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IOROW Short Stories
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Story 1:

The restaurant was crowded as usual. Waiters and waitresses in black button downs were running around, taking orders and cleaning tables, with voices overlapping each other and children screaming impatiently at their distracted parents. In one of the corner booths, a man, with slicked back hair in a navy blazer and button down wearing a Daytona Rolex, sat while looking through some documents. The bell at the front door rang as a woman in business casual attire, holding a black briefcase, entered. She looked towards the back corner where the man was waving for her attention and started walking over. The woman was weaving through the tightly packed restaurant, when a child covered in marinara sauce nearly ran into her. As she continued her way towards the man, ignoring whatever half hearted apologies the parents were saying, she just thought about how lucky she was not having to deal with one of those things.

“Hi, sorry about the delay. There was so much traffic on my way here.”

“Don’t worry about it. Please, take a seat.”

“Thank you. Wow, it’s crowded in here.”

“Well, you know, it’s Friday night. Everyone is out enjoying the end of a long week. Plus, this is an amazing restaurant. Last year, it was rated top 20 best places.”

“Huh, that's surprising.”

“Huh, yeah. Well, I suppose we should get started then.”

“Yes, yes. Here let me take out the new contract.”

She reached into her briefcase, and took out several folders, each with documents spilling out of them. The man took one of the folders and began carefully reading through it. The woman sat, with her legs crossed, eying the man as he flipped through the pages while shaking his head.

“Is something wrong?” She asked blankly. The man looked up with furrowed brows, trying to figure out the right words to form.

“I don’t mean to be ungrateful, but this contract is ridiculous. We would be giving up all of our shares. From the numbers my specialists have given me, and the ones I’ve done myself, what you’re offering is frankly still insulting.”

“Still insulting? I’m sorry, but you can’t be serious. My firm has seen your stocks plummet for years now, and last year, your company barely met the break-even point. At the beginning of this year, you were losing all of your assets, and investors. This contract is a generous offer.” He straightened his coat, breathed in sharply, and smiled.

“That was last year. I have data here showing our company's growth, and with a better contract, the merger will jump-start it’s success again.”

The man reached into his briefcase and shuffled through several pieces of paper before handing one over to the woman. After she skimmed over the data, she sat back with her arms crossed and, looking up, said, “These numbers just show me that you’re in no position to bargain. Now, I think we’ve been more than generous, but if you don’t want to sign those contracts, then I’ll be happy to leave now.”

The man stared at the contracts. Everything around him seemed muffled. He could no longer hear the chattering families, and couples, or the shuffling feet of waiters and waitresses. He barely flinched at the loud door that had slammed closed. Finally, he looked up.

“These numbers need to be higher. I can’t go back to my board with nothing.”

“I don’t know what to tell you. It’s this or nothing. We’ve already given more than our original deal.”

“I-I can’t take these numbers.”

The woman looked at him with narrowed eyes, and began gathering her things.

“Well, I’m sorry to see this deal fall through. I was hoping we could finally come to an agreement, but I guess not. Enjoy your night sir.” As she began to leave, the man stood up and shouted, “Wait, wait. Fine. I’ll sign it.”

Story 2:

I love my family, but once in a while they can be a real f**king pain in my a**. I wanted to go to my favorite restaurant as a graduation celebration, and of course they had to all simultaneously have meltdowns. We set a 6:30 reservation on Friday, and obviously only managed to leave the house at 6:40. As we were driving there, going 70 in order to make our reservation, my parents suddenly began bickering.

“What the hell! I told you, you need to get them a babysitter next weekend!”

“No you didn’t! You DID NOT say anything about next weekend!”

“Mom, Jesus, can you slow down. We’re not gonna make our reservation if we’re all dead.”

“Can you tell your dad I specifically said NEXT weekend.”

“YOU DIDN’T SAY THAT! Oh my f**king god, look at the road honey.”

“Don’t nitpick my driving! I told you I set the reservation for 6:30. Now we’re gonna be late for our daughter’s dinner.”

“Mom, it’s fine. Please slow down though.”

“We’re here! Go get our table. I’ll find parking.”

As we spilled out of the car, one by one, we entered the restaurant. My dad was busy on the phone trying to get the babysitter, so I pushed my way through the crowd, towards the host.

“Hi...umm, do you have a reservation for five?”

“How many?”

“Five!”

“What’s the name!”

“Janet Shelstrop.”

“What!”

“Janet Shelstrop!”

“Give me a second. Here, you can follow me.”

As I started following the host, I realized none of my family had followed, so I rushed back towards the door and herded them over to our table. After we sat down, I picked up the menu, though it was pointless, considering I always get the same thing. I looked over at my little brother, whose head was covered by the menu.

“Hey, what are you getting? Your favorite spaghetti with marinara?”

“Yeah I guess.”

He then started poking our dad, who was still on his phone, shouting.

“Hey. Hello? Can you hear me?”

I looked over and saw my mom at the front door, so I waved to get her attention. She came and sat next to my dad who was obnoxiously shouting into the phone.

“Well, I’m glad we finally made it. Have you guys ordered any appetizers? Honey? Why are you still on the phone?”

“I’m getting the babysitter for the kids this weekend!” He shouted back, and thus began yet another argument.

The food finally arrived, and my parents continued to argue as we ate. My brothers who started getting antsy, began wrestling.

