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A Test of Fate

Abstract

Nadia woke up to the loud banging of the front door. It sounded as if someone was desperate to get into the house. Glancing at the clock on her bedside table, the time read 2:00 am. 'Who could that possibly be at this hour?' she thought to herself. Then she noticed the empty space on the other side of the king-size bed. Realisation hit her. It was probably Tyrone, back from one of his drinking sprees and too drunk to let himself in with his keys. 'Piece of shit,' she murmured under her breath. She quickly donned her robe and responded with quick steps towards the door. By then Tyrone was agitated by her slowness in opening the door. He started bellowing at the top of his lungs.

HELEN SETU

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'Open the fucking door Nadia or I'll come in and belt the living daylight out of you.'

The nearer she got to the door, the louder and more frantic the banging grew. The curses increased in volume by each second.

'I'm coming Tyrone. Please stop that racket. You'll wake the baby up.'

As soon as she unleashed the last catch, the door shot open to expose the lumbering figure of Tyrone. He leaned heavily against the side of the door frame and watched her with drooping red eyes.

'You, you little bitch! Who do you think you are to lock me out of my own home?' he barked.

Nadia ignored his drunken slurs and turned towards the kitchen.

'And don't you dare walk away from me when I'm talking. I deserve to be treated better than this after giving up my dreams for you.'

Nadia continued to ignore him and went about heating his dinner in the microwave.

Her lack of attention and response ignited anger in him.

'You ungrateful bitch. I should have left you before you trapped me with a child. Now it's too late. I can kiss my dream of managing my own law firm goodbye, because all my money is wasted on you and your son.' He shouted as he sent a fist flying towards Nadia.

She had her back to him and never saw the punch coming. She turned around to beckon him into a chair and caught the blow full on the face.

'That's what you get for not paying attention to me when I'm talking to you.' He threw another punch.

The impact of this punch sent Nadia sprawling on top of the table. He picked her off the table again and flung her limp body against the sink. She banged her

back against its edge and fell to the floor. Having got his message through to her, Tyrone gave her a football-like kick to the stomach.

‘Now you’ll hear me better,’ he shouted down at her frail body.

Nadia felt her head spinning and found herself slipping back in time. Then darkness enveloped her.

She was back to the first time she had laid eyes on Tyrone. She was on one of her runs in her first year as a junior air stewardess. Meeting and falling in love with a passenger seemed the last thing on her mind. It was during the in-flight safety demonstrations before the plane’s takeoff that she first made eye contact with Tyrone. Their eyes locked for a brief second, but she had to take her eyes off him. She had to concentrate on the next set of demonstrations. ‘Okay Nadia focus, don’t lose your head now. Focus, focus,’ she thought to herself. She took a deep breath, put on her professional smile and continued her routine as if she had noticed nothing.

‘Phew ... that’s one worry gone,’ she muttered to herself as she polished off her last in-flight demonstrations.

She replaced the safety aides in their compartments. Then she turned to go back into her and Jesse’s cabinet. Jesse was her co-worker on this particular flight. Out of the corner of her eye she noticed a hand gesture signalling for her. It was the same guy she had locked eyes with earlier. She felt a chill run up her spine and a surge of blood rise to her face. She knew too well she shouldn’t be feeling this way. But there was something about him that was so compelling. She composed herself and headed towards him.

‘Can I help you sir,’ she asked in her most professional voice.

‘Yes honey. Can I have a glass of water please?’ He drawled sensually to her. She nodded politely to him, acknowledged his request and turned to go. She only took a step and then she felt a hand pat her behind. A chuckle came from the guy’s direction. Her insides screamed. She made as if to slap him, but she restrained herself for her career’s sake. Instead, she recomposed herself and walked steadily towards the food compartment. She returned with his water and gave to him, as if he had never touched her.

‘Please don’t do that again sir!’ She told him politely as she bent down to place his water on his table rest.

