



Newlyweds appear to have a wonderful future ahead. George and Sheila are positioned for success and a great life. They relocate to Southern California and enjoy their careers, family and friends. However, turmoil runs in the undercurrent of their relationship due to a tragedy. Resolution is in doubt.

The Month of June

by H. C. Wallace

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H.C. WALLACE

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FIFTEEN

He stood over the bed. She was sleeping soundly and curled tightly in a fetal position. He looked at her ring finger. Both rings were there, glinted on the white, thin fingers. The sun was arriving and its brow was breaking the horizon. Let her sleep and rest on success. At peace with the evening's event and the accolades.

He was in his bathrobe, unshaven and yawning at the hour. He returned to the sitting room. He had left the television on and he watched for a few moments. A news banner was running along the bottom of the morning show. Three people had been shot to death in Los Angeles the night before. It was less than ten miles from their house. There wasn't an explanation for the murders. The assailant, the third, had turned the weapon on himself. The reason died with him. There were only dead reasons in that universe. It was ten miles away and it was the same universe, yet it was a different planet. He turned the television off.

"I heard you rustling about so I made coffee." Consuelo placed the cup and saucer on the table.

"Thank you, Consuelo. Incidentally, Anita called and she is coming over to see Sheila. I suppose she

wants to wish her good luck with the interview. Can you make something for us? She may as well stay for lunch."

"Certainly, I know what she likes. Is Sheila still sleeping?"

"Yes and snoring besides."

"That means she was exhausted. I'll tend to her later."

He finished his coffee and read the newspaper. He logged on to the computer and sent a message to Russell and then made some fake entries in his client contact journal. He must stop the cheating he thought. They have been fair to me and I must be fair to them. He erased the entries.

He went up to the bedroom and found Sheila sitting at the dressing table. Consuelo was brushing her hair. Her clothes for the day were strewn across the bed. Sheila was snipping at Consuelo about her hair and Consuelo was trying to calm her. And then she told Consuelo that she had chosen the wrong clothes and Consuelo dashed to the closet and returned with Sheila's selection and helped her dress.

"Damn, what were you thinking about?"

"You have time Miss Sheila, calm now."

"Morning, George. I nearly over slept. I must run."

"Would you rather take a taxi?"

"No, I'll drive. Don't worry I'm not that late."

"I'm sure everything will go just great."

"Thanks for the confidence. Not that top, Consuelo. Didn't you understand? I want the black one and hurry."

"Anita called. She is coming over to wish you luck."

"What would I do with *her* best wishes? Anyway, she had better put on some speed since I am leaving soon. Or is it you she wants to see?"

"I'll leave the pair of you to sort out your wardrobe. I can see you're in a hurry."

He returned to the setting room. There was little more he could say. It was best to stay out of the way. He could extend more if the interview went well. She would return on the drug of recognition if she was successful. There could be conversations on another plane. It could inch toward the beginning of them and the recollections of their beginning would be a cure for them. She was worth it. He reviewed, not unlike a film unwinding in frames, those days of awkward discoveries that all fresh lovers endure. He ran it in reverse searching for a clue, some sign, and a fissure in

the history of her that could be a hint for some compulsion to swim in this remorse and take him along. Anita would arrive soon and he would tell her about her accusation. He knew what the reaction would be. She would laugh, she would be offended, and saddened. He looked up, turned his head toward the back of the house. He could hear a minor disturbance in the approximate area of the kitchen. Consuelo must be preparing their food.

Consuelo opened the armoire next to her bed and began packing the suitcase on the floor. She stacked the objects carefully making sure that they were neatly folded. Next, she opened the closet and began folding the clothes and packing them in the suitcase. She pressed down on the contents and tried to close the lid, but it would not snap shut. She removed several of the articles and laid them in the bottom of the closet. She closed the lid again and snapped it shut. She went into the bathroom, opened the medicine cabinet and raked the contents into a small handbag. She sat on the edge of the bed, took a sheet of notepaper and pen from her purse and began writing. The composition was short, it only took a couple of minutes to write and she folded the paper and stuffed

the note in an envelope. She propped the envelope upright on the armoire and it leaned against the wall. She picked up the suitcase, walked to the doorway and turned to face the envelope on the armoire. All of her years were in the envelope. She was hesitant to leave the years behind, but there could be no recourse. Today was the result of June.

She went into the setting room and picked up the telephone. The call was brief. She went down the hallway, opened the door, closed it quietly, turned and walked down the driveway, down the street to the arch over the entrance. The security guard greeted her and she returned the greeting. She parked the suitcase at the edge of a shrub next to the security house and sat on the suitcase. In less than five minutes a taxi drove up to the front of the security house and she entered the taxi quickly and the taxi slowly weaved down the twisting street.

