

A Seven Backed Up By a Two

By

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INT. AIRPORT - ARRIVALS LOUNGE - DAY

A large group of people congregate around the entrance. JOHN (late 20s), tall, well dressed, stands among them. He glances towards the entrance then at his PHONE in his hand.

He opens an already read message, it says: "My flight is due to land at half two. I should be at arrivals around three x".

He looks at the CLOCK on the wall, its 3:08. He turns once again towards the arrivals entrance.

INT. AIRPORT - BAGGAGE RECLAIM - SAME

The luggage moves along the conveyor belt. ELAINE (late 20s), cute, petite, watches the bags appear.

She takes out her phone, retrieves John's number.

As she dials the number, the battery goes dead. She swears to herself, turns it back on.

The phone lights up briefly before dying again.

ARRIVALS LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

P.O.V: Somebody moves through the crowd towards John.

A hand taps him on the shoulder. He turns around, taken back by the sight before him, struggles to hide his surprise.

An attractive woman, HELEN (late 20s), stands before him.

JOHN

Helen...this is a surprise. Long time no see.

HELEN

(formal)

Yeah, John, it has...Too long.

BAGGAGE RECLAIM - SAME

Elaine waits for her luggage. She checks her watch.

ARRIVALS LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Pause. John and Helen trade awkward glances at each other.

HELEN

Are you waiting for someone on
this flight too?

JOHN

Yeah, my am...wife, Elaine. And
you?

Helen eyes flicker but she remains composed.

HELEN

Yeah, Mark. My boyfriend.

John nods slowly in response.

JOHN

...So how have you been?

HELEN

Ok, workin' in a H.R. office up in
Galway now. Mark is from Cork too,
he was abroad on business. We're
goin' visiting his parents later.

JOHN

That's nice.

HELEN

He is nice. I never knew you got
married.

JOHN

Yeah, last April. It was a low key
affair. Just family, a few
friends.

HELEN

Sounds lovely...Congratulations.

John shuffles uncomfortably.

JOHN

Thanks.

Both turn towards the entrance, John's eyes wander
nervously around the building, anywhere but Helen.

BAGGAGE RECLAIM - CONTINUOUS

A large black suitcase moves along the conveyor. Elaine waits for it eagerly.

Just as she reaches out to grab it, another hand emerges, getting there first.

MAN (O.S)

I'll get that for you, Lainy.

Elaine looks up to see a smirking, rugged, good looking man, MARK (late 20s), with a bag already slung over his back. She recoils.

ELAINE

Mark...what are you doing here?

He looks around at their surroundings -- Conveyor, screens, passengers carrying luggage, airport personnel.

MARK

I thought it was pretty obvious,
the same reason why you're here.

(looks around
again)

And all these other people.

He readjusts the bag on his back, affords her a patronizing wink.

ELAINE

Still a wise ass, huh? A fuckin'
wise ass.

MARK

Ask silly questions, Lainy.

ELAINE

Yeah right...and stop calling me
that.

MARK

I saw you on the plane, how are
you?

ELAINE

(terse)
Great, I'm married now.

Elaine clenches her fist to show a WEDDING RING. She grabs her bag off him, turns to leave.

MARK

I'll walk you out.

ELAINE

No thanks. I've got full sight in both my eyes now...on a regular basis. I can make my own way.

Mark is caught off guard a little but maintains his confident demeanour. He walks after her.

ARRIVALS LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

An ELDERLY WOMAN (70s) passes in between John and Helen. John eyes the arrivals entrance.

JOHN

Do you see much of the old crowd?

HELEN

No, with work an' all, I'm rarely home.

JOHN

Yeah, me too. I still keep up contact with Dave though. You know he knocked up a seventeen year old?

HELEN

No, is she from around?

JOHN

Caroline Walsh, his boss's daughter. Not many know about it yet, including the aforementioned psychotic father.

HELEN

Shit, he must be up the walls.

JOHN

What, Dave? The man has the critical thinking capabilities of a lemming. He won't even begin to get to grips with something like this, he won't even try. A firm believer of the "it'll be fine" and "everything will work out" mantra.

HELEN

I dunno, he's got more lives than most that guy. I mean some of the stuff he got away with growing up.

JOHN

We're talking Eddie Walsh here, you know. A few sandwiches short? He hasn't even bought the loaf yet. Dave is gonna perish slowly when he finds out.

Helen smiles at John's wit but quickly suppresses it. Their eyes meet briefly before Helen turns away, looks at the floor.

A VOICE sounds over the intercom but BUSTLE and CHATTER of the people waiting in anticipation renders it inaudible.

BAGGAGE RECLAIM - SAME

Elaine and Mark walk past the rows of conveyors, approach the exit.

MARK

I've stopped drinking...well I cut down, just weekends now...and if Liverpool are playin' in the Champions League, you know yourself.