He only smiled and nodded in agreement to her request. Nadia spent the remaining minutes of the flight attending to the other passengers’ needs. She was so into serving and making the passengers comfortable that she totally forgot about the guy. Half an hour later, she had a familiar guy’s voice calling.

‘Excuse me miss. Can I have some assistance here please?’

Jesse was closer to the man. She assumed he meant her, Jesse. She continued to serve the other passengers. But she heard the same guy call repeatedly. She decided to attend to him.

‘Jesse is probably too busy attending to the other passengers. I might as well attend to him my self.’ She thought to herself.

She turned around to find that it was the same guy she had encountered earlier. He smiled at her. Her heart beat faster and she felt her pulse throb rapidly. She wondered if he could see what his smile was doing to her.

‘Uh um ... yes! How may I help you?’ she asked, approaching him.

‘Any way you can baby,’ she thought she heard him whisper.

‘I’m sorry. What was that you said? I didn’t quite hear.’

‘I said I’d like a cup of coffee — no sugar with lots of milk.’

‘Would you like that with anything else sir?’ she asked again.

‘You would do nicely,’ he said under his breath again, which she didn’t quite hear. She only heard the ‘would do nicely’ bit.

‘Could you repeat that sir?’ She wanted to prove what she thought she heard.

‘I said, “a piece of that chocolate cake I had earlier would do nicely”.’

She was sure she heard different. But she brushed these thoughts away and left. She found Jesse in the food cabinet and confronted her.

‘I thought you were going to serve that annoying guy. You were closer to him than me.’

‘I did. I offered to help him, but he totally ignored me and kept calling in your direction. I was so embarrassed, I just left and came here,’ Jesse retorted.

‘I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to be so harsh,’ Nadia apologised.

Just then the pilot’s voice came over their intercom machine. He informed them that the airstrip was in sight. They were going to land within ten minutes. When the plane had come to a complete standstill, Nadia opened the door. She and Jesse then stood at the doorway to see the passengers off. They greeted and shook hands with them. Then out of the corner of her eye, Nadia noticed a figure cross to her side.

‘Call me,’ she had the familiar voice whisper into her ear.

He rounded her and thrust his business card firmly into her hands, as he pretended to shake her hand. Then he was gone. He was the last passenger to leave the plane.

‘So what did he give you?’ Jesse hovered over her to see what she had in her hand.

She opened her hands to reveal his business card with his details printed on it. The name Tyrone Garrison stared back at her.

‘So he has a name after all!’ Jesse uttered and headed into the plane again.

Nadia called Tyrone two days later. They met for lunch. They started seriously dating a week after they met. Everything seemed perfect and promising right from the start. Nadia couldn’t believe her luck. Tyrone was the most perfect gentlemen. She couldn’t believe he was the same guy she had served in the plane. He was romantic, yet virile. He brought her roses and paid the bill. It seemed he was out to win her heart right from the start.

The first day they met formally for lunch, he completely won her over. She arrived at the restaurant five minutes early to find him already there. He was talking to the restaurant manager and had his back to her. He didn’t see her

come in. She went over to the receptionist and asked for her table. She led her over to their table and seated her. By then, Tyrone had finished talking to the manager. He turned to find her seated at the table and looked surprised. He approached their table.

‘Hi! I wasn’t expecting you for ...’ he looked at his watch, ‘... at least another five minutes,’ he said as he slipped into his chair.

‘I just wanted to get here early,’ she replied.

‘Well that’s great. This gives us ample time to get to know each other properly. So, do you want to order now or have some wine first?’

‘Why don’t we order then have something to drink while we wait.’

‘Sure. What will you have? I’ll have the chicken casserole and a vegetable salad.’

‘That looks appetising. I think I’ll have the same.’

Tyrone called the waiter over and gave him their order. They then had him pour them a glass of wine.

‘So, tell me all about yourself.’

