

# MOVING ON

By Jeff Dunne

© 2020 by Jeffrey A. Dunne

## CHARACTERS

- STEVE                      A man with deep and unresolved regrets about the kind of person he was as a child.
- TYLER                      An introverted stranger who has unknowingly sat down next to a psychological problem trying to unravel itself.

## SETTING

A park bench near a school.

SCENE

*(Steve is sitting on a park bench, watching something that is out in the audience. He shakes his head from time to time, clearly not pleased with what he's seeing. On the other end of the bench is a Chinese food take-out container. After a few moments, Tyler enters. He's carrying a book and paper bag, and walks up to the bench. He gets Steve's attention, then motions at the container in way of saying "Yours?" Steve shakes his head, so Tyler pushes the container to the middle of the bench and takes a seat. He retrieves a sandwich from the bag and takes a bite, then puts it on his leg and starts to read. Steve goes back to watching what's in the audience.)*

STEVE

Oh, don't do that. Don't do... *(He shakes his head in disgust.)* Just get up off your fat, lazy ass and... Right, or just sit there. Not that I'm surprised.

*(Steve leans in to Tyler a little.)*

Can you believe that?

*(Tyler looks up from his book, first at Steve then briefly out into the audience. He shakes his head and tries to go back to reading.)*

It's pathetic. He's just sitting there. Look at that.

*(Tyler resentfully looks up again at where Steve's indicating.)*

TYLER

What am I looking at?

STEVE

What do you think you're looking at? The kid.

TYLER

There's like eight kids over there. Can you be a little more specific? Or better yet, don't.

STEVE

The little fat one. In the blue shirt. Sitting on the slide.

TYLER

He's not that fat.

STEVE

What're you? The P.C. police? He's a tubbo.

TYLER

Whatever.

*(Tyler goes back to reading.)*

STEVE

Miserable fuck.

TYLER

Excuse me?

STEVE

Not you. Him. The kid.

TYLER

Right.

STEVE

Doesn't he look miserable to you?

TYLER

I don't know. Maybe that's just how he l—

STEVE

Trust me. He's miserable.

TYLER

Maybe he's just freaked out because some stranger's staring at him. And yelling.

STEVE

Yeah, right. He's a fucking coward, that's why he's miserable.

*(Tyler just stares at Steve, discomfort edging into annoyance.)*

Fucking coward.

STEVE (CONT)

Look, buddy—

TYLER

Steve.

STEVE

I don't know what your problem is, but—

TYLER

It's not my problem that's the problem. It's his.

STEVE

Well, to me and this tuna on whole wheat, it sounds like you're the one with the problem.

TYLER

Yeah. His.

STEVE

What?

TYLER

The little shit's just sitting there. He *wants* to get up and go hang out with the other kids, but he doesn't. He just sits there.

STEVE

Maybe he just likes to be alone.

TYLER

Does that look like the face of someone who wants to be alone? Look at the way he glances over. When no one's looking.

STEVE

Honestly, pal—

TYLER

Steve.

STEVE

You're acting pretty damn creepy.

TYLER

Oh, give me a break.

STEVE

A grown man sitting here—

TYLER

*(Steve nudges Tyler, and the sandwich falls on the ground.)*

There. Right there.

STEVE

Shit.

TYLER

*(Tyler picks up the sandwich, and while Steve keeps talking, he tries brushing it off.)*

See that? He's looking at Marta Williams.

STEVE

What?

TYLER

*(Gives up and throws the sandwich back in the bag in disgust.)*

The girl in the green and white skirt. Blond hair, tied back with the pink ribbon...

STEVE

Buddy, you're—

TYLER

Steve! The name's Steve, not buddy or pal or whatever. Steve.

STEVE

Steve, I try not to involve myself in things that aren't my business—

TYLER

You're not involved.

STEVE

I'm not, but you're starting—

TYLER

STEVE

*(Suddenly shouting at the kid...)*

Just get the fuck off your ass and go over there!! *(Then to Tyler...)* What a fucking idiot. Jesus!

TYLER

Are you the boy's father? Beca—

STEVE

*(Snorts...)*

Right. No. If I was his dad, I'd have taught the kid how to open HIS FUCKING EYES!!

TYLER

Alright. What the hell's wrong with you?

STEVE

Look. Just look.

TYLER

I don't see anyth—

STEVE

Just watch for a goddamn second.

*(They both watch for a moment.)*

TYLER

I don't—

STEVE

Watch!

*(A moment or two passes.)*

There. Did you see that?

TYLER

No. What am I supposed to be looking at?

STEVE

The girl.

TYLER

The blond one.

STEVE

Marta. Right. See how she just looked over at him?

