**A THANK YOU JUST WON'T CUT IT**

*an insightful play*

*First and foremost, we must acquaint ourselves with the characters of this story, Angela and Elliot. The two are friends, and have been as such for a decent time. But the duration of their friendship need not be mentioned for such information shouldn’t count as the go-to measure of value. The reason for this is quite simple. Friendship is built on trust and whilst trust takes much time to be built and varies in intensity from relationship to relationship, almost every form of trust can be shattered within seconds. One can be friends with another for many years and still remain nothing more than in acquaintances with the other person, whilst also maintain a friendship of no more than 6 months in age and have a genuine liking for the person. With that in mind, our two friends have built their relationship on firm ground. It was strong, however, as of recently, both seemed to have been taking that very core all too much for granted…*

ACT I.

*We see our friends lying in a decently grown meadow, enveloped by the moonshine of a warm summer night. In front of their eyes, a fairy-tale view of distant grass-fields and forests is painted. Whilst initially taken aback by its sheer greatness, the sight begins to slowly lose its initial value to them. A sense of dread descends, the hellish spawn of recent past. It’s been a long and tiresome year for both...*

(ANGELA): *(removing her eyes which were previously fixed on a distant tree from which she assumed the distant hooting was coming from) “*You know, Elliot, I’ve been thinking lately.”

(ELLIOT): *(sarcastically, with a taint of anger)*”Oh, have you been now?”

(ANGELA): “This may come off as a bit rude, but I have to get this off my chest.”

(ELLIOT): “Hmm?”

(ANGELA): “You’ve been a real pain in the ass lately.”

(ELLIOT): *(with a slight sense of disbelief and slight tremor in his voice, raised himself to better face what was to come)* “How so?”

(ANGELA): “You know how I’ve mentioned you many times before how I absolutely despise it when you shut yourself in and pretend like you’re better than the rest, because you’re the only who supposedly feels pain whilst the rest of us have it so much easier than you?”

(ELLIOT): “I remember you mentioning that first part, the seco-“

(ANGELA): “No matter. The point I’m trying to portray is that I’m starting to become really sick of it, you know. At first I thought I could somehow bear it, thinking you would eventually open up and finally start talking to me about the things that pain you and the like. Instead you treat me like a goddamn child, safe in her imaginary world, oblivious to pain and loss, someone who couldn’t possibly understand you.”

(ELLIOT): *(in disbelief)* “Oh wow, where’s all this coming from? Have I really been this awful?”

(ANGELA): “Mhm.”

(ELLIOT): “Oh god. I’m really sorry, Angela, I-“

(ANGELA): “Oh shut up, spare me the apologies. It’s like your vocabulary can’t come up with anything else rather than an occasional “I’m sorry” and “Omg so cute”. I’m talking about the posts I’m always sending you, the ones you tend to ignore for a while before you heart them all?”

(ELLIOT): “Right, those. I understand.”

(ANGELA): “Anyway, it feels like I’m the only actually interested in this friendship. I mean come on dude, I always start the conversations-“

(ELLIOT): “Ehm, not alwa-“

(ANGELA): *(now visibly angry)* “-I keep sending you things I think you’d like whilst you never return the favour unless I explicitly mention it, I have to be the one to always come up with plans, I even have to pick topics for our conversations because you clearly don’t seem to give one and so on. And what do you do? You shut yourself in and treat me like a child who’s not worthy of your fucking time!”

(ELLIOT): *(impressed by the strength of her voice)* “I-I honestly don’t know what to say. Look, I’m really sorry, but -“

(ANGELA): “I bet you are. It’s always the same with you, isn’t it? I’ll point out a flaw, you’ll quickly come up with some mediocre excuses and continue to go on as if nothing had happened. And yet you always preach how communication is important, how taking criticism and accepting it can help you develop, but you yourself seem to forget these very teachings you keep bombarding me with, those long text essays that essentially carry no meaning and various speeches you keep on giving. At best you’re a hypocrite.”