‘Well there’s nothing much to tell. I’m an only child. My parents died in a car accident when I was three and I was raised single-handed by dad’s only sister. I finished year twelve and decided to pursue a career as an air stewardess, despite aunt’s wishes for me to pursue studies in university. That’s about it. What about you?’

‘Not as tragic as yours, but quite a long story. Why don’t we eat first? Here comes our food.’

In the next couple of minutes, they ate while conversing in-between meals. When they had finished their meal, they ordered coffee.

‘Well, that was certainly a wonderful meal. I’ve thoroughly enjoyed it.’

‘I’ve enjoyed it myself as well.’

‘So, let’s hear your story.’

‘No, let’s leave that for next time. I wouldn’t want to spoil this lunch with my boring life story.’

‘No one’s life is boring. It’s what you make of your life that tells your life story.’

So instead, they talked about other issues until their coffee cups ran empty. They decided to part shortly.

‘I had a pleasant time. Thanks again,’ Nadia said as she got into her car.

‘You are welcome. See you next week. Take care,’ Tyrone replied, as he stood at the curb.

‘You too. Bye,’ Nadia replied and drove off in her Chevy.

Six months later they were engaged. It was one of those really hot days when there was no wind blowing. The trees and plants were as still as ever. Nadia and Tyrone had spent the weekend together at Nadia’s apartment.

‘It’s a blazing hot day, I wish I could dive into a pool right now,’ Nadia said stifling a yawn.

‘But I’ve got to be at work by 9:00am. What a bamma!’ she sighed.

This was their last day together. They were having breakfast out on Nadia's patio.

'Why don't we go swimming at the town complex when you return from your trip?'

'That's a great idea. Will you pick me up at the airport then? Well go straight to the pool from there.'

'Sure. Now why don't you finish breakfast or you'll be late for your flight.'

Nadia's portable fan was on high speed fanning them with cool air. They ate their meal of egg on toast, bacon, hot cross buns, and orange juice. It was 7:30am and Nadia was stuffing eggs and toast down her throat with orange juice. She was due for a flight at 9:00am. She had to be in at work an hour early. Tyrone took his time reading one his cases. He sipped his orange juice while reading. All of a sudden, he put down his case reading as if realising something.

'What! Is there something wrong?' Nadia asked catching his action and facial expression.

He clasped both of Nadia hands.

'I've just had the most romantic idea,' he babbled.

'What kind of idea?'

'Will you marry me?' he asked

Nadia stared at him.

'But we hardly know each other. I mean ...we've only known each other for six months. Don't you think we should get to know each other for at least a year or so before we commit?'

'But we already know each other too well. We've been sharing the same bed for six months. What else is there to know about each other?'

'Well there's love for one thing. We have to be really sure that we love each other before we commit. Otherwise, one day we'll both wake up and realise we've made a terrible mistake.'

'I know I won't regret this and you won't either. As for love, we have a lifetime together to learn to love each other. So how about it, do I take your silence as a yes?'

'I'll have to think about. I'll give you my answer when I return from my trip.'

Nadia returned from her trip three days later. She called Tyrone and said yes. They set a date for their wedding. They were to be married a month later. Before they knew it the day of the wedding arrived. The cab came to a halt at the sidewalk leading up to the small cottage-like church.

'Shit! He's already here. Jesse help me gather my dress so I can get out.'

'Here, hold onto to your dress tailings. Let me just open your door and I'll help you out.'

Nadia looked out the window and caught Tyrone smiling at her. Her heart fluttered and she wanted to rush out into his arms.

'Damn it Jesse hurry up!' Nadia grew impatient.

Tyrone looked so handsome in his black tuxedo with his hair slicked back.

She finally hopped out of the cab taking care not to trip on her dress. Her dress, a white satin sleeveless dress had a high neck. It was quite long and it clung to her curves.

‘Wow! You look quite appetising. I can’t wait to have you all to myself,’ Tyrone whispered in her ear and sauntered her into the dimly lit church.

There were only a few of their friends. They filled the front row seat. Nadia’s bridesmaid, Jesse stood beside her. Tyrone’s best man, Trent stood beside him. They stood before the priest.

