

THE GREED GAME
Written by Kianni Keys

THE GREED GAME

CHARACTERS:

AVERY MILTON- 20s, homeless, needs change for food, very blunt and sassy

RICHARD (RICH) PRATT- 30s, very well kept, business attire, arrogant but interested in entertaining other's thoughts

CHARLES STEEN- 30s, sympathetic and preachy

MIRANDA WESTEN- 30s, no nonsense

POLICE OFFICER- 40s, trying to do their job efficiently and has a good heart

SETTING:

PLACE- Public park

TIME- Afternoon

(Lights up on a bench in a public park. AVERY MILTON, 20s, homeless, raggedy clothes, multiple layers, is holding a CUP for change. Realizing that no one is coming soon she empties the contents of her cup onto her hand. There are a couple COINS. Barely enough for anything.)

AVERY

Damn.

(Looking around herself, she pockets the change and leaves the CUP on the bench before taking out a KNIFE from her pocket. She takes a second to look at it before hiding behind the bench. Soon after RICHARD PRATT, 40s, neat suit, tie, BRIEFCASE, walks in front of the bench talking on the PHONE.)

RICHARD

Yes-yes I know George. I'll have them do it by next week-hey, no, that'll take away the bonus. Come on, a little elbow grease never hurt anyone-

(Richard sits down on the bench and looks at the CUP.)

RICHARD (con't)

Right, George, but you're going to have to start being reasonable with me here. Trust me, they call me Rich for a reason.

(After hearing "Rich", AVERY peeks her head out from behind the bench and puts the KNIFE away. She slowly crawls to the CUP without RICHARD noticing. RICHARD takes out his WALLET and gets out a handful of BILLS, fanning them in his hands.)

RICHARD (con't)

You're the best, George. Yes- I'm feeling some lucky money in my hands- money that's growing because of you George- you just got yourself a projected 40% increase on your future project signed and sealed by Mr. Rich// himselfAHHH OKAY GEORGE BYE!!!

AVERY

(CUP in hand)

Could you spare a couple dollars, mister?

(RICHARD, very caught off guard, leaps up and accidentally throws the MONEY all over the place. He frantically puts his PHONE in his pocket and snatches his briefcase.)

AVERY (con't)

Any change?

(RICHARD takes a deep breath. AVERY watches as he bends down and collects every single dollar in excruciating awkwardness before stuffing both the money and wallet in his pocket, then straightening out his suit. He takes a huge step back from AVERY.)

RICHARD

(extremely calm)

Sorry, I don't have any change on me.

(Beat.)

AVERY

Not even a dollar?

RICHARD

(patting his pockets)
I lost my wallet.

(RICHARD starts to walk as AVERY blocks him, shaking the CUP. He dodges her but she blocks him again. He dodges her again and this time she whips out the KNIFE, making him stop.)

AVERY
Geez buddy you are a different species let me tell ya. Do you think I'm blind?

(RICHARD doesn't answer.)

AVERY (con't)
No. No, I'm not blind.

RICHARD
Damn.

AVERY
(flashing the KNIFE more)
You had the chance to be an okay human being, but you know what? We all have to eat one way or another. Now give me your money.

(Beat. RICHARD doesn't say anything. AVERY gets closer.)

AVERY (con't)
Give. Me. Your. Money. Or. I'll. Stab. You.

RICHARD
No.

AVERY
No what?

RICHARD
No both.

AVERY
Ugh, rude.

RICHARD

Excuse me? Last time I checked, you were the one who was about to stab *me*, not the other way around.

AVERY

Well, last time *I* checked, you were the one talking about not having a wallet when your whole bank just spilled right in front of me like a minute ago. You're so greedy.

RICHARD

What? Is this conversation really happening?

AVERY

I guess so.

(AVERY motions for RICHARD to sit on the bench but he shakes his head.)

RICHARD

(starting to leave)

I have to go to work.

(AVERY chuckles, blocking his way. She brings out the KNIFE again.)

AVERY

I'm really surprised you thought you had a choice. Now sit.

RICHARD

Fine.

(RICHARD slowly moves to the bench, his hands raised. AVERY makes a jabbing motion for him to hurry up.)

RICHARD (con't)

I SAID FINE GEEZ.

(AVERY puts the KNIFE away and starts to pace in front of the bench.)

