

A Short Story: Mystery Man [B1]

Una storia che mostra come le relazioni possano soffrire quando la comunicazione si interrompe e come sia possibile ricostruire i legami perduti.

Hey, pretty lady," said the message on Mayah's app, referring to her online name PrettyLady. She smiled. It was a message from MysteryMan. "Hey, handsome man," she responded. She had no idea if MysteryMan was handsome or not. She had never met him in person. She had connected with him on a community forum and now they were chatting online every night. "Where's the old man tonight?" asked MysteryMan, referring to Mayah's husband, Bernard. "Oh who knows?" **typed** Mayah. "I heard him come in from work but he went directly into his office. He doesn't even come to talk to me anymore." "My wife doesn't talk to me either," admitted MysteryMan. "It's like we've forgotten how to talk to each other." "Same," said Mayah. "I think he finds me boring now. Old and boring." "He doesn't know how fortunate he is," **typed** MysteryMan, "to have a woman as interesting and intelligent as you." They spent the next hour chatting, as they always did, about everything from local politics to their favourite films. They had so much in common. Mayah felt like she could talk to him forever. "I'm going to a work conference on Friday," Bernard told Mayah over breakfast the next morning. "Is my good **suit** back from the **dry-cleaner's** yet?" Mayah **nodded** distractedly. "Yeah, I think so..." When they first married, she and Bernard would talk amicably over breakfast, trying to communicate as much as possible before they had to say goodbye and go to work. So what happened? "Life happened," she told MysteryMan that night. "Kids. Careers. A **mortgage**. That's all we ever talk about now. I can't remember the last time we even went to a nice restaurant together, just the two of us." There was a long pause and then MysteryMan wrote. "Speaking of that..." There was another pause, and Mayah **held her breath**. "Would you like to have dinner with me?" he finally wrote. Mayah released her breath and held her fingers over the keyboard. She looked at the photo near her desk, a photo of her and Bernard on their wedding day. She had been so happy that day, so full of life and promise. She had thought Bernard was her **soulmate** and that they'd be

happy together forever. But they weren't happy anymore. And now she had found a new **soulmate**, someone who understood her, someone who she thought could love her, who she could love in return. "I'm free on Friday if you are," **typed** MysteryMan, before she could respond. Friday. That was the day Bernard had his work conference. It was perfect. "Let's do it," said Mayah. "It's time for us to meet." On Friday, Mayah put on her favourite black dress. It was also Bernard's favourite dress. She tried not to think about that. She didn't want **guilt** to ruin her first evening with MysteryMan. She went to the restaurant where they were to meet. It was her favourite local Italian restaurant. She'd mentioned it once to MysteryMan and he'd booked them a table there. He said he'd be wearing a white rose on his jacket. She stopped outside the door to the restaurant and **took a deep breath**. Was she really doing this? She knew that if she did this, if she went from chatting with MysteryMan online to meeting him in person, then it would be the beginning of the end of her marriage. But her marriage was ending anyway. It should end. It wasn't working, not for her or Bernard. They had nothing in common anymore, nothing to talk about. And life was too precious to spend in an unhappy marriage. She took another deep breath, then opened the door to the restaurant and went inside. "Mayah?" Almost as soon as she entered the restaurant, Mayah heard someone saying her name. She'd thought this restaurant was a good option because it was **dimly lit**, and this would make it difficult for anyone to recognise her there, having dinner with a man who wasn't her husband. But someone had recognised her. And it wasn't just anyone. It was her husband, Bernard. "What are you doing here?" he asked. "I could ask you the same thing," she responded, as her eyes adjusted to the dim lighting and she saw Bernard sitting at a table, wearing his best **suit**. "You told me you were going to a work conference." It was then that she noticed the white rose on his jacket. "Wait... are you... MysteryMan?" And then they talked, really talked, just like they had been doing online for months. They had lost each other through **complacency** but now they had found each other again, through the anonymity of the internet. And this time, as they left the restaurant **holding hands** they promised to never let each other go again.

Glossary

- **took a deep breath** = fare un respiro profondo
- **complacency** = compiacenza
- **holding hands** = tenersi per mano
- **dry-cleaner's** = lavanderia
- **nodded** = annuire
- **held her breath** = trattenere il respiro
- **soulmate** = anima gemella
- **dimly lit** = poco illuminato
- **typed** = digitare
- **suit** = completo
- **mortgage** = mutuo
- **guilt** = colpa