(ELLIOT): *(in shock from the words that had just been dropped on his head by a friend he held so dearly in mind)* “I apologise for that, Angela, I really do.”

(ANGELA): “Mhm, sure. You keep repeating it as if that’s going to change anything. You never change Elliot, despite your many promises. You’re always your boring self…”

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

*Clouds were now covering the moon, dimming its shine. The forest, strangely, seemed to have become less audible. Stricken down from what he had thought was reality, Elliot began to go over the words of his friend. No matter how he put them, he couldn’t deny what she had said. She had accurately revealed his character in a matter of minutes. Denying that would be the action of an insane man. Instead, a different approach was needed.*

(ELLIOT): *(After some brief silence he decided he’d be the one to speak first. “No need to prove her point any further”, he thought to himself.)* “Alright, look. I can’t really go about denying what you had just said. It’s true, plain and simple.”

(ANGELA): *(with a small sense of pride)* “Oh I wouldn’t have even let you deny it, of course it’s true.”

(ELLIOT): “Right. I’ll return to that later, lest I forget. But first, may I add something to this?”

(ANGELA): “If it’s another excuse you’re thinking of, you best be quiet. Otherwise proceed.”

(ELLIOT): *(only now beginning to realise that Angela was not messing around)* “It’s not an excuse, I promise you that much. I already said I can’t deny your words. What I want to add is: you’re not much better yourself, you know?

(ANGELA): *(with mixed feelings of unease)* “Oh. Is this you finally opening up to me?”

(ELLIOT): “Sort of, yes.”

(ANGELA): “Mhm, sure. Well, let’s hear it.”

(ELLIOT): “I apologise if this hurts you in advance, but it goes without saying: you’re genuinely egotistic.”

(ANGELA): “What do you mean?”

(ELLIOT): “Have you ever noticed how many of the things we ever did mostly revolved around you?”

(ANGELA): “You’ll have to be more specific than that.”

(ELLIOT): “Have you ever actually considered any of my so-called ‘excuses’, or were you so tightly focused on propagating your self-perceived righteousness that you failed to see that perhaps you needn’t be the hero of this story? You needn’t force me to open up to you as you’ve been striving to do. Affected persons do that by themselves when they feel comfortable, not the other way around. Of all people I’d expected you would actually know what it feels like to be estranged to others. And well, you did mention you know what loneliness feels like in the past, right?”

(ANGELA): “I have, yeah. I talked about it with you as well. It would seem though as if you weren’t really paying as much attention to me as I’d hoped. I would just like to point out that despite the common naming and core similarities, people tend to experience loneliness differently. That said, the same probably goes for us, huh.”

(ELLIOT): “I guess so. So did you notice then, that I haven’t really opened up to anyone about my feelings, not just you? As unhealthy as it might be, I lack the trust so many seem to find so easily in others. You’re one of those people, given how much I came to know about you in just about a month after we first met and how easy it is for you to be open with others. Quite foolish of me to think you’d understand my situation come to think of it now, but here we are. Although, this in itself is an egotistic thought, so I shan’t indulge in it any further. And tell me now, when was the last time you didn’t make a fool out of yourself for so desperately trying to fit in with others ‘just for the sake of making an impression’, so you could reap that attention and confirmation you so desperately yearn for? When was the last time you genuinely considered my needs instead of just asking me and then quickly shrugging it off as if I never feel anything like you do whenever I don’t immediately give you an answer you’d be happy with? To me this shows you never really meant any help in the first place, even if you did, but only wanted to make it seem like you care so you could throw that in my face and make it seem justifiable to criticise me for not caring as much as you apparently do. In reality, this ‘care’ of yours is seemingly more or less just surface-level, an excuse to feel better about yourself. We’ve almost always been doing everything to your accord and not always because I had nothing better to come up with. The reason is mostly you. You can’t seem to bear it when you’re not the one all the attention is being given to, when you’re not the one responsible for all the good things, the success, the happiness. But criticism? You always run away from it. You say you’re always willing to listen, but do you actually? You always quickly hop back to what *you* were planning on doing either way. I’ve become so used to this that I’ve decided I best keep my mouth shut, since the chances of me actually being listened to and understood are slim to none. With your actions I’m given nothing more than a sense of distrust.”