“Hello, am I disturbing a meditation? The door was unlocked, and I let myself in. Where is Consuelo?” She stuck her head through the doorway. “And has Sheila left for the interview?”

“Consuelo must be in the kitchen. Sheila left earlier, I think she was in quite a hurry and nervous.”

He rose from his chair and gathered her in his arms. "Or she wanted to avoid you."

She held on to him and kissed him. "I think I understand, buddy."

"I told Consuelo to make a lunch for us and she said she knew what you liked. How does she know what you like?"

"I slip over here once in a while for a dip and Consuelo feeds me. I told her that it was fine by you."

"Always sneaking around aren't you?"

"I knew you would be fine with it. It is a convenient stop for me. I jog close to here and your gate attendant waves me through. Put it on my bill."

"You don't have a bill. Sit on the couch by me, close."

"It seems like I can't get enough time with you. You ignored me last night. Did I do something to offend you? No, I didn't. We know each other well enough so that would not happen. I suppose you were totally focused on her to the exclusion of everything around you. You must have been happy for her. I did see that you had a glow on your face, an expression of satisfaction. I felt exactly the same as you. I felt a relief. Our Sheila came back to us momentarily. But as for the

three of us, we seem to be traveling in different circles these days. And us, you and I, we are definitely traveling in different circles these days. I miss you."

"I'm afraid to call you, see you, and talk to you. I finally gave in."

"God, George those days, those golden days. It is like a dream that won't end. But you are afraid of calling me, talking to me. What do you mean?"

"It's Sheila. She has some odd suspicions about you."

"Oh, it is the contrived presentation for the gallery exhibition. I suppose she felt like we were ganging up on her. I never thought that she wouldn't see through the absurdity of it. Perhaps she thought it was an insult."

"That is not what I am referring to."

"Then what is it?"

"She has this delusion that we are having an affair."

"I certainly am and I am happy with it. How is it going with you?"

"No, she thinks that I am having an affair with you."

"I understood what you meant. I am sorry that she thinks that her best friend is doing her husband. Is she insistent with the accusation or is she simply fishing around?"

"It is constant, every opportunity she gets. It is either clever subtlety or direct accusations. She won't let go of it."

"Hence the hissy fit at Dina's. It must have registered with her more seriously than I had expected at the time, unless it was something else more serious. It could have been something that happened long ago." She looked down at her knees, tapped her fingers on her knees as though she were impatient and then glanced sideways at him. "Women hold things, George. You know that we do."

"I don't know what you mean by more serious, but I told her to confront you with it if she was so sure."

"It could be that she is waiting for the opportune time. Although I can't imagine what more of significance would happen in the future. I could only tell her the truth, but if she is convinced of my guilt then she will not believe me. Do you remember anything that happened previously, something that gave her a reason to believe this?"

“No I don’t know.”

“I do know who is guilty.”

“What are you talking about?”

“An acquaintance of mine told me about it after the last party at Dina’s house. She recognized you. She doesn’t know anything about the woman, but she knows you and she has seen you going to her apartment on two occasions.”

A big city can be a small town with big eyes. In the beginning he was always careful, but he wasn’t toward the end. He had become reckless. He preferred her apartment as opposed to a hotel in the shadow of night. He had ignored the precautions. He went there any hour of day, on any occasion. It was an escape from the heat and he had become oblivious to the world around him.

“So this person knows me. Who is it?”

“I won’t say and don’t worry. She isn’t the type. She simply laughed about it.”

“It’s over. Yes, it *was* true, but it is finished. I know you won’t tell.”

“You don’t have to say that. Please realize that I am caught in an uncomfortable place between friends. As for your escapade, if you were ignoring her then she

knew you must have had a convenience to entertainment you."

"She has refused me for the most part. I didn't reject her. I am being punished for something that I did not do with you."

"I would say that justice wears an ironic face at times, wouldn't you think so? You are rightly punished for an indiscretion but not with the person that she suspects."

"I am disappointed that she dislikes her former friend with such passion when her friend is not guilty."

"That's all understandable but you remain guilty. These infidelities can be a little complicated can't they?"

"Beyond complicated I would say. That is enough of me. I've forgotten you. I'm selfish aren't I?"

"No, you are not selfish. I don't have the luggage compared to you. Everything is running fine at the art institute. I did lose to some competition and didn't get the position that I was chasing, but something else will arise in the future."

"I know. It could be another place or another time. I can't see anything that would hold you back for long."

"I do have a new beau. He is a sculptor in Carmel. He doesn't show a promising future as an artist, but he has other skills."

"It's hard to get everything in one package."

"I wasn't looking for *everything*, only enough."

"I won't ask more, but I am happy for you."

George led her to the kitchen and found the table neatly arranged, silverware, glasses, plates for two and the food presented neatly in the middle of the table.

"Where is Consuelo?"



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