AVERY

Now, where were we?

RICHARD

You called me greedy and I got offended and then you threatened to stab me if I didn't listen-

AVERY

Right, I said you were greedy and you had the audacity to disagree.

RICHARD

Well-

AVERY

How much money do you make?

(AVERY taps on the bench, her hand inching towards RICHARD, making him answer quickly.)

RICHARD

Um... a decent amount.

AVERY

Thank you for your cooperation. Now how much do you think I make?

(Beat.)

RICHARD

I'm scared you're going to stab me if I say what's in my head-

(AVERY takes out the COINS from her pocket and shows them to RICHARD.)

AVERY

Was it this much?

RICHARD

Around that yeah.

AVERY

And I bet you know that this much change is not even enough for a vending machine pack of gum, so I'm not eating tonight.

RICHARD

I understand that you're in a difficult situation, but I'm not being greedy by not giving you money. Your life is none of my business.

AVERY

To an extent you're right. Why should you care about my life? It's a reasonable question. But here's the thing:

(takes out KNIFE)

my life became your business when I threatened yours. Now we're sitting and having this conversation.

(extends CUP)

So will you give me enough change for a meal? Something that costs nothing to you will keep me living. Will you?

RICHARD

No.

AVERY

(annoyed)

Wow. I wasn't even planning to stab you in the first place but you're really pushing it-

RICHARD

Listen to me. I get what you're saying, I really do, but me giving you money to live another day won't matter at all if no one gives you enough money the next day and you end up dying anyways. It becomes a lost cause.

AVERY

Okay, harsh-

RICHARD

Why don't you work for a more sustainable solution? Get a job and don't depend on people's kindness?

AVERY

(sits down on the bench)

I've been homeless since high school. No resume, no nothing. No one will hire me.

RICHARD

No family?

AVERY

Nope.

(beat.)

Hey, is that why you won't spare me a dollar? You wanna give your kid a lollipop when you get home from work?

RICHARD

No. Family's are distracting. My work is my kid.

AVERY

Yikes, that was sad.

RICHARD

We all have our own ways of living.

AVERY

(stands up)

Dude, that's exactly what I've been saying this whole time- You know what? No. You don't seem to be getting it by just listening to me. You need to experience it-

RICHARD

Excuse me?-

AVERY

I'm basically holding you hostage right?

RICHARD

I guess.

AVERY

And it's very clear to see the financial divide between us....

RICHARD

Right.

AVERY

So let's do a little experiment while we're here. Since you say you aren't being greedy, let's test that theory: if a poor person mugs a rich guy but the rich guy doesn't give in, who's being greedy?

RICHARD

And how exactly are you going to test that?

AVERY

You're going to live my life, Mr. Rich.

RICHARD

It's Richard.

AVERY

Ohhh. I thought you were just being an ass.

RICHARD

Thanks.

AVERY

No problem. Now get up.

(RICHARD, now used to AVERY's antics, gets up. AVERY puts the CUP in his hand.)

AVERY (con't)

(putting one COIN in)

This one's for you, bud. I'm feeling a little generous.

(AVERY shoves RICHARD forward onto the path then sits on the bench.)

RICHARD

So what do I do?

AVERY

Beg for change- Oh, and be polite. We want some efficiency.

RICHARD

But I don't get it. No one will give me money. They see I have money.

EVERY

Exactly. You begging for money is the same as not giving me money. You're greedy either way. So let's see if kindness will be in your favor.

RICHARD

I disagree with-

EVERY

LOOK. Someone's coming. Put on a smile big guy.

(RICHARD huffs and rolls his eyes but does as she says and holds out the CUP.
Soon CHARLES STEEN, 30s, nicely dressed, walks by the bench.)

RICHARD

(somewhat genuine)

Excuse me, sir. Would you be willing to spare some change?

CHARLES

Why would you need money, you look like you're doing fine.

RICHARD

Well- um-

CHARLES

How could you be begging for money when there's a person who really needs money right behind you?

(CHARLES walks to EVERY and pulls out his WALLET, giving her FIVE DOLLARS.)

CHARLES (con't)

(to EVERY)

I'm so sorry this man is preventing you from getting money. I hope this is enough for something.

(walks away, to RICHARD)

Greedy bastard.

(Beat as EVERY fans the money.)

AVERY

Okay, I'm *really* starting to like this experiment.