(ANGELA): *(in awe)* “Is this really how you’ve been feeling?”

(ELLIOT): “I’m afraid so.”

(ANGELA): *(overwhelmed with unease)* “Oh wow. Is there anything else you’d like to add?”

(ELLIOT): “As a matter of fact, plenty.”

(ANGELA): “Oh boy.”

(ELLIOT): “Out of all things that bother me most about you, is you shifting the blame and playing the victim.”

(ANGELA): “Right.”

(ELLIOT): “Remember that week when we were at your place on a Tuesday, the week before we had a test, when we did almost no learning we initially intended?”

(ANGELA): “Yeah?”

(ELLIOT): “We were both visibly disappointed with ourselves, but it was what it was and at the very least it was fun. I told you that very same day not to blame me exclusively for this, as we both equally stalled with work. Believe it or not, there was a reason as to why I asked you this. You immediately agreed we shared our blame. And yet, when we met at a café two days after that, you did the exact thing you promised you wouldn’t. You said something along the lines of: “Oh, I wanted to do some work, but someone was enjoying themselves too much and I didn’t want to say anything.” With that simple sentence you made it known you weren’t ready to be held responsible for your share and that the fault was mostly mine. Given that you were sick that day and I wasn’t really in the mood for an argument I simply agreed by saying I felt the same, but this has been bothering me ever since. Not the case by itself, it only serves to exemplify a repeating pattern, but more-so what stood behind it: you almost never acknowledge your blame. Rather, you become extremely defensive, filled to the brim with excuses, desperately trying to shift the blame on others, be it people or other contributing factors. This is also why I find it difficult to communicate with you with criticism as I know well I won’t get anything else than bold replies, contributing nothing to the debate, but rather striving to avoid it. And should that not be enough, well, then there’s always the victim card waiting to be drawn. You always tend to make yourself seem pitiful to others when pinned into a corner and faced with your own bullshit. Or when I’m trying to make a point you don’t wish to see through you pull a sad face and pretend like everything is worthless and that nothing really matters, why even try. Simply put, you overreact for no solid reason.”

(ANGELA): “Well this victimhood and overreacting thing you mentioned; I’d just like to point out that it takes one to know one. You’re not much better you know. You do pretty much the same thing here, only difference is you’ve waited until now to tell me.”

(ELLIOT): “Again, I can’t deny your words. Well put. May I continue now?

(ANGELA): “You haven’t yet finished? Oh god.”

(ELLIOT): “Yeah, sorry. You talked a lot about always being the one who’s actually trying in this here friendship. You were quite vocal about it too: you initiate conversations, you make the plans, you lead the topics, you take the most interest. But again, none of this has anything to do with you *by yourself*. Stop being so goddamn egotistic. Nobody is forcing you, and neither should you be forcing yourself. Give the friendship space and time to grow by itself. If it’s truly more or less a one-sided effort it will quickly fade and you’ll be able to move on. If not, if both sides actually do care but have different ways of expressing it, different schedules and different lives, all of which are things that always seem to slip out of your mind, then it will blossom still. You *just* have to give it time and let it grow naturally. Forcing yourself and consequentially me as well, will do more harm than good in the long run. And keep in mind that nothing and nobody is perfect. Trying to make somebody completely perfect for you is never going to be a good idea.”

(ANGELA): *(rather hurt and slightly angry)* “Have you finished now?”

(ELLIOT): “I have. More or less.”

(ANGELA): “Good. It’s a nice thing we got this out of the way. But it would seem we still have plenty to talk about.”