TYLER

No.

STEVE

He thinks she's judging him.

TYLER

*(Flatly...)*

He does.

STEVE

Yep.

TYLER

She doesn't look like she's—

STEVE

She's not. He just *thinks* she is.

TYLER

And why's that?

STEVE

*(Slowly, softly, as if to an idiot...)*

Because he's a fucking idiot. *(Takes a deep sigh, gets lost in thought...)* Most beautiful girl in the world is looking over at him, and rather than making eye contact, he stares down at his feet like they're about to sprout wings or something.

*(Tyler just stares at Steve, trying to understand what kind of crazy he is. Suddenly Steve's attention returns.)*

You want a laugh?

TYLER

What I want is to read my book, but—

STEVE

You know what's in here? *(He points to the take-out container.)* Kung Pao Chicken.

TYLER

Yeah, that's a riot all right.

STEVE

That little shit buys Kung Pao Chicken five days a week. From the Hunan Express, two blocks over. Buys it, writes his initials on the box, then takes it out with him for recess. Leaves it here on the bench while everyone's playing.

TYLER

Hysterical.

STEVE

Don't be an ass. The funny part is, he doesn't even like Kung Pao Chicken. Not really.

TYLER

Then w—

STEVE

He overheard some people talking at lunch back in October that Marta loves Kung Pao Chicken. So he gets some. Every day, just in case he has the chance to share it with her.

TYLER

Still not so funny.

STEVE

No. It's not. Though what's kind of funny is that she doesn't even like it. The whole conversation was sarcasm, and tubbo there was too stupid to pick up on it. But that's okay. He never offered it to her, so it didn't matter anyway.

TYLER

Maybe he will today.

STEVE

Nope. Not today. Not tomorrow. He keeps buying it for the rest of the school year, but never gets up the nerve. He doesn't have the guts. God, I hate that kid.

TYLER

Clearly.

STEVE

You know, even though she doesn't like Kung Pao Chicken, I bet that if he offered her some, she'd probably take it. You know, basic politeness. Curiosity. Whatever. Or maybe she'd tell him that she didn't like it. Either way, at least they'd have the chance for a conversation.

TYLER

Makes sense. Maybe if he tells her what he did she might be touched that he went to all that effort for her.

STEVE

You're as dumb as the kid. She's in seventh grade. She'd think it was weird or creepy or something. But knowing him, he'd probably tell her. (*He laughs.*) No, that's not true. He'd *try* to tell her, and wind up stuttering to the point that she'd think he had cerebral palsy or something.

TYLER

Can I ask you a question, pal?

STEVE

Steve. I told you. Steve Deere.

TYLER

Okay, Steve Deere. Can I ask you a question?

STEVE

Sure.

TYLER

You obviously hate that kid, so why are sitting here watching him?

*(Steve sits uncomfortable for a moment, then...)*

STEVE

You know where she got that ribbon in her hair?

TYLER

What?

STEVE

The pink ribbon. It was a gift. Her grandmother made it for her when she was ten. Learned that overhearing a conversation in gym next year. Anyway, the grandmother died just after Marta turned twelve, and she wore it every day after that.

TYLER

Steve...

STEVE

Until her sophomore year in high school. But even then she used to carry it—

TYLER

*(More insistent...)*

Steve.

*(Steve falls silent.)*

Why are you sitting here?

STEVE

I don't know.

TYLER

Bullshit.

STEVE

I don't know. Maybe because some part of me hopes that that stupid kid will suddenly get the nerve to offer her some Kung Pao Chicken.

*(Steve stares down at the take-out box.)*

But he won't.

TYLER

And if he doesn't? Will that really be the end of the world for him? I mean, he's a kid. He's allowed to make a few mistakes, isn't he? Without you yelling at him from the bench?

*(Steve thinks about this. After a few moments, he nods, then stands up and starts to walk away.)*

Hey! I wasn't... You okay, buddy?

STEVE

I told you—

TYLER

Right. Steve. Steve Deere. You okay?

STEVE

Yeah. *(Pause, and then he laughs a little.)* Yeah. Thanks. *(Sincerely...)* Really. I appreciate the conversation. And the insight. You, uh... make a good point. Maybe it's... time to be moving on. Sorry about the sandwich.

TYLER

It's alright.

STEVE

*(Pointing to the box...)*

You can have that if you want. He's not gonna eat it.

*(Steve exits. Tyler considers, and then eventually picks up, the box. He picks up some chopsticks and then realizes he can't open them while holding the food. He puts the box back down on the bench, but turned around so the audience can see the initials S.D. on the other side of it. The lights go down as Tyler opens the chopsticks.)*