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A Matter of Taste

BY MEGAN LESTER

The empty coffee pot was enough to convince Margot she would be getting a divorce, and her wedding was still weeks away. True, she was prone to dramatic reflection in the early hours, especially when uncaffeinated. Yet Margot felt, staring at the shallow ring of coffee left at the bottom of the pot, that Todd was perhaps her least favorite person in the world. “Long is the way and hard, that out of hell leads up to light,” Margot whispered, placing the coffee pot on the counter.

It was hard to catch Todd in the act of being an asshole. Every day Margot tried to find some indiscretion, some concrete event, which would justify her leaving him. Unfortunately, Todd’s assholery was well masked by a thick facade of niceness. In fact, everyone seemed to *really like* Todd except his fiancée.

Margot’s phone hummed. “Don’t forget your appointment!”

Only Todd would spell out a-p-p-o-i-n-t-m-e-n-t in a text message, the douche. And she hadn’t forgotten! Of all Margot’s flaws, forgetfulness was not one. If anything, Margot’s problem was remembering. That was why she had an appointment in the first place. Margot felt that all her remembering was beginning to weigh her down. The morning’s empty coffee pot now balanced atop yesterday’s weather report in Margot’s mind. She could almost feel it teetering on the edge of some synapse (or maybe that’s not how memory works?) Regardless, carrying all these memories left Margot exhausted, and she begrudgingly agreed to visit Dr. Bieler after Todd’s bajillionth request. Margot told herself she was only going to humor Todd, but she secretly hoped therapy would be some giant bin where she could dump the coffee pot and the weather report and her mother’s voice.

“And what’s wrong with Todd?” Dr. Bieler was actually holding a clipboard. He had a trimmed goatee, but it didn’t look gross. Margot had been preparing for this question on the drive over—in fact, she asked herself the same question every single day. Sitting in the clean, white office, though,

an answer arose which Margot hadn't constructed in all the months of her engagement. Her reply slinked out of the jumbled mess of memory cluttering her mind, and she was shocked to find it had been sitting there all along.

"About a month after Todd and I became engaged, I rented *Purple Rain* on DVD. I don't know why. I had to make an account at a video rental place, and pay some dumb fee, and I knew it was only a matter of months before the place would shut down. But I just had to watch *Purple Rain*. Have you seen it?"

Dr. Bieler shook his head.

"Well it's a great film. Prince stars in it, and the soundtrack is purely Prince's music. Ok, maybe I exaggerated when I said it's great...the film might actually be terrible. But I absolutely love it. I love Prince. I love it all. You know what I love most about it?"

"Hm?"

"It doesn't make any sense. None of the dialogue is justified. Prince will say something mean to his girl, and she'll laugh, and then Prince will flirt, and then she'll get angry, and then they'll have sex. Every scene your brain tries to figure out what's going on, but it can't. None of the characters react to one another in a natural way."

"That sounds annoying."

"No! It's great. I feel like I hold my breath through the entire movie. So I rent *Purple Rain*, and then I have to buy some weed—oh! Can I say that here?"

"Confidentiality."

"Right. Well I have to buy some weed, because it just enhances the *Purple Rain* experience, you see. But I haven't smoked since college. So I have to go to my neighbor's high school son and buy this little Ziploc baggie from him, like some sneaky teenager. I go up to this pimple-y kid who's outside

skateboarding, afraid his mom will come out and catch us. It was so embarrassing! But I knew it would be totally worth it."

"Was it?"

"At first, yes. Todd came home from work and I was absolutely giddy. I told him I got a movie, and I asked him if he still had his piece from college. He was surprised, but also weirdly excited. We started smoking—I coughed up half a lung—and then we started the movie."

"Todd didn't like the movie?"

"Todd loved the movie. But... but he laughed at all the wrong parts."

"How do you mean?"

"I can't explain it. He just laughed at all the wrong parts. He treated it like any other movie. Like, we could have gotten high and watched *Caddyshack* and he would have had the same reaction. Does that make sense?"

Dr. Bieler nodded. "And that bothers you?"

"Damn right it bothers me! *Purple Rain* is genius. This experience was sacred, but for Todd it was just watching a movie."

"Todd didn't appreciate it enough?"

"It's not that he didn't appreciate it enough... he just appreciates everything equally. ...I don't think Todd has any taste."

"Things are replaceable for Todd."

Margot opened her eyes, not realizing she had closed them. Her neck was hinged back, her gaze on the ceiling, which looked chalky. Margot imagined the chalkiness against her teeth. "I need a divorce."

"You're not married."