

Shameful Decisions

On the frigid winter morning when Kanaya received the call that would change everything, Kanaya had forgotten to charge her phone. She had been doing her best to avoid phone calls and so when her phone rang its incessant buzzes and chirps, Kanaya felt the all too familiar prick of annoyance dance upon the back of her neck. She blissfully imagined letting it go to voicemail. Surely, if anyone really needs her then they will leave a voicemail and she can check its importance. Something pulled her to answer this phone this time. She felt unsure as to whether it was the person walking towards her on the sidewalk whom she wished to avoid the unpleasant exchanging of niceties. Or maybe it was simply because the buzzing had begun to tickle her palm in an uncomfortable manner. Whatever the reason, Kanaya found herself with her phone to her ear while the man on the other end of the line broke the news that Kanaya would forever remember and question her judgement in the final decision she was tasked with making.

“Kanaya?”

“This is she.”

“Kanaya, this is Dr. Roak at St. John’s Hospital. I regret to inform you, but your husband was found unresponsive from a car accident and is in the hospital in critical condition. It is recommended that you get here as soon as possible. Your husband needs you right now.”

“...”

“Miss Kanaya?”

“I’m here.”

“Do you understand?”

“I think so.”

“Do you have any questions?”

“What hospital?”

“Pardon me, St. John’s. On the corner of Fifth and Lemont.”

Kanaya repeated the conversation over and over again in her head. The Doctor's words haunted her. “Your husband is in critical condition... He needs you.” In their fifteen years of marriage, Tobi had never needed her for a single thing. But that was the glorious part of their marriage. They didn’t need each other, they wanted each other. Despite the flaws and the messy miscommunications, the screaming wars, all of it, they wanted each other. It was a marriage built on passion. Even when they fought there was an underlying tone of love. Tobi picked a fight with Kanaya the week before their wedding.

“We shouldn’t wait a week after the wedding before starting our Honeymoon. That’s stupid, cause all that’s gonna happen is the excitement from the wedding will be lost and our Honeymoon will just be a glorified vacation!”

“Okay, first, if the excitement from our wedding is all gone after one week of marriage, then we are fucking doomed anyway. Second, the Honeymoon could be ten years from now and it would still be the celebration of our wedding to me! I don’t understand you! Why are you

making this such an immediate thing, why is it this important that we are screaming at each other on a fucking Tuesday night!”

“Obviously you don’t get me or we wouldn’t be here. God, Kanaya, you’re impossible! You know that? I just want our Honeymoon to be perfect. Cause you’re fucking perfect, and the way I see it the Honeymoon is the first part of marriage and I want our marriage to be perfect. Okay? Is that okay with you? OR do you wanna nitpick that apart too? Change it cause I’m not enough for you.”

“...”

“...”

“Tobi, you’ve always been enough for me... I- I have to go.”

Kanaya left the apartment that night bawling. She was convinced that Tobi would never marry her after seeing that fit of rage. It was the first time the two had actually blown up at each other. They’d gotten close in the past, but never to this extent. Surely this would scare him off. How could he love a woman so cruel, so brazen? She had gone to the park she went to often as a little girl. The one her father would take her to for daddy-daughter-dates. There was a gazebo with a picnic table in the center that they would sit at. The table was painted white, and Kanaya would gather leaves and yellow dandelions with her father to spread over the table and add a pop of color. Now, when she arrived, the paint was chipping off, and the table wasn’t quite so white as it was when she was a girl. And her father was missing. Her father had died when Kanaya was a teen. Part of what attracted her to Tobi was the gentleness that Kanaya had only ever seen in her father. They both had the kind of spirit that was soft spoken, and warm-hearted. They cared for all they met from tiny insects to people of all sorts. Kanaya had the rage of her mother. The same rage that supposedly drove her mother to leave Kanaya and her father. She began to cry hunched over the picnic table that in so many ways represented her childhood. She cried from the loss of her childhood. She wasn’t a little girl anymore, and her father wasn’t around to care for her as such anymore. She felt a strong pair of arms wrap around her from behind. She could smell the familiar scent of pine and mint from behind her. She hated that smell most days, but today it was perfect. She turned into Tobi’s chest, embracing him, her tears washing away the cologne from his neck.

“I’m sorry, if you want to wait for the Honeymoon we can. We can do whatever you want. I love you, and I want you to be happy.”

She cried harder at his kind words, and they sat at the off-white table with the chipped paint while she mourned everything. After an indeterminable amount of time passed, she raised her face to his to kiss him.

“Let’s go home.”