The wedding commenced. Nadia suddenly felt her body go numb and panic rise within her. She became totally oblivious to what the priest and Tyrone were saying. When it came to her turn to say her vows, Jesse jabbed her in the ribs.

‘With this ring, I thee wed....’ She imitated the priest until the end of her vows.

When it came time for the groom to kiss the bride, Nadia looked into Tyrone’s eyes. She saw her happiness and fears for their unknown future mirrored in his eyes. But when his lips touched hers and the intensity of the kiss grew she felt her fears diminish. Happiness soared within her. She felt so happy she wanted to cry. The wedding came to a close.

‘Congratulations Nadia,’ her friends chorused around her as they showered her with hugs and kisses. ‘You’ll make a lovely wife. Take care now.’ They blew her kisses as she hopped into the limousine. Tyrone hopped in beside her after fare-welling his friends. He held Nadia’s hand. They left for their honeymoon. Their future looked so promising.

Nadia woke up. Instead of the stylish interior of the limousine she and Tyrone sat in a moment ago, she found herself staring at the white walls of the hospital. She couldn’t help but feel sad for some unknown reason. All the happiness she felt a moment ago vanished as she looked around. She expected to find her friends wishing her well. Instead, she only saw a stand with a drip-hanging overhead. Her eyes followed the tube protruding from the bottom of the water filled bag. It led to her arm. In that instant, a flash of what transpired the night before came to mind. She saw herself sprawling over the kitchen table. Then she saw Tyrone pull her up again and fling her towards the sink. She remembered her back being excruciatingly painful as she bumped it against something sharp. Then something log-like slammed into her stomach. She remembered going back in time. The last thing she remembered was sitting in a limousine with Tyrone and feeling so happy.

Glancing to her left she noticed Tyrone sitting on a chair beside her bed. His eyes were closed. He had his hands clasped around hers and his lips were moving. ‘He is probably praying and asking God for his forgiveness. Good for him, but I hope the good Lord doesn’t hear his prayers,’ she thought to herself. In that instant, she felt an intense hate for him. She remembered how he had propelled her into this loveless marriage, made her so happy, and then vanquished all her happiness. How she wished things were different. She should have seen it sooner when his

feelings towards her changed after the birth of Trivet. He seemed to blame Trivet, his own son, for causing the rift between them. When instead, it was his job that took him away from his family for days on end. She made up her mind then and there that leaving Tyrone was the best thing to do before he did something more drastic than just injure her.

‘Good morning, my love,’ Tyrone whispered as he kissed her on the forehead, interrupting her thoughts.

‘What are you thinking about? Happy thoughts, I hope, not the ones of last night. You know I never meant to hurt you. It was the influence of alcohol that sent me into a rage. Please forgive. I promise I will never touch the bottle again. I want you to be like what we were before Trivet came along.’

‘Me too!’ Nadia replied, not believing a word he said. ‘But I’ve made up my mind that it’s best if we go our separate ways,’ she added.

‘What do you mean go our separate ways?’

‘I mean look at what’s happened. You’re not happy and I’m not happy. We were probably not meant to be together. Let’s admit it, our marriage was based on pure sexual attraction. That’s why nothing good can come out of it, but misery. You don’t love me or else I wouldn’t be lying here with a needle sticking into my arm feeding me water,’ Nadia stated.

‘Do you love me?’

‘I do. I’ve always loved you. But no matter how much I love you, I cannot keep hanging onto you and pretend you will in time come to love me. You’re a free spirit. You cannot be tamed and forced to settle down. Whenever, you feel you’re ready to settle down it is up to you. So I’m letting you go.’

‘What about Trivet?’

‘You don’t have to worry about him. He isn’t your’s anyway.’

At these words, Tyrone stood stunned. His mouth hung open, but no words came out. He was shocked into numbness. A deep silence hung over them; one could hear a pin drop.