

FOR BETTER FOR WORSE

Written by

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FADE IN

INT. WADE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

WADE, 40, athletic, half handsome, concerned as he approaches the bed where MEGAN, his wife smiles despite the pain. Yellowed eyes say she's having liver problems.

WADE  
Is it bad today?

MEGAN  
Not so bad.

WADE  
You never could lie. I checked the list. You've moved up two spaces.

MEGAN  
At that rate, I'll get a new liver in...3 years?

WADE  
Thirty-three months.

MEGAN  
The drugs make me slow.

He bends over and kisses her forehead.

WADE  
I'll be back for lunch. Try to walk a little. The doctors think exercise helps.

MEGAN  
I'm dying, Wade. Why should I walk?

WADE  
Because in thirty-three months I'm taking you dancing.

INT. WADE'S OFFICE - DAY

Wade sits behind the desk of a modest office. Computer, a wall of thick tomes, decent view, the office of a successful attorney. Office casual dress and a legal pad.

Across from him sits TOWNSEND, 40, handsome, charming, in expensive digs, the picture of success.

WADE

What is this, number three?

TOWNSEND

Four. There was one in Jamaica that I handled locally. Cost me double but hey, it's Jamaica, mon.

WADE

I don't get it. You have the Midas touch. Every business you start jumps the moon. But when it comes to women, you pick nothing but losers. What this time?

TOWNSEND

Jade's been boffing her tennis pro. I know, cliché, but she's not bright enough to think of something clever. I want you to take good care of her.

WADE

She signed a pre-nup.

TOWNSEND

I know, I know, what do you say to a million?

WADE

That's insane. She'll depart for at most a hundred thousand.

TOWNSEND

I still like her. I just can't live with a cheater.

Wade jots notes on his pad.

WADE

When are you going to settle down with a nice girl?

TOWNSEND

I can't.

WADE

What do you mean, you can't?

TOWNSEND

Part of the contract, Wade. I make money faster than rabbits make babies, but I'll never find a woman who won't cheat on me.

WADE

That's crazy. I know a dozen pretty women who would never cheat on you.

TOWNSEND

As soon as they say "I do." Hell, they'll shag the best man before we leave the church. And there's nothing you or I can do about it. How's Megan?

Wade stops writing and forces a smile.

WADE

We moved up three spaces.

TOWNSEND

Not fast enough, right?

Wade shakes his head. Townsend stands and grabs Wade's legal pad. Townsend writes.

TOWNSEND

Some time ago, when I couldn't make a dime, this person helped me. It's not your usual guru, but...well, she put me in touch with someone who could help.

WADE

Unless she has a spare liver hanging around, I don't-

TOWNSEND

Go. See. Her.

Townsend pushes over the pad and walks to the door.

TOWNSEND

One million, bro. I hear you're going to be a judge.

WADE

Who told--

Wade watches Townsend disappear.

INT. WADE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Wade carries a tray of soup and a glass of milk.

WADE

Lunch.

In the bed, Megan rolls over.

MEGAN

I'm not hungry.

WADE

You have to eat. Sit up.

Wade sets the tray on a table and helps Megan sit up in bed. Then, he places the tray on her lap.

WADE

You don't have to eat it all. But you have to eat something.

She nods and picks up the spoon.

WADE

I'm working at home this afternoon. Call when you finish.

With a gentle kiss, he leaves her.

INT. WADE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Wade empties his briefcase onto the table. He grabs the legal pad and notices Townsend's note.

EXT. MANSION - DAY

The oldest mansion you've ever seen. Dark, overgrown, the stuff of nightmares. The vines are about to come alive and strangle Wade who stands on the walk. He hardly believes this place is occupied. He walks up and rings the bell.

Barely a second later, the door opens. A large, black woman, KIDRA, 60, smiles.

KIDRA

Come in, come in.

WADE

I'm sorry. I was expecting-

KIDRA

I know what you want. Come in.

Wade hesitates, and she waves him in.

INT. MANSION - KITCHEN - DAY

Kidra hands Wade a cup of coffee. Unlike the outside, the kitchen is spotless, with a cadre of modern appliances.

KIDRA

That's when I say to him, boy, you got to find yourself a girl cause runnin' around with them hoodlums is gonna get you killed. He laugh and say he got plenty of time for girls. You want a piece of pie? Cause I got a cherry pie that just begs to be eat.

WADE

No, I was hoping-

KIDRA

Oh, I know why you're here. You here for the same reason they all come. You got a problem that you can't reckon with. That be it. So, how about that pie?

WADE

I really don't have time for-

KIDRA

You got time. Things ain't ready yet.

Wade smiles.

WADE

Pie sounds fine.

INT. MANSION - BEDROOM - DAY

A 10-year-old girl's room, pink and fluffy. Dolls, a doll house, a girl's dream. In the middle of the room, a small table where Wade shares pretend tea with NINA, 10, as cute as her room.

