

Fine May Morning

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When she woke up on that fine May morning, Olivia Taylor had a feeling that it would be a wonderful day. With the warm sunlight filtering through the curtains, gently caressing her face, the weight of her dearest Tom next to her in bed, and the knowledge that it was Friday —she didn't work Friday mornings— she managed to start her day with a positive attitude.

Slowly, she sat up. She stretched out her arms, and could feel the ache in her muscles. It had been a rough week. She should take advantage of her free morning and do some yoga, Olivia thought. Letting her arms drop, with dishevelled hair and half opened eyes, she turned her head, and allowed a smile to brighten her face. Tom. Her dearest Tom.

They had been married for two years now. The happiest years of her life. He was her perfect match. They did fight, of course. Every couple does. But there was nothing they could not overcome. Reaching out a hand, she brushed his hair back. He did not stir. That did not surprise her. He had fallen ill earlier that week, and had not got a good night's sleep in days. Feeling better, last night he had decided to take some of her sleeping pills in order to get some rest. It usually took him a while to come to.

Unhurriedly, she got out of bed. Slipping into her slippers, she padded toward the en-suite to start her morning routine. She turned on the light, closed the door gently behind her and stared at her reflection. She had always been highly critical of her image, taking great care and great pride in never having a single strand of hair out of place. Looking at her drowsy face —certainly not her best look— she found she did not care so much anymore. Tom's influence, no doubt. Still, old habits die hard. Opening the tap, she got started.

About half an hour later, she emerged from the bathroom, feeling refreshed and ready to start her day. Going to her closet, she took out the outfit she had picked the previous night, along with her yoga mat. Before leaving the room, she glanced at Tom once more, smiled and headed for the door. She closed it gently behind her.

She walked through the hallway and went to the living room, placing her outfit on the backrest of her favourite armchair. She had decorated the whole flat herself. She was quite proud of the way it had turned out. Admiring the space and congratulating herself once again on her good taste, she walked toward the balcony, opening the door and letting in a light breeze. She took a moment to feel how it delicately brushed her face, so she closed her eyes and took a deep breath. When she opened them, a deep serenity seemed to engulf her. She set her mat down and began her routine.

About halfway through, her cellphone rang. Slightly annoyed at the interruption, she walked to the centre table, grabbed her phone and answered, rather curtly. It was her coworker, Edith, asking her to lunch before work, so that

* 3º premio del Concurso Literario USAL en Lengua Inglesa – Categoría cuento (2022).

they could discuss some final details for the meeting that afternoon. She pondered upon it for a moment, and decided it was quite a good idea. That meeting was important, after all. Telling Edith she would meet her at the restaurant near the office in an hour, she hung up and went to get ready.

Grabbing her outfit from the armchair, she walked to the main bathroom and started to get dressed. She hated wearing formal attire, which put a damp on her mood. But given the importance of the meeting, it was a necessary evil. Turning toward the mirror, she applied some light make-up on her face, with an assertiveness that showed the skill that came with practice. But when she got to the lips, she hesitated, debating between two options, two of her favourite lipsticks. In the end, she opted for a deep shade of red. She was feeling quite bold that morning. She brushed her long hair and decided to leave as it was. Appraising her reflection one last time, she left the bathroom and headed toward the bedroom.

Peeking inside, she noticed that Tom was still asleep. Had it been any other day, she would probably have worried. But she knew how the pills would affect him. She walked to her dressing table and applied a rose scented perfume. Her favourite. She grabbed her handbag, making sure that she had everything she needed. She approached the bed, and lovingly gazed at Tom. She leaned down and gave a chaste kiss on his lips. They were quite cold. Taking hold of his hand — which felt cold, too— she squeezed it and told him how much she loved him. She placed it back on the bed, with devoted gentleness, and made her way toward the door. She decided to leave it slightly ajar. Stopping for a moment outside her flat, she grinned widely. Life was good.

Lunch with Edith was uneventful. They discussed all the points they would dwell on at the meeting and, all in all, had a nice time. She liked her well enough, though she did find her quite dull. She ordered dessert. She had skipped breakfast, after all; and she just loved the chocolate cake of that place. After paying the bill, they walked for three blocks until they reached the office.

The whole place was in a state of disarray. Everyone knew today's meeting was vital for the future of the company, and it showed. Edith was being affected by the nervous energy, but not Olivia. She was feeling bold, happy and confident, and nothing was going to ruin that. She was right to be confident, for the meeting was a success. Her boss was so ecstatic that he invited the team out for a round of drinks at the bar next door. She declined, though. She had to get back to her husband.

Opening the front door, she stepped into her home. The lights were out. She turned them on and looked around. Everything was exactly as she had left it. She smiled. Placing her bag on the sideboard next to the door and her keys on a little glass bowl beside it, she made her way toward their room. The door was still slightly ajar. Pushing it, she entered and looked straight at the bed. Her husband was still lying there, in the exact same position he had been that morning. A giggle escaped the confines of her mouth. Slowly, a ghost of a smile still present on her lips, she made her way to the bed. Sitting next to the still figure, she took his hand in hers. It was even colder now. Her dearest Tom. If only he had not tried to leave her, he would still be alive.