(ELLIOT): “It really would seem so.”

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

*The two friends were now visibly distressed. The moments they’d shared in the past few minutes were indeed shocking, yet unavoidable. Sooner or later a lashing out, a sort of schism would’ve occurred either way. It’s how human relationships work, differences lie within their very core. And as the gentle summer breeze began to stroke their faces, Angela and Elliot knew something had to be done…*

(ANGELA): “I won’t lie to you, this was honestly a bit much to hear.”

(ELLIOT): “Sorry.”

(ANGELA): “Don’t be. I had it coming, heh. But I would like to point out a few things if I may.”

(ELLIOT): “By all means.”

(ANGELA): “You seem to have taken my ‘vocal outbursts’ about me being the only one who does anything in our friendship a bit too harshly. What I meant was, is that I have this feeling you’re not trying as much as I do. And I’m not saying this in an egotistical sense, but rather as an almost objective observation. Sure, you can keep on saying how egotistical I am about this, but this won’t change the simple fact that I do indeed start most of our conversations, or make most of our plans. Facts are facts, and they don’t care about your feelings.”

(ELLIOT): “Well, you’re right. Thank you for pointing this out.”

(ANGELA): “No problem.”

(ELLIOT): “Truth be told, I’m not quite sure of the reason myself. However, I can assure you that I value our friendship quite a lot. I’m aware words themselves won’t do much to ail this, it’s the actions that carry the value. And it really would seem that I haven’t done as much to contribute to the well-being of our relationship. I guess I’ve begun to take our friendship too much for granted and the fact that I don’t know as to why this is happening somewhat scares me. But this truly doesn’t mean that I don’t value our friendship. Fact of the matter is, it’s one of the best things I currently hold in my life. I can’t verbally express myself how much I love it. The least I can do, now that you’ve pointed this out, is to try my damndest not to let it go to waste.”

(ANGELA): “As will I. May I point out a couple more things?”

(ELLIOT): “You may.”

(ANGELA): “I’ve noticed this supposedly ‘strong’ character of yours, the one you pretend to have and hide behind whenever you’re faced with something you find displeasing, is nothing more than a façade for a weakling who is easily insulted and acts as if he’s smarter than he wishes to confess. You always seem to need to be the one to have the last word in an argument, yet at the same time fail to see the obvious. You too don’t listen, just as much as I apparently don’t. It’s like you have a superiority complex of sorts, and a weak one at that. You’re so easily insulted when people turn out to be better-performing and more self-confident than you thought they were that it’s become painful for me to see it. In a way, your character is toxic, whether you wish for it to be true or not. And I’m not saying this to insult you, I’m just trying to point out some features you may have previously missed. I genuinely don’t wish to see you be hurt because of such stupid behaviour.”

(ELLIOT): “Oh wow. Well, thank you for pointing this out, Angela.”

(ANGELA): “Not a problem, Elliot. I’m surprised you weren’t apologetic. That’s a nice touch.”

(ELLIOT): “It would seem I have to start somewhere. By the way, some additional thoughts had just crossed my mind, would it ache you if I shared them with you?”

(ANGELA): “Heh, be gentle, please.”

(ELLIOT): “You were spot-on when you said my ‘strong’ character is just play-pretend. Up to a point it really is. Though I couldn’t help but notice you’re, again, not as different. Your ego is extremely weak and it shows. It shows whenever someone makes a slightly more offensive joke you don’t agree with, or makes a remark about you that doesn’t fall in line with your reality. You become aggressive, insulting or so saddened you would give up on life if it meant an exit of out of the unpleasant position. When repeated over the course of time, this becomes very annoying, as one can’t even communicate with you properly without the fear of striking a nerve. To add insult to injury, whenever I point out such behaviour, you’ll brush it off with an excuse such as “I’m a LoL player, what did you expect?”. I couldn’t give a damn as to what game you love to play most, whether it be one with a toxic community or simply single-player. What deeply bothers me is how naïve you are when it comes to your character. The fact that you run on spite and label that as a normal part of your personality that others should always put up with, is absurd. I hope you learn that negativity, of any kind really, just makes you become older, *uglier*. As should I.”