ELAINE

Well done, I'll lick some gold stars and stick them to your forehead. Then everyone will know how good you've been lately.

Mark smiles, laughs off Elaine's remark. She picks up the pace, strides for the door.

ARRIVALS LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

The flights inward screen flickers, updates -- A large SCHOOL TOUR GROUP (pre teens) flock past John and Helen making their usual racket of LAUGHS, SCREAMS and SHOUTS.

JOHN

You still wear that bracelet, from school.

Helen looks down at a pretty gold bracelet around her right wrist.

HELEN

Yeah. It's one of the few things
that stayed with me.

John's face morphs into a "I walked straight into that one" expression. He feigns a COUGH.

HELEN (CONT'D)

So how's your mother keeping?

JOHN

She's doin' good. It hasn't come
back since, thankfully. The doctor
said she's made a complete
recovery.

HELEN

I'm glad to hear.

JOHN

She always asks for you, misses
you around.

HELEN

I miss her as well...but she makes
me think of you.

Again, John looks at anything but Helen.

HELEN (CONT'D)

And I'd rather not think about
you, John.

CUSTOMS - CONTINUOUS

Elaine and Mark pass through customs. Mark catches up with her.

MARK

We had some good times.

Elaine ignores him, continues pacing ahead.

MARK (CONT'D)

C'mon on, Elaine. I wasn't always
a prick, was I?

She keeps walking, chews her bottom lip. Her face grows rigid, tense.

ELAINE

I don't want to have to deal with you now, Mark. Not here, not anywhere.

Elaine takes out her phone and tries it again, no response.

ARRIVALS LOUNGE - SAME

A few others join the crowd beside John and Helen.

HELEN

It doesn't seem like you fully realize what you did to me.

John makes eye contact with her for a split second, inhales, bracing himself.

HELEN (CONT'D)

I don't think you understand how long it takes to recover from something like that happening to you...because you never think it will happen to you.

(emotional)

A reminder, an offhand moment or memory can knock you right off your feet. Then you're back to square one, you got to start all over again, pick yourself up...And it's fucking hard, John.

JOHN

I had to get over you too. It wasn't an easy decision for me to make. My head was fucked up. We were too young, everything came together at once...I couldn't handle it.

HELEN

You walked out.

JOHN

(appeasing)

I walked out.

HELEN

Yeah...on me.

JOHN

My mother needed me...with Dad
gone I--

HELEN

I needed you t--

SCREAMS sound out as the first of the arrivals emerge.

Some people rush forward to greet their loved ones. John and Helen barely react -- John looks again at the entrance, Helen cold eye doesn't falter.

WALKWAY - CONTINUOUS

Mark and Elaine are the last of the arrivals to file through.

MARK

I'd like to take you out some
night, for dinner or something.
Show you I've changed. I'm not
that guy any more.

Elaine simmers, her knuckles whiten around the bag handle

MARK (CONT'D)

I know this new restaurant on
bachelor's quay, supposed to be
ni--

Elaine turns around, her face contorted with rage.

ELAINE

(through gritted
teeth)

How dare you.

Mark looks properly fazed for the first time.

ELAINE (CONT'D)

You have some gall coming up to me
like this, acting all cool like
nothing has happened. You think
I've forgotten the things you done
to me, forgotten the abuse...?
Your little tantrums, the names
you called me...I'm just barely
keeping things together here even
at the sight of you.

Elaine inhales, summons all her will to stay calm.

ELAINE (CONT'D)

How little you used to make feel
in front of your friends. Or if
the dinner wasn't good enough to
shovel down your throat.

Elaine stops, breaths heavily, tears well up in her eyes.
Mark remains composed.

People brush past them, casting the occasional sideways
glance.

ELAINE (CONT'D)

And the beatings, over the
smallest things...You too pissed
to remember and I too chicken shit
to leave you.

Mark takes it all in, seemingly unperturbed.

ARRIVALS LOUNGE - SAME

Arrivals stream through, unite with the waiting people.
John scans the crowd gingerly, Helen admonishing gaze
remains locked on him.

JOHN

Mam was very ill. I had to be with
her.

HELEN

It was our wedding day!
I spent four hours trying to look
nice in that...fucking dress, and
for what? To stand on my own up at
that alter...it was humiliating.

JOHN

I don't know what to say. It was
exceptional circumstances.

HELEN

You were never going to marry me.
You just hadn't got the balls to
be up front about it. You let me
go up there...allowed it go that
far.

John continues to eye the arrivals coming through.

HELEN (CONT'D)

I know your mother was sick, I said a hundred times to put it off if you wanted. But you were adamant to go through with it...until the actual day itself of course...One big wind up, huh/?

JOHN

It wasn't like that.

John faces her.

JOHN

...I'm sorry.

HELEN

That means nothing to me, John, absolutely nothing. It's just a word, doesn't mean shit. You wouldn't even answer my calls, a whole month. You left the country for fucks sake! And you tell me it was all because of your mother?