RICHARD

Look. I told you, no one will give me money, it just doesn't look right.

AVERY

Be honest. It kind of hurt getting rejected huh.

RICHARD

Not really-

(beat.)

Okay maybe.

AVERY

Imagine I was a sunglasses stand: that dude just passed you in order to spend five bucks on sunglasses he's never going to wear because he has to put fake intention behind money that he knew was supposed to go to you.

RICHARD

Interesting analogy under these circumstances but I see what you're saying.

AVERY

Now imagine that everyday... it sucks.

RICHARD

It does.

AVERY

Which is why you have to up the ante-

RICHARD

What?

(AVERY takes out the KNIFE. She stands.)

RICHARD (con't)

(serious)

No. NO. No way I'm using that.

AVERY

It's what I did to you and the only way to complete the experiment.

RICHARD

That's too far.

AVERY

Only if you actually stab them. Man, it's not that deep-

RICHARD

Yes it is.

AVERY

Don't you wanna know if you're actually greedy or not? Isn't the question burning inside of you?

RICHARD

Not enough to flash a knife at someone.

(AVERY steps towards RICHARD. He flinches. She takes another step.)

AVERY

Here, I'll make you a deal. If you manage to get any amount of money from the next person that walks by the bench, knife or no knife, you can go. Hell, you can even call the police on me I don't really care.

(AVERY puts the KNIFE in the CUP then backs away.)

AVERY (con't)

Just use it if you need it. I'll hide this time so you have even more of a chance. Remember: you don't have to use it.

(Beat. RICHARD struggles for a bit before sighing and putting the KNIFE in his pocket.)

AVERY (con't)

(mockingly)

Attaboy.

RICHARD

I'm going to get this money and call the police on you so fast you won't even be able to stab yourself before they come.

AVERY

(behind the bench)

Glad to know you're enjoying it.

(RICHARD waits with the CUP. He straightens out his suit before loosening his tie and untucking his shirt to look more poor. Soon enough, MIRANDA WESTEN, 30s, well dressed, handbag, walks by the bench.)

RICHARD

(genuine)

Hello, ma'am. Would you be willing to spare some change? Even a penny?

MIRANDA

Did you have a hard night out? Why so unkept?

RICHARD

(fixes his suit)

Oh, no, um, I'm sure you have just a penny on you right? One penny?

MIRANDA

Look, I don't know what you're trying to do but I don't give any kind of money to pranksters or whatever you are-

(MIRANDA tries to keep walking but RICHARD blocks her.)

MIRANDA (con't)

What do you think you're doing?

RICHARD

Look lady, it's not that hard to reach into your handbag and give me some change alright?

MIRANDA

Sir, you better move or I'll call the police.

(MIRANDA tries moving forward one more time and RICHARD takes out the KNIFE.)

MIRANDA (con't)

(shocked)
OH MY GOD.

RICHARD

Give me your money or I'll stab you.

MIRANDA

I-

RICHARD

I didn't want it to come to this but you're being a greedy bitch. What's one penny to you huh? One fucking penny?

MIRANDA

(frantic)
OKAY OKAY. Please don't hurt me- I have a family and-

RICHARD

I don't care about your family- you know what? For trying to sway me with your pity party, give me everything in your wallet-

MIRANDA

What?-

RICHARD

NOW. Or your kids are gonna grow up with some dead mommy issues.

MIRANDA

STOP. I have it.

(MIRANDA scrambles for her WALLET and opens it for money but RICHARD takes the whole thing.)

RICHARD

You took too long.

(beat.)

Now go. Tell your family I said hi.

(MIRANDA looks at her wallet in RICHARD's hand, hesitating to get up.
RICHARD growls, flashing the KNIFE at her so she quickly gets up and runs away.
Beat. AVERY emerges from behind the bench.)

AVERY

Woah.

(RICHARD is breathing heavily. AVERY approaches him cautiously.)

AVERY (con't)

Dude, are you okay?

RICHARD

(scarily calm)

Do I look okay?

AVERY

I'm sorry, man. I was just trying to have some fun, I didn't know you'd go insane-

RICHARD

So I won, right?

AVERY

What?

RICHARD

I won. I got the money so now I can leave.

AVERY

I mean yeah, but, do you wanna talk about what just happened or-

(RICHARD quickly turns and grabs the collar of AVERY's shirt and presses the
KNIFE against her neck.)

