

What Comes Together Also Separates

JP Hyde



Thomas cupped his arm around his wife of thirty years, Dianne, as he affectionately gazed at his daughter standing before her soon-to-be husband. Their daughter, Sarah, couldn't hold back her tears of joy while she squeezed her fiancé's hand. Thomas examined Bradley, his charming future son-in-law, and noticed his blue eyes glistened before Sarah.

Dianne, on the other hand, sat forward to keep contact with Thomas minimal and shook her head in disapproval at Sarah's wedding dress choice. Dianne thought the eggshell white dress looked like it had been found in a dusty antique store. She overheard her sister commenting on how lovely the church's gothic architecture was and just how lovely the décor was, which Dianne hated. All the same, whenever the two parents looked towards the young lovers, they saw themselves thirty years younger.

"Why are you so tense?" Thomas asked. "What's wrong?"

"Just look at the slip," she said. "It doesn't compliment her frame at all. If this were my wedding I'd be mortified."

"Why? What's wrong with it?" He was always questioning his wife.

"Why? Take a look around." She tilted her head towards the stain glass windows. "We're not even Catholic to start with."

Thomas bit his lip and wondered what Dianne was suggesting. "Is Bradley?"

"Not at all," she said beneath a chuckle, "his mother and I discussed that this should have been non-denominational."

"Oh, none of that matters, babe," he whispered. "She probably just liked the dramatic atmosphere. It's as close to a castle as we can afford, after all."

The couple sat in silence while the priest walked onto the stage. The priest, ancient and feeble, muttered through his routine. The occasional coughs echoed throughout the church, followed by snuffles and creaking pews when someone would adjust their seat. Dianne grew more annoyed with Thomas' arm wrapped around her. The weight of his arm strained her neck.

“Move,” she said.

“What?”

“Move your god damned arm, Tom.” Dianne said, as she pushed her back into his arm. “Please.”

“Oh,” Thomas said. “Sorry.”

Dianne sighed. She knew regardless of her own personal opinion of her choice of dress that her daughter was beautiful. She liked Bradley and knew the couple complimented each other well. While she looked at the two standing, occasionally stumbling with their jittered nerves, Dianne wished her daughter and son-in-law more happiness than Dianne experienced in her own marriage. She didn't want Sarah to feel regret every time she looked at or touched her wedding band. She didn't want Sarah to live the rest of her life in a state of blissful ignorance and wake up one day unhappy that she sacrificed the prime years of her life to simply become content.

Dianne loved motherhood, but when Sarah became more independent, Dianne was left home alone waiting for Thomas to return from work. For years, she wanted to tell Thomas that they needed excitement in their life—to travel, make friends, join clubs, anything. Time just escaped them in their daily routine of work and parenting, and Thomas seemed comfortable with the circumstances. Each time Thomas would try to kiss her on the cheek, she'd oblige him but turn away unfazed unlike the day they, young and full of ambition, married.

“Thomas,” she said, looking down at the marble floor. “What do you see when you look at them?”

Thomas took a breath and pondered his answer. “I see us.”

“Do you?”

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“Of course.”

“In what way?”

“Well,” he paused, “I see two great people getting married. I see two souls that will build a future together and support each other. Bradley will have a great woman.” He looked over at his wife, “Just like I have a great woman.”

Dianne felt a lump in her throat. Thomas was always sweet and supportive, but unlike him, she wasn't content with where she was in life. She tried to accept the mundane life they lived, but she wanted more. She was tired of waiting for Thomas to come home from work and fall asleep on the couch. Her jaws locked up in fear of what she was going to say. She was unsure if she should continue asking him the very questions that crossed her mind for the last fifteen years. Her fingers caressed her wedding band and twisted it.

“That's what I was afraid of,” she said while she yanked on her wedding band. Her knuckles turned ghost white until the band slipped off. She felt naked and vulnerable as she slipped the band into Thomas' coat pocket.

“What's this about, Dianne?” Thomas looked at her, puzzled. Dianne looked through the corner of her eyes and saw the heartbreak in his widened eyes. For a moment, she saw the young man she fell in love with, but his grey hairs and baggy eyes reflected what their marriage had become—a tired routine.

“Don't make a scene, Thomas,” Dianne whispered. “For the love of God, please don't make a scene.”

“I just don't...” He looked around to see if anyone saw what was happening, “I just don't understand. Did I do something?”

Dianne looked ahead at her daughter, who might or might not be making a mistake, and muttered, “No.”

Thomas placed his hand on his lap, but Dianne, without looking at him, slipped her hand into his.

“I just think our time's up. It has been, Tom.” She stopped and wiped the tears from her cheeks. “I'm sorry.”

Thomas clenched her hand, shaking. He didn't look at Dianne.

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He just stared forward.

“Beautiful wedding, though,” Dianne said, smiling behind her tears.