WALKWAY/ARRIVALS LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Elaine walks ahead of Mark who keeps his distance this time. She stops again before the entrance, turns to him.

ELAINE

I'm a different person now. I've got someone who cares about me, respects me. Isn't a fuckin' animal! I wouldn't take your shit for one second now...

Elaine stands face to face with Mark, almost vibrating with anger. He looks directly at her.

She cools suddenly, scoffs, shakes her head.

ELAINE

You're just a bully, that's all.

She walks on, enters the arrivals lounge.

CUT TO:

John and Helen look away from one another as the crowd begin to clear away.

John turns to her.

JOHN

Why did you come over to me just now, just to say all this?

Helen turns to him.

Elaine walks through the entrance in the background, Mark follows a few steps behind.

HELEN

Yeah...I never got the chance before with your mother was being sick. I've been waiting a long time for this opportunity.

(beat)

And not because I think it will solve anything or get things back to the way they used to be, having it all out in the open...but because it makes me feel a whole lot better about it...Maybe now you can "get to grips" with what you did to me

In the background, Mark picks up the pace to catch up with Elaine.

HELEN

But hey, you're obviously well over all that now, aren't you? Got yourself all married up, for real this time...I guess I must've been the problem.

CUT TO:

Mark walks beside Elaine.

MARK

So a sorry won't fix anything...? And my offer for a reconciliation dinner has been ah...shot down we'll say?

Elaine ignores him, keeps walking.

CUT TO:

John spots Elaine approaching -- Helen sees Mark.

John and Helen wave to their respective loved ones to get their attention, confused, they glance at one another before looking back in the direction of Elaine and Mark.

CUT TO:

Mark leans a little closer to Elaine.

MARK

Well in that case I got nothing to lose, do I...? So fuck you too...My only regret is I didn't hit you harder...Lainy.

Elaine appears as if she's going to snap before she spots John up ahead -- Mark follows her gaze, catches sight of Helen.

DITTO:

Elaine and Mark wave to their respective loved ones to get their attention, confused, they glance at one another before looking back in the direction of John and Helen.

CUT TO:

The four meet. All eyes curiously size each other up for a brief moment. Ice needs breaking.

John approaches Elaine, hugs her. Helen and Mark do likewise.

JOHN

How was your flight?

ELAINE

Fine.

JOHN

(gestures to Helen)
This is Helen by the way...an old friend of mine. Helen, this is Elaine, my wife.

John looks at Helen with trepidation. Will she hang him?

HELEN

(smiling)
Nice to meet you, Elaine.

Both shake hands.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Yeah, me and John, we go way back.

(beat)

You've snagged a good one here,
hold on to him...You know Mark?

Mark and Elaine exchange glances. She hesitates.

ELAINE

Yeah...we know each other from
before too.

Mark nods coolly.

JOHN

Wow, that's a bit of a
coincidence, isn't it? Nice to
meet you, Mark.

MARK

You too.

Both shake hands.

ELAINE

I'm really tired, John.

(looks at Helen)

Sorry, I don't mean to be rude.

(looks at John)

I'd like to get going, we have a
long journey ahead of us.

John nods.

MARK

Yeah, we have to be somewhere too

(ushers to Helen)

Will we make a move, pet?

Both men exchange silent, yet cordial salutes. Both women
do they same, all smiles.

John awkwardly waves to Helen

JOHN

(croaks)

Bye.

She forces a smile in return.

HELEN

Bye.

Helen's eyes linger on John for a brief moment as he gestures to carry Elaine's suitcase.

Elaine and Mark stare at one another.

John picks up Elaine's suitcase.

MARK

It was great seeing you again,
Elaine.

Elaine looks sympathetically at Helen, appears to be on the verge of saying something.

ELAINE

Yeah.

She links arms with John.

Mark faces Helen, puts his arm around her. They both walk away.

CUT TO:

John and Elaine walk towards a side entrance.

JOHN

The car is parked over here. Who
was that?

CUT TO:

Helen and Mark walk towards the other side entrance.

MARK

Who was he?
(jokingly)
One of your Lotharios I suspect?

HELEN

(dismissively)
Jonathan? Oh, he's harmless. We
were in school together, he's
always had a crush on me. Still
not over it I think...who was she?

MARK

(innocently)
Nobody.

HELEN
(jokingly
suspicious)
Nobody...really?

They smile at each other, look away.

Helen's expression turns sombre -- Mark's leer reinstates itself, not a care in the world.

CUT TO:

John and Elaine are halfway across the Foyer.

ELAINE
I used to work with him, he's an
asshole. She can do a lot better.

JOHN
Yeah, why?

ELAINE
I'll tell you in the car.
(looks at John)
She seems to hold you in high
regard.

John shrugs it off.

Both sets of people walk across the large foyer in opposite directions.

FADE OUT.

THE END