

By 錢彥中 John Chyan

The False Cheater

On my hand was a package which contained a letter, a check that has US\$67,290 written on it, and a three carat diamond necklace. It was a necklace that I had dreamed of having for many years but never dared to buy it because of its extremely high price. Many would think that I would be delighted to have the money and the necklace. However, I did not wear a tiny piece of smile. In fact, there was no emotion on my face. My face was pale, my mouth was half opened, tears were racing down on my cheeks, and my body was trembling.

Outside was cold and windy. The sky was dark and the trees were bold. The street was empty and the neighborhood was quite. The moon did not shine and there were no stars in the sky. The air was cold and the wind was fierce. I was standing by the doorway shivering. I shivered not because of the freezing wind but because of what I had just seen and heard.

On the package it wrote, "To my adorable loving wife, Ana. From: Larry Benedict."

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My name is Ana and Larry Benedict was the name of my husband. We had been married for nine years, and we had an eight years old child named Colin. We lived in a small house in Greeneville. We were a family that was not wealthy but was definitely happy.

Each morning, Larry would go out to work in the nuclear plant, and I would stay home doing the house chores and taking care of Colin. Colin was a bright kid; he could do most of the daily routines like eating and going to the bathroom without much of my help. So that would give me plenty of time to do other jobs.

One of the highlights in my daily life was going to the market. It was not that I really liked to smell fish and pork. Well, who does? The real reason was that there was a Tiffany jewelry boutique on the way to the market. There were always lots of pretty jewelries displayed in the window. I could spend a really long while in front of the window staring at those pretty treasures. Among them, there was one thing that really caught my eyes. It was a necklace which has a three carat diamond on it. Although I really liked it, I have never thought of buying it because it costs way more than I could afford. In fact, I was satisfied by just staring at it for a few minutes.

When I got home from the market, I would start making supper. I always enjoyed cooking because Larry and Colin would eat whatever I made; and that really gave me a lot of confidence and happiness in cooking. Another highlight of my day was when Larry came back from work. He would tell me what had happened in the factory that day while we ate, and I really liked to listen to the stories he told me.

Although there weren't too many entertainments for me, I was happy and I really hoped that days would go on like this and never change. However, it had; everything was changed.....in this autumn.

It was an ordinary day, and Larry went to work in the morning as usual. When I was feeding Colin, he suddenly said to me, "Mama, why Papa talk to Jessica on phone when you go shower every night?"

"Huh?? Who's Jessica, and what were they talking about?" I wasn't aware of anything at first.

"Papa and Jessica talk on phone. I don't know what they say. Papa don't want me hear it."

Colin wasn't good at grammar, but I can understand the message that he tried to deliver, and I

started to smell something weird going on.

So that night, I pretended to go shower as usual. After a while, I sneaked out from the bathroom to the hallway right outside the living room. Colin wasn't lying; Larry was talking with someone on the phone.

"...ok, Jessie, but I don't want my wife to know this yet...right... so I will meet you at Ritz Hotel tomorrow at eleven...yes...and I will give it to you. Yes... alright so I'll see you tomorrow, bye." My husband was whispering on the phone as though there were a big secret.

I didn't know what to do, so I sneaked back to the bathroom pretending that nothing had happened.

The next day, my husband went out for work as usual. Although I didn't know what he was up to, I knew he was going to do something. However, I didn't believe that he was going to do anything that would harm me, or perhaps to cheat on me. Maybe it was because I really trusted him...or maybe it was just that I didn't want to face it, the cruel reality.

No, no, it can't be true. Maybe he was talking with his co-worker about some of the company's confidential information. I was telling myself. But why not let me know. It would do no harm to him or the company. Beside, what is he going to give to the woman? And why does he have to talk to her every night? There were hundreds of questions pouring down in my head.

Suddenly, the phone rang.

"Hello?" I answered.

"Hey, Ana, it's me, Kristina! I just saw your husband in his blue jacket a minute ago in the restaurant in Ritz Hotel. And there was a woman with him. I thought it was you because he was

handing a package to her, maybe a gift. But she wasn't! Well, I think he was quite nervous, coz when I went to greet him. He just said 'hi' and rushed away. I just want to call you to make sure if he is alright. And please say sorry for me if I had offended him." As my friend Kristina said this on the phone, I understood what was really going on.