Kanaya arrived at the hospital and had shuffled from person to person. First, the receptionist at the front desk who had directed Kanaya to the floor that Tobi was assigned. Kanaya had been given a nametag that said visitor. She wondered if her husband bore the same nametag because surely the patients would be regarded as “visitors” as well, and not as

permanent guests. Although, she supposed some patients do become guests for life. Some patients spend their final moments in hospitals. Kanaya felt a prick of annoyance at the back of her neck again because this was not supposed to be Tobi's fate. She couldn't believe the misfortune that had befallen her and her family. She approached the room Tobi was waiting in. Again, the doctor's words echoed in her mind:

"Your husband needs you."

She gathered her strength, staring at the sign above the door. Room 204. She double checked her name tag which said, "Kanaya Williams. Visitor. Floor 2, Room 4." This was it. She would open the door, the stark white door, and walk through the doorframe, which looked to be about six feet tall and two feet wide, she would enter his cold room, because hospital rooms are always cold, and she would see him lying on the bed. She wondered if he had tubes everywhere, like in the movies, or maybe he's doing better, maybe he was awake now. She found herself inside of the room, staring at her husband, without realizing she had even moved. He did look like something out of a movie, but somehow it all felt more real. She heard the steady beeping of the machines he was attached to and caught herself smiling. Kanaya sat on the side of his bed and grabbed his hand. A tear slowly and gently made its way down her face. Her husband, strong and steady, now reduced to a pile of bones on a bed. It brought tears to her eyes.

Kanaya recalled the last time she had seen her husband lounging in bed, before the phone call. He had been smiling and patting the bed next to him. She knew what he wanted. The same thing he seemed to expect every night.

"Can we- Can we just not tonight?"

"Kanaya it's been months. You must move past this."

"Move past this? You want me to move past the fact that last time we did this it ended in me bleeding on the bathroom floor, left to call 911 alone while you were at work, *again*."

"I know, baby, I know that was hard. It was hard for me too. But eventually we must try again. Okay? We can't let our failures define us."

"Failures? So, my miscarriage is a failure on my part? And what pray-tell did I do to cause the miscarriage? I don't remember asking to have my Anais ripped away from me while I was helpless to do anything about it."

"God, Kanaya, I don't know what you want from me. Obviously, it's not your fault. Is that what you want to hear? Do you want me to say, 'oh no it's okay we can just try again some other night,' when you nag me every day about picking a boy name in case we end up with a boy one day? I honestly don't even care that much about making another kid or trying to make another kid or whatever! I just want to be fucking intimate with my *wife*. You're the one that's hyper focused on making babies. All I ever ask for is sex. Plain and simple sex. You remember when sex was just about pleasure? I swear you've made sex about babies so much that I don't think we've had sex for pleasure since our fucking honeymoon SIX YEARS AGO. Damn it, Kanaya! I have needs ya know. I can't keep doing this with you."

“Well, you’ve made your feelings quite clear on the subject. My feelings on the subject, not that you asked, but I think if intimacy is so important to you then you can sit here and be intimate with yourself. I’m not sleeping in the same room as you tonight. You’ll be lucky if I share a bed with you ever again you god damn fucking pig. Have a good night, I wish you and your hand the best of luck.”

Kanaya cringed at the memory. It isn’t her favorite. That was the first time she had found the side of Tobi that was nothing like her dad. Her dad would never say things like that to a woman, especially one whom he claims to love. A nurse walked into the room pulling a cart behind her with a computer on it.

“Oh, I’m sorry. I wasn’t aware Mr. Williams had visitors.”

“Hi, I’m Kanaya, his wife. How is he?”

“He’s still in critical condition. I’ll send the doctor in to speak with you as soon as he is available.”

“I’d appreciate that, thank you. So, he was unconscious when he got here? Hasn’t awoken since.”

“I’d really rather the doctor speak with you on your husbands’ current condition.”

“I don’t understand, I’m family, so you can share with me anything about my husband’s condition so long as he is unfit to make his own medical decisions soundly... right?”

“Yes, Ma’am.”

“So... spill!”

“I’d rather wait for the doctor Ma’am. I’ll send him as soon as he is able to come.”

“If you’re not going to help, then fucking leave.”

“Ma’am- “

“LEAVE!”

Kanaya cried as the nurse left the room. How hard is it for a woman to get some damn answers around here? Kanaya sat in the chair beside her husband’s bed. She held his hand. It felt as warm as she remembered it, though the back of his hand was covered in tape holding the IV in place. She stared at the yellow daisy walls and laughed at the thought of how much Tobi would have hated having yellow daisies on the walls. She could practically hear him saying, “I’m supposed to fight for my life in a room full of daises?” That was the old Tobi though. The Tobi of recent proved to be a bit of an asshat. That night, that fight, might’ve been the turning point in the relationship. That fight started a slowly building fight that would never quite reach resolution. Kanaya missed the old Tobi, but she knows that he probably misses the old Kanaya. I guess people really never do stay the same. The doctor came into the room wearing a white coat the same white as the door. Embroidered on the right upper chest of the coat was, “Dr. Roak M.D.”.

“Ms. Williams. Did you make it okay?”

“It’s Mrs. Williams.”

“What?”

“You said Ms. Williams. But I’m married. I am married to the man laying in that bed right there. That man, who is still alive, and so I am married and that makes my name Mrs. Williams.”

“My apologies Mrs. Williams.”

“How is my husband?”

“To be frank, his injuries are extensive. The MRI done upon his arrival revealed minimal brain function. Brain function that is below the average or expected function he would need to maintain a livable quality of life. Should he wake up, due to his injuries, he would most likely be paralyzed with minimal hope of regaining movement of any sort as his spine was broken into multiple parts. Unfortunately, it has reached the point where you must consider whether or not to continue life sustaining measures. Your options are to go on with life sustaining measures. He may wake up, but he would do so a changed man from the one you remember. He would most likely have brain injuries, paralysis and more. Or you could consider organ donation. Your husband could save a lot of lives. Of course, organ donation is just one of the paths you could take after ending life support.”

“I-, uhm, what?”

“Your husband, ma’am, you have to consider what’s best for your husband.”

“And you believe what’s best for my husband is to... stop?”

“Yes, ma’am, I do.”

“Okay.”

“Okay?”

“Okay. Do it. My husband would hate this. He’d always hated depending on anyone or anything in life. He’d rarely even drive a car. Said they were unreliable. He wouldn’t want this. So do what you need.”

“Okay, I’ll send the nurse in.”

“Dr.Roak, how can I help?”

“Ms.Williams has made her decision, I’ll leave you to assist her in this process.”

“Mrs.Williams. It’s still Mrs.Williams.”

“Sorry, ma’am.”

“Mrs.Williams, how are you?”

“How am I? Seems to me I wouldn’t be so good seeing as you’re about to kill my husband.”

“It seems awful quick to have made this decision don’t you think?”

“No, I don’t think.”

“I’m sorry, that was terribly unprofessional of me.”

“You’re right it was.”

“I’m sorry I just think if it were me, I’d have needed more time to think it through.”

“As I explained to the doctor, and so I’ll explain to you, my husband hated being dependent on anything. Didn’t even like driving cars because they were too unreliable.”

“But if he didn’t like driving cars, then why was he driving in the first place.”

“Well... I suppose that is the question.”

“I’m going to remove his breathing tube. There is a small chance he will resume breathing on his own, however, due to his injuries he will most likely pass in the next few hours.”

“All right.”

“Is there anything I can do for you?”

“No, nothing.”

“Just press the call light when the moment has passed.”

It didn’t take him long to go. It never did. It certainly hadn’t the morning I found out what he did. He was out at work. We hadn’t spoken for a week; I had made the mistake of bringing up the idea of me going back to work. Since he seemed so concerned with my remembering my responsibilities, I decided to deep clean the place. I’d gone through the living room and thrown away old cards from past holidays, I’d gotten rid of Tobi’s socks with holes in them, I’d gotten rid of the chipped plates and cups from the kitchen. I found myself cleaning the medicine cabinet in the bathroom when I found a prescription bottle shoved to the back corner with the label “Mifeprex,” but it was diagnosed to me. But I’d never seen this pill bottle before. I’d certainly never been prescribed the medication before. So, I looked it up online. Turns out Mifeprex is often used in conjunction with another medication to end early pregnancies. I waited in front of the computer screen for what must have been four hours. I could try and describe the feelings that I’d felt in that moment. Pain, heartbreak, betrayal. But mostly I just felt pissed off. Tobi had been controlling my life in more ways than one. And I was determined to put a stop to it. I thought up a plan. Tobi was leaving tonight. So, when he got home, I sparked a huge fight. I was inconsolable. I told him to leave. I told him to leave immediately, or I’d call the police with what I’d found. I told him that if he left right away then I wouldn’t call the police and we could discuss future plans in a few days, but he had to go now. So, he grabbed his things got in the car and left. He didn’t know that I’d been tampering with the brakes. It’s funny what a few Youtube tutorials can teach a person. As I listened to the long monotone pitch that signified his passing, I felt tears slipping slowly down my cheeks. It really is a shame. The old Tobi was just about my favorite person. Such a shame.