(ANGELA): “I’m glad you realise that last part too. And I think you’ve mentioned this before. I’m really sorry, Elliot.”

(ELLIOT): “All good. Just try not to forget about it. And I will try not to forget the things you’ve told me. For once I just might actually appreciate the feedback I’ve been wanting all this time.”

(ANGELA): “I sure hope you will. How did it feel to finally unburden yourself from all that dread you’ve been carrying?”

(ELLIOT): “Not that bad if I’m honest. I honestly hope I’ll be able to do this more often, and for real, not just build tension and distrust on false promises. But please, Angela, I beg for your patience here. Sadly this is who I am, this is the friend you seemed to have picked. Would you be willing to put up with him for a bit longer?”

(ANGELA): “I think I could do that, yeah.”

(ELLIOT): “I can’t thank you enough, really. The sheer fact you’re willing to put up with me, that you talk to me, that you actually care – it’s impossible for me to describe it, it really means a lot to me. Thank you.”

(ANGELA): “It’s okay. But a thank you just won’t cut it, dear Elliot. You’ll have to prove yourself with actions, not words. And one more thing I’d like to add, something I think both of us should learn from. Given the nature of the conversation we just had, I think it’s important we remember, that people do not respond well to being told what to do, even when we, their friends, view the solution to be clear. You can’t change the way other people think by saying them the things they did wrong, or impose your way of thinking. You can however, set an example and be there from them.”

(ELLIOT): “A remarkably fair point.”

(ANGELA): “Heh, I know.”

END OF ACT III.

*And so our friends seemed to have finally arrived at a conclusion. Whether or not they actually paid attention to each other this time, remains to be seen. But one thing is for certain: they weren’t so different from each other after all. Sure they had their different views and opinions, but who doesn’t? Throughout life, people tend to surround themselves with those they prefer in the sense of ‘who’s most likely to agree with me?’ We tend to hang out with those who share similar views to those we hold, possess the same values we cherish. Life is much easier this way. Problems arise when people are faced with things they dislike, be it views or acts of others that don’t fall in line with our perception of good. Everybody reacts in their own way to these disturbances. The intensity of one’s feelings or the strength of one’s emotional reaction, varies from person to person, but is usually correspondent to that of what is being perceived as unpleasant. As such it becomes highly important that those in close relations with a certain person they hold dear, sometimes take a step back and reconsider their views. Are my views perhaps too harsh, could the other person be right, is it possible that this argument is just the result of stress and pitiful remarks and holds no real value? Those are just some of the things that need to be taken into consideration when faced with such obstacles. Forcing somebody to change so that they would fit one perfectly, is an act no one should consider. On the other hand, adapting to one another, facing obstacles together and not on opposite sides, can be a difficult task, as it is usually much easier to just give up and have it one’s own way, the way one perceives as safest and most effortless. Sadly, most of the time this is how progress is avoided and relationships fail. If done properly and within healthy measures, cooperation with those you supposedly deeply care about can yield fantastic results. Let’s just hope our characters will be able to come to that same realisation someday.*

*~THE END~*

Note to reader

The author of this work is far from perfect. As such, any constructive criticism is more than welcome. Whether or not he will accept it with a smile, is his concern, but he will try his best to answer comprehensively. Ctrl+A

Nosy little donut, aren’t you? Well since you’re here: I just want to let you know that I still love you very much. I hope this story served you well and gave you some ideas to talk about. But please, don’t forget that my goal here wasn’t to destroy what we have. If anything I want to keep it, albeit with some improvements. Stay safe, love.

P.S. Rad te imam, prosim ne pozabi tega.