“Hey, guys. Stop. We’re at a restaurant.”

“So!”

They then began running around the restaurant bumping into waiters and customers. I buried my red face under my hoodie, trying to avoid the glares. They finally stopped after my youngest brother almost ran into this stern woman that was carrying a black briefcase and wearing one of those basic blazers with a striped button down, and grey skirt. She walked away

glaring at him with sharp and cold eyes. We had to calm my mom, who was about to get up and start a fight.

“God, I hate those people who think they’re so high and mighty that they can glare at my kid. Get off your high horse you *****.”

“MOM! Jesus. Language!”

“Ooo, mommy said a bad word.”

“Shhhh, you didn’t hear me say that.”

On our drive home, we made amends and laughed at our crazy night.

“Oh my god. Can you believe what happened with that guy? The poor man?”

“I know! That was crazy. Were you worried about that happening to you dad?”

“Hahaha, please. I was a catch.”

My mom rolled her eyes, but warmly smiled back. My family is crazy, but we still have fun.

Story 3:

Tyler and Grace had been dating for three years. Although they never talked about it, he knew he wanted to marry her. It just felt right. They had been together for so long, and they had fought all odds to be together. How else could it have ended? He had planned for months to make sure everything was perfect. He set a reservation date at their favorite restaurant for 6:40 on Friday, and he told the waiter to place a bottle of Cabernet Franc - Grace’s- favorite, on the table in advance. He also coordinated with the restaurant's baker about writing the question on her cake. He bought a 10 grand East-West Pear-Cut Diamond Eternity Ring from Blue Nile, and a new \$375 black Italian merino wool suit. Everything was set in place for him.

They entered the noisy restaurant, and Tyler shoved his way to the front. The host led them to the table, where they found his bottle of Cabernet Franc.

“Um, we didn’t order this,” Grace exclaimed.

Apologetically, the host replied “Oh, excuse me, miss. Let me remove this for you.”

“No, no. I ordered it. Leave it.”

Tyler blocked the host with his body, as his face turned red. He could feel his heart pounding harder and harder, as his hands began shaking, and beads of sweat started trickling down his face. Taking a deep nervous breath, he said, “I thought we could celebrate, since it’s our three year anniversary.”

“Oh my god. I’m so sorry. I completely forgot.”

“No, no. Don’t be. Here, let me pour you a glass.”

After the host opened the bottle, he poured her the wine, and with his clammy hands placed down the smudged glass. He wiped the sweat from his forehead and took off his overcoat.

“Wow, it’s really hot in here.”

Grace was looking at the menu while taking sips of wine. Distractedly, she responded, “Yeah, I guess. Umm, do you wanna share some gnocchi.”

“Yeah, of course. Anything you want.”

After they ate and chatted, Tyler became calmer and more relaxed. With Grace, he always felt more comfortable. She always made him feel better, more confident, more complete. The minute they met, he knew he wanted to marry her. He took a deep breath and signaled to the waiter to bring the cake. His warm hands gripped the soft velvet ring box as the waiter walked towards them with the cake, each step becoming heavier and slower. As the cake was placed before Grace, Tyler mustered all the strength he had, stood up, swiftly dropped to the floor, with one knee down, and held out an open ring box, revealing the glistening pieces of diamond. Ignoring all the eyes and gaping mouths, he, in a smiling clear voice, asked,

“Grace Stacy Jones, will you marry me?”

Tyler, still in a stupid grin, waited in anticipation. The room fell nearly silent, with only two people in the corner still talking. A few minutes passed, and slowly, one by one, people began turning their heads away. Although noise had slowly come back, and the rush of Friday night continued, he still stayed on the floor blankly staring. Grace, not knowing what to do whispered, “Tyler. Tyler, get up. Tyler, please get off the floor.”

He didn't. He just looked back at her, his mind completely empty, barely registering anything. After a few more minutes, he clenched his fists, rose without making eye contact with her. He closed his eyes and took a deep breath, trying to hold back the hot tears wanting to escape. Finally, after regaining some strength, he moved towards the door, completely aware of the whispers and eyes that followed him. As he gripped the handle, he could feel all the anger and rage wanting to get out. He slammed the door closed, taking in the sharp cool air, and creating echoes around the abandoned streets.

Connection between stories: Restaurant

You incorporate one or more of the following themes: power, choices and their repercussions, class, social mobility, sexuality

Story 1:

Set up: Two people meeting for a business transaction

Inciting Incident: The two people are both CEOs, and they're talking about a merger and acquisition plan.

Rising Action: They start disagreeing, and tension rises

Climax: Huge argument blows out

Falling Action: Seller accepts terms

Resolution: Seller signs contract and buyer

Story 2:

Set up: Family goes to restaurant to celebrate kids graduation

Inciting Incident: *Idk*

Rising Action: Disagreement about future plans, and different family conflicts

Climax: Everyone is angry

Falling Action: Everyone is passive aggressive

Resolution: Still passive aggressive, but a little more chill

Story 3:

Set up: Couple meeting up for date/ secret proposal

Inciting Incident: *idk*

Rising Action: the person proposing begins their proposal speech, or something like that

Climax: Get rejected

Falling Action: Person gets left at restaurant

Resolution: not really. I guess the person moves on with their life.