

Sunshine poured through the windows greeting Derek and Shaly. Slowly, Derek opened his eyes and glanced at the clock. Since the wedding reception had lasted into the wee hours, he frowned. *It's too early to get up.*

Derek and Shaly lay naked as he spooned up behind her. He laid awake, snuggling next to his newlywed wife. He planted kisses along her neck.

Shaly stirred, opened her eyes and turned to face Derek. "Good morning, husband."

"I like the sound of that," Derek said with a sexy grin.

Shaly gave him a look of pure adoration. "This might be the best way to wake up in the morning," she said, her voice hoarse from sleep.

"I'd love to stay in bed with you forever," Derek said, kissing her.

Grinning at the thought, Shaly said, "That sounds good, but I'm not sure how we'd arrange that."

Derek chuckled. "I know, but you have to admit, it's a great idea." He paused, taking in the sight of her. "You're beautiful," he said, planting kisses from her ear to her shoulder.

As he held Shaly close to him, he thought, "I never had this feeling when I was with Heather. Since meeting Shaly, he realized now that what he had with her wasn't love or happiness but he was thankful for their three daughters."

He looked into Shaly's eyes. He held her face with his hands, locking his mouth over hers. Breathlessly, he eased his embrace and looked into her deep brown eyes. "I love you."

"I love you too."

"I have an idea—" Derek stopped, groaning as Shaly made circular movements on his thigh while easing toward his manhood. Playfully, he slapped her hand away. "We'll never get out of bed if you keep doing that."

"Is that so bad?"

"No, but we have a busy day, and besides, we'll have a lifetime to make sweet, passionate love to each other." He sat up and said, "Let's get up, shower, dress, and go out on the beach and watch the sunrise."

"What a great idea."

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After climbing out of bed, they entered the shower. Derek, seeing his new bride couldn't control his desire and made slow, passionate love to Shaly. Satisfied, they showered, dried off, and dressed.

Thankful for the coffee maker in the room, Derek made a pot. After it brewed, he and Shaly fixed cups of the hot liquid.

Derek grabbed a beach towel and they walked out onto the beach. After deciding on a spot, he laid the towel on the sand and they sat down.

They drank their coffee in silence, watching the sun come to life. They marveled at the array of bright yellows, reds, and oranges spreading across the blue sky.

Derek broke the morning silence. "Our wedding couldn't have been better. I can't believe that everything went off without any drama. I never imagined it would be so perfect."

"I agree and I'm glad you suggested that we have a destination wedding. Everything was so beautiful. I'll never forget our wedding day. I also think everyone had a wonderful time." What Shaly didn't add was, *except for Heather*.

Shaly leaned her head on Derek's shoulder. He drew her close, kissed the top of her head and whispered, "I love you and thank you."

She pulled away and looked into his eyes. "I love you too, but why the thank you?"

"You saved me. I'm not sure where I'd be if it wasn't for you. After the divorce and before I met you, I had become a miserable, bitter man. I had no idea how to get on with my life." Derek stopped, shaking his head.

"I thought Heather was the love of my life and we'd be married forever. Her betrayal and the divorce made me bitter, disillusioned, and sad." He let out a nervous chuckle. "Looking back, I had given up on happiness until I met you."

He gave Shaly a quick kiss. "You were patient and kind, listened to me, and were always supportive. You made me believe that I was worthy of being happy and that I deserved love." He shrugged. "I believed Heather had been my one shot at having a wonderful life."

"You give me way too much credit. Derek, you're a kind, considerate, loving man. Unfortunately, you were suffering from heartache and I understood."

"That might be true, but you weren't judgmental and took me for who I was and for that I'm grateful."

Shaly wrapped her arms around his neck and kissed him hard on the mouth. They broke their kiss and Derek chuckled. “We better stop that before I throw you down and have my way with you.”

“In a few hours, for seven days, we’ll have plenty of time for that.”

“Yeah, and I can’t wait.” Derek’s eyes were twinkling.

“I’m looking forward to being with you too and plan to cherish every moment.” Shaly fell quiet, looking at the calm, blue water.

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Shaly hated that Heather’s warning crept into her thoughts. When they were in the restroom, her threatening words still resonated with her. Shaly loathed Heather’s conniving attitude, always doing something to try and drive a wedge between her and Derek.

Regardless of what Heather had planned, there was nothing Shaly could do about the unknown. She just hoped that Heather wouldn’t cause Derek more heartache. Again, she couldn’t prevent it but she could be strong for Derek and continue to show how much she loved and supported him.

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Shaly must have stayed quiet too long because Derek drew her close. “Is everything okay?”

“I’m fine,” she lied. “I was thinking about the next seven days and how much fun we’re going to have.”

