

NOSTALGIA

Written by

J.E. Clarke

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J.E. Clarke
Janetgoodman@yahoo.com
917-328-5253

INT. SUBURBAN KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

A male hand reaches for a window, pulls an old curtain aside.

Sunlight glints off his WEDDING RING. Reveals a suburban paradise just beyond the glass:

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - CONTINUOUS

Neat houses, pristine streets. ROOMBA BOTS chew their hungry way across manicured lawns.

SAM (45) squints at the road - left, then right.

SAM

She'll be here any minute.

Behind him, a female hand pours from a kettle. Liquid gurgles from spout to cup. Sam affords the pourer a look of regret.

SAM

Did you hear? There's not much time.

CLICK. The woman's hand sets one cup down. She extends a second cup to Sam. Elegant lips curl through rising steam.

Lips that belong to RACHEL (39): an alluring woman - even more so, thanks to that serene smile.

RACHEL

Won't you have one for the road?

SAM

You're asking me *again*? You know I can't drink -

RACHEL

You look upset. I was concerned.

Sam stalks over to the table and sits down. Confronted by Rachel's calm face, he has no words. Rachel arches an eyebrow, extends the cup once more.

RACHEL

Sweetheart, it's Peppermint.
Guaranteed to calm one's nerves.

Sam glances at a wall: his eye movements trigger a DIGITAL CLOCK. The time glows: 6:05 PM.

SAM

Ka - she said she'd arrive 6:15.

RACHEL

You mean Karen? Sam, you've got permission to say her name. I told you many times, it doesn't hurt.

Sam fidgets with a PAPER NAPKIN. His guilt grows.

SAM

You've got to believe me, Rachel. We didn't *plan* for things to happen. And when they did, it took *lots* of time.

RACHEL

Three years. Yes, I know. If it makes you feel better, I admire your loyalty. Very, very much.

SAM

I'm going on a date with another woman! How the hell are you calm?

RACHEL

You know how I feel about swearing. But Karen makes you happy. And that's exactly what I want for you.

SAM

But I promised to love you forever!

Sam reaches for Rachel's hand. Last second, he recoils.

The kitchen table suddenly glows. A POP-UP display blinks a text: "It's Karen. Grab UR jacket. I'm round the block!"

The screen fades away. Sam stares, long after it's gone.

Rachel sips tea. Above the cup's brim, her eyes waver - a subtle touch.

RACHEL

Sam, we've been at this for *hours*. My energy's draining. I can't keep this up. You read the text; she's almost here. Let's simply agree I retire for a little "nap"?

In the distance: a CAR ENGINE PURRS. Which fuels Sam's tension. He rips his napkin in half!

SAM

This isn't fair; for anyone!

RACHEL
 Times change, Sam. That's a fact of
 life. You and I had terrific years.
 Tonight, let Karen have her turn.

SAM
 You're "OK" with that?

RACHEL
 (smiles)
 "OK?" Darling, I *insist*.

Outside: a CAR pulls up to the curb. At the wheel, blonde
 KAREN honks the horn. Rachel squints towards the window.

RACHEL
 You were right. She looks lovely.

Sam sighs, shrugs on his coat. A glimmer from the wedding
 ring catches his eye. He deliberates - then pulls it off.

He lays the ring on Rachel's plate. Odd: it doesn't CLINK.

SAM
 It's - I do want to wear this...
 always. It's just too awkward for
 Karen. You know?

Rather than collect the ring, Rachel laughs, and shoos Sam
 towards the door.

RACHEL
 Have fun, kids. Take your time. And
 if it makes you feel better to
 "confess", tell me all about the
 date when you're back home.

Sam reaches out to her cheek. His hand passes through Rachel -
 like she's a ghost.

SAM
 Don't be lonely while I'm gone.

RACHEL
 No worries. Memories never are.

Sam walks past a counter filled with PHOTOS. One stands out:

A picture of a lively Rachel hugging Sam. A FUNERAL CARD'S
 jammed in the frame's corner: RACHEL CONNELEY, RIP.

Dabbing his eye with napkin shards, Sam pauses at the door.
In time to see Rachel and her tea set dissolve.

SAM
(whispers)
I'll always love you, Rachel. Long
after we've said goodbye.

Another HONK. Though reluctant, Sam shuffles out.

Back in the kitchen: A wisp of digital "steam" lingers.

Behind that, a PROJECTOR labeled HOLO-MEMOR-EASE blinks out.

The master AI house program dims the lights. An engine PURRS outside. Unseen, Sam and Karen drive off.

FINAL FADE OUT: