

Rosemary's Beach House

Dalton

Truly, I wish that I could say I was head-over-heels in love with Dalton. It would be wonderful after my convoluted childhood to say that I made it work and we stayed "soul mates all of our life." That, however, was not the case.

Dalton and I met standing in a very long checkout line in the local Macon, Georgia grocery store. Upon completion of nursing school, I chose Macon to live and work as a registered nurse. Work, I did as many hours as the hospital would allow. I toiled hard at my profession. For many reasons, I can't say that I enjoyed nursing, but I was great at my chosen profession.

It was a Friday evening on the fateful meeting. The local grocery store packed with customers anxiously ready to begin their weekend. Macon was a good in-between location from Atlanta to Savannah. Many wealthy "Maconites" and Atlanta residents kept beach homes or sailboats in Savannah, so they stocked up on provisions before leaving Macon for their weekend retreat. Since I had no life but worked all of the time, I stared at the others as I felt extremely envious of such leisurely lives. Often, I studied the faces of these wealthy individuals who mixed with us commoners only because they must.

The air conditioning was not working well as the store overcrowded and became uncomfortably hot. There were only two check-out lines. People soon began mumbling about "abandoning their buggies." I turned to the person behind me to complain. Suddenly, I was face-to-face with one extraordinary man. Wiry and tall with extremely tanned skin and green eyes, framed with long lashes, I stared at a dream. He had the most incredible smile.

Okay, he reminded me of Mother's lover, Harry, as well as my no good dad, Roy.

I melted not because of the heat from the building but the look which he gave me. I could only smile and nod. Strangely, he looked at me.

"You approve of this mess?"

Not ever liking to feel challenged, I changed the direction of my head to a "no" but continued to smile. I felt like an idiot.

"You go in front of me since you only have two items."

I gracefully recovered from my lovelorn look.

"You go ahead because then the buggy would be between us. I don't want anything to come between us, ever."

He smiled that million dollar smile again.

I had not dated since nursing school. Now, life seemed hopeful. Immediately, I pictured us shopping together for groceries as husband and wife.

At last, my prince has arrived!

I could not believe that someone so gorgeous showed interest in *me*.

Don't get me wrong. Many people told me how beautiful I was. I never saw it. Honestly, I looked okay but didn't see great beauty. At that time, I was twenty-eight years old and possessed a great figure, not to sound immodest. My hair darkly shinned. I, too, owned green eyes like Roy and Harry.

Looks were wonderful, but I wanted to do something that mattered. Yes, Rosemary needed to change the world! Nursing required great compassion and a nurturing spirit. I hoped that described me more than I longed to be beautiful. Although my next phase of life might appear extravagant and frivolous, I paid my dues!

Soon, this handsome stranger and I started talking. We could not stop. The checkout line moved too quickly. He followed me to my car, which was a new Ford Mustang.

Registered Nurses received a pretty good salary at that time, with some hospitals offering a free car. I moved to Macon because the hospital provided a new apartment *and* car. The car which the hospital supplied, I traded for the impressive red Mustang. Suddenly, my hard work provided a new perk.

The hunk looked at my car with envy. Pointing to his truck, I noticed that it was also new and shiny. I hated dirty vehicles so that was like a sign as to the many things we must have in common. Written on the side of the truck was **Lewis Landscaping**.

"So, you are a landscaper?" I asked as I explained that I was a nurse at the local hospital.

He smiled.

"Yes, I own my company and do pretty well."

Gently rubbing my red mustang, I nodded. "I feel the same. I never thought that I would have such an interesting life."

I said this as though I took a cruise "across the pond" on Cunard every few months.

We went back to my bright apartment. Our relationship was born. A whirlwind courtship lasted for exactly three months. Dalton pushed for sex. Although not many people after the nineteen-sixties would have held out for virginity; I did. We simply had to be married or he could find another girl. Maybe Helen's lovers were not as compartmentalized as I thought although I seldom considered any of them.

Dalton professed his undying love. I believed it. Going so far as even telling him that I didn't think I truly loved him, the poor guy cried at my revelation but said it didn't matter. He would "love enough for us both." Even today, I think back to that sentence. It never entered my mind that he didn't care in the way that he professed—that head-over-heels, falling-down sick to be with me sort of love.

With my history, after three months of being together for dinner each night and as much as possible in the day, we married.

Our wedding was on Christmas Eve. My dress was borrowed from a friend, The scrumptious white ensemble looked elegant. That was the same friend whose prom dresses I paid to wear at my junior/senior prom. We were the exact size four. Rhonda possessed pure class for taste.

Claudia, my best friend, proudly walked before me as my bridesmaid. She wore a red velvet dress with shoes dyed to match on the frosty evening when I wed my handsome prince. I carried white roses while sporting a lovely veil of white. Feeling pristine since I could truly wear the white and not feel like a hypocrite, proudly I smiled. Dalton invited his father as best man. We planned the glorious event at my small Baptist church, which packed with people. Helen glowed. My stepfather, Craig, escorted me down the aisle.