RICHARD

I don't know why I didn't just run with the knife when you gave it to me. I just couldn't. I needed to see. But now I'm in too deep to run so tell me why I shouldn't kill you.

AVERY

Because I'm only worth five bucks?

RICHARD

(getting closer)

All the more reason.

AVERY

LOOK-look I'm sorry. I didn't know you'd be like this- I mean come on man. I do this every day and you don't see me going around slicing people. Take a chill pill.

(Beat. RICHARD pushes AVERY away and drops the KNIFE.)

RICHARD

You're so useless.

AVERY

A meaner reason to not kill me, but still...

RICHARD

How can you be so light hearted about this?

AVERY

If I didn't life would be too depressing.

RICHARD

I don't understand.

AVERY

What?

RICHARD

Why not just die then?

AVERY

Wow, one mugging and you became a joy and a half-

RICHARD

I'm serious. You don't have any family or any strings and you're obviously unhappy so why not just die?-

AVERY

Woah, woah there buddy. Who ever said I was unhappy? Yeah I have a shitty life but that's my string. I live through thinking and having to interact with people to survive, even if it's a two second exchange. I actually think you're the person I've talked with the most-

RICHARD

I'm not sure I'm happy to hold that title.

(Beat. AVERY chuckles and RICHARD is hesitant but eventually smiles.)

AVERY

So who do you think won The Greed Game?

RICHARD

'The Greed Game'?

AVERY

Yup. Neat, huh. I thought of it while I was behind the bench.

RICHARD

I don't know. I think it goes both ways now that I had to go through that.

AVERY

Strangely enough, I agree.

(Beat. AVERY and RICHARD sit on the bench. After a bit of time, AVERY takes the CUP and looks at RICHARD.)

AVERY (con't)

So... Wanna split the wallet?

(AVERY shakes the CUP and RICHARD laughs.)

RICHARD

I have to go to work.

(RICHARD gets up and gathers his things. He straightens himself up, fixing his hair and tie before picking up his BRIEFCASE. He opens MIRANDA'S WALLET and takes out all of the CASH and CREDIT CARDS before throwing the wallet at AVERY. He EXITS and AVERY sits in awe.)

AVERY

He was an interesting contestant.

(AVERY takes out the FIVE DOLLARS in her pocket and looks at them. She opens the WALLET.)

AVERY (con't)

"Miranda Westen". Ew, what a bland name.

(AVERY shrugs, then starts to SCREAM. A POLICE OFFICER, 40s, work uniform, comes running over.)

POLICE OFFICER

What's wrong ma'am?

AVERY

(breathing heavy, distressed)

I was just asking for change on this bench when I saw a man come over and mug a woman right in front of me.

POLICE OFFICER

Okay. Can you describe what happened?

AVERY

Well, I was hiding behind the bench but it was a rich looking man: suit, tie, everything. He asked the woman for a penny but she said no so he pulled a knife out on her and stole her wallet. He took out the money and credit cards but he left the ID.

(gives the WALLET)

Here. See? Her name was Miranda Westen.

POLICE OFFICER

Are you sure he was rich?

AVERY

I'm positive. I can't believe he would do that. Why would he mug such innocent people? Isn't he rich enough?

POLICE OFFICER

I'm sorry you had to witness that ma'am. Just be glad he didn't try to hurt you-

AVERY

He did! He took me by the shirt and said he would stab me if I called him greedy.

(points at the KNIFE)

The knife is right there. He dropped it while running away.

POLICE OFFICER

That's another story. Okay, come with me. Let's contact the woman and give her her wallet and then we'll find a way to protect you from any future attacks. What's your name?

AVERY

Avery.

POLICE OFFICER

Okay, Avery. Would you happen to know what the man's name was.

AVERY

All I know is that his name is Richard but I heard him call himself Mr. Rich on the phone.

POLICE OFFICER

What a psycho. Unfortunately, some people are never satisfied no matter how much money they have.

(beat.)

On the way to the station let me buy you a meal. You're too young to experience such an act of greed without knowing an act of generosity.

AVERY

Thank you, Officer.

(As the POLICE OFFICER and AVERY exit, AVERY smiles.)

AVERY (con't)

It's good to know I can still count on the kindness of strangers.

BLACKOUT