I was heartbroken, but instead of feeling sorrow, I was quite furious.

"I had trusted him and had done so much for him, and now he is cheating on me!" I was telling myself and I was more furious than ever!

So I waited at home angrily, waiting for my heartless husband to come home.

After a long while, the front door opened. It was Larry in his blue jacket. He looked tired and pale. As he saw me sitting on the couch with an angry face, he said, "Hey, honey, I'm home. What's wrong? You don't look very happy."

"What's wrong? You ask me *what's wrong*? Let me tell you what's wrong. I have married the wrong guy! I have done so much for you, and now you are cheating on me! I know you went to meet your secret lover today. Don't think that I am stupid! YOU BIG CHEATER! NOW I WANT YOU OUT OF THE HOUSE, I NEVER WANT TO SEE YOU AGAIN!" I lost control and started shouting at him.

He was shocked by my reaction and his face was white. "What are you talking about, I don't understand. I didn't..."

"QUIT PLAYING DUMB WITH ME! I AM NOT GOING TO SAY THIS AGAIN! GET OUT, OUT, OOOUUUTTT!!" I was roaring with a really sharp voice.

Seeing that there's nothing he could do, Larry stepped out as he was told to. Before he was

out, I heard him saying, “I love you, Ana...” But I slammed the door without hesitation; then I fell on the floor crying with a broken heart.

I didn’t know how the rest of that day went; the only thing I remembered was that the phone rang a couple of times, but I didn’t answer any of them.

When it was getting late in the night, when Colin was watching TV, there was a door knock. As I opened the door, I found a lady with dark hair. “Hello, you must be Mrs. Benedict. How do you do?” the lady greeted me, “I am your husband’s doctor, Jessica Hamilton.”

“Hi...eh...” I didn’t know why she was here, but before I could say another word, she started speaking again.

“Well, is Mr. Benedict home? He was supposed to come to the hospital for the surgery tonight, but he didn’t show up. I tried to call him a few times, but no one answered, so I just came to see if he’s alright.”

“Umm, he’s not home.” It seemed that the more she said, the more confused I was.

“Hmmm, that’s strange. Well, I can’t stay here for too long. I have to go back to the hospital. And please tell him to come to the hospital at once. He is very sick, and the surgery cannot wait.... Oh, and yes, your husband gave me this in the morning. He told me to mail it to you when he has the surgery, but since I’m here, I’ll just give it to you.” Before the doctor left, she gave me a package. It was from my husband.

Although she was speaking English, I didn’t understand what she was talking about. So I opened the package. Inside the package was a letter, a check and the diamond necklace I was dreaming of. Seeing this, I was both surprised and more confused. I opened the letter and read...

Dear Ana,

By the time you read this, I will be in the hospital having the surgery. I wanted to tell you this earlier, but I didn't know how to start it. Anyway, I found that I had a tumor on my brain a couple months ago, which means I am having a cancer. It must have something to do with my job in the nuclear plant. Doc. Hamilton said the tumor has grown so big that there's a 50% risk of dying for doing the surgery. I wasn't sure if I would be able to live through it, so I am writing this to you.

As you can see, there's a check. Although it's not much, that's everything I had. I have also asked the public welfare office about the single parent subsidies. They said once I died, they will give you US\$800 every month for you to take care of Colin and make a living. So you will be alright.

By the way, the Tiffany manager told me the other day that you seemed to like the necklace very much, so I bought it for you. I'm sorry I haven't given you and Colin a wealthy life. At least there's something I can give you before I leave.

At last, I don't know if I will see you again, but I want you to know that I will love you forever no matter what. And please tell Colin that I love him too.

Larry.

When I finished reading, I heard a voice coming out from the living room, "Breaking news, a man in a blue jacket was run over and killed by a drunken driver just twenty minutes ago. It was only fifty meters away from the Greeneville Hospital...."