NINA

Do you like the tea?

WADE

Delicious. But I didn't come to drink tea.

NINA

You came for the answer. Everyone comes for the answer.

WADE

You know what I need?

NINA

Of course. I was just hoping to have tea first.

WADE

Forgive me. There must be a mistake. I don't see how you can help.

Nina giggles.

NINA

I don't help, silly. I find the right one who can.

WADE

Right one?

NINA

They're not all the same. That would be soooo boring.

WADE

Who are we talking about?

NINA

Not who, what, we're talking about the right what.

WADE

I don't understand.

NINA

I'm sorry I don't have scones.

(makes a face)

I don't know what a scone is, but that's what they always say.

She laughs which baffles Wade.

EXT. MANSION - DAY

Wade stands on the stoop. Kidra stands in the doorway.

WADE

Can I ask you a question?

KIDRA

It be true. I know you don't believe cause it be so different. But it be true. If you do what you say, it do what it say.

WADE

I feel so...stupid.

KIDRA

(laughs)

Oh my, yes, that be true. Good-bye.

She closes the door on him.

INT. WADE'S HOUSE - DAY

Wade enters and finds the bed empty. He looks around. She stands at the window looking out.

WADE

Megan?

Megan turns, and she smiles brilliantly.

MEGAN

I can't believe how good I feel.

He comes over and takes her arm.

WADE

You may want to get back in bed.

MEGAN

I want to eat in the kitchen. Can we do that?

He smiles.

EXT. YARD - DAY

Wade, in jeans, work shirt, gloves, and hat. On his knees, he plants flowers in a large bed.

TOWNSEND (O.S.)

You're a hard man to track down.

Wade looks over his shoulder as Townsend as spiffy as ever walks up.



TOWNSEND

I need a pre-nup.

WADE

Sorry, I'm out of that business.

TOWNSEND

What do you mean, out? Come on, you're the best lawyer in the state, practically a judge.

Wade stands and his shirt has a name-Wade-embroidered on it.

WADE

Not any more. I plant flowers and trees and cut grass.

Townsend studies Wade a moment.

TOWNSEND

I get it. The full remission. Tit for tat. Health on one side, planting flowers on the other. That it?

WADE

A deal's a deal.

TOWNSEND

I understand, bro, I understand.

WADE

Call Victoria. She's almost as good as me.

Townsend holds out his hand. Wade removes his glove and shakes.

TOWNSEND

Call me sometime.

WADE

You're not afraid I'll screw your wife?

TOWNSEND

Of course, you'll screw her. That's part of the deal.

INT. WADE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Wade, dirty, sweat-stained, tired enters to find no food cooking, no Megan. He goes to the fridge and pulls out a beer.

In comes Megan, as healthy as yogurt, dressed for a night on the town, very pretty.

WADE  
Out again?

MEGAN  
Survivor party. All of us who have  
beaten the big 'C'.

He moves to kiss her, and she frowns.

WADE  
What? Too dirty? An honest day's  
work offends you?

She leans in for a peck on the cheek.

MEGAN  
I liked it better when honest work  
included some lawyering.

WADE  
Those days are over.

MEGAN  
And I still don't know why.

WADE  
It's for you.

MEGAN  
Of course, for me. Like I chose a  
gardener over an attorney ten years  
ago.

WADE  
You think I want to break my back  
hauling mulch? You think I live  
for insects and rodents and snakes?  
I loved the law. I was damn good  
at it. I miss it every day.

MEGAN  
Then go back to it.

WADE  
I can't.

She heads out.

MEGAN

Like every other loser in the world.

WADE

HEY!

She's gone. He hurls the can of beer into the sink. Then, he pulls his cell from his pocket and hits the speed dial.

WADE

(on phone)

Townsend? It's me. Stop by the house tomorrow and we'll do the pre-nup.

(beat)

Of course, I'm sure.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

A knot of MOURNERS stands next to an open grave. At the front stand Wade, rose in hand, Townsend, and MARIA, 20s, Townsend's gorgeous, new wife.

TOWNSEND

Sudden relapse?

WADE

Doctors didn't see it coming.

TOWNSEND

I'm sorry, bro, I'm sorry.

Maria grabs Wade's arm.

MARIA

You must come to dinner. It's not a good time to be alone.

She smiles, as sexy as money, and squeezes Wade's arm.

TOWNSEND

Yes, come to dinner.

WADE

Thanks for the invite, but--

MARIA

We will not accept no. You must promise.

Wade looks at Townsend who shrugs.

WADE  
Of course, I'll come.

Townsend and Maria step away, only to have Maria come back. She leans in to whisper.

MARIA  
We will have quesadillas and beer--  
and then you'll fuck me.

With a giggle she slips away, back to Townsend whose face says he knows exactly what she said.

Wade turns back to the grave and drops in the rose he was holding.

FADE OUT.