

Short Story: Intersection [B1]

Qual è il prezzo dell'amore? Una storia di conflitto con l'autostima e le aspettative sociali che solleva domande sul vero significato della felicità.

Vicky felt the tension in the room as she opened her eyes. She was in her on-campus dormitory at New York University and Richard was drinking a cup of instant coffee – not the gourmet type he was accustomed to. “You embarrassed me last night,” he said in a cold tone. “What?... I’m sorry,” said Vicky. She had gone to dinner with Richard’s colleagues, all professional lawyers, and perhaps had had one too many glasses of wine. “I was nervous, that’s all.” Vicky was still adjusting to her role as the girlfriend of a rich and successful lawyer. She had to be the perfect girlfriend, as assertive and elegant as he always was, in public anyway. “You know image is everything in this world,” he said. “I can’t be seen with some cheap floozy.” His words stung, and Vicky’s eyes filled with tears. In truth, she did feel like a cheap floozy next to Richard. While he came from a rich family who lived in The Hamptons, she had grown-up in a modest apartment in the Bronx. She’d had to take out an enormous student loan to finance her studies at NYU and would be repaying it for decades — unless she married Richard, that was. “I’m sorry,” she said again. She remembered how intimidated she’d felt at dinner. She’d sat in silence, trying to find the courage to speak, not knowing what to say. But after a few glasses of wine, she’d found her voice, and concluded the evening by entertaining Richard’s colleagues with stories about her eccentric family. It wasn’t the impression Richard had wanted her to give, and she regretted it now. Seeing the tears in Vicky’s eyes, Richard softened. “I was serious when I said I wanted to marry you,” he said, “but I need to know you’re serious too.” “I am,” said Vicky. And she was. She wanted to be everything that Richard wanted her to be. She wanted the life that he was offering her, one of wealth and elegance. She promised to do better and he forgave her. Then she put on one of the expensive dresses he’d bought for her, and he nodded at her approvingly before they left her dormitory and descended the stairs of the residence hall. She sensed the other students staring at them in envy as they walked to his Bentley, one of the most expensive cars on campus, and he leaned in to kiss her. “I’ll take

you to dinner tonight with my sister," he said. Richard's sister, Jennifer, was also a student at NYU and had introduced them the previous year. "But no wine for you. No more alcohol, Vicky. [Ever](#). That's a prerequisite." She tried to maintain her smile as [she waved him goodbye](#). Image was almost as important to her as it was to him. She wanted them to be perceived as the perfect couple. She wanted to be envied. After he left, she walked to an on-campus café. Her head was [throbbing](#) from all the wine she'd had the previous evening, and she needed a strong coffee before going to her first [lecture](#). She didn't normally drink more than a glass or two of wine. She knew she didn't have a problem with alcohol but she couldn't imagine never again enjoying a cocktail with dinner or a bottle of wine with her friends. But Richard had said it was a prerequisite. If she wanted to marry him, she'd have to accept a life of total sobriety. "Vicky!" She heard someone call her name. It was her ex-boyfriend Pele, who was sitting at a table with his [sketchpad](#). They'd been [datingcasually](#) until she'd met Richard, and she still thought of him sometimes. "How are you?" he asked. "Oh, [hungover](#)," she confessed. He laughed. "I know the perfect cure. A walk by the water in a green oasis." "In Manhattan?" she said, skeptically. "Sure!" He opened his [sketchpad](#) to a sketch of Little Island, an artificial island park in the Hudson River that had opened in early 2021. "Well, I really should be going to my [lecture](#) but... sure, why not? [YOLO](#), right?" Being with Pele was like a [breath of fresh air](#) after being with Richard, and Vicky realised how suffocated she'd been feeling, how rigid and conformist her life had become. She [clung](#) to Pele as he drove his motorcycle through the city to Little Island, and smiled as he sketched her sitting under a tree. It was only later, when they [stopped off](#) at his studio in Washington Heights, that she remembered why she'd stopped [dating](#) him and started [dating](#) Richard. The studio where he lived was [damp](#) and [cluttered](#). And it was full of the art he'd wanted to show her, art he'd been trying to sell for months, but with no success. As they walked through the campus that evening, she realised she was at an intersection in her life. She had to choose between two men and between the lives they led: one rigid and suffocating, rich and elegant; the other free-spirited and happy, but financially insecure. But it wasn't really about them, it was about her, about who she wanted to be, what she wanted from life: happiness, money... or independence. It was possible, of course,

that she could have both — or neither. But she was certain that whatever she chose now would dictate which she would prioritise in the future, not just in love but in every scenario. She and Pele were saying goodbye outside her residence hall when Richard's sister, Jennifer, arrived for their dinner that evening. "And who is this?" she asked, referring to Pele. Vicky knew the words she would say next would dictate her future. She'd either say, "Oh he's just an old friend," or, "This is Pele, my new boyfriend. I'm sorry but I'm breaking up with your brother tonight." Vicky opened her mouth to speak.

Glossary

- **that was** = ovvero
- **nodded** = fare un cenno di assenso
- **throbbing** = palpitare
- **sketchpad** = blocco, album
- **dating** = frequentare qualcuno
- **stopped off** = fermarsi
- **assertive** = decisa
- **stung** = ferire
- **breaking up** = interrompere una relazione
- **cluttered** = disordinato
- **floozy** = baldracca
- **clung** = stringersi a
- **unless** = a meno che
- **wealth** = ricchezza
- **leaned in** = avvicinarsi
- **Ever** = mai
- **lecture** = lezione
- **YOLO** = si vive una volta sola (you only live once)
- **on-campus dormitory** = residenza universitaria
- **to take out an enormous student loan** = contrarre un prestito
- **casually** = informalmente
- **hangover** = postumi della sbornia
- **breath of fresh air** = boccata di aria fresca
- **damp** = umido
- **embarrassed** = mettere in imbarazzo
- **she waved him goodbye** = salutare con la mano