the other woman in the story, this changes. She is annoyed at the beginning. We hear about all her prejudices, such as how the other woman is drinking from a water bottle and how the narrator finds this pretentious.

Again the need to be alone shows, she is trying to avoid the woman's crying and sharing of personal problems. But the woman's problem affects the narrator. They are similar. They both have an obsessive relationship with that particular bench. They both feel it's their own. But beyond that, they are opposites. She is going through the beginning of an unwanted pregnancy while the other woman has been trying to conceive for years. Hearing these problems on the bench seem to affect her, because she gets the idea to "share" her baby -? or rather give it away to the other woman.

She wants to do something nice, and since she does not want it anyway, why not give it to someone who wants it very much? For the first time, she could do something with a purpose and it was because of what she experienced on her dear bench. " It was the first time I ever thought about coincidence and fate and all that stuff; you know, where all the pieces just fall together" (page 4 line 35) - she explains how she never thought about fate before, when in reality she had always been letting the bench decide for her, letting the bench be there for her.

And this was no different. As she carried the child to term, she never saw the other woman again. But it did not really matter; she had started to grow maternal love for her unborn child. " I was never tempted, not even once, to spend it on myself" (page 5 line 165) she explains when talking about how her mother sent her money for the child. Her fate was now to keep it, for the child to be hers. The moment on the bench had changed her fate about aborting it. But the fact that she never met the other woman again changed her fate again -? she was now meant to keep it.

After she has giving birth, she is at the hospital with her mother. It is the happiest we hear her being throughout the entire text, so being on the bench that day really changed her life. But maybe now she would not need to visit it so often? Her messy life might still be messy, but in the end of the story, she has a lot of different people to also rely on to be friends, to be the one that waits for her when no one else does. She is not so lonely anymore.