

Punchinello (by Max Lucado)

(1) Once there was a group of wooden people called Wemmicks who lived not too far from their creator, the Woodcarver, who lived a bit up the hill from their village.

In the daily lives of Wemmicks, there is one activity that preoccupies the most, which is that if a Wemmick does something good, they would give that Wemmick a star sticker. Say, if a Wemmick looked very fashionable, they would give that person a star sticker. If a Wemmick was athletic, and could run fast, they would give that person a stick sticker as well. If they thought someone said something smart and was funny, they'd give that person a star sticker too.

(2) On the other hand, if they saw that someone did not look too good in their eyes, they'd give that person a gray dot sticker. And if someone was slow, they'd give that person a gray dot sticker too. If someone said something that wasn't too smart, then they'd give that person a gray dot sticker as well.

There was one Wemmick by the name of Punchinello, and Punchinello had paint on his body that was old and peeling. So Wemmicks gave Punchinello a gray dot for that. Punchinello did not have good balance and tripped a lot; and because of that, he received gray dot stickers. And because Punchinello was awkward and said the wrong things, he also received gray dot stickers for that. And because he had many gray dot stickers on him, other Wemmicks just give him gray dot stickers because of that.

(3) One day, when Punchinello was feeling low because of the gray dot stickers that were on him, he noticed another Wemmick by the name of Lucia. Punchinello noticed that Lucia did not have stickers on her. Because of this, Punchinello caught up with Lucia and said: "Excuse me, I notice that you no stickers on you. Tell me, what's your secret?"

Lucia replied, "It's simple. I go see our creator – the Woodcarver – everyday. "

"Really?" Punchinello said confused.

"Of course. Why don't you give it a try?"

Punchinello thought hard about what Lucia said. The next day, he gathered within himself the courage to go see the Woodcarver.

(4) He walked up on a path up the hill towards the place where the Woodcarver lived.

As he arrived at the door, he heard a deep voice.

WC: It's good to see you.

P: You know my name?

WC: Of course, I made you. (The WC sat P on a bench, and looked at P's grey dots). It looks like you've been given bad marks.

(5)

P: I didn't mean to. I really tried hard.

WC: You don't have to defend yourself to me. I don't care what the Wemmicks's think.

P: You don't?

WC: No. And you shouldn't either. Who are they to give you stars or grey dots? They're Wemmicks just like you. What they think doesn't matter. What only matters is what I think. I think you are pretty special and amazing.

P: Me? Special? Why? I can't walk fast or jump high. My paint is peeling. What do I matter to you?

WC: Because you are mine. That's why you matter to me. (P's eyes grew wide. No one had ever said anything like that to him). Everyday, I'd been hoping you'd come.

(6)

P: I came because of someone who had no marks.

WC: I know. She told me about you.

P: Why won't the stickers stay on her?

WC: Because she has decided that what I think is more important than what they think. The stickers only stick if you let them. They stick only if they matter to you. The more you trust in my love for you, the less you will care about their stickers.

P: I'm not sure I understand.

WC: You will. But it'll take time. You've got a lot of marks. For now, just come see me everyday. And let me remind you how much I care. (WC set P on the ground). Remember, you are special because I made you and I don't make mistakes.

(7)

Punchinello didn't stop, but in his heart he thought: "The Woodcarver really means it." When he did stop to pause, a dot fell to the ground.

WONDERING QUESTIONS:

- I wonder what you find to be the most important part of the story? What part caught your attention?
- I wonder if you've had an experience that comes very close to this story?
- I wonder where you are in this story? Who can you identify with or empathize with the most? (Wemmicks, Lucia, Punchinello, Woodcarver)
- Who is your Woodcarver in your life?

*Keep on sharing your story. Keep on listening to each other's stories. And keep on listening to the silence.