

SHORT STORY-8

TIME

The text came early in the night. It was dark already, the sun having gone down early that winter evening. There was snow outside, of course, and more on the way. The smell of Christmas trees tossed out on front lawns was heavy in the air. She glanced down at the phone and startled when she saw the message.

“TIME”

That’s all it said, “TIME”, but to her it was full sentences, paragraphs, months of planning, years of heartbreak.

She texted back immediately that she could be ready any time. “I just need to grab the bags”, she said.

The next text came right away.

“Sorry, not that fast. The car will arrive at 8:00 tomorrow morning.”

Tomorrow morning?! Her initial feeling of shock and excitement turned down just a touch. How would she make it through the night? She wouldn’t be able to sleep, that’s for sure.

The phone rang then, the texter calling to provide the details that both warmed her heart and terrified her soul all at once.

She texted her mom, her sister, her close friends.

“TIME” is all she said.

The texts came back in droves but she couldn’t bear to answer, to discuss, to go into details. She was both scared to the bone and excited as a lark. Happiness weighed with the threat of it happening again. She tried just to focus her mind on the positive.

She wandered the house, readying it for tomorrow. She checked faucets, finished a load of laundry, ran the dishwasher...mundane tasks to pass the time. She didn’t allow herself to go in the room until all that was done.

At last she went upstairs.

She peeked in, the light of the moon allowing her to see the outline of the precious shapes in the dark. She switched on the lamp and allowed it all to become real. She looked around, sighed, and allowed herself just a moment of the elatedness she had been trying to temper.

“Tomorrow”, she thought to herself.

She sat down in the chair beside the window. She picked up a book, paged through it. Noticed a speck of dirt in the otherwise pristine room and ran for the feather duster. Everything was as she'd left it the last time the message had come.

She felt the grief rising and swallowed it back. She pushed away the warmth, the hope, the finality that had never come. Trying to stay positive wasn't working and the weight of what was about to happen - again - sat on her shoulders. She rubbed them mindlessly and started to pray.

“Please, let this be real. I've worked so hard. I want this. I need this. Please let this time end well. I can't handle another like the last time. I'm ready. I've opened my heart. Please fill it.”

Her eyes drifted past the bags in the corner, left there the last time when it all fell apart. She slowly rose and opened them up, checking and re-checking the contents.

The rug on which the bags lay was soft and warm. She lay down and closed her eyes.

She dreamed of the best possible outcome.

She woke before the sun, stretching her body sore from her night on the floor. She made coffee. She forced herself to eat something. She showered. Her clothes were already picked out, selected carefully for this, her most important day.

It was 7:45. She stood at the family room window watching for the car. When at last it arrived - 3 minutes late, leading to her panicking that it would never come - she locked the door, turned to look one last time at her cozy yet lonely little house, and met the car at the front walk.

“Ready”, said the woman at the wheel. The same woman who had sent the text and made the call. The same woman who would bring either love or heartbreak.

“Ready”, she stated.

The drive was smooth, no traffic. While the woman reviewed details and went over plans, she nodded, answering only when required. Every once in a while tears would start at the corners of her eyes.

“It’ll be okay this time”, the woman said.

As they turned into the airport parking lot she started sweating, her heart beating rapidly. They made their way through security. People glanced sideways at them, her and the woman, as they headed through the terminal. They must have looked odd, just 2 small bags and an empty seat being pushed ahead of them.

The plane was to arrive on time.

The woman patted her arm, reassuring her. But until it was real she would not feel safe and good.

At long last the plane landed and passengers began to embark. She looked furiously for the unknown woman who carried her life, but it seemed she was waiting until last.

Then, there she was.

Her eyes trained on the bundle in the woman's arm. It was small, smaller than she had imagined. It was wrapped in a soft pink blanket.

She stood up. Breathing. Peering. Hoping. Listening. Praying.

They met in the middle of the room. The woman with the bundle smiled at her, kissed the blanket to say goodbye, and handed it to her.

Oh. My. Goodness.

In her arms lay all she ever wanted. All she had fought for. All she had been so close to time after time only to have it ripped away in the last days.

She looked down.

Brown hair. Unfocused brown eyes. Pure new skin.

Her daughter.

Her baby.

The adoption ladies shook hands with each other, wiping away tears of joys.

And she, the new mom, drank it all in. The newborn girl smelled so good and felt just right. Moments passed as she stared into her daughter's eyes for the first time. She realized an amazing thing.

Love.

The time had come for her to become all she ever wanted to be. She was a mom.