Dalton and I excitedly left after a small reception at my mom's house. Without making any reservations, we brilliantly headed for Nags Head, NC after deciding that we would not need plans.

Who visits the beach this time of year?

We were correct! No one wanted to go to the beach, which was cold and windy. What we didn't conclude was that the owners of the motels vacationed in Key West, not NC. We experienced an exhausting time finding a hotel. Our only choice was not exactly your "dream honeymoon."

Do you see a madness to my life? Maybe the beginning of our union should have sent alerts but not for me. I didn't care because I was with Dalton. He truly loved me!

Finally, a man loves me. What else can matter?

Our life seemed happier than any day out of Helen's chaotic life. I thought that I had done pretty well. Dalton was loving, perfect in the way he treated me. So considerate, frequently bringing small presents and flowers. I scored envy from our few friends. Everyone thought him not only gorgeous but devoted.

All that we need is a child.

My husband would squirm and fidget whenever I talked about what great parents we would be and our "drop dead gorgeous" beautiful baby.

I cut back my hours at work as I cooked nightly from scratch. My goal was being the perfect homemaker. He moved into my lovely new condo from money that I received from nursing.

Seemingly, we "had it all." Every hour off from work, I spent to make my husband's life the dream life I saw on TV. That was until I became ill at work one day with a sudden sore throat and fever. One of the docs checked me announcing that I had strep and needed to take some days off while I nursed myself with the

antibiotic he prescribed. I did not protest. I felt terrible. As I left the pharmacy, I looked forward to a long-deserved rest.

I pulled into the garage; I thought it odd that Dalton's truck parked in the drive. He was supposed to have a full day of sprinkler installation at one of the homes in Idle Hour County Club.

Probably, he forgot something.

Quietly, I entered through the front door thinking that he would be looking for some forgotten equipment downstairs in his designated "man cave." After locking the door, I entered the kitchen swallowing one of the antibiotics with a large glass of water. Feeling even worse, I slowly climbed the stairs to the second floor as if I could not take another step.

Suddenly, I heard a moan.

Oh no, poor Dalton must have come down with the same bacterial infection!

I could see him earlier working in the scorching sun feeling like I now felt.

He is the most wonderful husband desiring to provide for me in such a hard-working manner.

I climbed that last step, another moan much louder than the first.

Wait, that wasn't Dalton's voice.

I felt a sudden surge of adrenaline as I ripped open the door to a darkened room!

The smell of heavy perfume overcame me. I staggered back for a moment. To my absolute shock, there was my wonderful husband in bed with Beth Brown, my dearest neighbor. Suddenly, I was unable to move. Watching that scene was like a scorching poker branding betrayal into my psyche. They were clinging to each other in ecstasy as my world crumbled apart. Saying not a word, I stood absorbing the horror to me and joy for them.

Once the two completed their act of "love," Beth noticed me. The moan of joy replaced by a yelp of pain. Tears flooded down my face. I watched my father turn to look at me in my mind while I became my mom. Suddenly, Helen seemed brave trying to hold our small family intact.

Dalton turned. Beth scrambled from the bed. She could not compare with me in any way. My friend was attractive enough but tiny in stature and size. Her hair was thin and mousy. Paleness with light blue eyes did not attract.

Why would he throw all that we worked for casually aside? What did I do wrong?

I looked at my "best" friend feeling sorrow for her. She hadn't just destroyed my life but that of *her* family. She and Jackson were the "golden couple" of the neighborhood.

Her status just changed!

She ran to me with Dalton's shirt covering her.

"Please, Rose, don't tell Jackson; it would destroy him."

No one called me “Rose” but Beth. Saying not a word, I went downstairs to wait until they left *my* home. If they said a word to each other, I didn’t hear. She dressed quickly, fleeing out the front door. The ironic thing was now lunch hour brought Jackson home. Jackson, her beloved husband, drove past with a huge smile to grab a bite of lunch prepared by his beloved wife. He witnessed her harrowing exit from my home half-nakedly. I knew as his smile of salutation to me turned to horror just how he felt.

Dalton walked behind me, putting his hands on my shoulder. He too watched this scene not with sorrow but with a smile. He did not seem in the least concerned about anyone. At that moment, I deducted that I married a sociopath.

Right, Rosemary, he was a great choice.

“Rosemary, we need to discuss what you just saw.” He said this as though I witnessed his innocent flirtation at a party.

“No, Dalton, absolutely nothing to say. Pack your bags; my attorney will contact you.”

With that, he trudged upstairs to pack. I took my shower, hoping not only to remove the germs of strep but those of deceit. It didn’t work. By the time my hair was clean and dried, another man had left my life. Again, my swing could not bear the brunt of deception.

